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Briggs King Runs for Lieutenant Governor



Realty Transfer Tax Stays High



DSU Helicopter Program Successful

SPORTSMANSHIP
2010

2011

2012

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Headlines

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BY BETSY PRICE

Ruth Briggs King, a former state legislator from Georgetown, formally announced Friday she is running for lieutenant governor. If elected, she said, she will continue to work as a public servant, just as she did in the House of Representatives.

“I realized that I was elected by Republicans, Democrats and Independents,” she said. “This is a campaign for the people, not necessarily the party, and in our state, the Democrat Party has been in the majority for over 30 years and they’ve left the people behind.”

The only Republican woman in the General Assembly for the 14 years she served, Briggs King **resigned** last year after she and her husband Stanley, built a home a mile

RUTH BRIGGS KING LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

outside of her district. At the time, she said, she had no intention of running for office again and expected to stay busy working on the State’s Women’s Commission, a state Human Resources subcommittee and the board of A Better Delaware.

“I’m running because a lot of people came to me and said, ‘We need you. We need your experience. We need your integrity. We need your intelligence. We need you to work for us because you listen,’” Briggs King said. “My reputation has been built on constituent service, listening to those I serve, answering your questions and concerns.

“As your lieutenant governor, I would do no less. In fact, I would probably do more. I would do it throughout the state.”

BRIGGS KING PLATFORM

She doesn’t plan to parrot a national agenda.

“We have to have some change that is responsive to the people, not a national agenda, but what Delaware needs, what our families and businesses,” Briggs King said.

She will be one of four women seeking the second-highest office in the state. Briggs King has no Republican challenger, but will meet the winner of the Democratic primary: Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker, D-Wilmington; Rep. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Brandywine Hundred; and retired U.S. Army veteran Dr. Debbie Harrington of Middletown.

“It’s all women,” Briggs King agreed. “But I think

there’s huge, unique differences in all of us and I have served longer.”

She said her experience on the Joint Finance Committee, which writes the state budget, and a Revenue Task Force appointed by Gov. Jack Markell, as well as her other legislative duties, gave her a broad view of what happens up and down the state, how communities are different and what communities need to succeed.

Her own experience growing up on a farm and then as a teacher, regional medical laboratory executive and nonprofit association manager help her understand and see issues from multiple points of view, she said.

“If you see poverty in New Castle County, it looks different than it does in rural Sussex,” she said. “But if you’re not looking for these things and listening to people, you will miss that.”

While Briggs King is considered the running mate of Mike Ramone, a Pike Creek/Newark legislator seeking the Republican nomination for governor, but she could be elected and serve even if he is not. In Delaware, it’s possible to have a Democrat win one role and a Republican in the other. If she does win, she would be the first Republican woman to chair the Senate.

Briggs King said she will campaign on five platforms: tailored education, building a robust economy, a safer Delaware, better Veteran healthcare and improving Delaware’s infrastructure.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



\$3 MILLION PILOT PROGRAM TO FIND, TRAIN PEOPLE FOR STEM JOBS

BY BETSY PRICE

A new three-year pilot program bolstered by federal and state money will recruit and train Delawareans in STEM skills needed for basic laboratory and advanced biomanufacturing jobs. The move is part of a state focus on training a workforce for the future, partly to attract and keep the kind of STEM-related businesses expected to grow and provide more jobs in the future.

Just recently, for example, the state announced \$14.8 million in grants for [Incyte](#), a biopharmaceutical company, to move office jobs into downtown Wilmington and refit work space at its Alapocas campus as labs. The move is expected to bring 500 new jobs to the state.

The newly formed Delaware Center for Life Science Education and Training, was created by the [Delaware BioScience Association](#) two years after it released a report with the Delaware Prosperity Partnership that identi-

fied the need to invest in the development of a diverse, prepared and resilient workforce to ensure future life science industry growth.

“The simple goal of these initiatives is to make Delaware the very best place in the world for employers to find life science talent at every level—from advanced manufacturing operators to PhDs,” said Michael Fleming, Delaware Bio president and CEO. “These new efforts will attract talent and companies of all sizes, strengthen our state’s manufacturing capability, boost regional economic growth and advance our national security.”

The move was celebrated Friday morning at EastSide Charter School’s new Chemours STEM Hub. The 40,000 square foot facility is expected to be finished during the 2024-25 school year.

STEM FUNDING

Key initial funding for the center will come from a \$2.1 million Congressionally Directed Spending grant supported by U.S. Sens. Tom Carper and Chris Coons, as well as the Delaware BioScience Association and additional private financial and in-kind support.

The Delaware Life Science Caucus, including Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Fairfax, and Sen. Spiro Mantzavinos, D-Wilmington, plan to create a Delaware STEM Talent Advancement and Retention program to attract and retain new university graduates with Delaware STEM employers by supporting a portion of their college loan payments.

[House Bill 435](#), sponsored by Griffith, Smith and Mantzavinos, will give qualified job candidates grants of \$1,000 to \$6,000, depending on their education level.

The Center for Life Science Education is set to launch in early 2025 and will create strategic partnerships with industry, academic institutions and community organizations to find and train workers. Key partners include non-profit community organizations serving the city of Wilmington, such as The Warehouse, West End Neighborhood House, and East Side Charter.

The pilot training program will take place at the Chemours STEM Hub at Eastside Charter School and other locations.

“These important STEM-focused initiatives will serve the state well by addressing employer needs, informing communities about jobs in a robust area of our economy, retaining science and technology companies, and keeping talent in Delaware which is a wellspring for any industry sector,” said Kurt Foreman, president and CEO of the Delaware Prosperity Partnership.



BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware House of Representatives Republicans blocked an attempt to alter the constitution's rules on absentee voting by refusing to vote on it. [Senate Bill 3](#), sponsored by Sen. Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, would have eliminated limitations imposed in the state constitution about when an individual could vote. It also would allow the General Assembly to set rules governing absentee ballots and early voting.

REPUBLICANS BLOCK ABSENTEE BALLOT CHANGE BY REFUSING TO VOTE

Supporters say it will allow more people to vote in elections by offering options other than showing up in person on Election Day and removing a requirement that only certain excuses could be used for voting absentee. Republicans maintain that it will encourage illegal voting and allow the majority party (currently not theirs) "carte blanche" power to change rules on a whim, as Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden said Thursday.

Absentee and early voting was a hot topic in the national and state elections of 2020, exacerbated by COVID 19 restrictions. The issues became even more heated when a Delaware Supreme Court struck down a previous attempt at changing absentee voting, saying it could not stand because it violated the constitution.

ABSENTEE CHANGE RULES

Attempts to change the Delaware constitution have lots of strings attached:

- They have to be passed by a 2/3 majority in the state House or Senate. The Senate has enough Democrats to vote that through with a GOP vote. The House does not. On Thursday evening, the bill only got 16 yes votes.
- Any constitutional amendment has to be passed in two different sessions. Each General Assembly lasts two sessions, or two years. It's currently at the end of its 152nd session, which started in January 2023, broke for the summer, and reconvened in January this year.

- If the amendment doesn't pass this year, it will have to be reintroduced in January 2025. Assuming it passed in either 2025 or 2026, which comprise the 153rd session, it would need to be introduced and approved again in the 154th session, which will start in January 2027 and end in June 2028.
- So if one part isn't passed this year, the earliest legislative changes could be made would be in 2027, three years from now.

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Culture

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JUNE TEENTH

CELEBRATE JUNETEENTH NEXT WEEK WITH THESE EVENTS IN DELAWARE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Throughout the state of Delaware, a number of organizations are holding events to celebrate and honor the Juneteenth holiday.

Made a federal holiday in 2021, Juneteenth is short for “June 19” and celebrates the day in 1865 when Union Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger and his officers arrived in Galveston, TX, to free any remaining slaves. About two months after the Civil War had ended, and more than two years after the [Emancipation Proclamation](#) was signed by President Abraham Lincoln, the day became a day of honor after President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, making it America’s 12th federal holiday.

2024 Juneteenth events

- Wilmington Juneteenth Parade kicked off at 11 a.m. on Saturday, June 15. Attendees are asked to meet at Rodney Square at 1000 North Market Street, and the

route is down King Street, ending at the historical Tubman-Garrett Park.

- YMCA’s Juneteenth Celebrations are at all seven branches throughout Delaware. The events include food, drinks, bouncy-houses, family fun games, mindfulness and physical classes and more. Walnut Street YMCA’s was Saturday, June 15 at noon; Bear-Glasgow Family YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 3 p.m.; Middletown Family YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 11 a.m.; Brandywine YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 3 p.m.; Western Family YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and at 6:45 p.m.; Dover YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 (call location for time); and Sussex Family YMCA’s was Saturday, June 15 at 10 a.m.
- Winterthur Juneteenth Celebration was Saturday, June 15 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Activities include a

drum circle, African dance demonstrations, storytelling, dance jams and more.

- Georgetown’s Juneteenth Event was Saturday, June 15, at the historic Richard Allen School following at 11 a.m., following the 10 a.m. Juneteenth parade which starts at 10 a.m. in downtown Georgetown. The event will include an array of Sussex County historical presentations and performances by the Nanticoke Indian Tribe.
- Friends of Cooch’s Bridge Historic Site will host a Juneteenth celebration at 3 p.m. on Sunday, June 16, featuring Kenneth B. Morris and Nadjah Nicole, two civil rights activists and speakers. The location is South Old Baltimore Pike in Newark, three minutes east of I-95.
- The city of Lewes Juneteenth Celebration is Saturday, June 22, at 1 p.m. at the George H.P. Smith Park, located at the end of Dupont Avenue in Lewes.
- Cornerstone Fellowship Baptist Church’s Juneteenth Observance is a spiritual service of remembrance with gospel music and inspirational messages. The event starts at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 19. The church is located at 20 West Lea Boulevard in Wilmington.

If your group or organization is hosting a Juneteenth event that is not on this list, please contact reporter Jarek Rutz via email at jarek@delawarelive.com to have them added.





NEW TWIST: PORCH PIRATES DON AMAZON VESTS TO STEAL PACKAGES

BY BETSY PRICE

There's a new wrinkle in the **Porch Pirate** business. The **New Castle County Division of Police** says that residents are having packages delivered and shortly after the delivery is made, an individual, sometimes wearing an Amazon vest, quickly runs up to the package and steals it. It's also a trend across the country, the police said.

As always, police said, if residents see something suspicious, they could call and report it to 911 or the non-emergency number, (302) 573-2800.

ANTI-PORCH PIRATE TIPS

Residents also may want to take steps to make their purchases less available, police said:

- Opt to require a signature for all package deliveries.

Residents should review the delivery options at “check-out” and if there is an option, leave specific delivery instructions for the delivery company on where to leave packages.

- Consider sending the package to a family member or trusted neighbor who is home during the day to accept the delivery.
- Use the “pick-up at store” option for merchandise.
- Pick-up packages at a local UPS or FedEx location.
- Amazon also offers locker locations spread throughout communities where packages can be left with a code to get them. Convenient locations include grocery stores.



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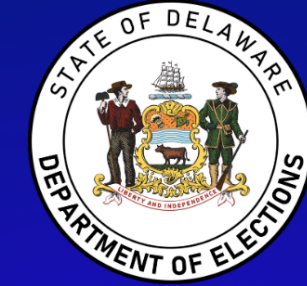
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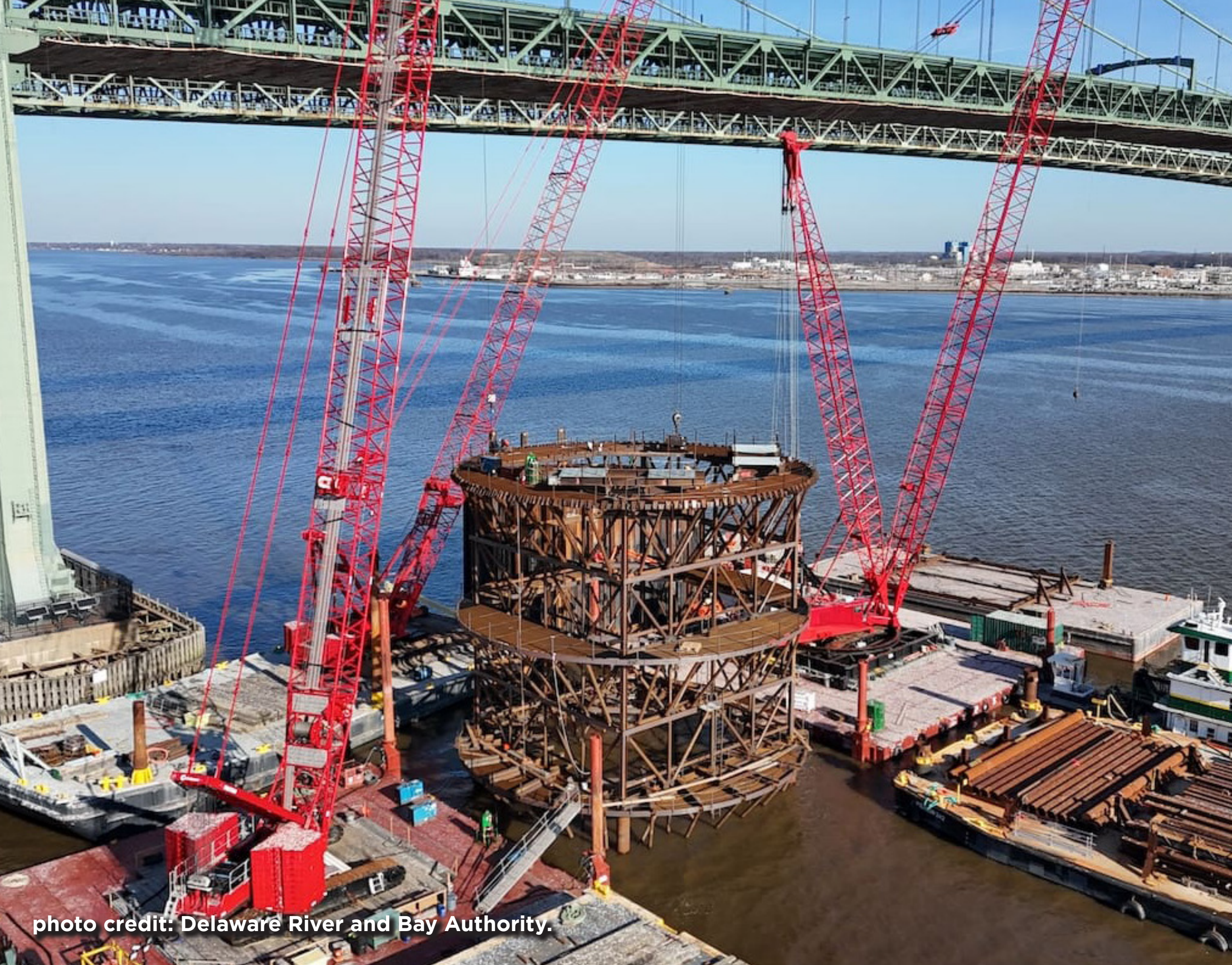


photo credit: Delaware River and Bay Authority.

Business

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CARNEY SIGNS BILL TO CREATE HOSPITAL REVIEW BOARD

BY BETSY PRICE

The Diamond State Hospital Review Board blew into existence Thursday when Gov. John Carney signed [House Bill 350](#). The board, which will have authority to review Delaware hospital budgets, recommend changes and enforce those changes, will help the state and consumers lower their healthcare bills by limiting the growth of hospital budgets, supporters say.

Theoretically, supporters believe, that means the rise in what businesses and consumers have been paying lately will slow. Opponents say the state has no business interfering in private business, that budget cuts will mean less access to care and tests for everybody, and the board is not a comprehensive enough move to make a real change. Any programs to control costs should

include drug companies, pharmacies, suppliers and other healthcare providers for any real impact, those opponents say.

Chief among the critics was the Delaware Healthcare Association, a trade group of hospitals. It fought the bill amid a hail of scorn from the sponsors, but finally agreed to a compromise version that included the removal of a clause that would allow the state to take over hospital assets.

“Now that HB 350 has been signed into law, DHA will advocate to ensure that the law’s implementation enables Delaware’s hospitals to continue providing high quality care to the patients and communities we serve,” said President and CEO Brian Frazee.

“We are proud that Delaware currently [ranks](#) No. 2 in the nation for hospital quality and we will strive to ensure access to care for all Delawareans, strengthen the healthcare workforce, and advance health equity as the regulatory and implementation process moves forward,” he said.

BOARD BACKPATTING

The Democrats who support the bill, however, may soon need physical therapy for patting themselves on the back for taking such a courageous stand, even when Dems dominate the General Assembly and can vote through virtually anything they want.

Gov. John Carney called the controversial bill an “important piece of legislation that will make a positive impact on Delawareans.”

“Rising health care costs are having a significant impact on Delaware families and state taxpayers, and we’ve been committed to addressing this since the start of my time as governor,” said Gov. Carney. “House Bill 350 will help lower the growth of healthcare costs in our state, while making sure we’re protecting health care quality and access.”

House Speaker Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, who sponsored by the bill, said, “With the signing of HB 350 today, we have taken a monumental step in getting these prices under control while bringing much needed transparency to our state’s hospital pricing process.”

“This legislation is a major breakthrough for small businesses and working families in Delaware, who for years have been paying more for healthcare than people in nearly every other state,” said Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

PROPOSED FAMILY LEAVE CHANGES: HAVE CONTRACTOR DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY

BY BETSY PRICE

Changes continue to Delaware's **Paid Family and Medical Leave Program**, which became law in 2022 and was sold as a way to give all employees, not just those at big companies, paid leave for emergencies and become a parent.

Originally called the Healthy Delaware Families Act, it created a statewide insurance program to provide up to 80% of wages for eligible Delaware workers for up to 12 weeks per year for parental leave and six weeks over two years for caregiving and medical leave. It is to be administered by the state, cost \$17.7 million and be paid for through a 0.8% payroll contribution split between the employer and the employee. For example, an employee who makes \$1,000 per week would pay \$4 per week and so would their employer.

On Tuesday, the House Labor Committee seemed set to approve **House Bill 438**, which would allow the state Department of Labor to hire a third-party contractor to determine eligibility and take that task away from businesses themselves. It's a move supported by business groups, including the New Castle County and Delaware State chamber of commerces, and contractors, all of whom spoke in favor of the bill. They said using a third-party to make eligibility determinations saved small and mid-sized businesses the administration burden and also protected them from liability and the likelihood of lawsuits over the issue. Joe Fitzgerald of the New Castle chamber noted that Connecticut has adopted a third-party contractor for its program and that seems to be working well there.

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Food & Dining

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MOVE TO HELP STATE ELIMINATE FOOD DESERTS HEADS TO HOUSE

pantries, local governments and other providers expand the healthy food options available in targeted communities.

“Anything we can do to find creative solutions for access to healthy foods is an important endeavor,” said Julie Miro Wenger, executive director of the Delaware Food Industry Council. “There are no easy solutions when it comes to sustainable models for some of our food deserts in underserved communities. We certainly would like to be part of the solution and welcome the opportunity to participate in developing the strategy to increase food access.”

Food deserts can occur in poorer and more rural areas. Grocery stores often make decisions about where to put stores based on both income and total nearby population. Inner cities can get ignored and so can rural areas where people are more spread out. Yet, access to fresh food is critical, because nutrition often is the first line of offense in populations battling high rates of obesity, diabetes and other illnesses often tied to diet, while often also having limited access to medical care. That leads to other medical problems and early deaths.

SB 254, sponsored by Sen. Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, would require the state of Delaware to develop a holistic, statewide strategy for reducing food insecurity, while creating a new grant program to help strengthen the existing network of small businesses, nonprofits and other organizations already giving underserved

communities their only access to fresh, healthy food.

“While people have been talking about our worsening food deserts for over a decade, we have seen very little progress in terms of making healthy foods readily available to the Delaware families living in urban and rural neighborhoods across our state who do not have reasonable access to a grocery store or supermarket,” said Brown. “We simply can’t wait any longer for the national supermarket chains to fix our problems for us.”

He is not alone in his concern.

“The Delaware Grocery Initiative is a measured step, not a cure-all, in addressing the complex challenge of slowing escalating healthcare costs,” said Joseph Fulgham, director of Policy & Communications for the House Republican Caucus. “We know better food choices lead to better health outcomes, and this initiative aims to empower residents by increasing access to healthy, affordable groceries. The three-year sunset provision will allow the legislature to assess the effectiveness of this approach before deciding whether to extend it or explore alternative solutions.”

“This bill recognizes there are areas within the state where Delawareans do not have access to readily available nutritional food options,” said Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover. “A lack of nutritional options can be directly correlated to poor health among Delawareans who live in identified food deserts.”

[READ MORE HERE](#)

BY BETSY PRICE

A proposal to launch a three-year pilot program focuses on eliminating food deserts in Delaware has broad support as it heads to the Delaware House of Representatives. The goal is to provide health food options for people who now don’t have much access to fresh fruit, vegetables and meat and tend to survive on fast food and other readily available products loaded with fat, sodium and sugar.

Under [Senate Bill 254 \(S\)](#), the state would authorize a state study of where help is needed and incentives and assistance that can help independent corner stores, food



photo link: Governor John Carney

Government

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ARCHITECTS: NO ROOM FOR CHILDCARE IN LEG HALL

BY BETSY PRICE

Childcare facilities was on the wish list for an expanded Legislative Hall, along with an access-controlled parking lot linked by a tunnel or legislators or staff could use. Philip Conte with architects [StudioJAED](#) recommended against the tunnel for a variety of reasons, but the [Legislative Building Committee](#) voted in [April](#) to have one anyway.

On Friday, Conte told the committee there's no room for childcare facilities considering the space available, unless other programs were cut or space reallocated, and it would require 35 square feet per child.

If Delaware did include childcare facilities, they would be the only state that did offer that in the state house, according to a survey by Mark Cutrona, deputy director of the Division of Research. Even so, Jesse Chadderdon, chief of staff of the Delaware State Senate Majority

Caucus, asked if the committee had time to appoint a group to study its feasibility. Conte said architects hope to submit some plans within a month. That effectively meant there was no time, especially with the General Assembly in its last two weeks of session and the Fourth of July holidays on their heels.

CHILDCARE REQUESTS

Chadderdon said he understood what Comte was saying. "I would say that as knowledge of this project has grown, at least in my experience, what I hear from current employees and even members is that childcare is in fact, a pretty big significant need or wish among people who are currently in the building," Chadderdon said.

Laura Wisniewski, chief of staff of the House Democrats, said she understood what Comte was saying, but wanted to echo Chadderdon.

"I've had members and staff as well as members of the public express the need for childcare in our building," she said. "So I do think it's something if...we had to submit the plan, but there might be wiggle room for us to make changes or be able to look at this in a deeper level...at least have that to review, I think it would be helpful.

"Again, just the difficulty that we have with even some of our members and staff that have kids and obviously that impacts like their availability within the building and how they're able to operate. So I just want to echo those sentiments and you know the case for having the childcare system in the building I understand what the space limitations but that may be difficult but just for the need."

Several other committee members asked about checking with area childcare facilities and even Delaware State University, which is building a childcare facility. Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, a member of the committee, moved to vote a childcare facility up or down.

Comte said there are strict rules about childcare space that include entrances, exits and kitchen areas, as well as indoor and outdoor spaces. Chadderdon said he wasn't sure that Leg Hall needed a full childcare but didn't really finish the thought.

The vote was one yes, four no, four not voting—including Chadderdon and Wisniewski—and four absent. That was not a majority vote, so Yearick's motion failed.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



HOUSE COMMITTEE REJECTS BILL TO OPEN PRIMARY VOTING

BY BRADLEY VASOLI

A Delaware House panel on Wednesday voted down a bill to open voting in Delaware's primary elections to unaffiliated voters. State Rep. Michael Smith, R-Newark, introduced the legislation with Reps. Bill Bush, D-Cheswold, and Sean Matthews, D-Middletown. But despite [House Bill 43](#)'s bipartisan sponsorship, the House Administration committee rejected it three-to-two along party lines with committee Democrats opposed.

Currently, a Delaware voter can vote in a major-party [primary](#) if he or she has registered as a member of the Democratic or Republican Party. About 72 percent of the state's voters thus can vote in the public nominating election of their chosen party.

As of June 1, 170,160 voters met the state Department of Elections' description of "no party" voters. Under HB 43, they would have become able to choose to participate yearly in either the Democratic or GOP primary.

Smith said he wanted to open Republican and Democratic primaries to unaffiliated Delawareans partly because many voters affiliate with a party despite not feeling steadfast loyalty to that party.

CARNEY VS. MARKELL PRIMARY

He recalled that when current Gov. John Carney and former Gov. Jack Markell ran against each other for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 2008, many First Staters changed their party registration to Democratic merely to have a say in that race. (The general election was uncompetitive, with Republican William Swain Lee garnering only 32% of the vote that year.)

Smith said he hears from many people who simply want to remain free of party identity while still getting to play a role in the major-party nominating process.

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GOP MOVE TO CUT REALTY TRANSFER TAX TOSSED ONTO TRASH HEAP

BY BETSY PRICE

Another Republican attempt to lower the costs of buying a house by reducing taxes associated with it was shot down along party lines Wednesday. Rep. Lyndon Yearick's [House Bill 343](#) would have dropped the real estate transfer tax from 4% now to 3% in January 2018. That was the rate it was in 2016 before being raised in 2017 to bring in more money amid budget woes in Gov. John Carney's early years. The hike made it the highest transfer tax in the country.

Recently, the state has seen four years of huge surpluses, many near \$1 billion, and Yearick argued—as other Republicans have before him—that the state should use some of that to pay back the people of Delaware.

His bill would have limited the tax cuts to residential properties costing \$500,000 or less and commercial properties costing \$1 million or less. Many sales would

not qualify, he said.

Yearick, the House minority whip whose district is in Camden, said he hoped the move would help ease the affordable housing crisis and help more people buy their first home. Reducing the transfer tax isn't a silver bullet, but would be a tool at the state's disposal, he said.

Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Claymont, who works in real estate, noted that the transfer tax on a \$300,000 home would cost the buyer \$12,000 out of their pocket at 4%. At 3%, it was only \$9,000. That \$3,000 can make a difference in whether someone can buy a house or buy the house they really want, he said.

TRANSFER TAX V. INCOME TAX

Democrats, however, argued in Wednesday's House Revenue and Finance Committee that available houses appear to be selling fine and the real problem is that

there's not enough of them. Rep. Madinah Wilson-Anton, D-Newark, said she would rather see the state raise income tax and bring in more revenue that way before changing the transfer tax. So far, she noted, the legislature has resisted any income tax hikes.

Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, wanted to know why taxes couldn't be rolled into mortgages and what could be done by the legislature to fix that.

Spiegelman and other real estate experts explained that banks and mortgage holders would not allow taxes and fees to be included. Banks lend money tied to real property they can take that property and sell it if the loan goes bad, he said. There's no way for a bank to recoup taxes or fees. Schwartzkopf persisted, asking several times what the state could do about that. No one ever answered.

Yearick's proposal would cause the state to lose between \$30 million and \$47.7 million in revenue, according to the fiscal note and a representative of the state Finance Department. Rebecca Goldsmith said the department thought the transfer tax should not be lowered unless it was a part of a larger budgetary initiative.

Rep. Kendra Johnson, D-Bear, said she thought there were too many other areas that needed money and the state couldn't look at the transfer tax in isolation.

Rep. Danny Short, R-Seaford, who sits on the Delaware Economic Financial and Advisory Council, said the state could handle the reduced realty tax. In just the last few months, the state's revenues were upgraded by \$240 million for next year, he said. That comes as the state budget is expected to be \$6.3 billion, a 9.9% increase in a year that was expected to be tough, he noted.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would shift the burden away from police while also establishing monetary fines for homeowners with excessively barking dogs was unanimously supported in the House Appropriations Committee Wednesday. **House Bill 124**, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, eliminates animal noise and noise disturbances from the Noise Control and Abatement Chapter in Delaware Code.

It clarifies that the **Office of Animal Welfare** and **Department of Agriculture** has the authority to enforce all state laws relating to the protection and control of animals with, as occasion requires, the assistance of police officers. HB 124 prohibits the owner or person in pos-

HOMEOWNERS COULD SOON BE FINED FOR THEIR BARKING DOGS

session or control of a dog from allowing the dog to bark for an extended period, defined as continuously for 15 minutes or more, or intermittently for 30 minutes or more. It exempts barking dogs if:

- A person is trespassing on private property
- An animal is intruding on private property
- The dog is being teased or provoked.

It also exempts dogs located in animal shelters, pet stores, dog grooming facilities, veterinarian offices and animal clinics. More exemptions are if the dog's engaged in dog training, dog exhibition, lawful performance competitions, hunting and herding.

Penalties include a first warning, \$50 for a second violation, \$100 for third violations and \$150 for all violations after. There is a state cost of about \$240,000 each year for personnel operations, specifically with the Office of Animal Welfare.

There was no discussion about how this would work in real time, how long it would take officers to react to calls and what that would mean to the average resident.

HB 124 now moves on to the full House floor.



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STATE AUDIT: ELLENDALE FINANCES, RECORDS, PAYROLL A MESS

BY BETSY PRICE

A state auditor’s report posted Tuesday on the department’s website says, in essence, that the town of **Ellendale**’s financial records, handling of cash, payroll and even basic operational details and practices are a mess. In a lot of cases, they look like growing pains in a small town experiencing rapid growth typical of Sussex County.

It had 400-plus residents in 2020 and now has 527, but its location along the route to Delaware’s beaches has contributed to rising property values, making property and realty transfer taxes its prime economic driver, with developments annexing into the town.

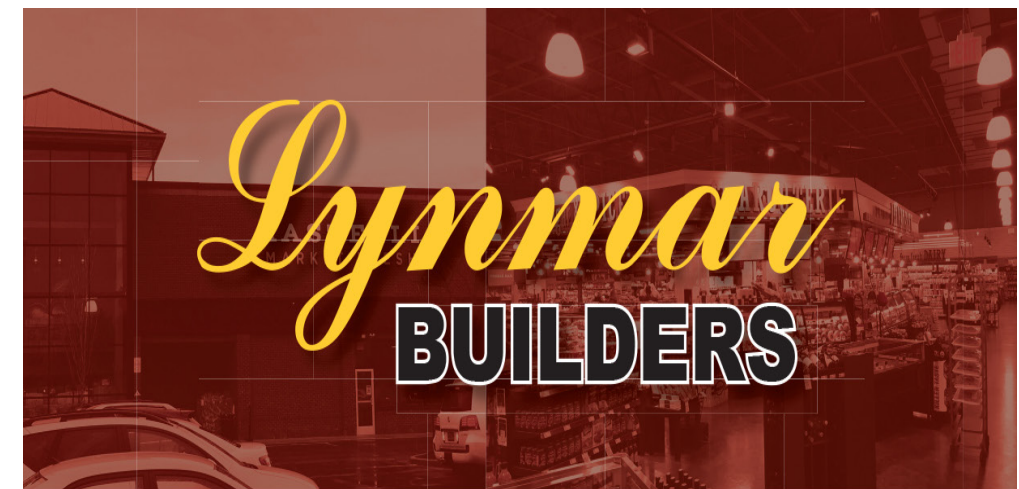
The Ellendale council elected in 2023 inherited the problems, the audit says, and asked for the audit of city finances from 2019 through 2022. Efforts were not successful Tuesday to reach Tom Panus, president of the

town council, for comment. Efforts were not successful to reach Mayor William Clay Walton.

The explosive growth of property values and tax revenues represent opportunities, according to the audit. But, it said, town operations and record keeping haven’t been done to normal standards and that’s preventing Ellendale from understanding what is happening or from seeing or implementing changes that should be made.

The town council already has hired a bookkeeper from a certified public accountant firm with expertise in QuickBooks accounting, the audit said. The hire should strengthen financial integrity, streamline processes and position the town for better financial management, it said.

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DELAWARE TO GET \$4.9M IN \$700 MILLION J&J BABY POWDER LAWSUIT

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware will receive \$4.9 million in a \$700 million nationwide settlement that aims to resolve allegations related to the marketing of **Johnson & Johnson's baby powder** and body powder products that contain talc.

“All of the funds we receive will be placed in the State’s Consumer Protection Fund,” the Delaware Department of Justice said.

Under the consent judgment with attorneys general representing 43 states, Johnson & Johnson:

- Has ceased the manufacturing, marketing, promotion, sale, and distribution of all baby and body powder products and cosmetic powder products that contain talcum powder, including Johnson’s Baby Powder and Johnson & Johnson’s Shower to Shower in the United States.
- Shall permanently stop making, marketing, promoting, and distributing any covered products in the

United States either directly, or indirectly through any third party.

BABY POWDER OVER THE YEARS

“Johnson & Johnson sold such products for over a hundred years,” a release from Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings said. “After the coalition of states began investigating, the company stopped distributing and selling these products in the United States and more recently ended global sales. While this lawsuit targeted the deceptive marketing of these products, numerous other lawsuits filed by private plaintiffs in class actions raised allegations that talc causes serious health issues including mesothelioma and ovarian cancer.”

The release wasn’t that blunt, but a 2018 **Reuters** investigation cited more than 11,000 plaintiffs alleging the powder was contaminated by asbestos, a known carcinogen. Reuters said the contamination was known

as early as 1957.

In 2018, a jury of 22 awarded women \$550 million in compensatory damages and more than \$4 billion in punitive damages in a suit contending that the powder led to ovarian cancer, Healthline reported.

In 2022, J&J announced transitioning to cornstarch for baby powders. “Our position on the safety of our cosmetic talc remains unchanged,” the company said at the time. “We stand firmly behind the decades of independent scientific analysis by medical experts around the world that confirms talc-based Johnson’s baby powder is safe, does not contain asbestos, and does not cause cancer.”

The new settlement is pending judicial approval.



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MEDICS IN DE GIVING IVF SERVICES COULD GAIN LEGAL PROTECTION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new bill would dispel the fears of potential repercussions for medics providing in vitro fertilization, commonly known as IVF, which takes mature eggs from ovaries and fertilizes them with sperm in a lab. About 90,000 babies are conceived through this process each year in the U.S.

House Bill 374, sponsored by Rep. Kendra Johnson, D-Bear, would legally protect medical professionals who provide fertility treatment, even if their services are deemed illegal in another state, as long as they are legal in Delaware. It also prohibits health care providers from disclosing communications and records concerning fertility treatment without the patient's authorization in any civil action or proceeding.

HB 374 would protect health care providers from out-of-state civil actions relating to fertility treatment that is legal in Delaware. Insurance companies would be pro-

hibited from taking any adverse action against health care professionals who provide fertility treatment and services.

Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, was the legislator who spoke most when the bill was presented to the Senate Judiciary Committee Tuesday. She said the bill was personal to her. In an emotional testimony, she shared the struggles of infertility she and her husband faced when trying to conceive their first child.

"Twenty-seven years ago, as my husband and I were in our very early 20s, things that came easy to most people, pregnancy should have been one of those things," she said. "It was not for my husband and I and Billy, being a good partner and a committed partner, walked hand-in-hand with me through the fertility procedures, many ups and downs, many disappointments, many months of infertility."

She said she traveled to state after state in order to find somebody that could help them through insurance practices, and in January 1999, she was able to deliver their first baby.

"Delaware must ensure that families are not punished simply for seeking to fulfill their dreams of having children, and that practitioners are not punished for assisting them," she said.

Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, pointed to how emotional and powerful of a day he and other legislators experienced when a law passed a couple years ago ensuring IVF coverage for state employees.

"There's occasional times where people still send us emails with photos of their new loved ones that are part of their world now because of it, and it only happens because people advocated, and the most important advocacy is sharing the personal story like you just did," he told Poore.

Representatives from the Delaware Department of Insurance, Planned Parenthood of Delaware, League of Women Voters Delaware, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Delaware and Medical Society of Delaware all gave public comments in support of HB 374.

Senate committees do not take a public vote on bills, but instead sign the bill with their vote, which is usually posted on the General Assembly website a few hours after the meeting ends. If released by committee, the bill will reach its final step on the full Senate floor, and then will be ready for Gov. John Carney's signature if it passes the Senate.



photo link: Delaware Department of Education



Education

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CHARTER LEADERS HAPPY WITH FLEXIBILITY NEW LEGISLATION COULD GIVE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Several leaders from charter schools spoke at the state’s legislative hall in support of a bill that allows them flexibility in hiring. **Senate Bill 311**, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, provides the ability for charter schools to hire the administrators that they deem beneficial to the success of the school’s education program and the needs of students and staff.

The bill, which was introduced to the Senate Education Committee Wednesday, clarifies that all instructional administrators at charter schools must be licensed and certified as administrators while non-instructional administrators do not.

James DeChene, chair of the board of directors of **Newark Charter School**, said the bill is very timely for his charter.

“I have a CFO [chief financial officer] who’s going to be retiring in the next few years...and we want the best possible person to fill that position, which is a CFO,” he said, “not necessarily somebody that has an education licensure or background in order to fill that position.”

Scott Kidner, president of **First State Military Academy**’s board, agreed that there are some leadership positions that are needed for the success of the school, but are not necessarily aligned to standard education backgrounds or certifications.

“We have a rather unique position as a Military Academy, and we may indeed want to seek a school leader that has a military background but does not have an educational background,” he said, “and that might be just the right person for us. This type of legislation, of course, preserves our ability to do that.”

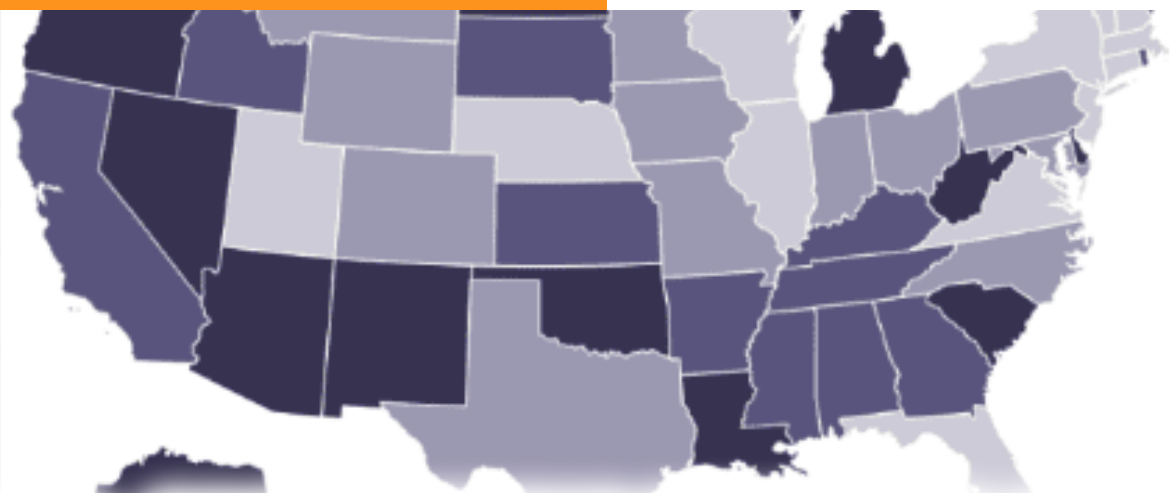
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NATIONAL CHILD WELLBEING REPORT PUTS DELAWARE 45TH IN EDUCATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A report from a national nonprofit focused on the wellbeing of America's children confirms what most Delawareans have learned over the past couple of years: education in the First State is far from first.

The [Annie E. Casey Foundation's](#) 54-page [report](#) lists Delaware 45th in education, or sixth worst in the entire country. But it highlights a lot of that has to do with the lived experiences of First State children.

For example, 43% of Delaware children experienced one or more adverse childhood experiences in 2021-2022, the year a lot of the report's data showcases. Furthermore, 27% of students are chronically absent, which means they miss more than 10% of the days in an academic year.

On a positive note, Delaware ranks eighth best for economic wellbeing for children. It's middle of the pack—25th—in health.

Parental involvement and engagement has been a talking point for education experts, and the Casey Foundation's report ranks Delaware as 32nd for "family and community." This takes into account the safety of children and financial wellbeing of parents and their involvement in their child's education.

What the report calls the "overall childhood wellbeing," Delaware ranks 31st, which is the combination of the education (45th), economic wellbeing (eighth), health (25th) and family and community (32nd).

The low proficiency and bad test scores has been another red flag, and the report points out that 75% of fourth-graders are not proficient in reading and 82% of eighth-graders are not proficient in math.

About 13%, or 26,000 of children, live below the poverty line in the state, and 50,000, or 24%, have parents who lack secure employment.

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FIRST YEAR OF UNIQUE DSU HELICOPTER STUDIES PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware State University is the first and only Historically Black College and University to offer a helicopter training program, and it's fair to say year one of it was a success. Two upcoming sophomores at DSU, Zach Wainio and Gavin Parker, both said the program is the reason they chose to attend the school.

"I took lessons in high school and I really loved it, and looking at what I should do next I came here and the timing was pretty coincidental because this program is very new," Parker said, "so we took a lot of risk in being the first ones, we had to be the ones to make mistakes so the people after us can learn, but it's, it's a great opportunity, it really is."

The degree itself is a bachelors of science degree in aviation: professional pilot helicopter, and it was created last August with five total students in its inaugural year.

Ten more students are expected to join in the 2024-2025 school year, according to Thomas Baechle, a flight

instructor for **Ascent Aeronautical Academy**, a flight school in Medford, NJ, that was contracted by DSU. More instructors will join the program too.

A bunch of flight schools applied for the contract bid, and Ascent was picked and given a four-year contract with a two-year optional extension for a little under \$7 million, per Doug Herlihy, co-owner of Ascent.

"I grew up in Brooklyn, NY, and where I lived the Coast Guard and police had their helicopters close by, so they would fly over my house like 20 times a day," Herlihy said. "One day I was just like, 'I want to do that' and I quit my job, I moved to New Jersey and I went to school to learn how to fly."

Now, his school is the vessel for Delaware's youth to learn the same skills.

DSU's Helicopter Flight Training Program is an Army scholarship that trains select Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets to fly helicopters during college

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while laying the foundation to be future Army aviators. Along with flight certifications, cadets receive leadership training. By the end of the four years, enrollees will have completed 200 total hours of learning and flying and will receive a Private Pilot Certification, Instrument Certification, Commercial Certification and Certified Flight Instructor Certification.

Essentially, by the end of the four years, the helicopter students will have certification to fly themselves, fly others and teach people how to fly.

READ MORE HERE



BY JAREK RUTZ

A group advocating for radical change to improve education in the state wants parents to be involved in their child’s education and is giving them the tools to do so.

First State Educate hosted a webinar Monday night in what will be a series of meetings helping inform the public about the current state of education in Delaware. Monday’s was called “First Steps to Understanding Education: Navigating and Engaging with Delaware School Boards” in which leaders from the organization explained how to contact school board members, how to get information on school boards, the key issues school boards are paying attention to today, the composition of different district school boards and why parental engagement is key.

“Don’t underestimate your voice, because it’s important and in order to change the status quo, to change

FSE SAYS PARENTS NEED TO ENGAGE IN THEIR KIDS' EDUCATION

student outcomes, people need to speak up,” said Yvonne Johnson, school board consultant for First State Educate.

Establishing common goals in the community is key, she said, adding that studies have shown a child’s outcome is more positive when their parent or caregiver is a participant in their educational journey. Many aren’t aware of the authority of school board members, so First State Educate explained the main responsibilities they have, including:

- Hiring, firing and evaluating superintendents based on student outcomes
- Exercise financial oversight of district budgets, which are millions of dollars
- Represent the interests of their community with transparency and responsiveness
- Be accountable to taxpayers, students and families from the district
- Create and adopt policies that govern the school district.

“It’s important for families and educators to be involved in those discussions, and most school districts have a policy committee which the citizens of that district can serve on,” Johnson said.

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SODE WRAPS UP 2024 SUMMER GAMES

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Special Olympics of Delaware (SODE) wrapped up its 2024 Summer Games this weekend at the University of Delaware. Nearly 700 athletes competed, 160 coaches and 100 unified partners were part of the 2024 Summer Games.

Before the games kicked off, there was the Delaware Law Enforcement for Special Olympics annual Torch Run, where hundreds of members of law enforcement carry the Flame of Hope across the state, lighting the way for acceptance and inclusion.

Kicking off the Summer Games, an opening day parade was held just like they do for the Olympics, a parade of athletes so that fans can cheer them on before

they start the games. Then they are invited to a family barbecue with the athletes' families to enjoy food and fun activities as well as a dance.

The athletes competed in six sports throughout two days at the Nelson Athletic Complex on the campus of the University of Delaware sports complex. The sports include Bocce, Powerlifting, Swimming, Softball, Tennis, and Track and Field events.

Jon Buzby, a board member and Senior Director of Unified Champion Schools, told us "The 2024 games were bigger and better than ever before thanks to the hard work of more than 1,500 volunteers at the games and of course the coaches who worked tirelessly leading



“

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up to the games at practices over the past few months.”

He also told us “We can’t thank the co-presenting sponsors Bank of America and DuPont enough and the dozens of businesses and other entities that made a difference to ensure a fantastic experience for everyone who attended.”

The Special Olympics of Delaware is always looking for volunteers and partners. To be part of SODE please visit their website www.sode.org. As their motto says “Get off the sideline and into the game”.



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