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*May 5, 2022  
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2022-23 PLAYHOUSE BROADWAY SERIES



TURBOTAX TO PAY \$400K



SOFTBALL WEEK 7 PREVIEW

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*Photo credit: Longwood Gardens*

*Community*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**

# 'BOOK OF MORMON' TO HEAD 2022-23 PLAYHOUSE BROADWAY SERIES

BY BETSY PRICE

Like there hasn't been enough drama in the world with the Supreme Court leak, mid-terms elections and the Depp-Heard trial, the Playhouse on Rodney Square announced its 2022-23 season Tuesday. The realllllly big show will be "The Book of Mormons," a hilariously blasphemous look at a Mormon mission trip to Africa gone wrong. It will run March 10-12, 2023.

While the play has been sending sell-out Broadway audiences to hell (or purgatory) for 11 years, the Grand was blocked from hosting the traveling show because the sets were too big to fit into the stage's loading door. But when the Playhouse had a major facelift last year—new wider chairs, new curtains and a generally snazzier look, thanks to Tatiana and Gerret Copeland—it also got a more expansive back door.

Interestingly, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints never protested the show and even advertised in its program. If you look up "The Book of Mormon" on Uncle Google, you'll find the actual Mormon book—which you can get for free—listed first. Word to the wise among all you Catholics: You should just go ahead and make an appointment at the confessional now. You'll probably still be laughing on your way in.

Season ticket holders will get their new Broadway subscription package soon. New subscriptions will follow, and single tickets are expected to go on sale in the summer.

The three other Broadway shows in the series are "Tootsie," based on the 1982 Dustin Hoffman movie, Oct. 6-9; "Hairspray," Andrew Levitt a.k.a. Nina West from "RuPaul's Drag Race" as Edna Turnblad, Dec. 1-4, 2022; and "Anastasia," Feb. 9-12, 2023.

Three Season Specials that can be added to subscriptions will round out the season:

- "Stomp," back for the first time in eight years, Oct. 28-29
- "Holiday Dreams Cirque," Dec. 10-11
- "Beautiful: The Carol King Musical," for Mother's Day weekend, May 12-14, 2023

"We were thrilled to celebrate the return of live theater with Wilmington audiences. Next season we're looking forward to bringing even more shows for our audience to enjoy," says Mark Fields, executive director of The Grand, which runs The Playhouse on Rodney Square. "After a gradual re-opening this past season, we truly cannot wait to welcome back all of our patrons starting in October."

The runs of "Tootsie," "Hairspray" and "Anastasia" will include a 2 p.m. Friday matinee, for a run of six performances each. "The Book of Mormon" will have five performances, starting at 8 p.m. on Friday.

Season subscriptions will be available by calling 302-888-0200 or going to the box office at The Grand at 818 N. Market Street, Wilmington between 10 a.m to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. All performances for the 2022-2023 season will be on stage at The Playhouse on Rodney Square, 1007 N. Market Street in Wilmington. Single tickets for all shows will go on sale at a later date.





# PETE DU PONT REMEMBERED AS GREAT GOVERNOR, EVEN BETTER DAD

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

He was a tonic in human form—a stimulant for all who had the pleasure of his company.

That's how Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post columnist George Will described the late Pierre "Pete" du Pont April 29.

Hundreds gathered at the Playhouse on Rodney Square in the Hotel duPont for a celebration of life service nearly a year after the former governor's passing.

In addition to Will, a panel of speakers included Gov. John Carney, du Pont's wife Elise, and their four children, Elise, Pierre, Ben and Thère.

du Pont's children remembered him as a man of integrity, patience and wit, on one hand, larger than life and on the other, deeply personal and involved in their upbringing.

Carney credited du Pont with turning Delaware around when it needed a strong leader the most. "When

Pete took office, the state was a mess," Carney said. "There was a huge budget deficit, the state's credit rating was the lowest in the country, the Farmer's Bank with all the state's revenue deposited there was on the brink of insolvency, our personal tax rate was the highest in the country and we had a reputation of being bad for business."

That would all change under du Pont's leadership, Carney said. He pulled Delaware out of economic crisis, instilled fiscal discipline, created the "rainy day fund," attracted the banking industry and restored confidence in state government.

"Most importantly," the governor concluded, "he set a new standard for how we treat each other in this state. Some call it the Delaware Way, others call it the Return Day ethic. Whatever you call it, it just means working together to get things done."

In 1968, du Pont was elected to the General Assembly to represent Christiana Hundred. Two years later, the moderate Republican was elected to Delaware's lone U.S. House seat. He served three terms in Congress before returning to state politics to run for governor in 1976, an election he would win. He remained in the governor's office for two terms from 1977 to 1985, where he earned the dichotomous reputation of both a groundshaker and a peacemaker.

"Pete was a politician with an engineer's mentality—an interesting combination," Will remarked. "His

Princeton degree was in mechanical engineering, which means that he, unlike a majority of politicians, was intellectually inoculated against the abiding political sin of indifference to facts and practicalities.

"Politicians can promise this and that but a politician with an engineer's mind is necessarily a realist," he continued. "He knows that if calculations are not made correctly and respected, bridges buckle and dams collapse. But to say that Pete was a realist is not to say that he was tethered to a grim realism—there was nothing grim about Pete."

du Pont, alongside then-U.S. Senator Joe Biden, sought the presidency in 1988. His unique "Damn Right" platform featured controversial proposals, including the phasing out of Social Security in favor of private savings plans, replacing welfare with work, making driver's licenses conditional on passing random drug tests and phasing out government subsidies for farmers.

He dropped out of the race after placing last in the New Hampshire primary election.

Will said of du Pont as a presidential candidate, he had "the least substance-to-blather ratio of anyone running for president."

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# TAKE A FIRST PEEK AT NEW MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE

between man, nature and science. Exhibits will highlight the paleozoic era, a rainforest, the African savannah, Arctic tundra, the ocean and Delaware ecosystems, from the piedmont in the north to the salt marshes of the south.

After being closed for 17 months, the museum will hold a grand opening weekend Friday, May 20, to Sunday, May 22, for invited guests and then open Monday, May 23, to the general public.

A walk-through this week showed a lot of exhibits with major pieces up but plenty of construction and final touches going on.

“This has actually been a multi-year long project,” said Jennifer Accord, director of communications. “The Strategic Plan was created in 2014. I learned the new name at my interview in 2015. We started with a kind of baby master design plan in 2016. So this has been going on for quite a while. Every single one of the images and all of the text our scientists were very involved in creating and gathering. So it really has been achieved.”

The entrance will retain the original Delaware Museum of National History name carved into the doorway as a nod to its beginning. Visitors will walk into a more open space with an atrium that’s home to a specimen-studded tree of life mural highlighting the connections of man and the natural world.

One specimen is a snake, which Accord herself transferred from an old container into this jar. With all hands on deck, “somebody had to do it,” she said. “I will tell absolutely everybody I did that. I’m very proud.”

Across from the mural will be a new display space that include rotating exhibits from local groups such as the Delaware Mineralogical Society and the University of Delaware.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

## BY BETSY PRICE

A lot of smiling faces are waiting to see people return to the reimagined Delaware Museum of Nature and Science next month. Some of them have a lot of really big teeth. And it’s impossible to tell whether those dinosaurs in the museum’s new Ellice & Rosa McDonald Foundation PaleoZone are happy to see patrons, or simply delighted to see lunch arriving on its own two legs.

Those toothy grins are part of the former Museum of Natural History’s \$10.8 million evolution from 1972 specimen-oriented exhibits of, say, rows of shells, into a space that tries to tell the stories of the time and location, emphasizing the connection

*Photo by David Abbram for Pexels*



*Food & Dining*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# LE CAV, GOOBERS HIGHLIGHT HAGLEY'S ALFRESCO DINING SERIES IN MAY

BY PAM GEORGE

You would expect to see 19th century tools and the du Pont ancestral home and gardens at **Hagley Museum and Library**, the birthplace of Eleuthère Irénée du Pont's gunpowder works. Flatbread and couscous, however, may come as a surprise. The Middle Eastern dishes are part of **Hagley Alfresco**, a series of four after-hours events held from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays.

On May 12, **Le Cavalier** will "pop up" on the grounds, located beside the Brandywine River. **Goobers Diner** is the featured restaurant on May 26. Guests have several options, said Laura Jury, Hagley's marketing manager.

"You can come and bring a blanket or chair and enjoy the gardens, or you can purchase the deluxe package, which includes admission, the light bite and the drink of your choice," she said.

The first is a \$5 general admission ticket, and you can purchase drinks a la carte. However, food is not available with this option since the preparation is based on prepaid orders. The deluxe package is \$30 and includes admission.

For the May 12 event, Le Cavalier's chef, Tyler Akin, has created a menu with a choice of shawarma chicken brochette or mushroom brochette. (A brochette is a skewer for grilled chunks of meat or vegetables.) Grilling is always a good show, he said. "And we are all itching to get started [doing it] before white pants season."

The chicken comes with a harissa-chili crisp, and the mushroom is accompanied by a pine nut tarator sauce.

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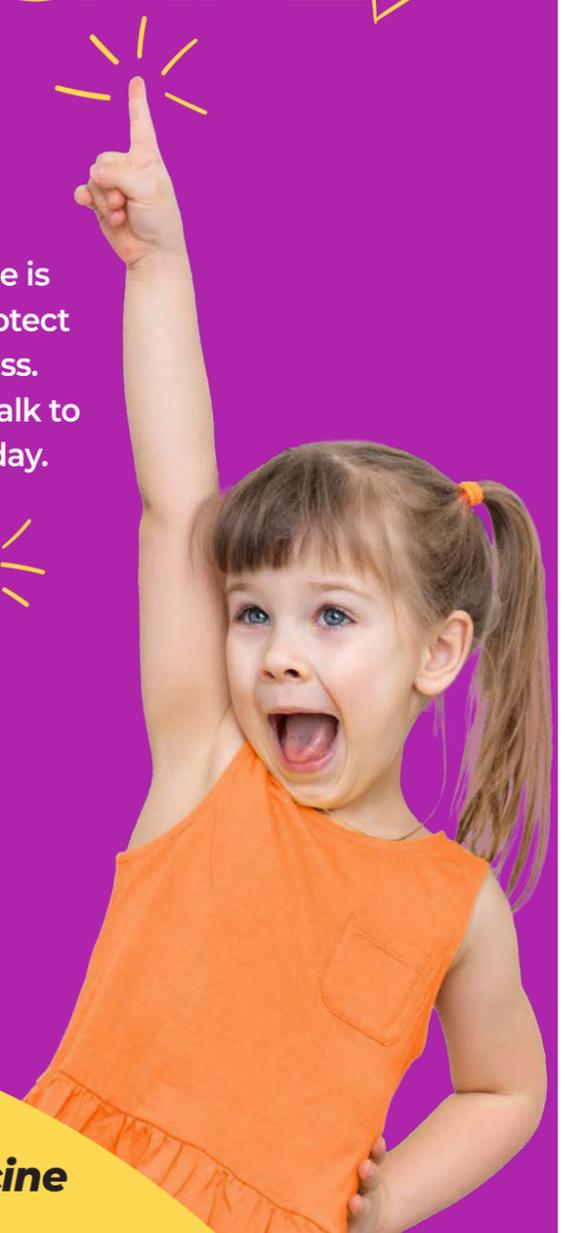
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# SPRING 'STUFF THE BUS' COLLECTS 4.3 TONS OF FOOD

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Transit Corp. announced April 28 that its spring “Stuff The Bus” Food Drive collected 8,514 pounds, or 4.3 tons, of food. The four-day event was held in early April at the Safeway stores in Rehoboth and Dover, and the ShopRite stores at First State Plaza and Brandywine Commons. The total tonnage includes donations from Chesapeake Utilities and Sharp Energy. The Food Bank of Delaware will distribute the donated food throughout Delaware.

DART for years traditionally sponsored “Stuff the Bus” campaigns before Thanksgiving, but when COVID began in 2020 and so many needed help, it began a spring campaign, too.

“The Food Bank of Delaware has met record levels of need over the past several years, and the DelDOT family is proud to support their mission through their drive-thru mobile pantries and the expanded ‘Stuff The Bus’ food drives,” said Secretary of Transportation Nicole Majeski in a press release. “We are so grateful for the donations received across the state!”



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*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**

# DELAWARE HOUSE TO VOTE ON CANNABIS LEGALIZATION

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The bill to legalize simple possession of up to an ounce of marijuana will be voted on in the House of Representatives Thursday. [House Bill 371](#), sponsored by Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, represents one-half of the latest effort to legalize marijuana.

It would legalize simple possession, but it would not allow for it to be grown or sold. That will require another bill, [House Bill 372](#), which has been released from the Revenue and Finance Committee and awaits a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee. Legalization only requires a simple majority.

A previous effort, [House Bill 305](#), failed earlier this year, but that's because it required a three-fifths majority

as a result of the financial component that now exists in the other bill.

By splitting the bill in half, House Bill 371 will only require a simple majority, which it almost certainly will receive. The idea behind Osienski's move is that if the General Assembly is able to pass simple legalization, there will be less incentive for lawmakers to vote against House Bill 372, as the substance will already be legal. That could earn it enough votes to cross the finish line.

If Osienski's new strategy is successful, the bills could pass in the Democratic-controlled House and Senate without a single Republican vote.



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Osienski said he thinks anti-pot Gov. John Carney will do a pocket pass of the bills, wherein he neither signs or vetos them and lets them become law after 10 days of inaction.

The House session will begin at 2 p.m. and can be livestreamed [HERE](#). Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the 2022 effort to legalize marijuana.



# TURBOTAX OWNER TO PAY \$400K TO DELAWAREANS AFTER 'MISLEADING' USERS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings announced April 27 that Intuit Inc., the company behind online tax filing software TurboTax, will pay more than \$400,000 to low-income Delaware residents who were deceived by the company. The settlement comes as part of a \$141 million agreement between the attorneys general of all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Intuit.

Intuit must also suspend TurboTax's "free, free, free" ad campaign, which Jennings said lured customers with promises of free tax preparation services, only to deceive them into paying for services.

"Intuit benefited from a special agreement with the U.S. government to provide free tax services to low-income consumers nationwide, all while preventing Delawarean consumers from taking advantage of those free services," Jennings said. "Intuit engaged in deceptive

and unfair tactics to hide access to free services and to instead promote its own profit-generating tax filing products instead."

Jennings said Delawareans who struggle to put food on the table shouldn't be tricked into paying for tax preparation services they don't need. "My office will continue to protect consumers statewide and be on the lookout for businesses who seek to take advantage of them," she said.

An investigation into Intuit began after ProPublica reported that the company was using deceptive digital tactics to steer low-income consumers toward its commercial products and away from federally-supported free tax services.

Intuit has offered two free versions of TurboTax. The first was through its participation in the IRS Free File

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Program, a public-private partnership with the Internal Revenue Service which allows taxpayers earning roughly \$34,000 and members of the military to file their taxes for free. In exchange for participating in the program, the IRS agreed not to compete with Intuit and other tax-prep companies by providing its own electronic tax preparation and filing services to taxpayers.

Intuit also offers a commercial product called "TurboTax Free Edition," which is only free for taxpayers with "simple returns" as defined by Intuit.

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Government

## JUDGE DENIES REQUEST TO DISMISS MCGUINNESS CHARGE

no way for her to intimidate a witness, her attorney argued.

The state argued McGuinness' awareness of an active investigation was irrelevant. Her actions may still qualify as witness intimidation if she believed they could potentially influence a witness in a future investigation or trial, even if she was not aware of one at the time.

McGuinness's attorney, Steve Wood, asked Judge William Carpenter of the Superior Court of Delaware to dismiss that charge on April 7. In his May 2 decision, Carpenter said while the court disagrees with the state's position on what is required to establish the offense, it believes the indictment is sufficient to allow it to proceed to trial.

"In any event, the Court is satisfied that Count Five is sufficiently drafted to allow it to proceed forward," the decision says. "While it clearly could have been drafted with greater clarity, the Court is convinced that the Defendant has been provided sufficient information to allow her to defend the allegation and that information would prevent future prosecution for this conduct."

A trial date is currently set for the end of May, but during the April hearing Carpenter said he didn't think a May trial would give either side, or the court, time to properly prepare.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

State Auditor Kathleen McGuinness' request to dismiss the felony intimidation charge she faces was denied Monday. McGuinness is under indictment on a slew of felony and misdemeanor charges alleging conflict of interest, theft, non-compliance with procurement law, official misconduct and witness intimidation.

In April, the auditor's attorney argued the intimidation charge details acts that occurred prior to McGuinness becoming aware of the investigation. Because she didn't know she was being investigated, there would have been

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# CHILD CARE BONUSES SET

## CHILD CARE BONUSES SET AT \$1,000; REGISTRY TO OPEN SOON

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Department of Education is finalizing a registry that will allow child care workers in Delaware to apply for the direct financial relief they were promised six months ago.

They may not get as much as initially expected. By estimating the number of providers who would qualify for assistance, Gov. John Carney and the Delaware Department of Education in Nov. 2022 announced workers could expect direct relief payments of “up to \$1,500.”

Jamie Schneider, president of the Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children, said she was told the Department of Education now believes the number of workers to be greater than expected. Providers can therefore expect to receive \$1,000 payments instead of \$1,500 payments, she was told. The payments will be considered taxable income.

The application process will be ready to launch in May with the first payments being distributed before the end of the month, according to sources at the Department of Education.

Once launched, providers will have 60 days to apply for their payments. After that time, if there is any money left of the \$10.6 million allocated, additional payments could be made to providers. The money for the direct relief payments comes from the American Rescue Plan Act, which provided more than \$120 million in relief for Delaware’s child care industry.

By February 2022, providers began **expressing displeasure** that after three months, payments still had not been made.

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# BILL AIMS TO KEEP GOVERNMENT HANDS OFF LEMONADE STANDS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A bill released from a House committee Tuesday would exempt children’s lemonade stands from regulations and licensing fees. House Bill 331, sponsored by Rep. Andria Bennett, D-Dover, defines the stands as ones that operate on a temporary, occasional basis, serve or sell lemonade or other beverages to others, and are located on private property with the permission of the private property owner.

The proposal exempts those stands from state regulations on food establishments, soft drinks and other beverages, requirements related to child labor laws and retail licensing requirements.

The bill also prohibits counties and municipalities from enacting laws or regulations that prohibit, regulate, require a license or permit for or impose a fee on a stand operated by a child.

The bill requires a two-thirds vote in both chambers of the General Assembly because it indirectly affects the charter of municipalities in the state.

Bennett said she became interested in drafting the bill after talking with students at W. Reily Brown Elementary School in Dover.

“We worked with them and we invited them to the Legislative Hall,” Bennett said during the committee hearing. “We talked about how to put a law together... we brought up the public health issues and how public health had to be involved.”

After all their efforts, COVID hit and schools closed down, Bennett said. The bill was put on the backburner, but it wasn’t forgotten.

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# PUBLIC GIVEN CHANCE TO COMMENT ON MARIJUANA POSSESSION BILL

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A bill to legalize the possession of an ounce of pot or less was released from a House committee Tuesday and will advance to the House floor for a vote. The bill initially appeared to fail, but after votes were gathered from committee members who were absent, it was revealed to have passed.

**House Bill 371** came before the House and Human Development Committee in April, but a majority of its members **voted to release it** without first taking questions from legislators and hearing public comments. After a number of Republican lawmakers walked out of the April meeting in protest, **Democrats announced** it would get a special hearing after Easter break. That hearing happened Tuesday, with scores of commenters on either side of the issue speaking about the pros and cons of marijuana legalization.

Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, asked whether the bill could be interpreted to legalize up to one ounce of synthetic marijuana, which the legislature has long fought to keep illegal. A House attorney said that as the bill is currently written, it could have that effect. Osienski said he would welcome an amendment to change that, which Briggs King indicated she would do after the meeting.

The bill heard Tuesday represents one-half of the latest effort to legalize marijuana. It would legalize simple possession, but it would not allow for it to be grown or sold. That will require another bill, **House Bill 372**, which has already been released from the Revenue and Finance Committee. House Bill 372 now awaits a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee.



A previous effort at legalization—**House Bill 305**—failed earlier this year. Shortly after, the bill’s sponsor, Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, unveiled the plan to split the bill in half. The idea behind **Osienski’s move** is that if the General Assembly is able to pass simple legalization, there will be less incentive for lawmakers to vote against taxation and regulation, as the substance will already be legal.

It’s not clear when House Bill 371 will advance to the House floor for a vote, though it could happen as soon as Thursday.



# RUH-ROH: BILL FILED TO FINE BARKING DOGS IN DELAWARE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Delaware dog owners could soon be slapped with barking tickets if their pups don't shut up. A bill filed in the House of Representatives would ban dogs from terrierizing communities by barking, whining or howling for a period of 15 minutes—or intermittently for 30 minutes or more.

The **bill** was set to be considered by the House Health and Human Development Committee Wednesday. If pawssed, dogs will be exempt if they're teased or provoked, or if someone trespasses or threatens to trespass onto private property where the dog is located.

For a first violation, dog owners would receive a civil penalty of \$100. Second violations would cost \$200. Third violations are the ruffest of all, coming in at \$300.

Town Square LIVE hounded the bill's sponsor, Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, but attempts to fetch him

for comment were unsuccessful.

One of the bill's cosponsors, Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, pawstulated that the legislation would give neighbors some recourse if a nearby pug were to become a nuisance. She said she agreed to co-sponsor the bill because several constituents in Georgetown and Long Neck complained about neighbors leaving their dogs outside at all hours of the day.

"You're lucky if the police will respond to this," Briggs King said. "I'm not talking about a dog that barks every once in a while. I'm talking about dogs—when people are trying to go to bed at 11 or 11:30—and it just barks and barks and barks and barks and barks."

When law enforcement does respond, she said, there's not much they can do under current statute.

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"This is worthy of discussion," Briggs King said. "People need to talk about what would a reasonable solution to give people the quiet enjoyment to be able to sleep at night, so that's why I signed on."

She said law enforcement would respond if residents were disrupting neighbors by throwing wild parties every night, so they ought to be able to do the same for nuisance barking. As to whether the bill stands a chance, Briggs King said she's not sure if her colleagues will bite.

"I think it's causing a group discussion, which is what you want, because maybe then the parties will come together and find a solution," she concluded.

In essence, Briggs King decided that signing on to the bill is the leashed she could do to address her constituents' concerns.





# WEED, TAXES, POLICE REFORM LIKELY TO DOMINATE END OF GA SESSION

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

With the year-long campaign to pass paid family and medical leave in the rearview mirror, the General Assembly returned to work Tuesday with two months left to focus on the rest of its progressive agenda.

When the House of Representatives and Senate reconvene, they will be kicking off a two-month stretch to the end of the 151st General Assembly on June 30.

Some of the issues likely to come up before the end of the legislative session include cementing the permanent use of mail-in voting, recreational marijuana legalization, police review boards and changes to the law enforcement officers' bill of rights. All of those are Democrat-led efforts.

Few Republican bills are in the mix. The most viable may be a bipartisan bill to cut the realty transfer tax. Two major gun control bills that didn't reach the finish line in 2021 could be revived this year, too.

## Mail-in Voting

Last year, Republicans in the General Assembly blocked a bill aimed at making no-excuse absentee voting a permanent feature of Delaware's elections. **House Bill 75**, sponsored by Rep. David Bentz, D-Christiana, would have allowed voters to request mail-in ballots without providing an excuse. The bill, which seeks to amend the Delaware Constitution, failed to

receive the required two-thirds majority needed in the House.

Constitutional amendments must be passed separately during two consecutive legislative sessions. HB 75 passed in the House in 2019 with the support of 12 Republicans. By 2021, the conversation surrounding mail-in ballots had shifted. The Republican Party began claiming no-excuse absentee ballots could lead to fraud in elections and there aren't enough ways to verify voters' identities. When the bill came back for its second and final vote in the House, not one Republican voted for the proposal.

A commonly employed rule in the General Assembly allows lawmakers who vote against a bill to reintroduce it later in the legislative session. Because she switched her vote from 'yes' to 'no' at the last moment, Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Delaware City, could attempt to revive HB 75 before the end of June. Democrats would need to earn just two Republican votes in order to pass the bill with a two-thirds majority.

If HB 75 fails in 2022, it will have to be reintroduced during the next General Assembly, pass, then be introduced again during the following General Assembly. That would delay the implementation date by at least three years.

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*Photo by Rafael Cosquiere for Pexels*

*Education*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# BILL TO STUDY, ENCOURAGE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE HEADS TO HOUSE FLOOR

BY BETSY PRICE

A bill requiring the state to conduct an annual workforce study of early childhood professionals and help the pool of workers earn more, unanimously passed the House Education Committee.

**House Bill 377**, sponsored by Sherae'a Moore, D-Middletown, would have the Department of Education do the annual study, with the first due by Nov. 15, 2022, along with a plan to implement supports that could include loan forgiveness, salary supplements and scholarships for additional training that would help workers earn more. The bill focuses on a hot topic in the business world right now.

Patrick Harker, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, told the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce in April that the lack of available child care is slowing economic growth and personal prosperity because workers can't find and can't afford child care. The state chamber this week held a webinar focused on

finding solutions, and the Fed, The Rodel Foundation and others participated. They said many workers, women in particular, have not returned to the work force because of the lack of child care at a time when businesses desperately want more workers.

Care for one child costs about 20% of a family's budget, webinar speakers said. The annual cost for child care in Sussex County is about \$21,000, other industry watchers have said, partly because there are remarkably fewer providers.

Already, a bipartisan group of legislators and several nonprofits are pushing the state to change the way it reimburses child care centers when the center's families qualify for state assistance because they are low wage earners.

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# APPO, CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL BOARD FORUMS EXPLORE CANDIDATE VIEWS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The school board forums being held by a coalition of 10 education-related organizations continued Monday night with Appoquinimink and Caesar Rodney.

At Appo, Nichelle DeWitt and Shawn Rohe answered questions put to them by a moderator, but didn't interact with each other, as planned by the forum organizers.

At Caesar Rodney, only one candidate participated, Lorenzo Hopkins. The other candidate for the seat, David Failing, declined the opportunity, saying he had a previous commitment.

The two forums were the fourth and fifth of a six-forum list. The last was Tuesday night with a focus on the Colonial School District.

The groups that organized and created questions for the forums are First State Action Fund, Grow the Good, S.A.F.E. Schools Delaware, The National Coalition of 100 Black Women (Delaware), Delaware Coalition Against

Gun Violence, NAACP (Central Delaware), Network Delaware, Delaware PTA, ACLU Delaware and the Delaware League of Women Voters.

Only six districts participated in the forums, even though there were contested races in places such as Smyrna, Woodbridge, Lake Forest, Seaford, Indian River, Laurel and Delmar had no forum.

Organizers said some districts didn't have a forum because they had reached out to candidates multiple times to try to get them to participate, but many did not respond or declined to participate.

The forums have tended to have far fewer viewers than the number of people who signed up. At Caesar Rodney, 56 people had signed up, but 15 were online. For Appo, 70 had signed up and 27 were online.

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# WHY SO FEW SCHOOL BOARD FORUMS? CANDIDATES WOULDN'T RESPOND

partnerships at [First State Action Fund](#). “So for Smyrna, we tried to reach out to some of those candidates. We did not hear back, or they told us to stop communicating with them.”

The candidates were contacted three times: once just after the filing deadline, another a month prior to the forums and a final attempt two weeks ago.

First State Action Fund along with Grow the Good, S.A.F.E. Schools Delaware, The National Coalition of 100 Black Women (Delaware), Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence, NAACP (Central Delaware), Network Delaware, Delaware PTA, ACLU Delaware and League of Women Voters collaborated to create the questions and conduct the virtual forums.

One of the seven Smyrna candidates, Brian Clements, told Delaware LIVE News that he was game. “I would have no problem participating in a forum and for some reason, this is the only school district that seems like it’s not having a forum,” said Clements. He said he has no clue why some candidates refused to participate in a forum.

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## BY JAREK RUTZ

While the six school board forums organized to allow community members to meet their candidates wrapped up Tuesday, some have asked why there aren’t forums being held in every contentious district.

Smyrna, for example, has seven candidates campaigning for just two seats. Woodbridge, Lake Forest, Seaford, Indian River, Laurel and Delmar also have competitive races where two or three candidates are running for a single seat, but no forum.

Organizers began trying to contact school districts and candidates months ago. “We reached out to every district that had a contest and we didn’t hear from most of them,” said Sade’ Truiett, director of advocacy and

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# MOUNT PLEASANT'S ROBOTICS TEAM HEADS TO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Mount Pleasant High School Junior Reserves Officer Training Corps checked off a lot of wins before earning a berth in a world robotics championship. Regionals, CHECK. States, CHECK. Nationals, CHECK. The team's next stop is Dallas, Texas, this week to compete in the **VEX Robotics World Championship**, where they will use their machine named Viper in a "capture-the-flag" tournament.

The team, overseen by Senior Army Instructor Ivan Montanez, qualified for the world championships in both the high school and **JROTC** categories. They belong to the United States Army's fourth brigade, along with 300-plus other robotic programs, and they are the only team that qualified for both categories.

The team credits its road to the championship to dedication that increased as the project went on. Martiana Olsen, a junior, said the robotics team started out meeting only on Wednesdays, but as the team members became increasingly invested in their creation, they started meeting after school on Mondays as well as texting and calling outside meetings to discuss Viper.

The team believes working together on robotics has helped them in their JROTC training, too. "We've realized this has really helped our communication skills," said junior Cadentz Orbanus. "When it comes to our battalion, we can effectively communicate what we need with them, how we want to run things, what we would like to see—and even just in class if you're leading a class or presentation, these skills help."

"I'm most proud of the relationships they have developed with each other, a bond that will last way after these competitions and their high school years," said Montanez. "Camaraderie and esprit de corps of citizenship" is what the Mount Pleasant JROTC team promotes. It's a common saying in the Army that expresses



how that camaraderie makes its members like family. "This entire team is a true representation of that," said Montanez.

The NCAA's March Madness tournament has nothing on the Dallas Vex Championships—more than 7,000 teams will compete this week, broken up into 64 divisions in a bracket-style competition. JROTC competitions were Tuesday, May 3 through Thursday, May 5, and the high school competitions will be Thursday, May 5 through Saturday, May 7.

VEX Robotics is a global STEM organization that uses robotics to inspire students to participate in hands-on learning while creating something with technology. Each year, the organization publishes a new challenge, in the form of a game that requires students to create robots that will compete throughout the year.

This year, VEX created "Tipping Point," a game played on a 12-foot-by-12-foot field with four teams broken up into two alliances—red and blue.

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*Photo by Nick Halliday*



*Sports*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**

# INSIDE THE CIRCLE – SOFTBALL WEEK 7 PREVIEW



BY GLENN FRAZER

The top six in our rankings all won last week. The only change in the top 10 is at the bottom as teams battle for conference titles and a spot in the 24-team field for the DIAA state tournament that is scheduled to begin May 17.

*No. 1 Appoquinimink (13-0)* is the only unbeaten program in the Top 10. Last week, the Jags did not allow a single run in three wins against HVT (13-0), Mount Pleasant (15-0) and Concord (13-0). Savannah Laird and Ayla McCathern combined for 34 strikeouts and held all teams teams hitless. The offense collected 46 hits last week. With only five games left in the regular season, Appo faced SGT Tuesday, then will be featured in a 1-vs-2 game at Caravel Thursday night at 7 p.m. in a game that will be streamed live on Delaware Live-302 Sports.

*No. 2 Caravel (9-1)* The Buccaneers hold on to the second spot with a 9-6 win last week over Newark Charter. Veronica Diomede collected five RBI in that win. The Bucs faced DMA Tuesday at Midway prior to the Thursday night showdown with Appo. Caravel will finish the week with HVT Friday and Cape Saturday.

*No. 3 Sussex Central (11-2)* The Golden Knights picked up two wins last week in close games with Lake Forest (7-4) and No. 7 Caesar Rodney (6-4). Kate Evick and Mya Jones each had three hits in the win against Lake. Evick hit two homers and drove in four in that win. Against Henlopen-North rival CR, the Golden Knights scored three runs in the top of the seventh and held off a Riders rally. Central will face Sussex Tech and Smyrna this week.

*No. 4 DMA (10-1)* The “Hawks” were road warriors last week, gaining victories at MOT Charter (18-0), Concord (17-4) and St. Mark’s (8-4). DMA came from behind to get the win over the Spartans as St. Mark’s held a 4-1 lead after four innings. The Hawks’ bats were hot last week with 43 hits in the three games. This week, DMA hosted No. 2 Caravel at Midway on Tuesday, then hits the road again with games at Newark Charter Thursday, and No. 9 Laurel Saturday.

*No. 5 RLCA (9-1)* The Lady Lions won a couple of close games last week—6-4 against Conrad and 5-3 over William Penn. Conrad held a 3-1 advantage until the bottom of the sixth inning. With two outs and the bases full, Alayna Griffing belted a grand slam to give RLCA the lead. Against the Colonials, the Lions took a 5-0 lead into the bottom of the seventh and held on for the “W.” This week features games with Dover, Archmere and Polytech.

*No. 6 Middletown (10-2)* The Cavaliers picked up three wins last week—a 14-0 shutout of Delcastle, a 10-0 win against SGT and a 5-1 win over Charter of Wilmington. The Cavs’ pitching staff allowed just five hits in the three games. Maddy Hackett had a hot bat with two triples in the Delcastle game and a three-run “dinger” against SGT. Middletown will face William Penn, Padua and Conrad this week.

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# GRIFFING'S GRAND SLAM LIFTS RED LION

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Conrad went into the Lion's Den ready to play No. 5 ranked Red Lion. The Red Wolves scored three runs in the top of the first with an RBI single by Adriana Pesce followed by a two-run home run off the bat of Abigail Baldwin. Red Lion answered back with a run of its own as Angelina Edwards knocked in Petton Pusey on an RBI single making the score 3-1 after one.

That score would hold till the bottom of the sixth inning. Isabella Mckee walked Pusey with the bases loaded bringing the score to 3-2 Conrad. On a 3-2 count with the bases loaded and two outs, Alayna Griffing went down and got a low fastball that she drove out over the centerfield fence for a grand slam giving the Lions a 6-4 lead, their first of the game.

The Red Wolves did threaten in the top of the seventh, scoring one run on an RBI single by Sterling Baldwin. They would send the game-tying and winning runs to the plate, but Red Lion was able to get out of the jam to take the 6-4 victory.

Angelina Edwards got the win on the mound for Red Lion. Pusey and Edwards each had multiple hits to lead the Loins. Baldwin led the Red Wolves with multiple hits in the game.



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# CZARNECKI LEADS SALLIES IN VICTORY OVER CONRAD

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Zach Czarnecki of Salesianum led the Sals at the plate and on the mound. Czarnecki went all seven innings for Salesianum as he allowed five hits, one run, one walk, while striking out seven Red Wolves batters earning the win.

At the plate, Czarnecki went 1-for-3 scoring a run and knocking in one which was the go-ahead and winning run. In the bottom of the sixth inning, Czarnecki drove a 1-0 pitch to deep center field driving in Ryan James while he coasted into third base with a triple giving the Sals their first lead of the game 2-1. John Dunion drove in Czarnecki on a sacrifice fly giving the Sals an insurance run and a 3-1 win over Conrad.

Tyler Reinart took the loss for Conrad, but was a force on the mound. He went six innings, allowing two hits and three runs while striking out seven and walking one. For four innings Reinart was pitching a perfect game.

In the fifth inning, the perfect game was lost with a walk to Conor Campbell. Ryan "Deuce" Rzucidlo broke up the no-hitter following the walk, doubling in the gap driving in Campbell that tied the game at one.

Noah Gonzalez went 2-for-3 and Tyler Purring went 1-for-2 and knocked in the lone run for Conrad.



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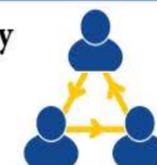
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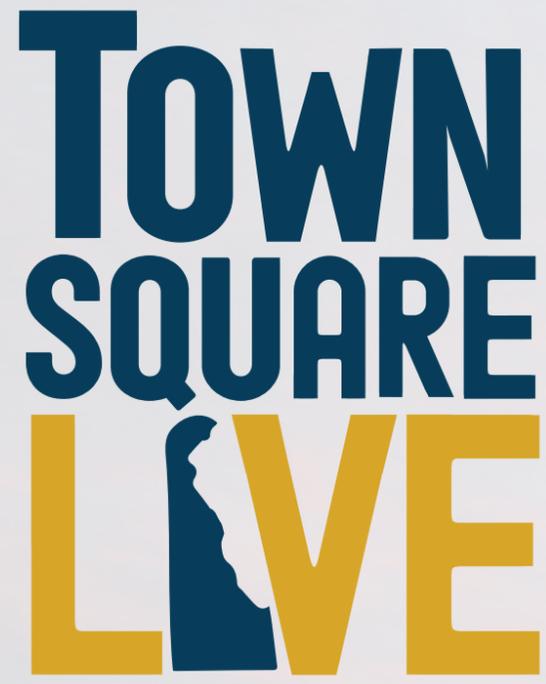


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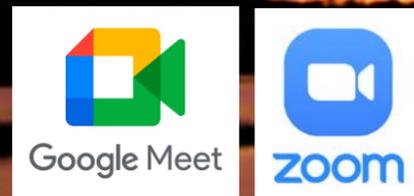
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