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April 6, 2023
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Wingmom Serves 5,000 Clients



Tax Credit for Union Dues Unfair



Inside the Circle—Week 3

photo link: Delaware State Parks

Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



SHE WANTED TO HELP. NOW WINGMOM SERVES 5,000 CLIENTS

BY BETSY PRICE

After Kate Maxwell’s firefighter fiancé died in the 2016 Canby Park fire, she crawled into a tunnel of grief and substance abuse. Nine months later, when she got sober with the help of her parents, she was overwhelmed with the amount of love and support she had been shown during that time.

Her best friend, Meg Hurst, and others came to check on her, cooked for her and her kids, cleaned the house and did a number of chores and errands on her behalf while Maxwell sat on the sofa “comatose with grief” after the death of Capt. Chris Leach.

“The community totally surrounded me and showed me so much love and support,” Maxwell said. “When I kind of got back on my feet my thought process was ‘I’ve got to find a way to give back.’”

The result was Wingmom, a company that offers all kinds of services including giving kids rides, doing laundry, cleaning, organizing, senior care and even cooking a dish for an overwhelmed mom to take to a party.

The six-year-old company had total sales of \$1.1 million in 2022, all while employing an army of moms who are able to work as much or as little as they want for wages that start at \$19 an hour.

“We have this amazing byproduct that I never thought about in that we’re taking women that wouldn’t traditionally be employable because they are stay at home

moms or they are trying to support their family through a second job and we are giving them jobs because of our flexibility,” Maxwell said.

Wingmom has franchises in Middletown, serving all the way to Dover; southern Pennsylvania; Bucks County, PA; Catskills, NY; and, soon, Washington Township, NJ.

In total, the franchises serve more than 5,000 customers with 250 Wingmoms—and as of 2020 some Wingdads. The original north Delaware franchise alone has 125 Wingmoms and Wingdads on their payrolls.

Maxwell said she never expected the growth that the company has seen.

“I thought that Wingmom was just going to be a way to make some extra cash while helping moms with their day-to-day while I figured out my next move,” Maxwell said. “And it ended up becoming this large company.”

The company has a lot of vocal fans praising it on social media. Sarah Goldfarb Weeden hires Wingmom to clean her house and has found Vickey Smith, who runs Wingmom’s home management department, to be remarkably more reliable than other cleaning companies.

But Goldfarb Weeden’s favorite Wingmom story took place on her first day back at work after taking leave when her youngest daughter needed major surgery at CHOP in Philly.

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MINISTRY OF CARING TO CUT THREE WILMINGTON HOUSING PROGRAMS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Wilmington’s **Ministry of Caring** is cutting three programs that provide housing to homeless people and AIDS patients because of federal funding cuts. The cuts are a result of the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development** slashing \$685,991 from the ministry’s \$10 million budget.

“Without our services, these people are going to end up back on the streets and perhaps dead,” said Priscilla Rakestraw, deputy director of development at the ministry, on Tuesday.

One woman, she said, has been living at one of the ministry’s facilities for almost a decade. She’s on dialysis and will not be able to get those medical services later this year when her bed is removed due to the funding cuts.

It’s the second year in the row that the Wilmington charity has had its allocation cut. Last year, its funding was cut by \$185,000. The ministry had \$11.1 million in revenue in 2020, the agency’s 2020 annual report said.

Brother Ronald Giannone, the executive director of the ministry, said in an email to supporters that eight beds at the House of Joseph II, which houses people living with HIV/AIDS, will be removed June 30. That’s half of the building’s beds. The other eight beds are funded through a different federal grant. Breaking the news to the eight residents who would be leaving was extremely difficult, and a couple had serious mental breakdowns, said Ashley Edwards, a nurse at the House of Joseph II.

“We have no choice except to notify our residents that

we will cease to provide them housing,” Giannone said in the email. “This is a tragic and sad moment for the Ministry of Caring and the people we serve.”

All 24 beds that the ministry has at St. Francis Transitional Housing for women, children and infants, will also be discontinued June 30.

Mary Mother of Hope House Permanent Housing program, which houses nine single women, will end Nov. 30, the note said.

“It’s disgraceful to cut a program that helps people in so many ways,” said John Bates, deputy director of programs at the ministry.

He said Delaware’s Continuum of Care, which oversees the allocations from the federal government and uses a rubric to grade programs, indicated that the cuts were partly a result of a low score for supportive services.

Bates also said at the federal level, there’s been a push for rapid rehousing, which would essentially pay for a three-month, six-month or nine-month residency period for an individual the ministry is helping. But rapid rehousing definitely does not work for everyone, he said. If someone is homeless for years, gets a six-month residency, and then is booted out of the facility, that person is going to end up in the same place they started: homeless.

Gianonne said in his email that there’s no chance of reversing the department’s decision.

“It would be unwise for us to believe that we could carry these programs while losing HUD funds of \$685,991,” he said. “This is a continuing annual loss and therefore for us to use other sources it would put a burden on our finances.”

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



ST. GEORGES BRIDGE TO CLOSE, STARTING TUESDAY, FOR 18 MONTHS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The **St. Georges Bridge**, which carries U.S. 13 over the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, closed starting Tuesday, April 4, for approximately 18 months for major repairs.

A \$45.8 million contract, awarded to J.D. Eckman, Inc., involves demolishing and replacing the bridge decking, median barrier and drainage features; replacing bridge approaches and roadways; and repairing other bridge structural features. Work is funded by the federal government through Energy and Water appropriations.

During construction, traffic will be detoured to the Roth Bridge and Delaware Route 1. Even though the

bridges are just a third of a mile apart, detours will be several miles long, to account for the spacing of entrances and exits for Route 1.

The St. Georges Bridge is a tied arch structure that was constructed in 1941 and modified in 2010. Its last major construction project was lead paint abatement in 2000-2001.

The work was announced by the Delaware Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Philadelphia District.



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DEL. PLANS STATUE OF AUBREY PLAZA'S APRIL LUDGATE

“Delaware is excited to announce a new artistic installation featuring a 100-ft tall statue of April Ludgate, the Parks and Rec character played by Aubrey Plaza (voted most famous Delawarean in the News Journal),” the Twitter post says, mistaking a large sculpture for a bit of law. By dusk on Saturday, the post earned almost 1 million views and more than 350 retweets, 80 quotes, 2,800 likes and 20 bookmarks.

One was from Plaza: “Dreams DO come true. Thank you,” she wrote, followed by a heart.

Other responses:

“Now when you guys going to update the aubrey plaza plaza ...”

“I live in DE and have no clue who this is!!”

“i’m from australia and would fly over to visit this historical masterpiece”

“Ok now actually build it you cowards, give the people what they want”

“Ugly...awful”

And “Is this an April fools joke?”

Yes.



BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware is planning a 100-foot statue of April Ludgate, the “Parks and Rec” character created by famous Delawarean Aubrey Plaza, the official Twitter feed of Delaware’s government announced on Saturday.

An artist’s rendering of the statue shows it next to the lighthouse in Cape Henlopen State Park, just smaller than the lighthouse but towering over a drawing of Li’l Sebastian, a miniature horse that appeared on the NBC sitcom.

“The air is too fresh,” the posting quotes Ludgate. “It’s disgusting.”



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KALMAR NYCKEL CENTER UNVEILS PAINTING OF SHIP'S LAST BATTLE

BY BETSY PRICE

The Kalmar Nyckel Foundation threw a party on Saturday to unveil its new exhibit: A painting of Delaware's tall ship in the 1652 battle in which it sank. The exhibit includes a newly commissioned oil painting by well-respected Baltimore artist Patrick O'Brien that is hung at head level on a second-floor wall in the Copeland Maritime Center, along with information about the battle between the Dutch and the English.

The painting becomes a wall-sized exhibit directly above, shown on a 10-foot-by-24-foot backlit light box that add a sense of drama to the Main Deck room while letting the viewer feel the power of the art.

The installation was celebrated Saturday, April 1, with hands-on activities such as sail handling, cannon loading, LEGO ship building, scavenger hunts and free tours

of the Kalmar Nyckel's deck. Face painting was offered for a fee.

The final battle painting, dubbed "Battle of Buchan Ness: Epitaph for an Exceptional Ship," has its genesis in the work of Jordi Noort, a foundation intern from the Netherlands. The foundation had known that the Kalmar Nyckel had switched hands from Dutch owners to Swedish—who used it to bring settlers to Delaware in 1638, helping create New Sweden with settlements stretching up into the Philadelphia area—and then sold back to the Dutch. Noort was able to help search Swedish and Dutch archives for more definitive information, including its sinking in battle.

"We have more documents from this three-month episode of the ship's story than the rest of its career," said

Sam Heed, senior historian and director of education.

The Kalmar Nyckel joined the Dutch naval fleet protecting that country's herring catch in a battle off the coast of Scotland.

"This 'Battle of Buchan Ness' was the first official engagement of the First Anglo-Dutch War, a contest over global trading empires, fishing rights and control of the seas around the British Isles," Heed said.

There are no paintings or illustrations of that battle, he said.

KALMAR NYCKEL PAINTING

"One of my jobs is public interpretation and getting the visitors and students to visualize and see the battle," Heed said.

The foundation agreed there should be a painting and Delaware philanthropist Arkadi Kuhlmann agreed to pay for it. The foundation declined to reveal the amount of the donation. Heed himself researched maritime painters and found he really liked O'Brien's use of light and was captivated by his ocean scenes.

Because O'Brien lives in Baltimore, the artist was able to visit the center and see the reproduction Kalmar Nyckel himself. Sailing on the ship not only allowed O'Brien to examine it closely, but imagine life on the ship in the 1600s, he said in a press release.

To conjure the roar of the cannons and the smoke and flames of a naval battle, he read the journals of sailors from that time, logbooks of captains and letters written by adventurous mariners.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



MOUNT PLEASANT LETS IT GO WITH 'FROZEN' MUSICAL THIS WEEKEND

BY JAREK RUTZ

Chris Turner knew immense pressure would come with being one of only 51 high schools in the country allowed to perform Disney’s “Frozen” on stage. The **Mount Pleasant High School** drama director hopes that pressure will create diamonds, and a memorable show for folks in the **Brandywine School District** community and beyond.

“We knew we were the only school doing it in, the only school allowed to do it in the state,” he said. “And the [Broadway] tour has not played in the Philadelphia area yet.”

Mount Pleasant’s show—which started Wednesday and ran through Saturday, April 1, with a 2 p.m. matinee Saturday—was the first production for anyone who hasn’t seen “Frozen” on Broadway, he said, so the Disney magic is a lot to live up to.

He and his crew of 60 students created a wish list of items they wanted to bring the popular movie to life. Keeping in mind the production’s budget helped narrow his list. Typically, he said, he tried to keep production costs under \$20,000, and the money largely depends on ticket sales for the previous year’s performances.

“We knew we needed snow, we knew we wanted a video wall,” he said. “Our technical director knew that the existing lighting that we had, which is not much, was not going to work for what we wanted to do. When people walk in, we want everyone to feel like they are immersed in the Disney experience.”

Several local organizations also chipped in to help the school.

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Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



WILMINGTON AIRPORT GROWTH YIELDS \$850,000 MORE FROM U.S.

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The resumption of passenger service at Wilmington Airport, with Avelo Airlines flying to and from five Florida destinations, means that the airport qualifies for \$850,000 more in federal funding. The airport “will programmatically be able to assume an annual federal entitlement of \$1 million,” according to its owner-operator, the Delaware River and Bay Authority. As a General Aviation Reliever Airport, the airport previously earned a non-primary entitlement of \$150,000.

On Feb. 1, Avelo began service at the Wilmington Airport with 149-seat, Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft, with flights to Orlando, West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Tampa and Fort Myers. Since then, nearly 22,000 passengers have either boarded or disembarked an Avelo flights.

And if Avelo succeeds with service—that’s a huge question, considering the number of companies that

have tried—the New Castle airport could qualify for more federal funding. The annual minimum entitlement is \$1 million as a Commercial Service Airport, and the annual maximum is \$26 million.

“We’re proud to achieve this milestone again and, if the trend in demand continues, 50,000 enplanements will be quickly on the horizon,” Stephen D. Williams, deputy executive director of the authority, said in a statement.

383 AIRPORTS NATIONWIDE

The airport is one of 383 airports nationwide, and Delaware’s only one, with the classification. The airport also receives revenue from the Federal Aviation Administration’s passenger facility charge. It is authorized to collect up to \$1.3 million until 2024 at \$4.39 per passenger.

Orlando is by far Wilmington’s most popular destination, with the other four roughly tied. In all five

destinations, so far more people have flown from Wilmington than have returned, which reflects snowbirds heading south for the winter.

Avelo was founded as a charter service in 1987 and started commercial passenger service in 2021. Last October, it **announced** service for Wilmington. Budget carrier Frontier Airlines **operated** flights out of Wilmington Airport between 2013 and 2015, then again for half of 2021 before suspending service.

Because Delaware’s airports are so small, they logged only 94 delays in the first 11 months of 2022, making them dead last in Bureau of Transportation Statistics data, according to Family Destinations Guide. West Virginia was 49th, with 9,019, and California first, with 1,344,218.





SENATE OKS CASINOS OFFSETTING LICENSE COST WITH INVESTMENT

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate on Tuesday unanimously approved a bill that would lower licensing fees for casinos that make capital investments.

Senate Bill 64, sponsored by Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, would allow the casinos, which under a 2018 bill were required to pay a \$3 million license fee to operate table games, to forgo portions of that fee if they pay for capital investment.

The bill also moves the date casinos would have to pay this fee from June 30 to Dec. 31.

Paradee said the bill was supported by all three casinos in Delaware and the Standardbred and Thoroughbred Horsemen.

It had bipartisan support, with eight Democrat and six Republican cosponsors.

The bill doesn't have a fiscal note because it won't impact the budget.

Secretary of Finance Rick Geisenberger said that if he could have done the 2018 bill over again, they would have made sure all the money from the table gaming license went towards capital investment.

Paradee asked Geisenberger if the program has made any money for the state, and the secretary said in response that to date hasn't.

"The benefits that the casinos were to realize in exchange for making additional capital investments and marketing investments in the 2018 deal have worked exactly as planned," Geisenberger said. "Which is basically, they would get a benefit, and half of that would have to be reinvested into the casinos."

After the passage of **Senate Substitute for Senate Bill 144**, casinos were only able to deduct from that fee by spending money to add jobs or for marketing expenses.

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Government

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TRADE GROUP: GIVING UNION MEMBERS TAX CREDIT FOR DUES UNFAIR

BY SAM HAUT

The president of a state contractors group says a proposed bill that would allow union members to claim a tax credit for their union dues is unfair. [Senate Bill 72](#), introduced by Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, would let people in unions claim up to a \$500 tax credit for union dues.

Edward Capodanno, president of the Associated Builders and Contractors Delaware, said that the bill is unfair because it favors one specific group.

“We’re not real happy about it,” Capodanno said. “You’re going to give a tax credit for someone to pay union dues when you have plenty of companies out there who are paying membership dues to business organizations who aren’t given a similar type of credit

...I don’t see why we’d do it for one specific group if we’re not gonna do it for everybody.”

Efforts were not successful to reach Republican legislators for comment.

Matt Revel, communications director for the Senate Republican caucus, said that they will not be commenting on the bill at this time. Capodanno said his group will be lobbying against the bill.

ABC Delaware operates on the merit shop philosophy, which, according to its website, is about promoting “the best management techniques, the finest craftsmanship, and the most competitive bidding and pricing strategies in the industry, regardless of labor affiliation.”

A merit shop is similar to an open shop, where work-

ers are not required to join a union as a condition of employment. ABC Delaware’s website also states that “more than 87% of the U.S. construction workforce has freely chosen not to join a union.”

If passed, the bill would take effect for the 2024 tax year and has been assigned to the Senate Labor Committee.

Poore initially began asking for cosponsors to the bill in January.

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), union membership in Delaware has decreased over the past year, going from representing 9.7% of the workforce in 2021, or about 42,000 workers, to 8.5% in 2022, or about 38,000 workers. Delaware is lower than the national level, where 10.1% of workers are in a union as of 2022, or about 14,285,000 workers, down from 10.3% in 2021, or about 14,012,000 workers.

Capodanno said if all the unions in Delaware get the \$500 tax credit, which includes teachers, building trades and service employee unions, it could cost the state up to \$10 million a year.

“How does that impact the state budget in regards to a fiscal note? So I think we need to take a look at the fiscal note to see exactly what this is gonna cost the state of Delaware from a tax credit standpoint,” Capodanno said.

There currently isn’t a fiscal note for the bill, which has 11 cosponsors and additional sponsors, all of whom are Democrats.

It has been sent to the Senate Labor Committee but is not yet on an agenda.



COMMITTEE OKS BILL REQUIRING INSURANCE COMPANIES TO PAY FOR ABORTIONS

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would require Medicaid and other health insurance plans to cover abortion services passed the House Health & Human Development Committee with all Democrats and one Republican voting for it.

House Bill 110, sponsored by Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, D-Newcastle, would make sure that Medicaid and state insurers don't require deductibles, coinsurances, copayments or any other cost-sharing requirement for the termination of a pregnancy.

HB 110 bill passed with six votes in favor and three on its merits. The lone Republican to vote for it was Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek.

Smith said that because some people get abortions for rape or incest, he wants those people to not have any financial difficulties accessing an abortion.

"That is between that person and God, not me, that person, and God," Smith said. "And I have to look at it

from a policy application, and I do think in this body, we do go through and tell insurance companies what they need to start covering and I think that's a nuanced debate that we're going to continue to do so for the history of time."

Minor-Brown said there will be an amendment introduced at some point to address technical corrections to the bill. She was not specific about what they were.

It is unclear how expansive the bill's definition of a termination of a pregnancy is.

The bill gives an exemption for religious employers who ask for an exclusion based on their "bona fide religious beliefs and practices."

There was extensive public comment for the bill, with 26 people providing comments both in person and online, with 11 speaking against the bill and 14 people speaking in favor of it.

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STOPPED CARS WOULD BE ADDED TO MOVE-OVER LIST UNDER BILL

BY SAM HAUT

The first bill in Gov. John Carney’s Roadway Safety Initiative has made its way through the House Public Safety & Homeland Security committee.

House Bill 92, sponsored by Rep. Bill Carson, D-Smyrna, would add stopped cars with their hazard lights to the list of vehicles for which drivers would need to either change lanes and slow down or just slow down if changing lanes is impossible.

That list already includes emergency vehicles, Department of Transportation vehicles and tow trucks that are flashing their lights.

Several people spoke in favor of the bill, including Sgt. Mike Ripple with the Delaware State Police; Nicole Majeski, secretary of the Delaware Department of Transportation; and Jana Tidwell, AAA public and government affairs manager.

No one spoke against the bill.

Rep. Kendra Johnson, D-Bear, a member of the House committee, said that she appreciates the legislation

because she had a friend who died after her car was rear-ended while the friend was stopped on the side of the road.

The bill passed with five votes in favor and one on its merits. On its merits means the voter thought the issue should be explored but did not want to go on the record supporting it.

Carney announced March 29 that six bills would address road safety, including reckless driving, open containers, motorcycle helmets, child car seats, snow plows and cars by the side of the road.

Carson’s bill is the only one filed in the legislature so far. Carney’s office said the child safety seat bill was expected Tuesday, with others following this week or during the upcoming two-week break.

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SEBC SUBCOMMITTEE CONTINUES TO DISSECT MEDICARE PLANS

BY SAM HAUT

The SEBC subcommittee continued Monday to dive into the minutiae of Medicare plans for state retirees.

The subcommittee gave a lot of time to the costs to the average retiree for the state's special group health insurance plan Medicfill versus Medigap K, G and N supplement plans and two Medicare Advantage plus prescription drug plans.

They focused on costs for retirees who pay less for a plan in both out-of-pocket and premium costs as well as people who pay more in both areas.

The state's traditional Medicfill program, which is the most generous of Medicare plans offered in Delaware, is among the plans that cost the least for retirees because the state pays for a range of costs.

For the 10th percentile of retirees, or people who pay less than 90% of retirees, the total costs for the GHIP Medicfill plan is between \$198 and \$474, while the most for a Medigap supplement is \$2,093, and Medicare Advantage is \$202.

For the 90th percentile of retirees, or people who pay less than 10% of retirees, the total costs for the GHIP Medicfill plan is between \$521 and \$797, while the most for a Medigap supplement is \$6,231, and Medicare Advantage is \$7,942.

The difference in costs is due to people choosing different supplement and prescription plans, with some plans being more expensive than others.

While premiums and the cost of medication continue to rise for retirees, prescription drug out-of-pocket maximums will be capped at \$2,000 starting in 2025. This is because the federal Inflation Reduction Act, signed in August 2022, capped the maximum cost for prescriptions under Medicare Part D.

The subcommittee, created this year by the General Assembly, is exploring alternatives to moving state retirees from their generous state plan to a Medicare Advantage plan, which the state intended to do for this calendar year.

But retirees, including the vocal Delaware RISE group sued the state to stop the move to Medicare Advantage, saying the state was violating a promise to retirees. A Delaware judge agreed and issued an injunction stopping the move.

Now the subcommittee hopes to be able to make a recommendation to the full benefits committee by May, even though creators of the committee admitted from the start that it might not be able to meet that deadline.

Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long, chair of the subcommittee, said it might take the subcommittee two or three months to issue a final report and recommendations because of the density of the material. In the meantime, they may be able to get a summary out, she said.

Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, asked whether extra COVID-19 funding can go towards covering the Medicare liability, and Secretary of Finance Rick Geisenberger said in response that he's almost certain that COVID-19 funding can't be used for liabilities.

The public comment section continued to be filled with people objecting to the change.

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RICHARDSON URGES CARNEY TO VETO MARIJUANA BILLS

BY SAM HAUT

Sen. Bryant Richardson has asked Gov. John Carney to veto bills dealing with the legalization of marijuana.

“The dangers associated with legalization of recreational marijuana were ignored by those who voted for the bills,” the Laurel lawmaker said in an open letter he released Friday. “But the dangers are real.”

House Bill 1 and **House Bill 2** would legalize recreational marijuana in Delaware and set up a department and tax structure for an industry that would legally grow and sell cannabis. The structure is similar to that used for taxing alcohol.

Carney’s office did not immediately respond to requests for a comment.

Richardson said that as of mid-August 2022, marijuana was associated with the deaths of six Delaware

children and near deaths of 63 in cases of neglect. In 2021, there were 70 cases for the year, a 35 percent increase over the previous year.

Republicans have largely been opposed to the two bills, sponsored by Ed Osienski, D-Newark, as they have been for several years. But with a Democratic supermajority in the Senate and a Democratic majority in the House, the GOP lawmakers can do little to stop the pot train. Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, and Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, voted for legalization, and Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Townsend/Hartley, voted for both bills.

A legalization bill did make it to Carney last year, but Carney swatted it down with a veto and the state House didn’t have enough votes to override it. Osienski believes

new factors will lead Carney to sign the bills, but Carney has given no public indication that he will.

However, his office requested changes to House Bill 2 in the form of an **amendment** that passed by voice vote. It made technical corrections and clarifications.

Richardson says he’s heard both that Carney will reject and that he will sign it and has no idea what the governor will do.

Richardson’s letter cites a study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse showing that employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries and 75% greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative.

According to a **review** from the National Academy of Medicine cited in the letter, cannabis increases the risk of schizophrenia and other psychoses, Richardson says.

Richardson also points to the 2015 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Fatality Analysis Reporting System, where 43% of fatally injured drivers had drugs in their system, with 36.5% of the drugs being marijuana in some form. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, of the 49,163 driver deaths on US roadways in 2015, 5,587 deaths, or 11.4%, were due to the driver being “under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication.”

In 2020, of the 53,890 driver fatalities, 6,246, or 11.6%, were due to drivers driving under the influence, the letter said.



STATE BENEFITS COMMITTEE MAY EXTEND RETIREE HEALTH PLAN AGAIN

BY SAM HAUT

A state committee will vote April 24 on whether to once again extend retirees current health insurance for another six months. The State Employee Benefits Committee will vote on a recommendation from its retiree subcommittee about whether to extend the current plan, as it did in October amid an uproar over a planned change.

The need for the plan to be extended stems from an uproar over the benefits committee's plan to move all retirees into a Highmark Medicare Advantage plan instead of the generous Medicfill plan that operates more like a standard supplement plan.

Retirees sued to stop the move, which they characterized as done in secret—it wasn't—and violated promises

made by the state to retirees. A Delaware Supreme Court judge agreed, ordering a temporary stay on the proposed Medicare Advantage plan. According to the retirees' RISE Delaware [website](#), they want to stay on the Medicfill plan for the next three years while the committee and subcommittees look at other options.

Claire DeMatteis, secretary of the Delaware Department of Human Resources, has said that it would cost the state an additional \$6.8 million to \$7.5 million a month to keep the current retiree health plan compared to the proposed Highmark Medicare Advantage program.

Under the old plan, the state picked up the full cost of health plans for those who retired on or before July 1, 2012, paying monthly \$459.38 for the Highmark BCBS

Delaware Special Medicfill plan with a prescription plan and \$260.44 for the plan without prescription coverage.

For those who retired after July 1, 2012, the retirees paid \$22.96 per month for the plan with prescriptions and \$13 for the one without prescription coverage, while the state paid \$436.42 for the plan with prescriptions and \$247.44 for one without prescriptions.

This plan will run throughout all of 2023, and there are currently 24,556 retirees on the Medicare Supplement Special Medicfill Plan, with the majority of retired pensioners, 15,581, being fully covered by the state and retired on or before July 1, 2012.

The second highest category of people on the Medicfill Plan are 5,818 retired pensioners who are fully covered by the state and retired after July 1, 2012.

Public comments in hearings have urged the state to more closely examine what is being offered and what it will cost retirees.

Diana Nooman said the Medicare Advantage plan requires prior authorization for ambulance services, that emergency services need to be pre-approved, and that retirees would be liable to cover the first and last days of hospital stays.

Former State Sen. Karen Peterson said that based on Highmark Advantage's medical benefits chart, members would still have to pay costs for copays, coinsurance, deductibles, and cost-sharing fees.

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BILL SEEKS TO ENSURE RECOVERY HOUSES ARE STATE CERTIFIED

Recovery houses are places where recovering addicts live after leaving their first programs to kick drugs. Many programs require their patients to move into sober living facilities to reduce the stresses that led to their addictions, the availability to drugs and closeness of others who may still do drugs, all to help strengthen their resolve to stay clean. Many in the houses continue to work through addiction programs as they seek healthier lifestyles and slowly take on public jobs before fully moving back into society.

George Meldrum, a former Nemours lobbyist, testified that he has been sober for 30 years and continues to be active in recovery programs. He's met many people who felt like their recovery house experience actually damaged their attempts to recover because they were not run well.

HB 114, Harris's first bill since her election to the House, drew bipartisan support from Tuesday's meeting of the House Health & Human Development Committee. The bill has 12 cosponsors, only one of whom was Republican, Rep. Ruth Briggs King of Georgetown.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would allow substance abuse recovery houses the option of being certified by the state drew a unanimous vote in a House committee hearing. **House Bill 114**, sponsored by Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, D-Dover/Magnolia, also would allow state and local government funds to go only to homes that are certified under the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

Those in the substance abuse recovery business say that they have been shocked that Delaware does not require recovery homes to be certified. It's an issue that's come into focus as opioid addictions worsened under the COVID-19 pandemic and deaths from heroin, fentanyl and other narcotic drugs continue to plague the country.

Open House

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JUDGE REFUSES TO BLOCK STATE'S ASSAULT RIFLE, MAGAZINE LAWS

BY SAM HAUT

A Delaware sportsmen's group says a federal judge's opinion refusing to OK an injunction to shut down implementation of two new state gun rules contained many incorrect findings and that it will appeal. A post on the Delaware State Sportsmen's Association page also says the group is not surprised a judge appointed by former president Barack Obama would rule in this way.

In the [opinion](#) issued Monday, U.S. Judge Richard Andrews of the District of Delaware denied a preliminary injunction sought by the plaintiffs in the case of Delaware State Sportsmen's Association, Inc. et al. v. Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security et al.

The laws banned the purchase of assault weapons and banned high capacity magazines respectively and were both signed into law by the governor on June 30, 2022,

becoming effective immediately. Both laws will remain in effect while the case makes its way through the court system.

Jeff Hague, president of Sportsmen's Association, the state's National Rifle Association affiliate, said the law that they passed is vague and is vague about which guns are and aren't banned. Hague said he would much prefer the state focus on passing red flag laws, like one he helped to pass, rather than on the type of gun used.

"The whole point is legislators don't have the guts to deal with the person that causes the problem," Hague said. "They ban the object. They say this is an evil object so we're gonna ban it...So to ban a specific firearm does no good. You have to deal with the person that's committing the violent act."

The association had responded to the suit on its Face-

book page earlier this week. "A right delayed is a right denied," the post said.

The organization vowed to continue fighting and asked people to donate to help.

RIFLE, MAGAZINE PLAINTIFFS

Plaintiffs in the suit include Bridgeville Rifle & Pistol Club, Delaware Rifle and Pistol Club, Delaware Association of Federal Firearms Licensees, Madonna Nedza, Cecil Curtis Clements, James Hosfel Jr., Bruce Smith, Vickie Lynn Prickett and Frank Nedza.

Andrews said the plaintiffs had not shown they suffer irreparable harm due to the two laws. The plaintiffs claim that the laws prevent them from obtaining assault weapons and high-capacity magazines for self-defense purposes and harm their ability to sell assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

Andrews takes issue with the first claim, saying the plaintiffs are able to use other weapons for self defense and pistols are not impacted by the law. They are the quintessential weapon of self defense, Andrews said, citing the Supreme Court case *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*.

For the second claim, Andrews cites the case *Drummond v. Robinson Township* to show that the Second Amendment doesn't give people an unabridged right to sell guns. The second amendment does not guarantee the right to sell guns, the opinion said.

Attorney General Kathy Jennings said in a press release that the decision acknowledges to role that assault rifles have played in mass shootings, including this week in Nashville, where six adults and three students were killed.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

photo link: Christiana High School

CHRISTIANA HIGH SCHOOL			
BOYS TRACK RECORDS	GIRLS TRACK RECORDS		
NAME	YEAR	NAME	YEAR
A. BARRY	11.81	A. BARRY	11.81
A. BARRY	14.20	A. BARRY	14.20
A. BARRY	16.20	A. BARRY	16.20
A. BARRY	18.20	A. BARRY	18.20
A. BARRY	20.20	A. BARRY	20.20
A. BARRY	22.20	A. BARRY	22.20
A. BARRY	24.20	A. BARRY	24.20
A. BARRY	26.20	A. BARRY	26.20
A. BARRY	28.20	A. BARRY	28.20
A. BARRY	30.20	A. BARRY	30.20
A. BARRY	32.20	A. BARRY	32.20
A. BARRY	34.20	A. BARRY	34.20
A. BARRY	36.20	A. BARRY	36.20
A. BARRY	38.20	A. BARRY	38.20
A. BARRY	40.20	A. BARRY	40.20
A. BARRY	42.20	A. BARRY	42.20
A. BARRY	44.20	A. BARRY	44.20
A. BARRY	46.20	A. BARRY	46.20
A. BARRY	48.20	A. BARRY	48.20
A. BARRY	50.20	A. BARRY	50.20
A. BARRY	52.20	A. BARRY	52.20
A. BARRY	54.20	A. BARRY	54.20
A. BARRY	56.20	A. BARRY	56.20
A. BARRY	58.20	A. BARRY	58.20
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A. BARRY	62.20	A. BARRY	62.20
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A. BARRY	66.20	A. BARRY	66.20
A. BARRY	68.20	A. BARRY	68.20
A. BARRY	70.20	A. BARRY	70.20
A. BARRY	72.20	A. BARRY	72.20
A. BARRY	74.20	A. BARRY	74.20
A. BARRY	76.20	A. BARRY	76.20
A. BARRY	78.20	A. BARRY	78.20
A. BARRY	80.20	A. BARRY	80.20
A. BARRY	82.20	A. BARRY	82.20
A. BARRY	84.20	A. BARRY	84.20
A. BARRY	86.20	A. BARRY	86.20
A. BARRY	88.20	A. BARRY	88.20
A. BARRY	90.20	A. BARRY	90.20
A. BARRY	92.20	A. BARRY	92.20
A. BARRY	94.20	A. BARRY	94.20
A. BARRY	96.20	A. BARRY	96.20
A. BARRY	98.20	A. BARRY	98.20
A. BARRY	100.20	A. BARRY	100.20

HOME	1:00	VISITOR
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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY JAREK RUTZ

Leaders of private christian schools clashed with legislators Wednesday in the Senate Education Committee over a bill that would require licenses and certifications for religious early education centers.

Senate Bill 69, sponsored by Sen. David Wilson, R-Lincoln, would exempt sectarian or religious institutions from the Delaware Child Care Act.

In 2021, the General Assembly enacted **Senate Bill 169**, to update and expand the definition of child care to include early education programs for children below the grade of kindergarten that are operated by public or private schools, including sectarian or religious institutions.

This law takes effect on July 1, 2024.

Wilson, who voted for SB 169, said the law had unintended consequences.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: EXEMPT US FROM CERTIFICATIONS AND LICENSURE

It had unintentionally impacted private schools because now they would have to follow mandates and be licensed by the state, he said

“Please know these private schools do not accept state funds,” he said.

Aaron Coon, head of school at Dover’s **Calvary Christian Academy**, said if the legislators don’t pass SB 69, all 335 students at Calvary will be put at risk of not having a school.

“The facility requirements in the regulation are not possible in our facility, which means we would have to buy a new facility or used facility and make a large move,” he said. “That is not possible right now financially or within the timeframe allotted.”

He also said the regulations in the Delaware Child Care Act conflict with some of Calvary’s religious beliefs as a church and a school, especially in the hiring process. He did not expand on that comment.

“These points among others will force us to close our doors, contributing to Delaware’s child care and unemployment crisis,” he said.

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POLLING

SHOULD 16-YEAR-OLDS BE ABLE TO VOTE IN SCHOOL BOARD RACES?

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would drop the age to vote in school board elections to 16 is drawing strong opposition from one education group. The voting age now is 18.

House Bill 96, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, which would lower that voting age for school board races, is set to be heard Wednesday at the 3 p.m. House Education Committee.

Efforts were unsuccessful to reach Morrison for comment. He is said to favor the move as a way to get more students involved in civic life.

The **Department of Education** does not have a position on the bill, according to Alison May, the department's public information officer.

The **Delaware School Boards Association** not only opposes the bill, but says it is unconstitutional.

The 77-year-old association is made up of school boards with the goal of helping improve public educa-

tion and assisting board members in carrying out their responsibilities.

John Marinucci, the group's executive director, pointed to Article V, Section 2 of the Delaware Constitution, which establishes that the state's legal voting age is 21.

"Of course, the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution superseded the Delaware Constitution and lowered the voting age to 18 nation-wide," he said. "Neither the Delaware Constitution, nor the U.S. Constitution as amended by Amendment 26, indicates a distinction between school board elections and/or state and national elections."

Because of that, Marinucci said, the association can't support a bill that violates the state constitution.

Rep. Charles Postles, R-Milford, who is on the House Education Committee, will oppose the bill. "I believe it is unconstitutional," he said. "I see nothing that differ-



entiates school board elections and any other state or national election."

Naveed Baqir, a board member of Christina School District, said the legislation is an awesome idea.

"Reducing the voting age from 18 to 16 would give young people a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives, which would help to ensure that their voices are heard and their interests are represented in the political process," he said.

Changing the age would encourage Delaware's youth to become more engaged in politics and to take an active role in shaping their future, he said.

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photo by Ben Fulton



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



INSIDE THE CIRCLE: WEEK 3

BY GLENN FRAZER

Saturday’s storms “washed out” the softball action to end week two of the 2023 season, but things are starting to take shape as a handful of pitchers are establishing early dominance.

Maybe none has been as impressive as Kaylan Yoder from Delmarva Christian.

In her four games as a first-year senior for the Royals, Yoder has recorded 67 strikeouts and allowed just four hits against some very good competition including Indian River, Smyrna and Mardela, MD.

Yoder has signed to attend and play softball for the Liberty Flames next year.

“Kaylan is another very special young lady. She is a competitor both on and off the field,” said Liberty coach Dot Richardson. ” She is an extremely hard worker and brings that with her in the circle, outfield and to the plate. She will be an impact player on both sides of the

ball. She is a special lefty pitcher who moves and spins the ball really well. She gets a lot of swings and misses. Kaylan will also be a leader through.”

Yoder hails from Greenwood, playing her high school softball as a left-handed pitcher for Delmarva Christian High School. Yoder has also played travel softball for TNT Delaware Bomhardt and Green Hornets Gold 18U. She is also a standout in varsity basketball and volleyball.

Yoder and her 4-0 Royals teammates face off against Madge Layfield and the 3-0 Sussex Central Golden Knights Monday at 4:15 at Georgetown’s Del Tech campus in one of the Top 10 featured games-of-the-week. Central also has a showdown with Kylee Hill and 3-1 Laurel on Thursday.

Some other “key” games this week include 3-1 Conrad vs 4-0 Saint Marks on Tuesday.

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The Spartans’ Carly Maxton has been “special” this season with 58 strikeouts, and three shutouts. The 3-1 Milford Bucs travel to Camden Tuesday to face the dangerous Peyton Shields and the undefeated Riders.

Wednesday’s games will feature 2-0 Appo hosting 3-0 Red Lion, while Caravel (1-0) hosts defending Maryland 1A runner-up Rising Sun under the lights at 6 p.m.

Thursday the unbeaten Spartans from Lake Forest travel to Smyrna (2-2) and Saturday DMA makes the long trip to Laurel.



DELTECH ADDS TWO MORE TO THE 100-HIT CLUB

BY NICK HALLIDAY

After adding its first player to the 100-hit club since 2013 a week ago Delaware Technical Community College adds to more. Earlier this month Macey Myers eclipsed the 100-hit mark making her the first player since 2013 adding her name in the history books. Since then two more players have added their name to the 100-hit club Matt Rodriguez from the baseball team and Logan Walls from the softball team.

Rodriguez, a graduate of Delmar High School, reached a total of 101 for his Delaware Tech career in the first game of a doubleheader against Allegany College of Maryland. Rodriguez got four hits in the game.

From year one to year two, Rodriguez became the team's dominant hitter. He was honorable mention for

the all-region team the first year and first team all-region his second year. Rodriguez was also named the team's most valuable player (MVP) after last season.

Logan Walls, also a graduate of Delmar High School, eclipsed 100 hits, she was also named Eastern Pennsylvania Athletic Conference (EPAC) Player of the Week for batting 11-for-14 with eight RBI and three triples in four Delaware Tech wins.

During her time at Delaware Tech, she was a two-time all-region player and a member of the back-to-back region and district champion softball teams.



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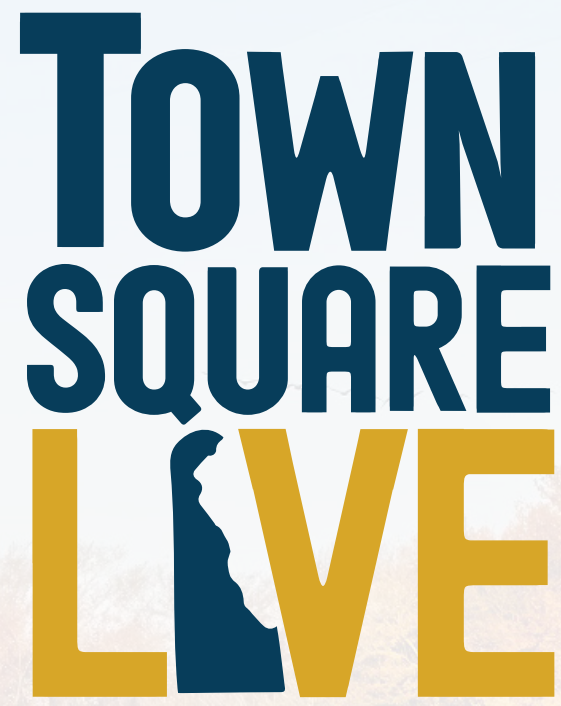
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