

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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Contents

Community	3
Business	8
Food & Dining	12
Government	14
Education.....	22
Sports	26
Stay Connected	29



Guide to July 4th Holiday



Democrats May Elect a New Speaker



Students Land on Top in National Healthcare Events

photo link: Longwood Gardens
photo by Carol Gross



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



NEW MUSEUM OF NATURE EXHIBIT LETS KIDS LAND ON OTHER PLANETS

BY BETSY PRICE

Visitors had a choice in the **Delaware Museum of Nature and Science's** *Be The Astronaut* exhibit opening June 24: Land on the moon, Mars or Jupiter.

The exhibit, the first that the museum has offered since revealing its total gut-and-renovation a year ago, combines science and gaming. It not only allows kids to learn the science that put mankind into space, but also try their hands at leaving the atmosphere, landing on another planet and driving unfamiliar terrain. Parents are allowed to play, too.

Be The Astronaut opened during June 24's Family Fun Days, which has moved indoors because of the forecast of rain, and ends Sept. 11. The exhibit had been scheduled to be at the museum in summer of 2020, but

the museum was closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Director Halsey Spruance, who spent a few minutes at one kiosk trying to land on Mars, said the exhibit emphasizes the museum's decision to highlight science as well as nature. "Now we've got more to offer," he said.

MUSEUM'S RENOVATION SUCCESS

Be the Astronaut also will tie in with an exhibit in the Discovery Gallery near the museum's entrance entitled *Sun, Earth and the Universe*, he pointed out.

"It's fantastic the way it's working," Spruance said. "The platform for getting into different subjects rather than just biology are huge. We can talk about chemistry,

physics. And it's not just about the physical attributes of space, but also about how do you get there. So it's engineering and mathematics. That's all an expansion of what we've done before."

The museum saw 90,329 visitors in the year from its May 2022 opening, a few hundred over its goal of 90,000. Spruance hopes the new exhibit will keep the momentum going.

Be the Astronaut includes a small play area for kids who are too young to really comprehend the information on panels or really enjoy the screens. They are more likely to appeal to those six and up who have a bit of patience and experience with gaming.

Visitors will get a look at the equipment an astronaut wears, including the suit, helmet and boots. While the information panel doesn't say so, Director of Exhibits Helen Bilinsky believes the suit on display was made by LLG of Dover, which outfitted NASA for decades.

The exhibit is split into three parts: navigation, the science behind flying into space and learning to put into action what you learned in stations one and two by sitting down and trying your hand at landing. All three stations include a gaming-type screen that allows you to practice leaving the earth's atmosphere and more. Short film clips pop up to tell visitors what to do.

It's not easy-peasy.

Bilinsky, who had practiced until she could leave the atmosphere in one shot, flubbed it three times trying to show the museum staff how it worked. That station also allows people to practice driving on another planet by using arrows.

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HAGLEY MERGES BIKE & HIKE, DOG DAYS INTO SUMMER NIGHTS

BY BETSY PRICE

Hagley Museum and Library has rolled the success of its long-standing Bike, Hike and Brew nights and its Dog Days of Summer, which allowed guests to bring furry pals, into an all-encompassing Summer Nights program. Now every Wednesday night, patrons can bring their families and pets to the site of the Du Pont Co.'s gunpowder factory along the Brandywine River to picnic, walk its trails and have a drink while listening to live music. Before this summer, dogs were only welcomed one night a month.

The revamp came after Hagley officials considered the enthusiastic feedback they were getting and decided to enhance elements that people really enjoyed.

“We decided to make every evening dog friendly,” said Laura Jury, Hagley’s marketing manager.

Organizers added yard games like hula hoops, cornhole, bubbles and more, as well as live music every Wednes-

day. In addition, guests can grab a Dogfish Head craft brew or one of their canned Culinary Crafted Cocktails, which includes flavors such as grapefruit vodka crush, blood orange vodka crush, pineapple and orange rum crush and lemon-lime gin crush.

Guests are encouraged to bring a picnic or stop by Janssen’s Market or Pizza by Elizabeth to enjoy at the picnic tables.

Summer Nights are weather dependent, and they’ve had a bit of a rough start, though. The June 7 debut went off fine, but the June 14 event was canceled because of smoke from the Canadian wildfires and the June 21 event because of rain. Organizers are hoping that’s all the bad luck they’ll have this season, Jury said.

The site’s Fishing on the Brandywine, held on select summer Saturdays, remains popular. Hagley provides fishing poles and bait, and participants do not need a

license to throw a line into the Brandywine during the catch-and-release events. It’s for all ages, included in admission and now scheduled for July 15, July 29, Aug. 5, Aug. 19 and Sept. 2.

Hagley also plans to add a new twist to the Sept. 17 **Hagley Car Show**, which is expected to once again fill its fields with 500 antique and restored cars. This year’s theme is “A Drive Down Memory Lane: Celebrating Bygone Brands”.

To enhance that message, the museum will hope a new exhibition of classic vehicles owned by the du Ponts, including a 1928 Ford Model A Phaeton, which has recently been sent for restoration. The lower level of the barn—the back side of the building used for the holiday gingerbread show—has been renovated to show off the vehicles used by du Pont family members across the decades.

Hagley’s not ready yet to release the full list of renovated family vehicles, Jury said. Half the field, though, is already allotted to registrants who want to show off their cars.

MORE ABOUT HAGLEY

Hagley Museum and Library, at 200 Hagley Creek Road in Wilmington, is a nonprofit educational institution spread across 235 acres. It includes the first **du Pont** family home and garden in the United States, the powder yards and a 19th-century machine shop, as well as a new permanent exhibit, “Nation of Inventors.” That exhibit includes dozens of the museum’s patent models, which once were required to apply for a patent.

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WILMINGTON, DOVER CALLED POOR PLACES TO RAISE A FAMILY

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Wilmington is near the bottom of a new list of America's best cities to raise a family. It's 173rd out of 182 cities on the list from [WalletHub](#), a personal finance website. Dover is 139th. In a stunning contrast, WalletHub a few months ago ranked Wilmington eighth on its [list](#) of best places to retire. Dover ranked 36th on the list.

These sorts of lists—assessing a topic by developing various criteria, compiling a bunch of statistics and then weighing all the numbers—are popular items online, because they generate publicity for the site behind them with articles like this, posts on social media and chatter by disc jockeys.

Because there are only 50 states, only 3,141 [counties](#) or their equivalents and only so many large cities with decent data, some place must be at the top and some place must be at the bottom. Wilmington, for instance, was this year dubbed America's most [affordable](#) city.

The lists from WalletHub are more sophisticated than most, by being more detailed in what was measured and more transparent about the sources.

For raising a family, WalletHub considered five big categories: family fun (where Wilmington ranked 127th and Dover 172nd), health and safety (Wilmington at 148th and Dover at 57th), education and child care (Wilmington at 61st and Dover at 88th), affordability (Wilmington at 145th and Dover at 143rd) and socio-economics (city results were not listed).

These factors added up to 41.3 for Wilmington and 46.2 for Dover, on a scale of 100. At the top of the list was Fremont, CA, with a score of 73.7; and the bottom was Cleveland, at 34.6.

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- URSULINE ACADEMY



YOUR GUIDE TO JULY 4TH HOLIDAY IN DELAWARE

BY JAREK RUTZ

July Fourth—a celebration of America’s independence and often a day full of fun with family and friends—is next Tuesday. With [AAA Mid-Atlantic](#) expecting around 14% of Delaware’s population to be traveling, here’s what to know about Independence Day in the First State:

Travel

AAA predicts 142,000 Delawareans will travel at least 50 miles over the weekend, up more than 4% from last year and setting a new record for the holiday.

Almost 88% of travelers or more than 125,000 Delawareans, will be hitting the road for the holiday. Air travel is up nearly 11% over last year, with AAA projecting more than 10,000 Delawareans to fly to their holiday destination.

The agency states travel by other modes of transportation, which was slowest to recover from the pandemic, is up nearly 24% over last year, with more than 7,000 Delawareans traveling via train, bus or boat.

The best and worst times to drive are:

Best and Worst Times to Travel by Car		
Date	Worst Travel Time	Best Travel Time
Thu, June 29	4:00 - 6:00 PM	Before 12:00 PM
Fri, June 30	10:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Before 10:00 AM, After 6:00 PM
Sat, July 1	1:00 PM	Before 12:00 PM
Sun, July 2	<i>Minimal Traffic Impact Expected</i>	
Mon, July 3	<i>Minimal Traffic Impact Expected</i>	
Tue, July 4	12:00 - 3:00 PM	Before 11:00 AM, After 6:00 PM
Wed, July 5	3:00 - 6:00 PM	Before 2:00 PM

If you are anxious about driving around Delaware, you can check road conditions by looking at the Delaware Department of Transportation’s real-time traffic cameras. Find them at [DelDOT.gov](#) or the DelDOT mobile app.

DelDOT encourages visitors to the Sussex beaches to buy a three-zones daily pass for \$10, which can also be used on all beach bus services. Riders can [download](#) the DART Pass mobile app for quick options, and the DART Transit app for alerts about delays, detours and more.

Weather

A beautiful Saturday morning is expected in the First State, but thunderstorms could roll in after 2 p.m., according to the [National Weather Service](#). The day will have partly sunny skies, with a high near 84 and a 50% chance of precipitation. Temperatures will fall to 70 as the storms come later in the day.

Sunday morning could have some showers before 8 a.m. and then a chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. The day will be mostly cloudy, with a high of 88 and a 40% chance of rain. The temp will drop to 70 at night.

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photo by Mailchimp / Unsplash

The image shows a laptop on a wooden table in a home office. The laptop screen displays the Mailchimp website. The website header includes the Mailchimp logo and navigation links for 'Sales', '+1 (800) 315-5929', and 'Log in'. The main headline reads 'Outperform your last campaign'. Below this, there is a diagram of an email automation flow: 'No Abandoned Carts' (Subject: You left something behind) leads to 'Float left in their cart', which leads to 'Wait 1 hour', which leads to 'Gets reminder email'. The reminder email preview shows a yellow background with a pink box and the text 'Don't let this one float away!'. To the right of the flow diagram, the text says 'Sell more with email automations' and 'Generate more orders with our prebuilt automations: remind abandoned cart shoppers, reengage lost customers, or cross-sell your products. Marketers have seen, on average, 4x more orders with our Customer Journey Builder than with bulk emails.' A 'Sell more' button is located at the bottom right of the text.

Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

AGILENT TO EXPAND NEWPORT MANUFACTURING SITE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Agilent Technologies Inc. has announced a plan to invest nearly \$22 million to expand its lab-based manufacturing site in Newport. The site employs 110 today, according to the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, and Agilent expects the number of jobs to increase by 20% over the next 10 years. The company has received a \$693,000 grant from the Delaware Strategic Fund, contingent on meeting various requirements.

The facility produces liquid chromatography columns used for chemical and biochemical analysis, drug discovery, environmental control and analytical chemistry.

Agilent will leave 12,000 square feet adjacent to its existing facility on First State Boulevard and fit out 9,900 square feet as lab space with new infrastructure,

equipment and instrumentation. Over half of the remaining square footage will become a warehouse, storage and shipping/receiving area, and the balance will be used for offices.

Agilent last year announced a \$7 million expansion (with six new jobs) at its Little Falls research and development labs in the suburbs west of Wilmington, the *Delaware Business Times* **reported**. Agilent employs 18,000 people worldwide, including more than 950 in Delaware, making it one of Delaware's top 100 employers.



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NEW CALL CENTER TO HIRE WORKERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A call center is being set up in Wilmington that will focus on the medical industry and on employees with special needs. By the end of 2025, BlindSight Delaware Enterprise plans to hire 227 Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired, have other disabilities, are military veterans and/or live in economically disadvantaged Promise Communities in New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties.

Most employees will be full-time medical schedulers, whose duties will include scheduling and confirming appointments, answering questions, providing directions and reminders, and resolving problems for patients of Beebe Healthcare and other providers that contract with Blindsight. Some jobs will be in CSC Station, a co-working space next to the Wilmington train station. Some will be fully remote.

Blindsight is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit social business enterprise founded in 2021 by **Blindsight Delaware** (a

nonprofit founded in 1909 and once known as Delaware Association for the Blind) and The Chicago Lighthouse.

The announcement came from the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, which called it a “\$2.3 million regional medical scheduling hub.” It will draw contracts from Philadelphia, southern New Jersey, Baltimore and Chicago, CEO John Baker said in a statement.


Blindsight has received a grant of up to \$608,000 from the Delaware Strategic Fund, contingent on meeting various goals.

Nationwide, the demand for medical schedulers has increased dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic escalated turnover in hospital staffing.




Summer Nights
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Unwind by the Brandywine.

Hagley

Enjoy music, food trucks, beverages, & ice cream Wednesday evenings June through August. Dogs welcome.

CHILL OUT



AMENDED POLYSTYRENE BAN BILL PASSES HOUSE

BY SAM HAUT

A bill banning the use of polystyrene containers, including Styrofoam, passed the House and will head back to the Senate after three amendments were passed with it.

Senate Bill 51, sponsored by Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, would ban the use of polystyrene containers in restaurants, fire companies and nonprofit organizations, along with single-use plastic straws, and beverage, cocktail picks and sandwich picks made of plastic. The bill would take effect July 1, 2025.

While the bill had previously allowed fire companies and nonprofit organizations to continue to use polysty-

rene containers, an **amendment** from Rep. Michael Smith, R-Pike Creek, removed those exemptions.

An **amendment** by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, changed one of the exemptions for polystyrene containers, which previously applied to healthcare providers, to now apply to just food given to a patient or resident by a healthcare provider. Baumbach said the amendment removes the exemption for places such as cafeterias in hospitals. Another **amendment**, also by Baumbach, makes sure a restaurant wouldn't lose its license for not following the polystyrene ban by changing the violation from a critical one to a core one.

The bill also requires the Delaware Solid Waste Authority to put out a report at the end of 2023 detailing possible substitutes for polystyrene containers and how the state can remove polystyrene containers from Delaware landfills.

Previously, those involved in the restaurant and plastics industry have **said** the bill would be costly because of the price of alternatives to polystyrene and that those containers don't take up a large percentage of waste in landfills by weight.

Baumbach previously has countered by saying that polystyrene doesn't make up a majority of the weight in landfills, but does take up a large portion by volume.

Polystyrene is also very difficult to recycle. Of the 5,200 tons in Delaware landfills in 2018, 16 tons were recycled, leading to a 0% recovery rate, according to the Delaware Solid Waste Authority. That compares to a 23% recovery rate for aluminum cans, a 31% recovery rate for plastic bottles and a 59% recovery rate for pallets.

There is no fiscal note required for the bill, which has 27 additional sponsors and cosponsors, 26 Democrats and one Republican, Smith. The bill previously had passed the Senate 14 to 5 in April, but now will head back to the Senate, which must approve the changes made by the three amendments.



photo by Spencer Davis / Unsplash



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

Food & Dining



HIGH-QUALITY, QUICK-SERVICE FOOD, FROM TALLEYVILLE TO REHOBOTH

BY PAM GEORGE

There's good news for Delaware diners who want more high-quality, quick-service options. Several eateries have recently opened or are preparing to open. For instance, **Lydia's Grab & Go Bistro** now serves salads, soups, wraps and charcuterie boards in **The Shops at Baltimore Commons** in downtown Rehoboth Beach.

Lydia Croce previously worked at Big Fish Grill and Atlantic Social in the Rehoboth area. With items such as whipped feta, chopped vegetable and herb salads, and quinoa and arugula salads, Croce stands out from the other sandwich shops on Baltimore Avenue. While waiting for your order, check out the cookbook shelf.

Speaking of meat and cheese, **First State Charcuterie** will hold a grand opening on July 1 and 2 for its brick-

and-mortar store in Frankford. Owner Jenna Bullock started as a delivery service in October 2020, and the fledgling business was so well received that she quit her HR job six months later.

In north Wilmington, **Boro Gelato & Cafe** plans to open on July 1 near **Taverna** and El Camino Mexican Kitchen in The Concord, the Talleyville office and residential complex. Owner Colin Dyckman is starting with coffee, gelato and pastry, with more options on the way.

Dinner at Drip

Drip Café in Hockessin is the go-to place for brunch and a good cup of coffee, but on July 19, the Lantana Square restaurant will host a five-course meal with pairings from Citadel Trading Corp., a wine importer.

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TWO HOURS TO BRING A SMILE



photo by Charlie Megginson

LEGISLATIVE HALL

Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DEMOCRATS MAY ELECT A NEW SPEAKER, GOP REPS BELIEVE

BY SAM HAUT

A few Republicans have heard there's a possibility that Speaker of the House Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, plans on stepping down by the end of the week. Rep. Kevin Hensley, R-Odessa, said during a Zoom meeting with the Delaware GOP that there is speculation that a new speaker will be elected by Friday.

"So the speculation, just keep in mind speculation, is that Speaker Schwartzkopf will be stepping down as speaker...There will be an election for speaker," he said. "There are a couple individuals that have expressed interest...It will be interesting to see how it plays out, but we're expecting that to happen at some point on Friday."

Schwartzkopf, who was first elected in 2002, served as the majority leader in 2008 and became the speaker of the house in 2012.

The Democrats' other House leaders include Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, as the House majority leader and Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, as the House majority whip. Longhurst, who was first elected in 2004, was elected majority whip in 2008 and became majority leader in 2012. Minor-Brown, who was first elected in 2018, **became** majority whip in November 2022.

Schwartzkopf, Longhurst and Minor-Brown did not respond to a request for comment. Drew Volturo, deputy chief of staff for communications with the House Democratic Caucus, also did not respond to a request for comment.

Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said he's heard rumors that in the shuffling of positions, Minor-Brown could become the new House majority leader and Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, D-Dover/Magnolia, could be the new House majority whip.

"Now the rumor is, some have heard that, I guess Valerie's gonna keep [Minor-Brown], who is the whip, to move to leader...and going to make [Harris] the whip," Ramone said. "That's the rumors we're hearing, but who knows?"

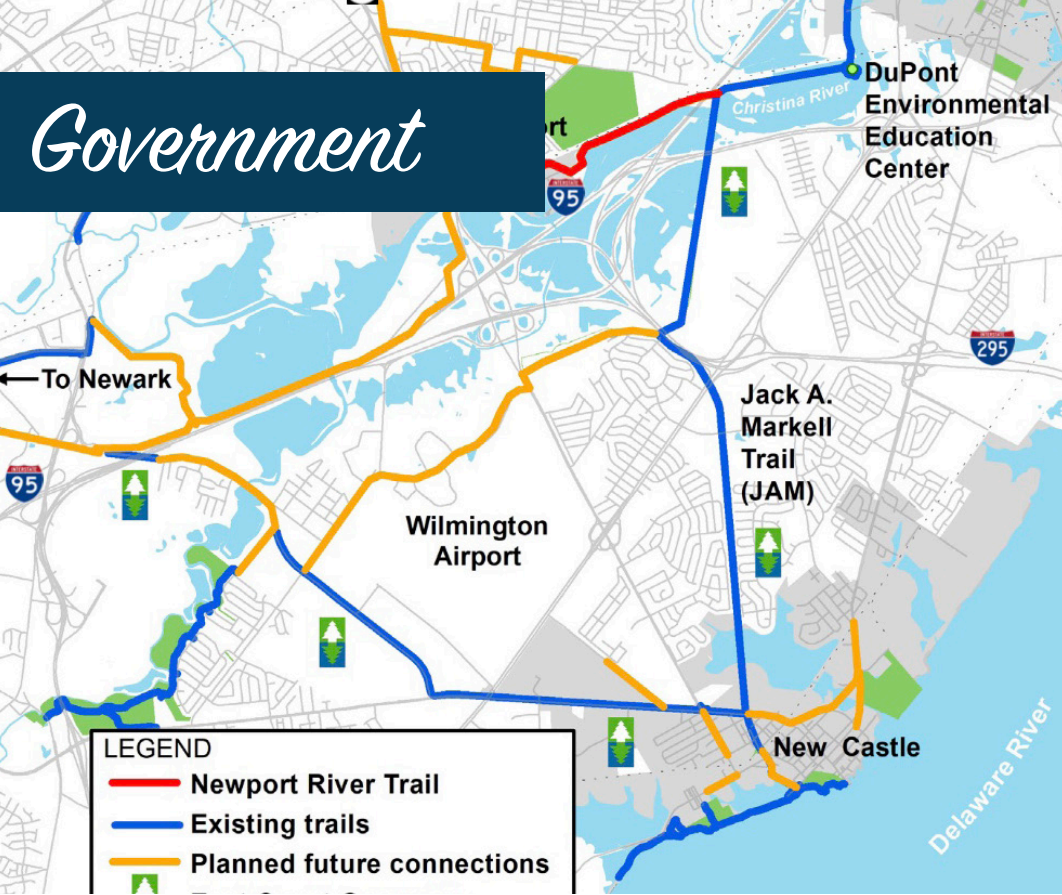
Hensley said that there are many factions within the House Democrats.

"You've got a group of typically younger, very progressive folks," Hensley said. "You have a legislative Black caucus that was formed a few years ago. They tend to have their own priorities. Then you have the old-time Democrats, I guess I'll call it, that have been around a while that may not see eye to eye on some of these more progressive issues. So it's an interesting dynamic to watch."

Ramone said Democrats will probably follow a familiar process in filling their leadership positions, but newer Democrats may complicate things.

"They believe they've got their process and they're gonna follow the process," Ramone said. "But we'll know Thursday night after the process is over, or Friday morning, that maybe everybody doesn't feel they need to follow that process. You have got to remember you got a lot of new people in there. A lot of new Democrats who have only been there either one or three years."





Government

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Multi-use trails to connect Newport with Wilmington and Georgetown with Lewes received \$44 million in federal funding today.

The Newport River Trail will get \$23 million to construct a two-mile path between Newport and the Jack A. Markell Trail on the Wilmington Riverfront. The trail is part of New Castle County’s Connecting Communities **initiative** and will be a far safer way for bicyclists and pedestrians than busy Maryland Avenue.

New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer is a bicycling enthusiast and envisions the day when passengers can ride their bikes safely to and from New Castle Airport, among many other destinations, he **told** *Out & About*.

The Georgetown to Lewes Rail with Trail will get \$21 million for the final phase of the 17-mile trail.

“Since the first phase of the Georgetown to Lewes

FEDS AWARD \$44M FOR NCCO, SUSSEX SHARED-USE TRAILS

Trail opened in October 2016 and with each completed segment, it has now become the most heavily used trail in the state,” Delaware Secretary of Transportation Nicole Majeski said, according to **WRDE**. “We are very excited to receive this grant that will allow the department to move forward with building the final six miles of the trail, connecting our growing communities with a great alternative to relying solely on cars for travel.”

The final phase covers six miles between Airport and Fisher roads, **WRDE reported**.

“Shared-use paths and trails are no longer an add-on at the end of the project planning,” Dave Gula, principal planner who’s worked at the Wilmington Area Planning Council since 2005, told *Out & About*. “They have become a driving force for some projects, and communities accept that these trails are amenities that should be included in almost every project.”

The money comes from the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity program. Nationwide, 70% of the grants are going to projects in regions defined as an Area of Persistent Poverty or a Historically Disadvantaged Community. Like last year, demand for RAISE funding was higher than available funds. This year, the U.S. Department of Transportation received \$15 billion in requests for the \$2.26 billion available.





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FAIRNESS IN GIRLS' SPORTS ACT INTRODUCED

BY SAM HAUT

With only a week left in this year's legislative session, a Seaford Republican plans to introduce a bill that would only allow trans athletes to participate in sports against players who match their biological sex.

Sen. Bryant Richardson said he filed Senate Bill 191, which he dubbed the Fairness in Girls' Sports Act, because it is unfair to allow transgender women—biological males who transition into women—to play women's sports.

“With this new transgender, men, boys identifying as women and calling themselves girls, entering in the sports arena,” he said, “it’s really set back the opportunities for girls, for women.”

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, who is a wrestling referee and a sponsor of the bill, said in a news release that he’s seen firsthand the physical differences between male and female student-athletes.

“There are certainly exceptions,” he said, “but on average, a boy is physically stronger and faster than a girl. We need to do all we can to protect girls and not place female athletes at a competitive disadvantage.”

When it comes to the actual data, though, one study has shown a decrease in muscle mass for trans women as they go through the gender transition, while another study showed that lowering testosterone levels didn’t bring trans women down to the level of cisgender women. Sarah Warbelow, vice president of legal policy at the Human Rights Campaign, said that most of the data that people point to is between performance of cis men and cis women.

“There has been an overall lack of research on trans athletes,” Warbelow said. “Most of the research that exists is comparing men who are not transgender to women who are not transgender, who are adults. And so it really is comparing apples and oranges. ...A trans woman is a woman. She’s not a cisgender man and it’s really not an appropriate comparison.”

Richardson said he doesn’t know how many transgender athletes there are in Delaware or how many trans people there are in the state in general, but that his bill would stop them from competing before it becomes a problem.

“It’s not a problem,” he said. “I don’t think it’s a problem yet, but I don’t want it to be a problem in Delaware.”

Warbelow said that there is also a lack of data on the number of trans athletes, but pointed to Utah, which

only has four transgender students participating in high school sports. The legislature last March passed a trans sports ban by overriding the governor’s veto. The ban was overturned last August by a judge in the state.

The focus of his bill, Richardson said, is to stop trans women from competing with cis women in high school, but the bill also bans trans men from competing with cis men in high school. Richardson said he doesn’t think there are as many trans women in sports as trans men, but the bill bans both for simplicity.

“I don’t think there’s too many women trying to get into playing football by identifying as male and playing football,” he said. “But I think it’s an obvious problem when male athletes want to get on female athletes’ teams. ...Just to make it clear, you just go by biological sex.”

NATIONAL PUSH BANNING TRANS ATHLETES

Warbelow said several conservative organizations are responsible for pushing bills banning trans people from participating in sports.

“So there are organizations, including the Alliance Defending Freedom, Moms for Liberty...that have been pushing these policies in states. ...The conversation is introduced by the politician, the far right wing has responded to it, which then of course gets more support from a politician who’s afraid of a challenge from the right,” Warbelow said. “But it is not reflective of where the general public is on matters of equality for transgender people.”

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

SENATE PASSES FIVE ENVIRONMENT BILLS, BUDGET

BY SAM HAUT

On June 20, the Senate passed five bills that relate to the environment, with Republicans offering some resistance, and a budget that had less opposition.

House Bill 99, sponsored by Rep. Debra Heffernan, D-Brandywine Hundred South, would require that Delaware meet certain emission reduction requirements, getting to zero net emissions by 2050, and create climate change officers within all nine departments to help the state achieve these goals. The bill, which doesn't require a fiscal note, passed 15 to 5 and now heads to Gov. John Carney for his signature.

House Bill 12, sponsored by Rep. Sophie Phillips, D-Christiana, would offer a rebate of up to \$2,500 for someone purchasing an electric vehicle in Delaware and up to \$1,000 for someone purchasing a plug-in hybrid in the state, leading to a fiscal note of \$2 million for the 2024 fiscal year. The bill passed 16 to 4 and now heads

to Carney for his signature.

House Bill 10, sponsored by Heffernan, would require that 30% of the state's school bus fleet be electric by 2030, with estimates of costs to be around \$250,000 per bus and the charging infrastructure costing an additional \$75,000 per bus. Since the state buys about 50 buses a year, the fiscal note for the bill estimates it will cost \$975,000 in the 2025 fiscal year and \$1,625,000 in the 2026 fiscal year. It passed 15 to 5 and now heads to Carney for his signature.

Senate Bill 51, sponsored by Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, would ban the use of polystyrene containers in restaurants, fire companies and nonprofit organizations, along with single-use plastic straws, coffee stirrers and cocktail and sandwich picks. The bill, which doesn't require a fiscal note, passed 15 to 5 and now heads to Carney for his signature.

House Bill 11, sponsored by Heffernan, would require that new buildings with a foundation of 50,000 square feet or greater be built to be compatible with solar panels. The bill, which doesn't require a fiscal note, passed 16 to 4 and now heads to Carney for his signature.

DEBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, said that climate change is a growing issue and House Bill 99 will help.

"This is a pivotal time for our state, and our vote today will determine how engaged we are in doing our part to secure a livable and sustainable future for humanity on a global scale," Hansen said. "We are ready and we are able. We will do this because we are actively, deeply invested in our future. We understand the cost of inaction and we care about what tomorrow brings."

Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, asked Hansen several questions about the specifics of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change **report** that she referenced and its conclusions about the right amount of carbon dioxide emissions.

"The report that you referenced is 0.4%," Lawson said. The specific number doesn't matter, Hansen replied, but rather that the report outlines that it's an issue.

"What matters is the fact that because this number is higher than it has been in the past, because it is higher, it is trapping heat in our atmosphere and is causing weather-related problems, flooding, related problems," Hansen said. "It's causing dire consequences and so we need to reduce it."

Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, said just because the number seems small doesn't mean it isn't not a problem.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

FORMER WILM. COP WATERS COULD FACE EIGHT YEARS FOR FELONY CHARGE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Samuel Waters, a former Wilmington police officer, could face up to eight years in prison after being convicted of four crimes, including a felony, for using excessive force during an incident that took place in September 2021. Supervisors from the **Wilmington Police Department**, along with investigators, informed the **Division of Civil Rights & Public Trust** that Waters had failed to turn his body-worn camera on when he should have, and that he regularly failed to do so.

The Division of Civil Rights & Public Trust opened its investigation into Waters after discovering footage of the Sept. 21, 2021, event where he repeatedly forced a man's head against a plexiglass window, causing lacerations and bruising. The incident came to the agency's attention after surveillance video of the arrest went viral.

The investigation found that he lied in official documentation of the incident and that just nine days prior, he was involved in another excessive force case in which he used his nightstick to repeatedly apply downward pressure on the back of a victim's neck, pushing their

face into the back of a vehicle and causing injuries. The police department's Use of Force instructor said that the force Waters employed was against policy and inconsistent with how Wilmington's police officers are trained.

Waters is charged with felony tampering with public records (first degree), falsifying business records, assault (third degree) and official misconduct.

"This case wasn't just about one video or one arrest," Attorney General Kathy Jennings said. "It was about a defendant who clearly abused his authority through egregious, unnecessary violence, and who subsequently tried to cover up his actions by lying about them."

Waters' crimes undermined public trust in law enforcement, Jennings said, and disrespected the community he swore to protect, and broke the law. "Now he will face the consequences of his actions," Jennings said.

This is the first conviction at trial in a police use of force case during Jennings' tenure. Two other officers have previously pleaded guilty in excessive force cases.



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MORE OPTIONS, NO DECISIONS ON STATE RETIREE HEALTHCARE PLANS

BY SAM HAUT

The State Employee Benefits Committee retiree subcommittee is considering more options to save the state money on healthcare over the next 20 years. It met Monday and may meet on July 10 and July 20 to discuss options.

The options presented relate to the “Other Post-Employment Benefits” that the state is trying to cut back on and close the unfunded liability gap. That liability gap revolves around projections showing the state can’t afford to keep paying for its current healthcare plan for all current and expected retirees.

Under traditional accounting, the state should be collecting now for insurance that will be paid later, but it hasn’t. While there is an \$8.3 billion shortfall, or unfunded liability, in collections for future retirees as of July 1, 2022, it is estimated that the shortfall will increase to \$20.7 billion by 2042 if nothing is done to close the gap.

The first two options discussed on Monday involve decreasing how much the state covers for a Medigap Supplemental Plan, which is based on the current Special Medicfill Plan, with one option decreasing how much the state pays from 95% to 90% while the other option would decrease how much the state pays from 95% to 85%.

Within both options were different groups, including those hired on or after Jan 1, 2015, those hired on or after Jan. 1, 2025, and those who retire on or after Jan. 1, 2025.

By decreasing the state share to 90%, it would reduce the liability by \$1.1 billion for those hired after Jan. 1, 2015, by \$1 billion for those hired after Jan. 1, 2025, and by \$1.1 billion for those retired after Jan. 1, 2025.

By decreasing the state share to 85%, it would reduce the liability by \$2.1 billion for those hired after Jan. 1, 2015, by \$2.1 billion for those hired after Jan. 1, 2025, and by \$2.6 billion for those retired after Jan. 1, 2025.

Another option would be to offer a Medicare Advantage plan based on the proposed Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware Freedom Blue plan, with the state covering 95% and retirees responsible for the remaining 5%. That option would reduce the liability by \$7.4 billion for those hired after Jan. 1, 2015, by \$6.8 billion for those hired after Jan. 1, 2025, and by \$9.5 billion for those retired after Jan. 1, 2025.

Earlier this year, the subcommittee was created after retirees opposed being told last year that their health insurance would be shifted to a Medicare advantage plan that was more restrictive than the generous health plan they had.

Another option involved letting people choose between a Medigap Supplement Plan, with the state only covering 85%, or a Medicare Advantage Plan, with the state covering 95%. The modeling, which estimated the liability would be reduced by \$3.6 billion, was only done with this option for people who retired on or after Jan. 1, 2025, and assumed 90% of retirees would take the Medigap plan and 10% would take the Medicare Advantage plan.

Along that same line of options, with letting retirees after Jan. 1, 2025, and choosing between Medigap and Medicare Advantage, another option would incentive retirees to choose the Medicare Advantage plan by making retirees who choose the Medigap plan have to pay 30% of the state’s share if they retire before 65.

In that same option, retirees who are between 50 and 55 would have to pay 80% of the state share if they choose the Medigap option, and retirees who are under 50 would have to pay the entire state share.

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HOUSE PASSES UPDATED POLICE BILL OF RIGHTS BY LARGE MARGIN

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware House of Representatives last week overwhelmingly passed a bill that would establish new standards for reporting police misconduct allegations, hailed by sponsors as a giant leap toward transparency.

After the bill passed, the Speaker of the House Rep. Pete Schwartkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, thanked the people who helped get the bill passed.

“I also want to thank the police officers in this chamber as well for coming forward with a plan...saying, we’re not fighting anymore, we want to help, we want to fix this thing,” Schwartkopf said. “What it takes sometimes to get really meaningful language changed, is to get the right people at the table.”

House Substitute 1 for House Bill 205, sponsored by Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, would require an investigating agency to prepare a detailed report of its internal investigation for any case involved a police

officer and publicly release it. That includes:

- Firing a gun at a person.
- Using force that causes serious physical injury.
- Having a sustained case of sexual assault or sexual harassment having been committed by the officer from an internal report.
- Having a sustained finding of domestic violence having been committed.
- A sustained finding that the officer has engaged in dishonest conduct.

The Criminal Justice Council will post the narrative of the case on its website within 30 days of receiving the narrative from the investigating agency, according to the bill. Those records must be preserved for at least 25 years and would be posted on the Police Officer Standards and Training Commission’s website.

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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

CHRISTINA'S BAQIR: REVIEW UD CONTRACTS AFTER COP INCIDENT



BY JAREK RUTZ

A Christina school board member said an incident involving a [University of Delaware](#) police officer and an 18-year-old graduate of Newark High School is “another George Floyd moment.” Naveed Baqir made that statement in a special board meeting last week where dozens of community members testified in support of student Mohammed Sanogo, with plenty of disdain and condemnation for UD, with an outcry of police misconduct.

On June 15, Sanogo was arrested by UD police less than 45 minutes after crossing the graduation stage—held at the Bob Carpenter Center on UD’s campus—and receiving his diploma. Sanogo, a star student with a grade point average above a 4.0, had plans to attend the University of Maryland to pursue aerospace engineering. His future endeavors are now in doubt, Baqir said, since

UD is pursuing charges of resisting arrest and reckless driving after accusing Sanogo of trespassing.

Baqir and others questioned the trespassing accusation, as many were still on the premises taking photos with their friends and family members after the ceremony.

“UD could destroy his future by implicating him in serious offenses,” he said. “They want to push through this so that for the rest of his life, anytime he applies for a job, he’ll have to answer the question, ‘have you ever been arrested?’ and he would have to say yes. He’ll be asked if he’s ever been charged with a crime, and he’ll have to say yes.”

Several witnesses of the incident shared the same story. It began when officers approached a handful of people, including Sanogo, who were engaging in a Muslim group prayer in the parking lot.

“The time for our prayer, which is around sunset, had come, so we decided we might as well just pray here,” said 18-year-old Abdu HafdhAllah, a friend of Sanogo.

Witnesses say a couple officers already appeared angry, provocative and on edge when they told the group that was praying that they needed to leave.

“Immediately after we prayed, we got in our vehicles because we were gonna go somewhere to eat,” Hafdh Allah said, “but as soon as I got in my car, a police officer, a lady, came up and she knocked on my window and said ‘You guys can’t be hanging around here.’”

After explaining they were praying, the officer said she didn’t care what they were doing and told them they must leave. The three cars were on their way out of the parking lot, but as Sanogo’s car left, his car made a screeching noise. Witnesses say he had just gotten his tires redone, so when he hit the gas, it made a noticeable sound.

“They made a sound but I was looking at him and he did not drift,” HafdhAllah said. “I don’t know if they thought that because of the sound, he drifted or something.”

After this, two UD cars “boxed in” Sanogo as he was trying to exit the parking lot. “It was just a truck, a construction truck or something from UD, and they boxed him in like they didn’t want him to get out,” said Ali Aidel, a 19-year-old who’s friends with Sanogo and was at the scene in a nearby car with his brother, Zakaraya.

It is unclear if the truck “boxing in” Sanogo was from UD. Even when the green light went off, Aidel said, the vehicle in front of Sanogo would not move.

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DEL. STUDENTS LAND ON TOP IN NATIONAL HEALTHCARE EVENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Ten Delaware high schoolers secured top 10 finishes in the 46th annual **HOSA-Future Health Professionals International Leadership Conference** in Dallas, Texas, which wrapped up Saturday. The conference is for students who are interested in pursuing a career in healthcare. Attendees had the opportunity to participate in career-focused competitive events, take part in community service work and leadership opportunities.

More than 150 students and advisors from across the state joined more than 12,000 other participants in Dallas. Competitive events that included: medical math, public health, behavioral health, community awareness and more. Here's who earned recognition:

- Arjun Bharath, from Middletown High School (Appoquinimink), earned 3rd place bronze in the Human Growth & Development event.
- Elissa Kouemeni, from Odessa High School (Appo-

quinimink), finished top 10 in the Health Career Photography event.

- Maria Pulido, from Sussex Central High School (Indian River), finished top 10 in the Interviewing Skills event.
- Fatima Cruz-Ocampo, from Delcastle High School (New Castle County Vo-Tech), finished top 10 in the Medical Assisting event.
- Abdel Abounabet, from Newark Charter School, finished top 10 in the Pharmacology event.
- Guo; Kim; Liu; and Nabung, all from Newark Charter School, finished top 10 in the Public Health event.
- Sahaana Rajagopalan, from Charter School of Wilmington, finished top 10 in the Academic Testing Center Leadership event.

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review, analysis, recommendations and strategic guidance. Advocates in the program help individual students and families resolve disputes or complaints concerning discipline, inequitable access to school programs and different or unfair treatment.

For example, if a student believes he was wrongfully suspended, an advocate would help work out a resolution with school officials. They are not the same as lawyers and take a backseat to lawyers.

Devon Hynson, an official in the ombudsman program, pointed out that the program is often for families who have no other resources, and perhaps cannot afford a lawyer. He said most cases deal with disciplinary disputes.

“Since about April of last year, we’ve done 153 cases,” he said. “We’ve done 50 suspension appeals with an 80% success rate.”

“The ombudsman program is historic and has never been done before,” he said. “So I really appreciate the opportunity to pilot it, and I appreciate you guys supporting it and coming out and saying this is something that we need to help build equity in the school system.”

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, did not publicly say whether he would vote for the bill to be released by committee or not.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY JAREK RUTZ

A law establishing a statewide program that provides advocates to students and families facing educational inequity drew discussion in the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday.

House Bill 188, sponsored by Rep. Sherae’a Moore, D-Middletown, codifies the Equity Ombudsman program, which provides non-lawyer advocates to assist families.

“In 2018, there was litigation against the state... brought by the NAACP and other entities that was settled in 2020,” said Sen. Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman, D-Wilmington. “One of the components of that settlement was the creation of an ombudsman program intended to make sure that [families] were receiving equitable treatment in all of the ways that we have encountered challenges in our public education system.”

The bill creates an Educational Equity Council, which would oversee the program and would provide broad



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Sports

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Sports

DELAWARE LIVE'S TOP 15 GAMES FROM 2022-23 SEASON

No. 14 Padua vs Saint Mark's Basketball (YouTube)

They met on Jan. 10 at Saint Mark's. The Spartans were 8-1 on the season while the Pandas were looking to get to the .500 mark. This game would go to triple overtime where the Spartans would pull away with a 70-59 win. Grace Trerotola would score 34 points for the Pandas with six three-pointers and a perfect eight for eight from the line. She hit a three at the buzzer to send it to overtime, then did it again to send it to third overtime. Lauren McDonald led the Spartans with 22 points

No. 13 Appoquinimink vs Archmere Girls Soccer

On May 15 in Claymont in one of the best soccer games of the year. Emma Gioffre scored in the 27th minute to give the Auks the 1-0 lead. Appoquinimink would tie it in the 60th minute then win it in the 80th minute on a corner kick goal by Avery Holland who came up from her defensive position to win the game with the last :30 second goal.

No. 12 Laurel vs Seaford Boys Basketball (YouTube)

The second sold out game between these two teams with the Henlopen South title on the line. The Blue Jays would walk away with a 89-76 win to capture the title.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY JASON WINCHELL

We have went through and picked the top 15 games from the 2022-23 high school sports season. Below you will see the games we selected with some statistics and a short recap of why these games were our top picks. Most of these games are rewatchable either on our YouTube Channel or on the NFHS Network (subscription necessary) if you would like to see them.

No. 15 William Penn vs Howard Basketball (YouTube)

This Jan. 31 game didn't disappoint as these two top 10 teams raced up and down the court in an overtime classic. Rasheen Matthews Jr. led the Wildcats with 15 points in their 58-56 win.

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FORMER BLUE HEN MAKES MAJOR LEAGUE DEBUT

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Minnesota Twins shut out the Boston Red Sox 6-0 June 22 in a baseball matinee. The big news from that game was not the score or the complete game shut out thrown by Twins starter Joe Ryan, it was the major league debut of former Blue Hen and Hodgson Silver Eagle Brandon Walter.

Walter, a New Castle native, played his high school baseball for Hodgson Silver Eagles and played his collegiate baseball for the Delaware Blue Hens. After three seasons at the University of Delaware, Walter was drafted by the Red Sox, with the 797th overall pick in the 26th round.

Walter entered the game in the second inning against the Twins in relief of Justin Garza. He ended up pitch-

ing 6.2 innings in relief allowing three runs, on three hits. Walter did settle down after giving up three runs in his first two innings of work. He threw a total of 92 pitches with 56 of them being strikes.

Walter did accomplish some firsts as he recorded his first ever major league strikeout when he struck out Max Kelder. Unfortunately, he did give up his first major league home run when Byron Buxton took him deep for his second home run of the game. Brandon also recorded 20 or more outs in relief, which hadn't been done in the Red Sox organization since 1944.

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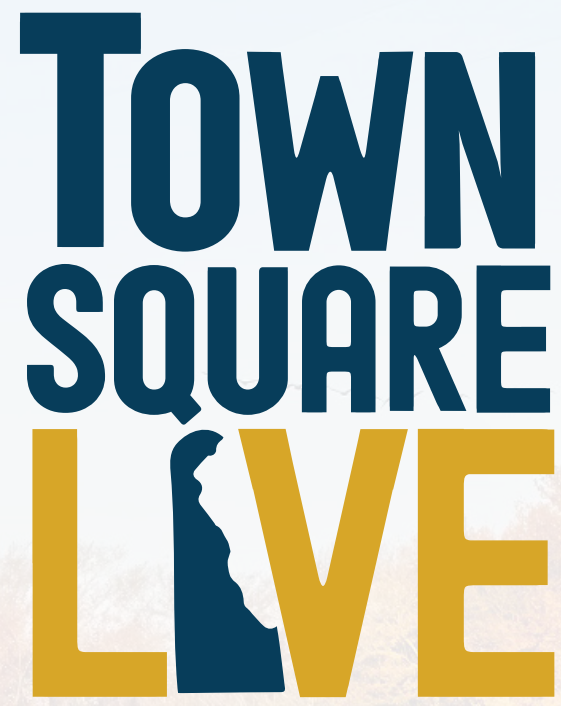
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