



# The Albany HERALD



LOCAL MATTERS



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ALBANYHERALD.COM

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026

## Officials encourage Dougherty County residents to resolve to clean up in 2026

By Alan Mauldin  
alan.mauldin@albanyherald.com

ALBANY -- "Doggone it! Here's a truck that just dropped a bag of litter on Mock Road."

That was Dougherty County Commissioner Anthony Jones' exclamation as he was speaking recently with an Albany Herald reporter about litter. The commissioner, who was on the phone with the reporter at the time, saw the litter fall off the

truck as he drove on the road. Jones said he chased down the driver, who was unaware that the bag of garbage had fallen off the truck. The driver returned to pick it up.

The commissioner said he is making addressing litter in 2026 a personal goal.

"I'm going to say Happy New Year to all the litter bugs," he said. "I would like to send out a plea to any and everyone who

is littering up our streets, our communities, our neighborhoods, I'd like you to shift your focus to cleaning up Dougherty County."

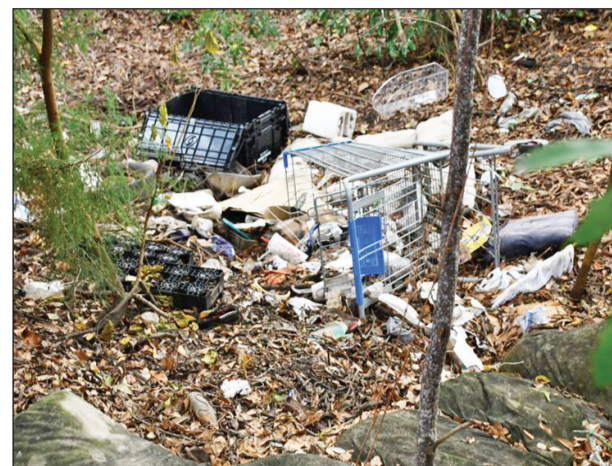
A few days earlier Albany City Commissioners Jon Howard and Willie Weaver invited the Herald on an inspection of an area in the 100 block of Cordele Road. There, what appeared to be a small storm drain area was littered with plastic laundry de-

tergent and bleach bottles, as well as pillows, bedding, grocery store carts, tires as well as glass bottles.

At the former Harvey's store nearby, an abandoned trash collector's door was open and people have been adding garbage and tires to the mix in the trailer.

"This was here when Harvey's was here, and it has been go-

See CLEAN UP, 2A



Staff Photo: Alan Mauldin

Albany City Commissioner Jon Howard recently became aware of an area at a shopping center on Cordele Road where individuals have been dumping trash. City and county officials are asking the public to pitch in and address the litter problem.

## Kinnebrew family succeeds with olive farming where Thomas Jefferson failed



Staff Photo: Tara Fletcher

The Kinnebrew family's olive farm in Americus is right at the north end of the Olive Belt.

Easton Kinnebrew shows off some of the olive crop harvested at his New Era Olive Farm in Americus.

By Tara Fletcher  
news@albanyherald.com

*Editor's Note: The following story appears in the latest issue of the Southwest Georgia Outdoors magazine. A few copies of the magazine remain available at sponsors' businesses and at the 306 W. Broad Ave. office of The Albany Herald.*

AMERICUS -- Over the past couple of decades, olive farms have been popping up across Georgia. Most people think olives are a new addition to the many crops Georgia is known to grow, but the history of Georgia and olives goes way back.

After returning from France, Thomas Jefferson expressed excitement about the possibility of growing olives in the southern United States.

See OLIVE, 2A

## New laws will address professional services, homeowner protections, car owners, politicians

By Alan Mauldin  
alan.mauldin@albanyherald.com

ATLANTA — Most new laws from this year's legislative session took effect in July, but a handful of significant bills became law on New Year's day.

They address shortages in accounting and dentistry, and they increase homeowner protections. They update campaign finance and vehicle licensing requirements. One adds a new look for car tags.

House Bill 148, The Public Accountancy Act of 2025, was brought by Rep. John Carson, R-Marietta, a certified public accountant trying to address a shortage of accountants. It updates a licensing framework established nearly three decades ago by offering new paths to becoming a certified public accountant. It also lets accounting firms do some work in Georgia without having an office in the state.

House Bill 551 by Rep. Jason Ridley, R-Chatsworth, updates rules for owning and operating a motor vehicle, adding numerous new requirements around the issuance of temporary operating permits and setting standards for a

See LAWS, 2A

Periodical — Mail Label

## SOUTH GEORGIA HEALTHCARE SUMMIT TO STRENGTHEN FUTURE OF RURAL HEALTH CARE

Staff Reports  
news@albanyherald.com

TIFTON -- The sixth annual South Georgia Healthcare Summit will take place on Feb. 10 at the UGA Conference Center here, bringing together educators, employers, students, and community partners to strengthen the future of health care in rural Georgia.

The summit is a joint venture between the Southwest Georgia Healthcare Sector Partnership (Region 10) and the South Georgia Health-

care Group (Region 11). This year's theme, "From Education to Employment: Building the Future of Rural Georgia Healthcare," highlights the critical connection between education pipelines and work force readiness.

Participants will include representatives from K-12 education, post-secondary institutions, health care employers, and community partners, all working collaboratively to address regional health care work force needs.

Keynote speakers include

Tammy Bryant, director of curriculum for Allied Health with the Office of Technical Education, and Joseph Echols, executive director of secondary education initiatives at the Technical College System of Georgia. Additional presentations will feature representatives from area technical colleges, along with powerful student testimonials showcasing real-world success stories.

A highlight of the summit will

See HEALTHCARE, 2A



Special Photo

The sixth annual South Georgia Healthcare Summit will take place on Feb. 10 at the UGA Conference Center in Tifton.

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## From 1A OLIVE

"I never had my wishes so kindled for the introduction of any article of new culture into our own country," he said, and in 1791, hoping to build a profitable grove, he did just that. Jefferson brought 500 olive tree seedlings to Georgia. Unfortunately most of the trees died and his dream was not realized.

Although Jefferson wasn't successful in his attempts, he inspired others to endeavor to grow the fruit-bearing evergreen. In the 1800s, people like Louisa Greene Shaw, James Hamilton Couper, and Thomas Spalding accomplished what Jefferson couldn't, and soon pickled olives and olive

oil became profitable Georgia crops. Shortly after the crop caught on, though, labor shortages caused by the Civil war, the popularity of cotton seed oil and a couple of hurricanes toppled Georgia's olive industry.

In 1820, while olives were thriving on Georgia's coast, the Kinnebrew family was settling on its 400-acre farm in Sumter County. For the next 100-plus years, the family grew peaches, and in the 1940s they began to grow row crops. To this day, the farm actively grows row crops. But now sixth-generation farmer Easton Kinnebrew has put his stamp on the family legacy with the addition of 20 acres of Arbiquina olive trees.

"I'm a general contractor; I grew up hanging out with my granddad on the farm and I

really enjoyed it," Kinnebrew said. "I decided I wanted to continue the family tradition (as a hobby) and farm something of my own. In 2011, after talking to a fellow grower, I decided I could ease into olive farming without a huge expense or too much work and I planted 10 acres of trees. I was wrong on both points."

With that, on the northernmost edge of the olive belt, New Era Olive Farm was born. The Kinnebrews understood that their baby would take 3-5 years to produce its first harvest. While they waited, they planted an additional 10 acres. Nearly 5 years in, New Era had a crop.

The harvest season at the olive farm is typically in the fall. Once the fruit is harvested, it's taken to the mill within 24 hours.

"The 24-hour time frame is crucial to ensure the quality and purity of the olive oil," New Era co-owner Stephanie Kinnebrew said. "After it's pressed at the mill, it returns to the farm where it sits for 2 to 3 months while sediment settles. The sediment is then removed from most of the oil and two products are bottled: extra virgin olive oil and olio nuevo (new oil)."

"The obvious difference between the two oils is that one has sediment and one doesn't, but the taste of the olio nuevo (with sediment) has a fresher, fruitier flavor. Also, the shelf life is different. The sediment-free oil has a shelf life of 3-4 years, and the new oil lasts 4-6 months."

To ensure their crop maintains its quality and the distinction of extra virgin, the

farm's soil is tested twice a year and the product is tested by UGA for fatty acid and polyphenol content. In the olive oil industry, Stephanie says, "70% of olive oil in grocery stores is really a mix of a little olive oil and nut or seed oil so you're not always getting what you think you're buying."

She also advises buyers to only purchase olive oils in dark glass bottles. She noted: "Clear plastic bottles allow too much sunlight in and change the composition of the oil."

The Kinnebrews admit that they are constantly learning new things about the olive-growing business. As part of that education, Easton sits on the board of the Southeast Olive Growers Association formed to further the production of olives in the Southeast

through shared information. The pair are also looking into investing in building a local mill to better serve the region's olive growers.

Stephanie and Easton said they want to grow olives for the rest of their lives, and in return for your support they promise to produce a quality product.

"Local farms are so important because the money they earn goes back into the community, and the community knows where their product comes from and what's in it," Stephanie said.

Currently, interested consumers can purchase New Era's oils on neweraolivefarm.com, at all Stripling's locations and at various boutiques in the Americus area.

## From 1A HEALTHCARE

be the presentation of scholarship awards, with winning recipients receiving checks to support their education. Scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors entering a health care career pathway

and post-secondary students currently enrolled in health care programs.

Attendees also will have the opportunity to participate in breakout sessions focused on:

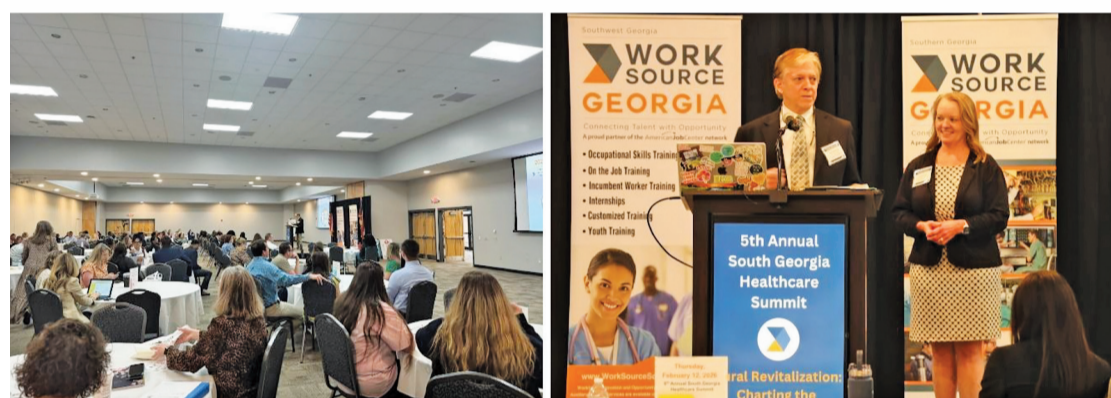
- Education pipelines
- Employer strategies
- Innovation & technology
- The Innovation & Technology session will feature inter-

active mobile units located in the parking area, including Phoebe Putney's Simulation Mobile Center, Miller County Hospital's Mobile Clinic, and the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth mobile unit. The summit also will include presentations from 3B Scientific Immersive Simulation Software, showcasing cutting-edge health care training tools.

Proceeds from summit sponsorships directly fund the Healthcare Scholarship Programs after summit expenses, ensuring continued investment in the region's future health care work force.

The event is free to attend, with lunch provided, and will feature 30 vendors available for networking and engagement. Attendance is capped at 300 participants, and early registration is strongly encouraged.

For more information or to register, interested participants should plan ahead to secure their spot at this impactful regional event.



The sixth annual South Georgia Healthcare Summit will take place on Feb. 10 at the UGA Conference Center in Tifton. **Special Photo**

## From 1A LAWS

new electronic system for issuing them. It also lets permitted property owners install an immobilization device on trespassing vehicles rather than just having them towed.

House Bill 567 by Rep. Katie Dempsey, R-Rome, addresses regional shortages in dentistry, authorizing licensed dentists to practice online, with regulation by the Georgia Board of Dentistry. It also permits coverage of teledentistry by dental benefits plans.

"Geography should not be a barrier to dental care," Kristen Morgan, the Georgia Dental Association executive director, said in May when Gov. Brian Kemp signed the bill into law.

Senate Bill 35 by Sen. Larry Walker III, R-Perry, gives homeowners more time to prepare for loss of insurance. It doubles the minimum notice period for nonrenewal of certain residential policies to 60 days, from 30.

Senate Bill 112 by Sen. Clint Dixon, R-Buford, requires that manufacturer warranties of residential HVAC systems transfer to home buyers. It also requires that warranties take effect on the

date a system is installed by a licensed contractor and prohibits requiring product registration as a condition of warranty.

Senate Bill 199 by Sen. Sam Watson, R-Moultrie, prohibits the State Ethics Commission initiating investigations of candidates within 60 days of their election. It also requires that local elected officials file mandatory financial disclosures with the commission rather than locally. And it requires that political action committees maintain bank accounts with detailed reporting when they contribute to candidates in the state. It also establishes uniform reporting dates for campaigns for all levels of office and requires redaction of home addresses from any records the commission makes available to the public.

Last but not least is America First: Senate Bill 291. The act, by Sen. Steve Gooch, R-Dahlonega, establishes a special license plate featuring the American flag and the words "America First." Funds raised from the sale of this plate will go to the state general fund. Gooch pushed the bill through as Senate majority leader, a post he left after the legislative session to run for lieutenant governor.

### Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

**ALBANY** — A cornerstone of southwest Georgia's civil rights commemorations returns this January as the H.E.A.R.T. (Hands Extended Across Reaching Together) Organization and Procter & Gamble Albany present the 46th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Breakfast. The event is scheduled for Jan. 19 at 7:30 a.m..

Continuing a proud tradition of community and faith, the program will once again be held at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. This year's program is headlined by keynote speaker E. Dewey Smith Jr., the senior pastor of The House of Hope and a globally recognized speaker, author, and musician.

For nearly a half-century, the King Day Breakfast has served as Albany's premier "Day On" celebration.

## E. Dewey Smith to speak at H.E.A.R.T. King Day Breakfast

"The HEART Organization is deeply honored to once again gather our community to reflect on the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," Anne "AJ" Johnson, the president/CEO of HEART Organization Inc., said in a news release. "To have a voice like Dr. Smith's in Albany for our 46th year is a testament to the enduring strength of our community. This program is not just a breakfast; it is a call to action."

The program will be guided by Master of Ceremonies Orson Burton, the president and CEO of the United Way of Southwest Georgia. A Morehouse College graduate and member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Burton will lead an agenda that includes official greetings from the mayor of Albany and the chairman of the Dougherty County Commission.

The morning's activities will

be further elevated by a stirring musical tribute led by J. Nathan Paige and the MLK Mass Choir, featuring special guest vocalist and "Dialogue" host Karla Heath-Sands. This communitywide ensemble honors King's legacy through the power of song and welcomes all local vocalists to participate. Rehearsals are scheduled for Jan. 12 and 15 at 7 p.m. at Victorious Life Church, 201 N. Carroll Street. To register, citizens can simply text 'MLK choir' to (833) 223-7813.

This program is a complimentary gift to the community, made possible through the powerful partnership between the HEART Organization and P&G Albany, which has served as the program's sole sponsor since 1989. The event is free and open to the public, and no tickets are required for admission. Given the profound significance of honoring King's



**E. DEWEY SMITH JR**

legacy and the high anticipation for Smith's address, community members are encouraged to arrive early to share in this momentous occasion.

- Event Details:**  
**What:** 46th Annual MLK Commemorative Program Breakfast  
**When:** Jan. 19 | 7:30 a.m.  
**Where:** Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 901 S. Westover Blvd, Albany  
**Cost:** Free and Open to the Public

### NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR PACKAGED BEER & WINE LICENSE

RCE Investments, LLC, trading as My Pie Pizzeria at 2700 Dawson Rd. Ste. 14, Albany, Georgia 31707 give notice that I have applied for an Alcohol License to be considered as a transfer of ownership. Albany Herald Run Dates: December 30, January 1, 3 & 6

### NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR PACKAGED BEER & WINE LICENSE

Albany Enterprise Inc., trading as Marathon Mart at 402 N Westover Blvd, Albany, Georgia 31707 give notice that I have applied for an Alcohol License to be considered as a transfer of ownership. Albany Herald Run Dates: January 1, 3, 6 & 8

## From 1A CLEAN UP

ing on for 10 years or more," Howard said.

Last year the city and county revamped the Keep Albany-Dougherty Beautiful board, and Howard, as chair, said he intends to be involved.

"I'm going to be a boots on the ground chairman," he said. The veteran city commis-

sioner also launched a "Keep East Albany Peachy Clean" campaign in late 2025.

For his part, Jones said he intends to work with Howard and others to not only encourage the public to do its part but to work to make sure laws are enforced when asking nicely is not enough.

"We're experiencing a lot of illegal dumping," Jones said. "If you're one of these people who are dumping illegally, I'd like to appeal to

you to cease and desist and use your trash cans, the landfill and any other means to clean up our community."

County residents are allowed to take up to 2,600 pounds of garbage per day to the county landfill, he said.

For those who don't get the message, law enforcement can make people pay attention, the commissioner said.

One issue he has noticed is people with unsecured garbage, such as the truck he

stopped that day. That also includes commercial garbage services whose trucks often blow trash out as they're leaving the county facility.

"If DCP (Dougherty County Police) catches your company, you will be cited," he said. "Dougherty County has zero tolerance for littering. We've got to enforce it, but I'd rather do it through the spirit of cooperation."

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# Daily Horoscopes

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):** Today is another sexy day in the general stars. For you, this energy shows up in the world or the workplace. Flirtation can fly in some situations, harassment is something else. Keep boundaries tight.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20):** Projecting fantasies onto another person will block you from actually knowing them. Projection prevents an accurate assessment. Open your eyes outside of wishful thinking and decide based on patterns.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** If the world isn't bringing comfort, your home base probably can today. When the choices aren't great, pushing things can easily worsen situations. Go slow, this week's improving Universal stars could bring better options.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** Romance could be on the agenda this evening, there's lots of heat in partner stars. If you're single and dating, there could be less heat but more help and support. Communications could be emotional today.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** When you bring the party to the place, doing good can feel like fun, not work. Get your crew on board and give to your community with joy. A financial situation could be harder to handle for a day or so.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** The creative spark could spark you again today, any kind of creation or even just playing at creating could be just the vibe you need. Try for some lightness and self-expression. Your heart could be on your sleeve now.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** Artistry plus hands-on efforts can make good things happen on the home front. A friend could offer an excellent idea, but the same friend or another could become overly emotional and need support.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** More sexy vibes are in your sector of ideas and communication, it could be a night to tell a bedtime story. People might believe in you more as they know you more. Keep things real at work or in

the world.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** A better understanding of something you value could come to the forefront, it might not be what you've imagined was important. Understanding yourself is one of the keys to self-mastery, open to new awareness.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** The iron hand in the velvet glove could be yours, or it could come knocking on your door. Identify the whole pattern, not just the charming exterior. Financial issues could still be emotional today.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** Past survival reminds you of what you can survive. Past victories remind you of what you can achieve. Let the past be your foundation, let today be the moment you work within, let the future pull you forward.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):** Friendship can bring both grace and tangible help, spend time with a friend or friends today if you can. Your empathy can make you want to give back but keep your contributions bite-sized so you don't burn out.

**IF TODAY IS YOUR BIRTHDAY:** Your appeal could be off the charts in January, this could be a lot of fun or a lot of frustration, depending. Enjoy if possible, activate and uphold boundaries if needed. Not every team is stronger than an individual alone, but there's the possibility of some serious synergy with someone you trust. Business/financial opportunities could arise. While January's high scoring days could make it a great month for a significant FIRST, there's a possibility of accidental or deliberate misinformation. Make an extra effort to get all the facts. February's planning could come apart — someone could be uncooperative which could challenge your confidence. Don't let depression or desperation drive any decisions, this is temporary. By later March, things could turn around dramatically, with many outstanding possibilities queuing up for your benefit. 2026 could be the year a lot of dreams come true.

research a manned space shuttle.

**1982:** Truck driver William G. Bonin was convicted in the "Freeway Killer" case.

**1994:** Figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was attacked, leading to convictions for those involved, including Tonya Harding's ex-husband.

## CALENDAR OF OBSERVANCES

- National Bean Day
- National Cuddle Up Day
- National Shortbread Day (also National Walker's Shortbread Day)
- National Technology Day
- National Apple Tree Day
- National Smith Day
- National Take a Poet to Lunch Day
- National Take Down the Christmas Tree Day
- Standard Poodle Day

The Albany Herald (U.S.P.S. 012-320), 306 W. Broad Ave., Albany, Ga 31701, published daily by GTLN, is the legal organ of Dougherty and Calhoun Counties. Periodicals class postage paid at Albany, Ga. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Albany Herald, 306 W. Broad Ave., Albany, Ga 31701. Business Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Don't waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good."

Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
poet (1803-1882)

## CORRECTION

This newspaper is committed to publishing fair and accurate information. Errors should be brought to the attention of Editor Carlton Fletcher at (229) 888-9300. Corrections or clarifications will appear in this space.

## SQUAWKBOX

squawkbox@albanyherald.com

If the True President can talk tough to Maduro, why can't he talk tough to Putin?

The Constitution reserves the right to declare war and invade another country to the House of Representatives. It would be safer for our country if the Republican members of the House would gather any courage they may have left after their worship of orange boy and fulfill their duties to our country.

Fletcher, I was moved to tears by the story of your cancer treatment. What a great way to kick off the new year; hopefully, people at risk will listen to you and get tested. Happy new year ... You have reason to celebrate.

I hope B.J. saved her B.J. for Mayor signs because we're gonna need them.

You libs don't appreciate a great president. Trump has made it where you can be proud to be an entitled white man again. I respect a president smart enough to make himself and family billions of dollars while making our country great again. And he is an honest Christian man.

U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene exposed massive government fraud that's ripping taxpayers off.

If ever there has been a time for a third-party audit of our city and county employee base, it is now. Many workers are extremely helpful and effective, but others have absolutely no function and are a complete financial drain on our tax revenue. If our taxes are going up, let's cut some wasteful spending via layoffs, as well-managed cities do. City and county Commissioners, are you paying attention? This is long overdue.

Carlton, since your wife was in at the beginning of the Pretoria Fields fiasco, perhaps she could shed some insider light on the goings-on there.

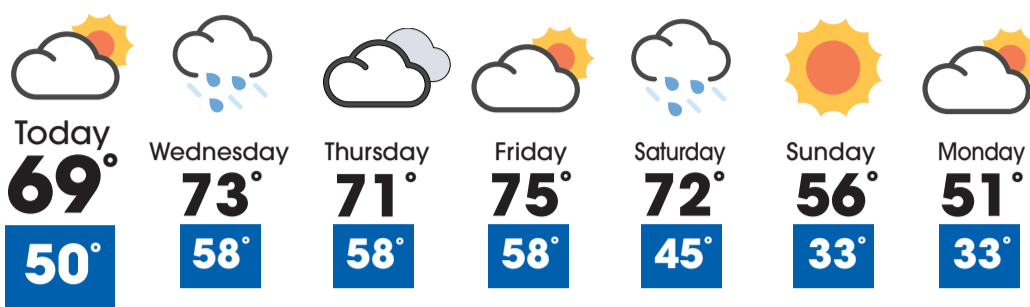
For 2026, our mayor, city manager, city and county elected officials need to seriously level up. Many departments have never been so dysfunctional. APD has never been so strategy-lacking and absent in the community. The answer is not more apartments or a community center. We are overdue for no-nonsense hard work to clean up the city. Crime, wasteful spending, trash, code violations, roadway danger. Address it, or step aside. No more excuses.

Litter has become a major problem in our city. Unfortunately, our narcissist Commission Chair and his cronies have nothing to say and no new strategies to address the problem. No school-based outreach, no adopt-a-block or park, no crack-down of chronically littered businesses and residences, no publicized group litter pick-ups. Our city and KADB need new, active leadership.

Fletcher, you're still the primary reason I keep reading The Herald. Blessings to you.

Every human life bears the image and breath of God. He gives it and only He can take it. For that reason the highest form of capital punishment is reserved for those who kill another. In Albany we tend to see the rights of the criminal more important than the value of life of the victim. Life, peace, hope, prosperity cannot exist in a chaotic, dysfunctional society.

## Weather Forecast



By Frank Stewart  
Tribune Content Agency

<b>NORTH</b>			
▲ 7 6 2			
♥ J 4			
♦ A J 9 8 7 4			
♣ 6 5			
<b>WEST</b>		<b>EAST</b>	
▲ Q J 8 3		▲ K 10 5	
♥ 10 8 5 3 2		♥ Q 9 7	
♦ 5 3		♦ Q 6 2	
♣ 8 3		♣ K 10 9 7	
<b>SOUTH</b>			
▲ A 9 4			
♥ A K 6			
♦ K 10			
♣ A Q J 4 2			
South	West	North	East
2 NT	Pass	3 NT	All Pass
Opening lead - ♥ 3			
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## Daily Bridge Club

### The right door

Cy the Cynic - cynic that he is - says when one door closes, another one slams in your face. No doubt, Cy's attitude stems from deals such as today's.

Cy played at 3NT, and West led a low heart. Cy put up dummy's jack, but East's queen covered. Cy took the king, pondered and led the ace and queen of clubs.

East won and returned a heart, and the Cynic won and cashed the jack of clubs. A 3-3 break would have given him at least nine tricks. When instead West slammed that door shut by pitching a spade, Cy took the king of diamonds and led the ten to dummy's jack. East produced the queen, and the result was down three.

#### FIRST HEART

Cy tried to open the wrong door. At Trick Two he should lead the ten of diamonds to the jack. If East takes the queen, Cy overtakes the king later for nine sure

tricks.

If East ducks the first diamond, Cy leads a club to his jack. He goes to the ace of diamonds for another club finesse and ends with four clubs, two diamonds, two hearts and a spade.

#### DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ K 10 5 ♥ Q 9 7 ♦ Q 6 2 ♣ K 10 9 7. The dealer, at your left, opens one spade. Your partner doubles, the next player passes and you respond 1NT. Partner then bids two diamonds. What do you say?

**ANSWER:** Expert opinion would vary. I think partner has a hand such as 6, A 8 5 2, A K 10 8 4 3, Q 4. He started with a double to get hearts into the picture. If he had bid two hearts at his second turn, he would suggest more strength. Pass. You might raise to three diamonds.

South dealer  
N-S vulnerable

## ADVICE COLUMNIST ■ ERIC THOMAS

### Siblings stage hearing aid 'intervention'



**Dear Eric:** I am 60 years old and have had hearing loss since grade school. I'd flunk all those screening tests. My two younger siblings also have my same type of hearing loss and have worn hearing aids since their 40s at least.

My siblings are persistent in trying to get me to buy hearing aids which they feel I need. Yes, I probably need them according to medical tests, but I have resisted due to vanity and, more practically, cost.

I am tired of being judged for my loss of hearing. My siblings came at me today, together, and approached me intervention-style to tell me when and where to buy hearing aids.

People at work have made rude comments pertaining to my hearing. "Oh, you're so deaf," "we know you can't hear us anyway," et cetera.

Please tell me what to say to people who think my hearing is their business and how to address comments that are so rude. And when I do decide to get hearing aids, how should I respond to the comments I know I'll get about how much better it is, now you can hear, oh finally you can hear?

- Hearing Jokes

**Dear Hearing:** Let's take your siblings and your coworkers separately. Your coworkers are being too cavalier with their comments. They're not trying to goad you into seeking treatment; they're mocking you for a medical condition. They may know that you've taken a bold stance about your hearing loss and see that as permission to tease you about it, but they're overstepping. This is a chance for you to talk to HR about

what's appropriate conversation for the workplace. You can also talk to HR, if you'd like, about options for hearing assistance in your company's insurance plan.

If your company doesn't have HR, or you'd rather deal with this head-on, be direct but don't get drawn into a back-and-forth about it. "It's inappropriate and unkind for you to make fun of my abilities. If you have an issue with the way I do my job, please address it with me professionally, or we can talk about it with a supervisor."

As to your siblings, you are obviously entitled to do whatever you want with your body and your health. But I'd encourage you to think about their input, aggressive though it may be, as coming from a place of legitimate concern.

Because they share the same hearing loss, they're likely had a lot of conversations with medical professionals about their options and their quality of life and so they may feel they're well-positioned to advise you.

They may fear you're depriving yourself, or they may be concerned about the increased risk of isolation or the link between hearing loss and dementia. In short, they may see this as an emergency situation. You don't have to agree. But I would encourage you to think of it less as judgment and more as a hand reaching out, offering help.

**Dear Eric:** my mother and I have given my son, his wife and my granddaughter birthday and Christmas gifts every year for 14 years now. I have taken them to dinner some four-to-five times and my mother has had them over for lunch count-

less times.

They have not reciprocated even once. Should my mother and I continue giving?

- Feeling Disappointed

**Dear Disappointed:** Disappointment often comes when an expectation isn't met. So, the first question I'd ask is are your son and his wife aware of your expectation? Now, yes, it's reasonable to think a son would send birthday and Christmas gifts to a parent and grandparent without being prompted or spring for a meal now and then. I can't speak to why this isn't occurring to him.

But what I know for sure is that this will continue to be a source of resentment for you and your mother, whether or not you stop giving, if you don't talk it through.

What you're feeling is an imbalance in the relationship. Gift giving can be an expression of love, so it makes sense that when you give and don't receive, you might feel a lack of love. The question you want to ask yourself, and them, is "how can we love each other better?" That's going to take a little bit of vulnerability. It's OK to talk about bruised feelings if you have them, or confusion. It's OK to ask why. But the goal of the conversation should be a better understanding of where each other is coming from.

Tell them what matters to you, tell them what gift-giving or dinners out mean to you, and tell them how you'd like to feel. The solution might be gifts from them, or it might be something else entirely. But you won't find it unless you talk.

Send questions to R. Eric Thomas at [eric@askingeric.com](mailto:eric@askingeric.com) or P.O. Box 22474, Philadelphia, Pa. 19110. Follow him on Instagram and sign up for his weekly newsletter at [verichthomas.com](http://verichthomas.com).

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THE ALBANY HERALD

# Perspectives

The Albany  
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**Carlton Fletcher**  
EDITOR

— Georgia Trust for —  
**LOCAL NEWS**

**TODAY'S  
BIBLE  
VERSE**

*"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."*  
**1 Thessalonians 1:5**

**COLUMNIST ■ MARC HYDEN**

## Georgia interstate slowpokes should feel the need for speed

In the immortal words of notorious rock star Sammy Hagar, "I can't drive 55!" and for good reason, at least in Georgia. The speed limit on the Peach State's interstates vary, but it generally sits at 70 miles per hour outside of congested areas. However, many drivers rarely approach this speed, and driving far slower than the pace of traffic, like the 55 miles per hour that bedeviled Hagar, could be dangerous.

Despite that, the minimum speed limit on most Peach State interstates is set at a snail's pace: 40 miles per hour. This policy is both antiquated and even hazardous, but this might change soon. There is already a bill filed to address this: House Bill 809, sponsored by Rep. John Carson, R-Marietta. A Capitol insider tells me the Georgia General Assembly may tackle this topic next year and not a moment too soon.

If passed, HB 809 would make a small, but meaningful, tweak. According to the bill language, "On any part of a highway in this state with a speed limit of 65 miles per hour or greater, the minimum speed limit for such highways shall be 50 miles per hour." Simply put, the state would increase the minimum speed by 10 miles per hour in most cases, which would be the first major update to this policy in decades.

In 1953, the General Assembly passed legislation empowering the public safety commissioner, transportation commissioner or local authorities to set the minimum speed limit as they saw necessary. It isn't clear how early policymakers made 40 miles per hour the norm as the minimum speed limit, but by the early 1970s, it was already well-established.

Then in 1974, the maximum speed limit on interstates was set to no more than 55, but the minimum speed remained the same. By 1987, states were authorized to increase the maximum speed limit to 65, but again, the minimum speed limit remained unchanged. Now the maximum speed limit is 70 miles per hour, but 40 is still the minimum.

According to comedian George Carlin, "Anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac," and depending on your perspective, Georgia encourages drivers of both persuasions as the chasm between maximum and minimum speed limits continues to grow. This policy permits drivers to maintain a broad range of

speeds simultaneously, which is problematic.

In 2023, there were more than 370,000 auto accidents on Georgia's roads and roughly 1,600 traffic fatalities. Of course, not all of these incidents and deaths were related to driving slowly. Distracted driving, driving under the influence and speeding are top culprits, and seatbelt disuse is a major contributing factor to drivers' health outcomes associated with crashes. Georgia has addressed each of these in the code relatively recently, but not the minimum speed limit. They should.



HYDEN

According to one government manual, "If you drive slower than the minimum speed, you can halt the traffic flow and create a dangerous condition. [...] Those driving too slowly can be as dangerous as those who drive too fast."

Rigorous research backs up this statement, too. "In a landmark study of speed and crashes involving 10,000 drivers on 600 miles (970 kilometers) of rural highways, Solomon [...] found a relationship between vehicle speed and crash incidence that is illustrated by a U-shaped curve. Crash rates were lowest for travel speeds near the mean speed of traffic, and increased with greater deviations above and below the mean." reads a Federal Department of Transportation report. In other words, driving faster and slower than the speed limit can be dangerous propositions.

Slow drivers, even when not involved in accidents, can also contribute to traffic congestion, which is an ongoing problem in Georgia. U.S. News ranked Georgia's capital as the country's eighth-worst city for traffic; Atlanta is home to three of the nation's 10 worst traffic bottlenecks; and the metro area has the dubious honor of having nine of the country's 100 worst bottlenecks. There are many variables contributing to these woes, and I imagine that exceptionally slow drivers are not helping the situation.

If Carson gets his way, the minimum speed limit might get its first major update in many decades, and if it does, then it may improve traffic and reduce auto accidents. Since it would set the minimum speed limit to 50 on most interstates, Sammy Hagar will be able to drive 55 (or faster if he wishes), which I imagine comes as a great relief to the rock star.

Marc Hyden is the senior director of state government affairs. Follow him on X at @marc\_hyden.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

## Good morning ... wake up, Albany

Good morning, Albany. Actually, good morning, America. Wow. What a year we have all had. What a life we have all had and what a life we are still facing. With the evils of today -- media, social connections, horrible working and living conditions -- do we really want to step into 2026?

Hell, yes, we want to continue. Why? Because God's not finished with us. We might have what we are going to do this year in our own minds, but I am telling you

God has His own plans. And if we would simply be still, we might hear Him. We might follow His ways a little better than what we've been doing.

I see people every day with real needs. I see people with an attitude daily that they are going to get something for free. I guess it's up to us to separate the greedy from the needy. But never stop looking for someone to help. Never give up on our community. Our country. Because. God's not

finished with our future. We just need to do our part.

So in conclusion. Take this year, 2026, and make it your best year ever. It's never too late to keep hope alive. Because God is alive. So let's start living out His plans for us. Because I just want you all to know ... you are a masterpiece to all.

Happy New Year  
B.J. Fletcher

**Punched...  
Threatened...  
Forcibly  
detained--then  
released...**



**...nevertheless,  
she persisted.**

KIRK

**FINE  
PRINT**

**STACEY  
ABRAMS**



**COLUMNIST ■ STACEY ABRAMS**

## How breaking government breaks democracy

When most people hear "authoritarianism," they tend to imagine tanks in the streets or elections being canceled overnight.

But democracy is usually undone more quietly — through budget cuts, layoffs and the slow dismantling of the institutions we rely on every day. One of the fastest ways to weaken a democracy is to break the government from the inside. You target the people who make it work and make those who rely on them suffer by default. When people no longer trust that the government will serve them, democracy becomes expendable.

This is Step 4 in the autocrat's playbook. And in few places is the destruction more visible than at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

Tens of thousands of Georgians work at the CDC or support its directive to protect the lives of Americans. They're our neighbors. They are parents picking up kids from school. They're scientists who keep us informed during illnesses. They track outbreaks and help local health departments do their jobs.

When Albany, Georgia, became a COVID-19 hotspot in 2020 — holding the No. 5 spot in coronavirus cases and deaths — it was the role of the CDC to understand how to defend lives in the region.

Whether it was the coronavirus or the bird flu, Georgians knew that the medical knowledge was centered right up 75 and 85. Yet now, the vital charge of the CDC — and the livelihoods of those who serve the public good — is being deliberately hollowed out by the Trump administration.

Step 4 in the authoritarian playbook is simple: break the government by breaking the people who make it function. You don't have to abolish agencies outright. You just take away their funding, politicize them and push out anyone who won't comply.

That's what we're watching with the gutting of the CDC and the broader federal workforce.

What began with the CDC is spreading. In a few weeks, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs plans to slash 35,000 health care jobs, including here in Georgia, a state where 7.6% of the population — or nearly 700,000 residents — are veterans.

Despite being chronically understaffed, the VA, like the CDC, will be asked to do critical, life-saving work with fewer people, fewer resources and fewer backup plans.

When Republicans eviscerate funding, freeze hiring, conduct mass firings or shut down the government entirely, they are sending a message: Do not trust us. Public service doesn't matter. The needs of the people don't matter. Only power does.

For Georgia, the stakes are enormous. The CDC helps protect us from outbreaks of measles, flu, foodborne illnesses and emerging diseases. It supports state and county health departments — especially in rural communities that already struggle to get basic care.

Given that agriculture is an economic engine, we have long relied on the CDC to spot problems before they can ravage communities. So, when the CDC is weakened, Georgians pay the price first.

Now, with cuts decimating veterans' health care, the harm will spread — and the solutions will be even harder to come by. But that's the point.

Authoritarians want the government to fail in visible ways so people stop believing it can help them at all. When inspections slow, data disappears and responses lag, people understandably ask, "Why doesn't government work?"

When those who defended our nation cannot get a doctor's appointment or a prescription, they will wonder if their sacrifices were in vain. Yet most good people won't blame sabotage — they will simply believe democracy failed to deliver because it's useless.

They won't use the words, but the sentiment will take root. Disappointment becomes disenchantment, and shared trust in the social contract transforms into disbelief that it's worth the fight.

What's happening now builds on years of attacks — politicizing public health, demonizing scientists and using budget battles as leverage to further erode services. This Republican authoritarian regime has been explicit about their goal: dismantle government and remake it into a hotbed of privatization and corruption.

However, the most insidious truth is that the damage is not always immediate or dramatic. The CDC will still issue reports, but the science is sketchy. VA offices will stay open, but getting an appointment takes even longer. Public service will feel more broken due to teacher shortages at Head Start and a lack of help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Fewer people will be willing to speak up when something's wrong. Over time, competence drains away, and trust follows. Eventually, a small "d" democratic government stops being something that serves everyone and becomes something that only serves the powerful.

That's why defending good government matters and why speaking up for civil servants and bureaucrats is an act of bravery. Making sure democracy delivers is not a talking point; it's a matter of self-interest.

These workers are scientists, nurses, inspectors, veterans and public servants who chose stability over profit because they believed in serving the public. Attacking them is attacking Georgia families and our future.

If Trump and Republicans succeed, the consequences ripple outward and include weaker public health, fewer protections, more privatization and a public that's been taught not to expect anything from democracy at all.

That's the warning — and Georgia is once again on the front lines.

Stacey Abrams is a bestselling author, entrepreneur and host of the podcast "Assembly Required." She previously served as minority leader in the Georgia House of Representatives.

# What to watch

## TUESDAY

January 6, 2026

All times Eastern. Start times can vary based on cable/satellite provider. Confirm times on your on-screen guide.

### Will Trent

**ABC, 8 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

Ramón Rodríguez returns as Special Agent Will Trent of the Georgia Bureau of Investigations as the drama is back for Season 4 with "... Speaking of Sharks."

### Moonshiners

**Discovery Channel, 8 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

Appalachia's colorful moonshiners invent new ways to meet demand for tax-free booze when trade wars start to cripple the liquor market. And when Canada calls for tariff-free liquor, even legal distillers return to the outlaw side in a cross-border bootlegging operation.

### Best Medicine

**FOX, 8 p.m. ■ New Series**

Catch an encore of the pilot of this new medical series centering on Dr. Martin Best (*The Good Wife's* Josh Charles), a brilliant Boston surgeon who abruptly leaves to become the general practitioner in an East Coast fishing village where he spent summers as a child.

### NBA Basketball

**NBC, 8 p.m. Live**

NBA *Coast 2 Coast* Tuesday presents Eastern viewers with the Miami Heat at the Minnesota Timberwolves, while fans out West get a clash between the Dallas Mavericks and Kings in Sacramento.

### Finding Your Roots

**PBS, 8 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

Henry Louis Gates Jr. is back for Season 12 of this genealogy series, which uncovers stories of resilience, love and sacrifice, revealing how diverse histories intertwine to shape America's shared identity. America Ferrera, Wiz Khalifa, Liza Colón-Zayas, Hasan Minhaj, Brittney Griner, Kristin Chenoweth and Flea are among this season's guests.



FRANCISCO ROMAN, FOX

### High Potential

**ABC, 9 p.m. ■ Midseason Premiere**

Season 2 resumes with "The One That Got Away: Part Two," in which Morgan's (Kaitlin Olson) suspicions of Rhys (guest star Aiden Turner) grow deeper as the case of the missing Rembrandt artwork continues.

### Wildcard Kitchen

**Food Network, 9 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

After midnight, Eric Adjepong invites top chefs to bring \$5,000 of their own money and play his culinary card game. Eric deals out the dish, time allotted and mandatory ingredients, but it's each chef's secret wildcard that makes or breaks the game. In the season premiere "Alex vs America's Champs," Alex Guarnaschelli faces off against two of her fiercest rivals from *Alex vs. America*, Kevin Lee and Arnold Myint.

### Doc

**FOX, 9 p.m. ■ Midseason Premiere**

Westside Hospital launches an investigation to discover the truth about Amy's (Molly Parker) hacked accounts in the midseason premiere "Chief."

### American Experience

**PBS, 9 p.m.**

Eighty years after two atomic bombs ended World War II and ushered in the nuclear age, the documentary "Bombshell" explores how the U.S. government manipulated the narrative about what happened to the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the bombings' aftermath. Through propaganda, censorship and the co-opting of the press, the government presented a benevolent picture of atomic power and minimized the horrific human toll.

### 1000-lb. Sisters

**TLC, 9 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

In the new season, Amy is deep in wedding-planning mode as she prepares to marry Brian in a Halloween celebration. Tammy is officially "adulthood" — taking on a volunteer position at an animal shelter and more responsibilities than ever at nearly 40.

### The Rookie

**ABC, 10 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

The police drama starring Nathan Fillion as LAPD officer John Nolan returns for Season 8 with "Czech Mate."

## CATCH A CLASSIC

### TCM Special Theme: The Working Class: True Stories

**TCM, beginning at 8 p.m.**

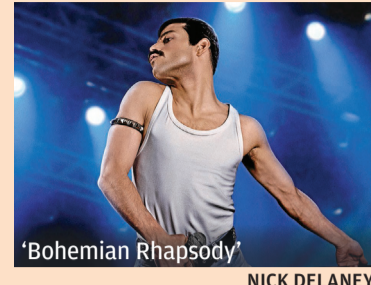
They work hard for their money and TCM treats them right every Tuesday in January with films saluting the working class. Tonight, what better way to begin this tribute than with stories about real-life working-class heroes? The courageous women who took a stand against worker safety violations at a plutonium plant are portrayed in Oscar-nominated performances by Meryl Streep and Cher in *Silkwood* (1983), and in the TCM premiere of 2005's *North Country* (pictured), Charlize Theron gives an



WARNER BROS.

inspiring portrayal of the miner who won America's first major sexual harassment case against her employer. Working in a mine remains the theme when workers daring to strike against their companies are shown in *Salt of the Earth* (1954) and *Harlan County U.S.A.* (1976). Unionization is the struggle of 1920s West Virginia mine laborers in *Matewan* (1987), as it is in Sally Field's Oscar-winning depiction of textile worker *Norma Rae* (1979), the opening film of this programming theme. Union!

## MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'Bohemian Rhapsody'

NICK DELANEY

**The Lion King** (2019, Family) Donald Glover, Seth Rogen **Freeform, 5:25 p.m.**

**Major League** (1989, Comedy) Tom Berenger, Charlie Sheen **Paramount, 6 p.m.**

**Nobody Dumps My Daughter** (2024, Drama) Ana Ortiz, Jasmine Vega **LMN, 6 p.m.**

**Unstoppable** (2010, Action) Denzel Washington, Chris Pine **AMC, 6 p.m.**

**Bohemian Rhapsody** (2018, Biography) Rami Malek, Lucy Boynton **FX, 7 p.m.**

**The Karate Kid** (2010, Family) Jaden Smith, Jackie Chan **BET, 7 p.m.**

**Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid** (1969, Western) Paul Newman, Robert Redford **Sundance, 7:45 p.m.**

**It Was Always You** (2021, Romance) Erin Krakow, Tyler Hynes **Hallmark, 8 p.m.**

**Living With My Mother's Killer** (2024, Suspense) Rhiannon Fish, Greyston Holt **LMN, 8 p.m.**

**Tommy Boy** (1995, Comedy) Chris Farley, David Spade **Paramount, 8:25 p.m.**

**About Last Night** (2014, Romance-comedy) Kevin Hart, Michael Ealy **Starz, 9 p.m.**

**Men in Black II** (2002, Action) Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith **AMC, 10 p.m.**

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# What to watch

## WEDNESDAY

January 7, 2026

All times Eastern. Start times can vary based on cable/satellite provider. Confirm times on your on-screen guide.

### Shifting Gears

**ABC, 8 p.m. ■ Midseason Premiere**

The sitcom returns with the new episode "Dog," in which Matt's (Tim Allen) refusal to allow a dog in the house leads Riley (Kat Dennings) to wonder if it's time for her and the kids to find their own place.

### The Masked Singer

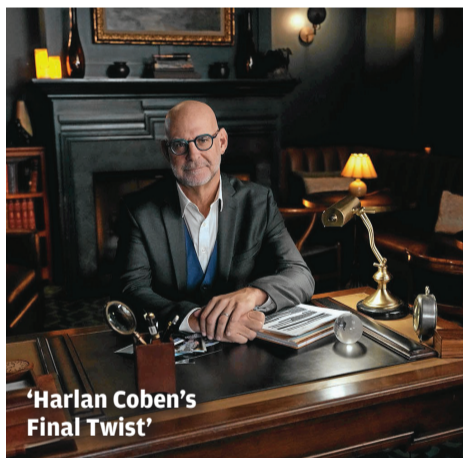
**FOX, 8 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

The costumed singing competition is back for Season 14, taking its themed episodes to new heights. Special nights include *Star Trek*, *Clueless*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and the *Twilight* saga. Characters this time around include Eggplant, Pucgasso, Queen Corgi, Scarab and the Croissants. Nick Cannon hosts with returning panelists Jenny McCarthy Wahlberg, Ken Jeong, Robin Thicke and Rita Ora.

### Hollywood Squares

**CBS, 8 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

The game show reboot returns for Season 2 on CBS with two episodes. Anthony Anderson, Glenn Close, Whitney Cummings, Pete Holmes, Lil Rel Howery, Triumph the Insult Comic Dog, Leslie Jones and Ross Mathews are the celebs in "I Will Not Be Ignored,



ROBERT VOETS, CBS

Glenn!" Then, Cummings, Holmes, Kat Dennings, Fortune Feimster, Tiffany Haddish, Padma Lakshmi, Joel McHale and RuPaul are guest squares in "Between a Cardigan Sandwich." Nate Burleson hosts with center square Drew Barrymore.

### Chicago Med

**NBC, 8 p.m. ■ Midseason Premiere**

The doctors deal with the fallout from the choices made during a power outage in the winter premiere "Triple Threat."

### Abbott Elementary

**ABC, 8:30 p.m. ■ Midseason Premiere**

*Abbott Elementary* returns from winter break with "Mall," which finds the staff dealing with unique challenges that come from teaching in a new temporary location: an abandoned mall.

### Neighborhood Watch

**HGTV, 9:30 p.m. ■ New Series**

HGTV turns its attention to revealing raw, unfiltered and sometimes shocking footage straight from security cameras, smart doorbells and nanny cams across America in its new series *Neighborhood Watch*.

### Pawn Stars

**History, 9:30 p.m. ■ Season Premiere**

Rick, Corey and Chum are back for Season 24, dealing movie posters, model F1 cars, music memorabilia and more.

### Shark Tank

**ABC, 10 p.m. ■ Midseason Premiere**

As Season 17 returns, entrepreneurs pitch their one-of-a-kind ideas to the Sharks, including a portable relief bottle, precision golf tees, a trusted nosebleed solution and digital windows that improve your health. Michael Strahan returns as Guest Shark.

### Harlan Coben's Final Twist

**CBS, 10 p.m. ■ New Series**

With over 90 million books sold globally and multiple scripted series, Harlan Coben is set to take on his first true-crime series. In each one-hour episode, Coben will guide audiences through gripping tales of murder, high-profile crimes and life-altering surprises, each meticulously unraveled to reveal hidden truths, deceptions and lies. The premiere episode will feature the harrowing case of Billy Payne and Billie Jean Hayworth, who were found shot to death in their Tennessee home, while their infant son was discovered still alive in his mother's arms. Detectives had no initial leads, pushing the investigation toward social media, where they uncovered a cyberbullying feud with neighbors and the involvement of a CIA agent driven by a personal vendetta.

### Weathered: After the LA Firestorm

**PBS, 10 p.m.**

One year after the devastating Los Angeles-area wildfires, survivors race to rebuild stronger. This episode follows residents and fire officials uniting to make L.A. a model for recovery and a blueprint for communities facing future disasters.

**Mask** (1939); **Captain Pirate** (1952), the second of two films where he played author Rafael Sabatini's Capt. Blood character; and, in a TCM premiere, **The Black Arrow** (1948). In this film, based on the Robert Louis Stevenson novel of the same name, Hayward plays a 15th century nobleman fighting against his ambitious and cruel uncle. The evening rounds out with two of the actor's crime films, **Repeat Performance** (1947) and **Duffy of San Quentin** (1954), making it a noir late night with Louis Hayward.

## MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'Jack Reacher'

KAREN BALLARD

**Face/Off** (1997, Action) John Travolta, Nicolas Cage **BBC America, 5:30 p.m.**

**The Wrong Marriage** (2025, Suspense) Vivica A. Fox, Jackée Harry **LMN, 6 p.m.**

**The Other Guys** (2010, Comedy) Will Ferrell, Mark Wahlberg **SHO, 7:05 p.m.**

**Pacific Rim Uprising** (2018, Science fiction) John Boyega, Scott Eastwood **SYFY, 7:30 p.m.**

**I Was a Child Bride: The Courtney Stodden Story** (2025, Docudrama) Courtney Stodden, Holly J. Barrett **LMN, 8 p.m.**

**Kingsman: The Golden Circle** (2017, Action) Colin Firth, Julianne Moore **HBO, 8 p.m.**

**Lost in Paradise** (2026, Romance) Lacey Chabert, Ian Harding **Hallmark, 8 p.m.**

**The Avengers** (2012, Action) Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans **FX, 8 p.m.**

**Jack Reacher** (2012, Action) Tom Cruise, Rosamund Pike **Paramount, 8:20 p.m.**

**The Taking of Pelham 123** (2009, Action) Denzel Washington, John Travolta **BBC America, 8:30 p.m.**

**Bride or Die** (2025, Suspense) Kelley Jakle, Rachele Schank **LMN, 10 p.m.**

**Saw** (2004, Horror) Cary Elwes, Danny Glover **SYFY, 10 p.m.**

**Eternals** (2021, Action) Angelina Jolie, Salma Hayek **FX, 11 p.m.**

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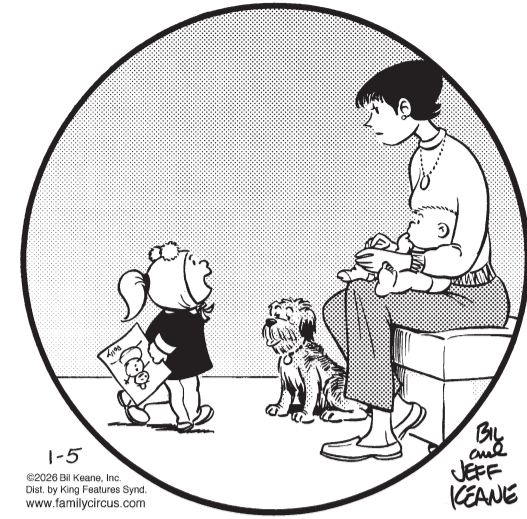
# TV - What to watch

**CLOSE TO HOME** John McPherson



When Stephen King reads bedtime stories.

**THE FAMILY CIRCUS** Bill Keane

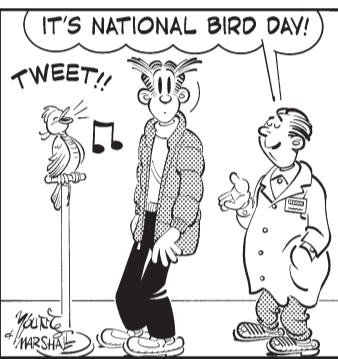
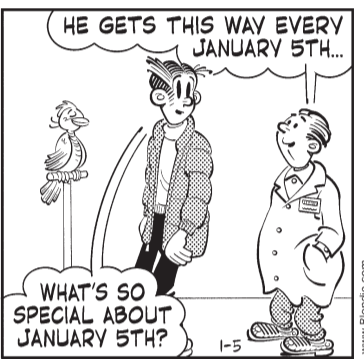


"The new teacher learned my name today. I knocked over her coffee."

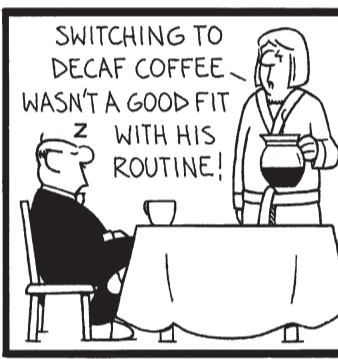
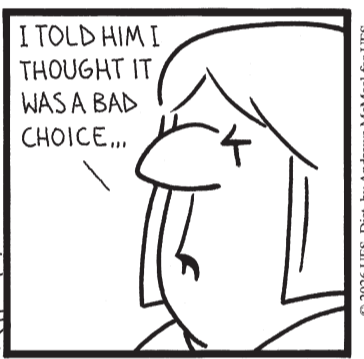
**BEETLE BAILEY** Mort & Greg Walker



**BLONDIE** Dean Young & John Marshall



**THE BORN LOSER** Art & Chip Sanson

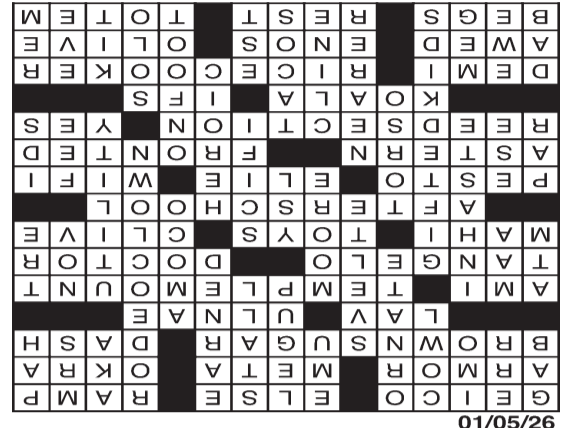


**Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle**

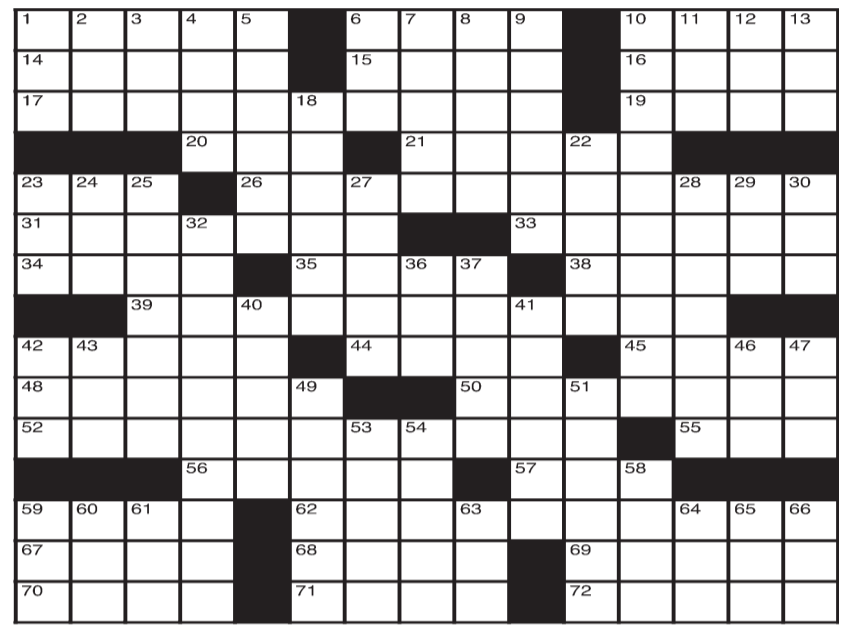
Edited by Patti Varol

- ACROSS**
- 1 Insurance company with a gecko mascot
  - 6 "What \_\_\_ is new?"
  - 10 Freeway exit
  - 14 Heavy coat?
  - 15 WhatsApp's parent company
  - 16 Gumbo pod
  - 17 Sweetener used on a Providence campus?
  - 19 See 12-Down
  - 20 Restroom, to a Brit
  - 21 Forearm bones
  - 23 "\_\_\_ dreaming?"
  - 26 Horse that's saddled up for a tour of a Philadelphia campus?
  - 31 Hybrid orange fruit
  - 33 Physician
  - 34 Off-grilled fish, on menus
  - 35 Flirts (with)
  - 38 Adventure novelist Cussler
  - 39 Time for extracurricular activities, or where the ends of 17-, 26-, 52-, and 62-Across literally are
  - 42 Basil-based sauce
  - 44 Author Wiesel
  - 45 Hot spot service
  - 48 Toward the back of a boat
  - 50 Supplied, as funds
  - 52 Quad found on a Portland campus?
  - 55 "Totally!"
  - 56 Australian marsupial
  - 57 Provisos
  - 59 With 27-Down, "The Substance" Oscar nominee
  - 62 Kitchen appliance used at a Houston campus?
  - 67 Wowed
  - 68 Genesis grandson
  - 69 Mediterranean oil source
  - 70 Beseeches
  - 71 Take a break
  - 72 Sacred carving
- DOWN**
- 1 Chitchat
  - 2 Make a wrong turn, say
  - 3 "Seems to me" shorthand
  - 4 Monastic hood
  - 5 Elaborately decorated
  - 6 Australian bird
  - 7 Boost
  - 8 Horse stable unit
  - 9 Brought home, as a salary
  - 10 Performer in bull riding competitions
  - 11 Letters between names
  - 12 With 19-Across, salt-free seasoning brand
  - 13 Dismissive sound
  - 18 Gracefully slim
  - 22 Gas brand with a torch logo
  - 23 Spot for short people?
  - 24 Barnyard bleat
  - 25 Without bothering to be careful
  - 27 See 59-Across
  - 28 \_\_\_ knife: handy kitchen tool
  - 29 Thanksgiving mo.
  - 30 Italian three
  - 32 Naturally talented youngsters
  - 36 French fashion monogram
  - 37 Futuristic genre
  - 40 Upper body
  - 41 Brave and noble
  - 42 \_\_\_ for the course
  - 43 Opposite of WNW
  - 46 Extra charge
  - 47 Docs with DOBs, often
  - 49 Not as far
  - 51 By walking
  - 53 Country singer Patsy
  - 54 Food truck fare
  - 58 Without backup
  - 59 Pat gently
  - 60 Female sheep
  - 61 Actress Ryan
  - 63 Ballpark fig.
  - 64 Baby beaver
  - 65 Genesis matriarch
  - 66 Sleep cycle letters

**TODAY'S SOLUTION:**



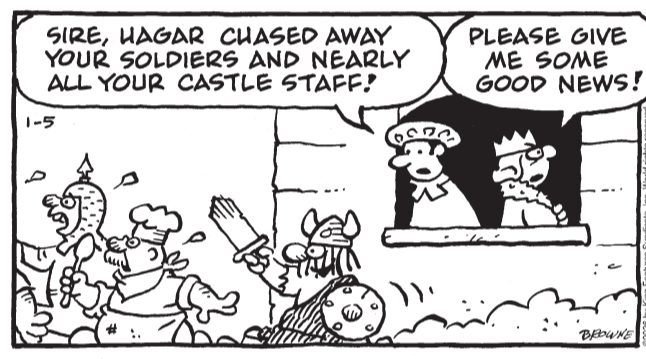
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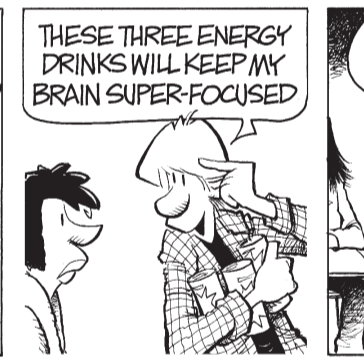
By Morton J. Mendelson ©2026 Tribune Content Agency, LLC

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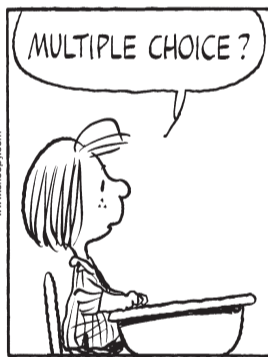
**HAGAR THE HORRIBLE** Chris Browne



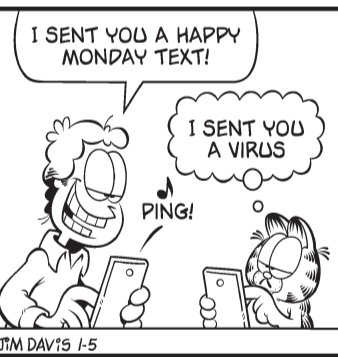
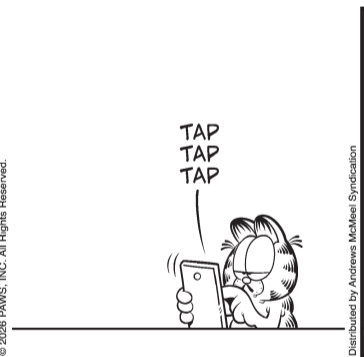
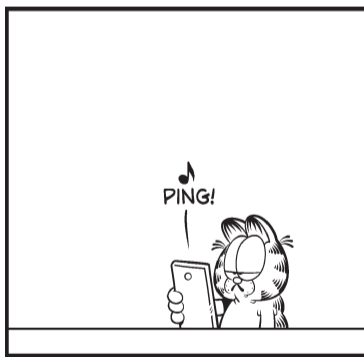
**ZITS** Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



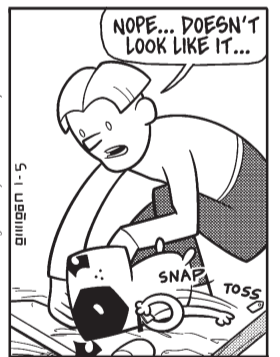
**PEANUTS** Charles M. Schulz



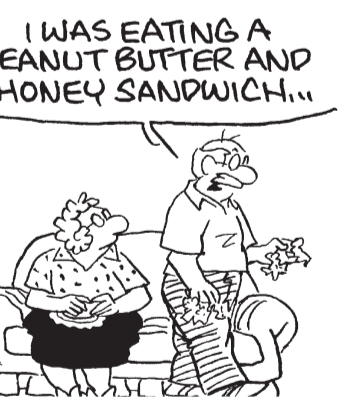
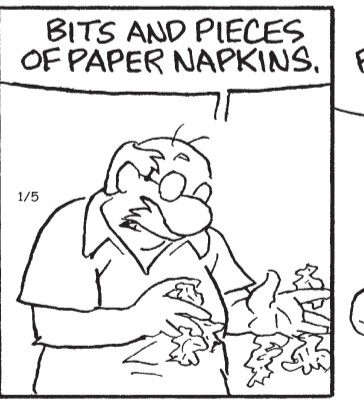
**GARFIELD** Jim Davis



**POOCH CAFE** Paul Gilligan



**PICKLES** Brian Crane



**WONDERWORD**

By DAVID OUELLET

**HOW TO PLAY:** All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

**WARM AND WONDERFUL WHIFFS** Solution: 5 letters

C	B	R	E	A	D	O	O	W	L	A	D	N	A	S
O	O	C	E	A	N	I	K	P	M	U	P	C	E	Y
F	A	M	O	R	A	S	C	H	A	I	O	A	R	A
F	S	E	F	A	C	H	S	U	L	Z	S	O	O	D
E	U	L	N	O	Z	E	S	T	Y	O	M	R	T	I
E	T	A	Y	I	R	A	I	N	N	E	C	C	N	L
E	P	V	R	F	P	T	T	D	M	H	O	H	I	O
L	Y	E	E	Y	E	N	O	H	I	E	O	E	M	H
I	L	N	K	C	L	O	A	D	L	S	K	S	R	I
M	A	D	A	A	W	M	S	E	L	O	I	T	E	B
O	C	E	B	R	B	L	T	T	E	R	E	N	P	I
M	U	R	A	E	E	T	E	S	M	G	S	U	P	S
A	E	D	R	M	A	E	D	A	S	N	A	T	E	C
H	E	T	O	L	A	O	C	O	C	R	I	S	P	U
C	I	N	N	A	M	O	N	R	G	N	I	R	P	S

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Amber, Aroma, Bakery, Bread, Café, Cedarwood, Chai, Chamomile, Chestnuts, Cinnamon, Cocoa, Coffee, Comfort, Cookies, Cozy, Crisp, Eucalyptus, Fresh, Herbal, Hibiscus, Holidays, Honey, Latte, Lavender, Lemon, Lush, Memory, Ocean, Orchid, Peppermint, Pine, Pumpkin, Rain, Roasted, Rose, Sage, Sandalwood, Season, Smell, Spring, Toasted, Zesty

**TODAY'S ANSWER:** Scent

**SUDOKU**

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

3			6		9	5	2		
6	5			4			9	8	
	7	9		5	3			1	
		7		6	4			8	
9	6							5	4
	1		9	2			7		
	4		3	8			2	7	
8	9			7				4	1
	2	6	4		1				5

**WHATZIT?**

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



**SUDOKU INSTRUCTIONS:** Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

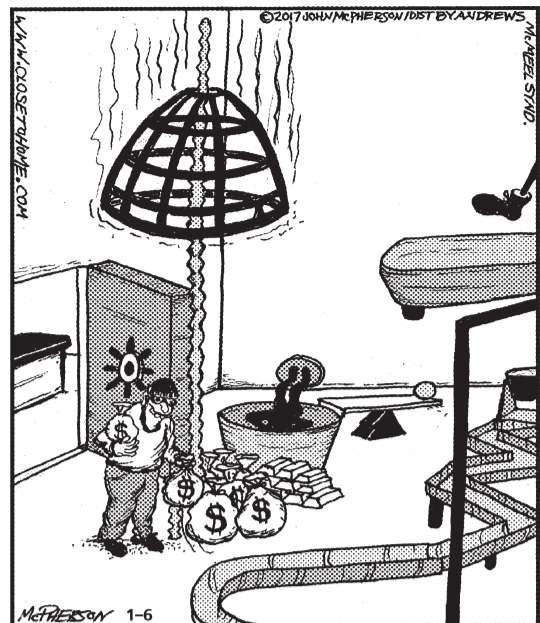
**TODAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTION:**

5	8	1	6	7	9	2	4	3
1	9	2	4	5	6	8	3	7
6	4	9	8	5	7	1	2	3
8	9	4	5	2	6	8	1	7
4	5	1	8	3	7	9	6	2
2	8	6	7	9	1	4	5	3
9	1	7	3	8	6	2	4	5
8	6	3	7	4	1	5	9	2
7	2	5	6	1	9	4	8	3

**TODAY'S WHATZIT SOLUTION:**

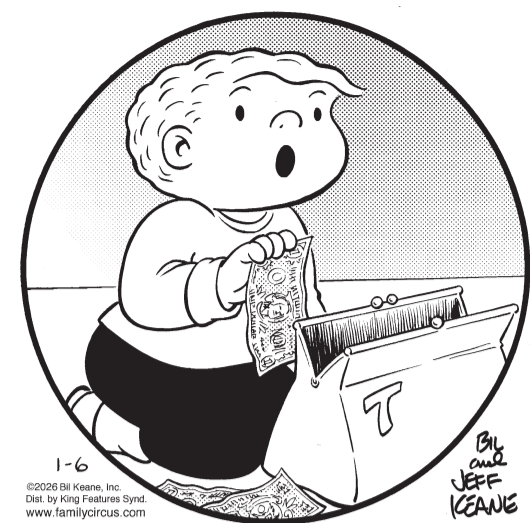
Comedy double act

**CLOSE TO HOME** John McPherson



At the Milton Bradley corporate vault.

**THE FAMILY CIRCUS** Bill Keane

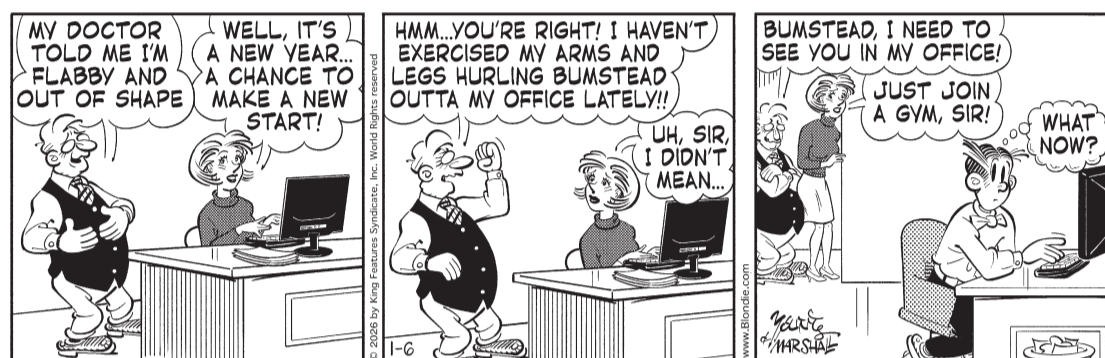


"Mommy, you don't have any money, just dollars."

**BEETLE BAILEY** Mort & Greg Walker



**BLONDIE** Dean Young & John Marshall



**THE BORN LOSER** Art & Chip Sansom



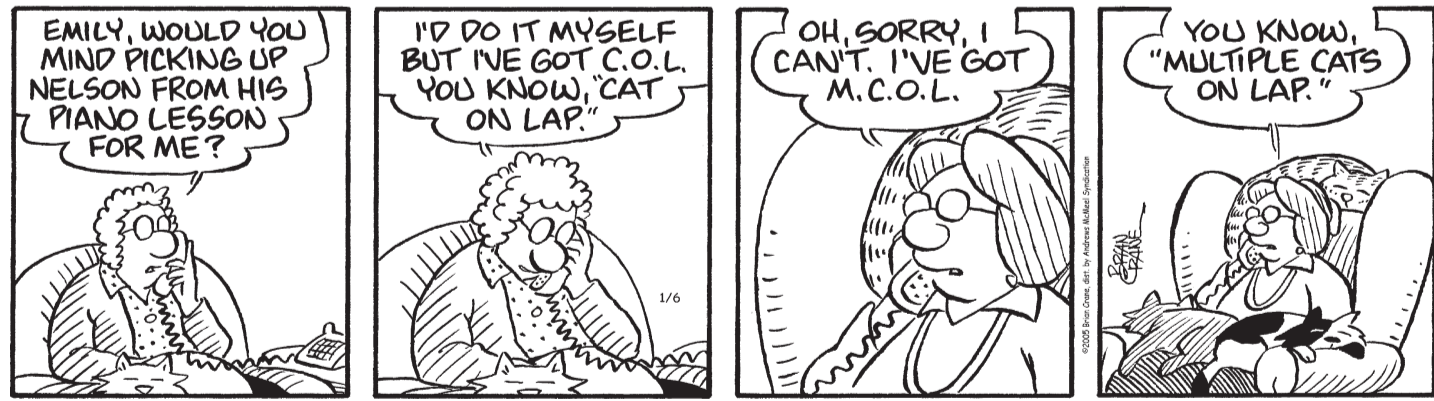
**ZITS** Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



**GARFIELD** Jim Davis



**PICKLES** Brian Crane



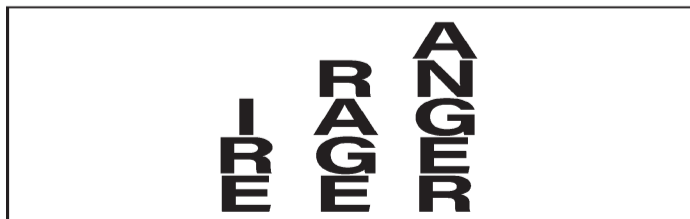
**SUDOKU**

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

			2	1				
					7			4
6	5	1	9	4	8	3		2
	1	4				8		9
	8	6	1	5	9	4	2	
9		5				7	1	
1		2	4	8	6	9	3	5
	9		3					
				9	2			

**WHATZIT?**

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



**SUDOKU INSTRUCTIONS:**

Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

**TODAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTION:**

4	8	1	2	6	5	9	9	7
7	9	2	1	4	8	6	8	5
5	6	9	8	7	2	1	1	1
9	1	1	7	2	8	5	6	6
3	2	7	6	5	1	9	8	7
6	5	8	9	4	7	1	2	1
2	1	8	7	6	1	5	9	9
1	4	1	3	7	9	6	2	8
8	6	9	5	2	1	7	4	3

**TODAY'S WHATZIT SOLUTION:**

Rising tempers

**CROSSWORD**

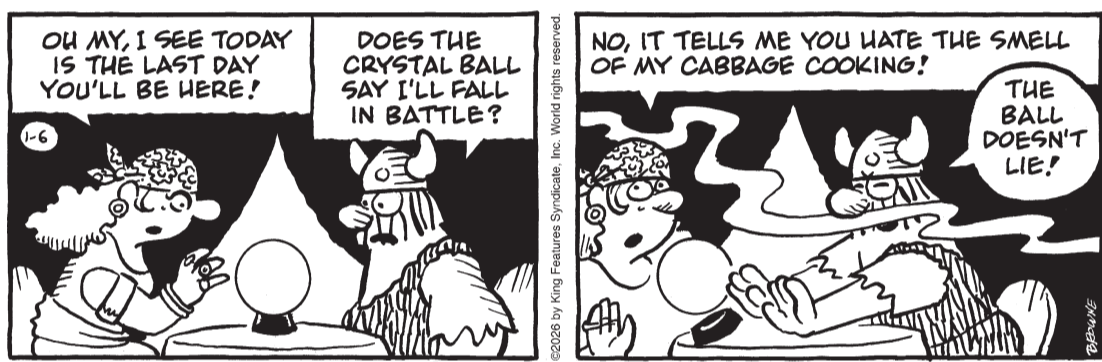
TODAY'S SOLUTION:

D	N	E		L	E	A		S	L	V	O
N	E	M		H	S	U	G	L	N	D	E
A	V	E		I	P	D	R	S	E	I	D
E	R	D		R	L	A	R	L	I	N	I
				I	R	A	S		T	F	
E	G	R	O	G		R	V		W	O	T
E	N	O	C	E	V	A	M		R	E	O
R	A	V		Y	R	E	P		W	R	E
C	A	B	C		W	E	Z		O	P	A
		B	E	G		B	E	N	O		T
N	O	I	T	O	N		N	I	T	R	V
V	A	G	V		L	A	K		R	R	V
W	O	L	P		D	B	I		N	E	K
S	A	G	S		E	P	I		E	T	S

- ACROSS**
- 1 Topsy fellow
  - 4 — in the sky
  - 7 Hangs down
  - 11 Get with difficulty (with "out")
  - 12 Tough spot
  - 13 Do a farm job
  - 14 Timetable abbr.
  - 15 Body of fresh water
  - 16 Pond growth
  - 17 Actor — Sheen
  - 19 Idea
  - 21 School for boys in England
  - 23 Plead
  - 24 Yellowish gemstone
  - 27 Fleecy animal
  - 29 Jackson 5 hit
  - 32 Utah city
  - 33 Predator's victim
  - 34 Sailor
  - 35 Poetic preposition
- DOWN**
- 1 Line of stitches
  - 2 Gumbo ingredient
  - 3 Region (Abbr.)
  - 4 Liberace's instrument
  - 5 Writing fluid
  - 6 Paradise
  - 7 Outpouring
  - 8 Everglades denizen
  - 9 Kind of club dancer (Hyph.)
  - 10 Cygnet
  - 12 Attack by air
  - 18 Sports group
  - 20 Comply
  - 22 The jitters
  - 24 Whistle sound
  - 25 Cookie brand
  - 26 Eternal
  - 28 Small
  - 30 Loud noise
  - 31 Western people
  - 33 Golf standard
  - 36 Electrical unit
  - 37 Coconut fiber
  - 40 Chart
  - 42 Clenched hands
  - 44 Celebrity roster (Hyph.)
  - 45 Name for a pooch
  - 46 "I had no —!"
  - 47 Tense
  - 49 Titled woman
  - 50 Divisible by two
  - 51 Tear
  - 54 Regret

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10
11				12					13		
14				15					16		
17			18			19	20				
			21			22	23				
24	25	26			27	28			29	30	31
32				33					34		
35				36					37		
38				39					40		
			41	42		43	44				
45	46				47		48		49	50	51
52					53	54			55		
56					57				58		
59					60				61		

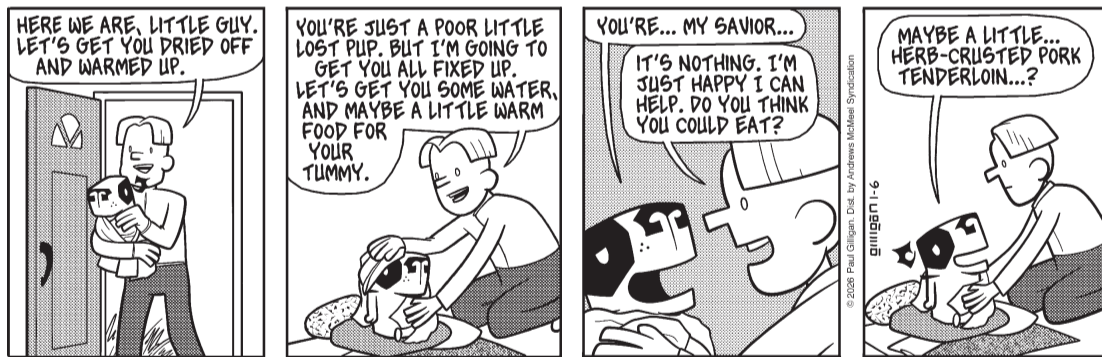
**HAGAR THE HORRIBLE** Chris Browne



**PEANUTS** Charles M. Schulz



**POOCH CAFE** Paul Gilligan



**WONDERWORD**

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING Solution: 7 letters

A	H	S	Y	T	I	S	R	E	V	I	N	U	T	L
R	T	C	D	A	D	V	I	C	E	N	O	T	N	A
C	E	T	R	A	E	I	N	T	E	R	V	I	E	W
O	T	H	I	A	E	X	A	R	O	T	C	O	D	Y
M	E	C	E	T	E	L	P	T	S	U	R	T	I	E
M	A	E	D	A	U	S	R	E	P	C	N	G	F	R
U	M	V	C	C	R	D	E	L	R	E	O	O	N	L
N	W	I	I	U	A	S	E	R	M	T	M	A	O	O
I	O	T	A	U	D	I	E	N	C	E	I	L	C	O
C	R	I	R	E	A	O	R	Y	S	A	I	S	L	H
A	K	S	N	D	F	E	R	S	T	A	L	K	E	C
T	T	O	A	F	V	O	A	T	A	H	C	L	A	S
E	H	P	I	O	T	G	M	E	N	T	O	R	R	B
P	T	C	G	S	E	O	P	I	N	I	O	N	Y	O
F	E	E	D	B	A	C	K	R	O	W	T	E	N	J

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Adapt, Advice, Articulate, Attitude, Audience, Call, Chat, Clear, Coach, Communicate, Confident, Doctor, Expertise, Feedback, Goals, Government, Interview, Introduce, Jobs, Lawyer, Leads, Mentor, Message, Network, Office, Opinion, Persuade, Phone, Positive, Rehearse, Research, School, Story, Talk, Teamwork, Tone, Trust, University

TODAY'S ANSWER: Clarity

# Battle for control of Georgia House cranks up

By Ross Williams  
Georgia Recorder

ATLANTA — Most legislative races are pretty anti-climatic by the time general election voters cast a ballot in the fall, and that is by design.

The state Legislature has power to determine the boundaries of its own districts, and they tend to do it in a way that protects the party in power. That leads to a lot of races where only the incumbent runs or a long-shot candidate from the other party steps up and gets a small slice of the total vote.

But when a state gets closer to 50-50, like Georgia is getting, districts that were mostly safe become less safe.

That's what happened around the turn of the century in Georgia, when Democrats ruled the roost and Republicans were hot on their heels.

Today, Democrats — bolstered by a surprise seat flip in a northeast Georgia special election and victories in the state-wide Public Service Commission race before that — think the political winds are at their back and they've got a shot at making big gains in the state House this year.

"There's nothing like an election to tell us what voters think," Georgia Democratic Party Chair Charlie Bailey said. "That's what matters, not what I think, but what voters think."

Bailey said Democrats are gearing up for a tough fight. "(Republicans) are not going to sit around and spend no money," he said. "They're going to spend money to keep people in power that reward billionaires and big corporations. They will spend a lot of money to do that, as they have, and so it is on us to raise the resources we need and deploy them in an effective way, like we did with the PSC, like we did with House District 121, and win as many seats as we can."

Carmen Bergman, director of the House Republican Caucus, predicted that Democrats' effort will fall flat.

"The Georgia House Republican Caucus has a full-time political operation so that we can recruit candidates, we can train candidates, we can prepare candidates for 2026 in addition to our existing members," she said.

Currently, the House includes 98 Republicans and 81 Democrats, including two who were recently elected and have yet to be sworn in. There is one vacancy representing a Cherokee County district that is set to be filled by a special election before the legislative session begins Jan. 12.

Bailey said there are 17 GOP-controlled House districts that are more left-leaning than the Athens-area seat that flipped in December.

"Are we going to spend significant money in all 17 of those? I don't know. We'll see. It depends on what the environment is like," he said.

Bailey said there's no guarantee that the environment will be as favorable for Democrats this year, but he's optimistic based on the results of last year's races.

"What it shows is that voters are quite dissatisfied and fed up with the Republican betrayal of working people, and we're going to carry that message across all of our races across this entire state, and we're going to net a lot of wins," he said.

Here are some of the state House races to watch as the 2026 campaigns heat up.

Buford Republican state Rep. Sandy Donatucci won her seat in 2024 by just 80 votes out of more than 30,000, defeating incumbent Democrat Farooq Mughal. Donatucci serves on the House education, transportation, and intra-governmental coordination committees.

Mughal thinks 2026 is the year he'll make a comeback in the Gwinnett County district. He launched a campaign over the summer with an emphasis on economic issues.

Democrats think they have a fighting chance in another Gwinnett-based district that Duluth Republican Rep. Matt Reeves now represents.

Reeves, who is vice chair of the House judiciary committee and also sits on the appropriations and insurance committees, narrowly fought off Democratic challenger Michelle Kang in 2024 by around 600 votes or just about 2% of the vote.

Kang announced her comeback bid in July with a pledge to focus on kitchen table issues.

Democrat Shelly Abraham of Suwanee, who works in the architectural and engineering industry, has also filed paperwork to run against Reeves in 2026.

Sandy Springs Republican Rep. Deborah Silcox was first



Special Photo: Georgia Recorder

State Democrats think the political winds are at their back and they've got a shot at making big gains in the state House this year.

elected to District 52 in 2016 but lost in 2020 to Democratic state Rep. Shea Roberts. Two years later, after Georgia redrew its legislative boundaries, Silcox went on to win in District 53, which had been drawn to favor a Republican.

But Democrats are hoping a swing in their direction will help send Silcox packing for a second time. In 2024, Silcox defeated Democrat Susie Greenberg by 1,351 votes, or just under 4%.

Democrat Beth Fuller, a former contractor with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, has announced that she is seeking election in the district.

As a Republican in a district Joe Biden won in 2020, Peachtree Corners Rep. Scott Hilton was seen as at risk following that year's election, but he won convincingly in 2022 and 2024, soundly defeating Democratic opponents both times.

Democrats are hoping that with Trump now in the White House, they can push the pendulum the other way in the Gwinnett and north Fulton-based district. Former Democratic state Rep. Mary Robichaux, who lost to Hilton in 2022, was recently elected mayor of North Fulton's city of Roswell, defeating incumbent Kurt Wilson, who had the backing of Republican Gov. Brian Kemp.

Attorney Adam Cleveland, a Democrat from Johns Creek, has filed paperwork to challenge Hilton in 2026.

The party in the White House usually faces some heat in a midterm, and Democrats are hoping that pattern holds.

But Bergman said Georgia Democrats should not read too much into Democratic wins in other parts of the country last year.

"A special election environment is just that: It is special, strange, and odd things can happen that typically wouldn't happen in a midterm or a general election environment," she said.

"When you look at polling, we know Georgians think the nation is on the wrong track," she added. "We clearly think that as a country, we are moving in the wrong direction, but that Georgia is on the right track, and that's because of conservative Republican leadership. Frankly, the Georgia Republican brand is different than the national Republican brand, and the onus is on us to make sure that voters know that."

One of the districts that may be most ripe for Republicans to test that theory is that of Sandersville Democratic Rep. Mack Jackson in central Georgia.

In 2024, Jackson squeaked out a victory by 128 votes, or just .18% over Republican Tracy Wheeler. Jackson, a pastor and retired probation officer, was first elected in 2008.

Republican Thomas Wilkerson of Warrenton has filed paperwork to run against Jackson, and Sandersville Republican Trey Sheppard, a co-president of a transportation and logistics company, has also announced plans to run.

Other Democratic lawmakers who won by narrow margins in 2024 include Macon state Rep. Tangie Herring, who won by about 1% against Republican Noah Harbuck, and Butler state Rep. Patty Stinson, who beat Republican Cary Moore by about 6.5%.

As of mid-December, no opponent has filed paperwork to run in either of those districts. The official qualifying process to run in 2026 is scheduled for the first week of March.

"We are going to be playing in all of those seats and more with quality candidates who are well prepared to be able to take on that race (in 2026)," Bergman said.



Special Photo

The Jack's restaurant on Slappey Boulevard scored a 100 on its latest kitchen inspection.

## Restaurant inspections

By Tara Fletcher  
news@albanyherald.com

The following Leesburg/Lee County restaurant inspections were conducted between Dec. 12 and Dec. 17:

**Hot Dog King, INC.**  
1295 HIGHWAY 82, UNIT C, LEESBURG

Phone Number: (229) 395-1170  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-088-000160

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-17-2025

**Osaka Hibachi & Grill**  
1210 S. U.S. HIGHWAY 19 A, LEESBURG

Phone Number: (347) 759-1808  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-088-000186

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-17-2025

**Philema Express/Subway**  
1505 PHILEMA ROAD, LEESBURG

Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-088-000197

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-12-2025

Following are restaurant inspection scores in Albany/Dougherty County handed out between Dec. 15 and Dec. 24:

**Jack's Family Restaurant**  
No. 374

2323 N SLAPPEY BLVD., ALBANY

Phone Number: (205) 201-7856  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-002142

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-15-2025

**McDonald's No. 24296**  
2448 N SLAPPEY BLVD., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 364-9323  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-001610

Last Inspection Score: 98  
Last Inspection Date: 12-15-2025

**Krystal Restaurants LLC**  
713 W. OGLETHORPE BLVD., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 436-4317  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-001898

Last Inspection Score: 94  
Last Inspection Date: 12-15-2025

**Starbucks Coffee**  
417 THIRD AVE., PO BOX 1828, ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 312-1121  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0470403488

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-15-2025

**Hot Dog King Midtown**  
1001 PINE AVE., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 395-1170  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0470504835

Last Inspection Score: 84  
Last Inspection Date: 12-15-2025

**My Pie Pizzeria**  
2700 DAWSON ROAD, STE 14, ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 496-2422  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-002517

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-16-2025

**MyPhoebe Putney Health-works/Juice bar**  
311 THIRD AVE., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 312-1121  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0470606535

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-15-2025

**3 Squares Diner**  
601 N. WESTOVER BLVD., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 883-2600  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-002325

Last Inspection Score: 91  
Last Inspection Date: 12-18-2025

**Tates Tavern (Bar Only)**  
2422 SYLVESTER ROAD ALBANY

Phone Number: (770) 757-7016

Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-001905

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-17-2025

**Big Mama Catering**  
2200 DAWSON ROAD ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 255-4492  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-002001

Last Inspection Score: 95  
Last Inspection Date: 12-19-2025

**TCBY**  
601 N. WESTOVER BLVD., STE A, ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 886-3141  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-002326

Last Inspection Score: 96  
Last Inspection Date: 12-19-2025

**Dunbar's Grill & Soulfood**  
1104 W. GORDON AVE., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 485-1008  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0470706379

Last Inspection Score: 85  
Last Inspection Date: 12-19-2025

**Ronnie's Rib & Chicken Shack**  
1301 CLARK AVE., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 343-4814  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-000021

Last Inspection Score: 97  
Last Inspection Date: 12-19-2025

**Church's Chicken**  
401 W. OGLETHORPE BLVD., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 439-0325  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0470706837

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-19-2025

**Villa Gargano**  
1604 N. SLAPPEY BLVD., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 436-7265  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0479800006

Last Inspection Score: 91  
Last Inspection Date: 12-19-2025

**Tay's Wings & Catering**  
202 OAKRIDGE DRIVE, STE F, ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 485-8203  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-000767

Last Inspection Score: 73  
Last Inspection Date: 12-22-2025

**Southern Elegance Catering**  
410 N. MAGNOLIA ST., ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 854-5090  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Last Inspection Score: 97

Last Inspection Date: 12-22-2025

**Burger King No. 5061**  
404 W. OGLETHORPE BLVD., ALBANY

Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0479800087  
Last Inspection Score: 94

Last Inspection Date: 12-22-2025

**Wendy's No. 1268**  
1101 DAWSON ROAD, ALBANY

Phone Number: (229) 436-6464  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-001870

Last Inspection Score: 100  
Last Inspection Date: 12-24-2025

**Kentucky Fried Chicken - B**  
400 W. OGLETHORPE BLVD. ALBANY

Phone Number: (931) 381-3000  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: 0470101792

Last Inspection Score: 96  
Last Inspection Date: 12-22-2025

**Cod & Tail of Albany**  
233 CORDELE ROAD, ALBANY

Phone Number: (678) 468-5251  
Permit Type: Food Service  
Permit Number: FSP-047-001814

Last Inspection Score: 84  
Last Inspection Date: 12-24-2025

## Tech industry the target of potential legislative backlash

By Ty Tagami  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Big tech has reached so far into the lives of children that some Georgia lawmakers want to push back.

After legal missteps in an effort to restrain the industry, the state Senate got new recommendations this month from a study committee that heard grim stories about the impact of social media and other platforms.

Among those who testified were parents of children who died by suicide after extensive use of social media and experts who spoke of an escalating mental health crisis after the merger of two technologies.

"Smartphones and social media, they take the person who is vulnerable, who is struggling mentally, and further isolate and distance them from real human relationships," Dr. Stan Sonu, a medical director at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, told the senators at a hearing at the state Capitol in

November.

He described a patient who had become withdrawn over the past year, burying his head in TikTok videos. He said the boy had high scores for anxiety, depression and thoughts of self-harm despite a calm demeanor.

Sonu said he initially dismissed the changed behavior, ascribing it to teen angst. Then, the 12-year-old disclosed what had been bothering him: Other boys had made him watch sex videos in the school cafeteria, bullying him afterward because of his discomfort.

Sonu said the boy had been using social media to self-medicate.

"Social media is, and I don't say this lightly, it is legalized digital heroin," Sonu told the senators. "By leveraging neuroscience to grab a hold of our attention, it promotes this powerful illusion that your real-life problems can be pushed aside."

The committee is picking up the pieces after the tech industry torpedoed the Gen-

eral Assembly's last attempt to rein in social media.

The Protecting Georgia's Children on Social Media Act sailed into law with broad bipartisan support last year, but an advocacy group for tech companies sued.

A federal judge for the Northern District of Georgia ruled in June that the plaintiff was likely to prevail on claims that the law violated the First Amendment's speech protections. She issued a preliminary injunction against enforcement.

The law required social media companies to make "commercially reasonable efforts" to verify users' age, and it mandated parent consent for those under 16. It also banned advertising to children.

It had been a priority for Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, a Republican who is now running for governor.

Jones authorized the bipartisan committee — co- led by a Democrat and a Republican — that issued new legislative recommen-

dations in late December.

The committee proposed a prohibition on addictive platform design, stricter data privacy and making artificial intelligence platforms subject to product liability laws.

The committee also backed measures to empower parents, such as a proposal that social media companies secure parent consent before letting minors access their platforms. But that would require age verification by everyone, like the mandate that prompted the federal judge to sideline last year's law on the grounds that it was a "severe burden" on adults to require them to prove their age.

The committee also recommended expanding on a measure that will go into effect next fall: a prohibition on student use of personal digital devices in public elementary and middle schools. The committee recommended extending the ban to high schools.

## As the football transfer portal swells, high school players are left behind

By Joe Whitfield  
Sports Editor

ALBANY — There was no yelling when Jake McCrae talked about college football. No theatrics. No finger-pointing.

That restraint made what he said harder to ignore.

McCrae has spent 30 years roaming football sidelines, including time at the University of Florida under Jim McElwain. He has seen systems evolve, schemes recycle and trends come and go. What he is watching now, he believes, is not evolution at all.

It is adults choosing convenience over responsibility — and calling it progress.

The transfer portal and the money flowing through it have reshaped college football, often in ways that don't show up on television graphics or recruiting rankings. McCrae sees it most clearly at the high school level.

His Deerfield-Windsor Knights just finished second in the state in GIAA Class AAA, losing in the championship game. His quarterback, Lane Seals, threw for 3,375 yards, 37 touchdowns with just five interceptions as a

senior — more passing yards than any high school player in Georgia.

He has size. He has film. He has leadership. He has character.

He has zero Division I offers. His top receiver, Gabe Daniel, caught 99 passes for 1,367 yards and 15 touchdowns — fourth-most receiving yards in the state.

He also has zero Division I offers.

"Before the portal, I would have 30 college coaches come by wanting to talk to kids," McCrae said. "This year I had four. They're not using high

school football as the farm system anymore. The portal is where they're going."

McCrae has the contacts. He has made the calls. He has sent the film. The silence remains.

That silence exists alongside a portal now swollen with roughly 4,500 Division I players — older, stronger, more experienced athletes already inside the system.

"I've always told my guys only the top one percent get to play Division I football," McCrae said. "Now you're adding 4,500 players who are already in that group back



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Deerfield-Windsor Head Coach Jake McCrae is lamenting the fact that many high school athletes are being ignored as college coaches face unreal pressure to win now or lose their jobs.

into the mix. Where does that leave the 18-year-old kid?"

It leaves him outside the door — while adults insist the system is working.

This is not a talent prob-

lem. McCrae has coached too long to mistake one for the other. Lane Seals is still exactly the kind of player college

See FOOTBALL, 10A



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Coaches and teammates surround Monroe's KieAundria Acree as she was honored for scoring her 2,000th point during a late December game. She is now less than 200 points away from becoming Monroe's all-time leading scorer.

## Acree's 2,000-point milestone feels like history in motion

By Joe Whitfield  
Sports Editor

ALBANY - There are milestones, and then there are moments that announce themselves as something larger than arithmetic.

Friday night at Monroe High School felt like the latter. Before the echoes from a rivalry win over Dougherty had fully settled, junior Kie'Aundria Acree stepped to midcourt and was honored for scoring the 2,000th point of her career — a number she reached quietly in December at the BallHer Showcase in Savannah, but one that demanded its own moment at home.

Two thousand points in a little more than two seasons. In Albany. In full view.

Teammates drifted toward midcourt. The crowd stayed on its feet longer than usual. For a brief moment, the game itself felt secondary.

"It wasn't just exciting — it was surreal," Acree said. "It felt great to accomplish something in a little over two years that takes others four years to complete."

In Albany, where basketball names become shorthand for eras, milestones are never just personal. They're communal. They carry history. And they

invite comparison.

Acree, the daughter of Monroe head coach Jennifer Acree, has grown up hearing those comparisons. DonTonio Wingfield. Jennifer Robinson. Perth. Melvin Drake. Lisa. Chris Cameron. Names spoken with reverence, passed along like heirlooms.

"I want her to mention me with them," Kie'Aundria said. "I want to be remembered as the person with the record in Albany."

That ambition hardly feels premature.

Acree owns the highest scoring average in the state of Georgia at 31 points per game, carries a pristine 4.0 GPA and has the No. 3-ranked Monroe Lady Nadas sitting at 11-1. She is fewer than 200 points away from becoming Monroe's all-time leading scorer — a record that now feels less like a question and more like an inevitability waiting on the calendar.

"This motivates me," she said. "I want the Monroe record. I want the district record. I'm not satisfied."

Being the coach's daughter in Albany is not a footnote. It's a spotlight.

Jennifer Acree knows that weight better than anyone — as a coach who has seen greatness and as a mother

who understands the cost of carrying expectation in a basketball town that watches closely.

"I'm so proud of KJ," she said. "No one knows what she goes through with me as her mom and her coach. She carries the weight of Albany and south Georgia on her back, and she's doing an awesome job."

The coach in her followed naturally. "She has worked extremely hard on her craft, and she deserves everything she gets," Acree said. "I've had two 2,500-point scorers — never a 3,000. One thing I do know is whatever she sets her mind to, she has proven she can accomplish it."

Then came the reminder that, even on a night built around numbers, the story is larger than basketball.

"This future mechanical engineer is destined for greatness," her mother said. "I truly believe that."

In a gym that has celebrated championships, rivalries and record nights before, Friday's applause lingered with purpose. It wasn't just for 2,000 points on a scoreboard. It was for the sound of a name beginning to feel permanent — and for a city recognizing, in real time, that it is watching another legacy take shape.



Special Photo: Kameron Taylor

Georgia's Jeremiah Wilkinson reacts during Saturday's 104-100 overtime win over Auburn in Athens. He scored 31 points to lead the Bulldogs to their first win over the Tigers in more than three years.

## Wilkinson leads Georgia past Auburn in SEC-opening thriller

By Joe Whitfield  
Sports Editor

ATHENS — The SEC doesn't care how you win — only whether you survive. The Georgia Bulldogs did both Saturday afternoon, escaping their league opener with a 104-100 overtime victory over the Auburn Tigers at Stegeman Coliseum.

Jeremiah Wilkinson made sure of it.

The sophomore guard poured in a season-high 31 points, seven of them in overtime, and drilled the decisive 3-pointer with 1:50 remaining in the extra session to lift No. 23 Georgia to 13-1. Wilkinson had already carried the offense early — 18 points in the first half — then steadied it when the game tipped from entertainment to endurance.

"I stay in the gym," Wilkinson said. "Those shots at the end of the game, it feels like I'm shooting by myself. I'm just trying to get to a good shot and give the team what it needs."

Georgia needed every bit of it after regulation ended in chaos.

The Bulldogs led 92-88 with 5.2 seconds left when Auburn produced an improbable tie: Keyshawn Hall was fouled with 0.7 seconds remaining, made two free throws, missed the third on purpose, and Kevin Overton collected the rebound and flipped in a short jumper at the horn.

Overtime arrived. Georgia didn't flinch.

Wilkinson scored seven of the Bulldogs' 14 overtime points, hit the go-ahead three, and watched Auburn's last push dissolve at the free-throw line. Georgia went 13-for-16 at the stripe in the final 3:20 of regulation and overtime, the kind of composure that keeps seasons from tilting early.

"What an enormous shot going into overtime," Georgia coach Mike White said. "The way we responded to that negativity — wow."

Marcus "Smurf" Millender matched Wilkinson's edge with a season-high 24 points. Blue Cain and Somto Cyril added 15 apiece, and Jordan Ross chipped in 12, marking the first time since Dec. 22 that five Bulldogs reached double figures. White singled out Cyril's late work on defense. "I thought Somto was brilliant down the stretch," he said.

The night unfolded with 10 ties and 11 lead changes — an SEC game in January that won't feel early come March. Georgia topped 100 points for the seventh time this season, the most in program history, and extended its home winning streak to 12, dating back to last year.

White framed the night as confirmation, not conclusion.

"Our team is really competitive and resilient," he said. "But the 23 offensive rebounds aren't going to translate to a lot of wins. We can't just bank on scoring 104 in these SEC games."

Across the hall, Auburn coach Steven Pearl offered a sharper assessment — and a contrast.

"Horrible," Pearl said of his team's defense. "Our one-on-one defense is terrible. At some point, our guys have to have pride. I can't go out there and guard for them."

White talked about the response. Pearl talked about pride — or the lack of it.

For Georgia, the opener delivered both confidence and clarity.

"It's an extreme confidence booster to start SEC play 1-0," Millender said. "Not beating them in three years — that's a blessing."

The road gets steeper immediately. Georgia opens a two-game trip Tuesday at No. 22 Florida before heading to South Carolina next Saturday. The Bulldogs return home Jan. 14 to face Ole Miss.

"Back to work," White said. "We've got 17 to go."

In this league, 1-0 counts — and Georgia earned it the hard way.

## Falcons fire coach Raheem Morris, GM Terry Fontenot

Field Level Media

The Atlanta Falcons are cleaning house, firing head coach Raheem Morris and general manager Terry Fontenot after two and five seasons, respectively.

Atlanta (8-9) ended the season with a four-game winning streak, capped off by Sunday's 19-17 win over the New Orleans Saints, but the Falcons had already been eliminated from playoff contention thanks in large part to a prior stretch where they lost five straight games and seven of eight after a 3-2 start.

"I have great personal affinity for both Raheem and Terry and appreciate their hard work and dedication to the Falcons, but I believe we need new leadership in these roles moving forward," Falcons owner Arthur Blank said in a press release. "The decision to move away from people who represent the organization so well and have a shared commitment to the values that are important to the organization is not an easy one, but the results on the field have not met our expectations or those of our fans and leadership. I wish Raheem and Terry the absolute best in their future pursuits."

The Falcons finished in a three-way tie atop the NFC South, but the Carolina Panthers won the tiebreaker



Special Photo: John David Mercer/Imagn Images

The Atlanta Falcons have fired coach Raheem Morris and general manager Terry Fontenot. A letter from owner Arthur Blank said a search for new leadership is under way.

and division thanks to their 3-1 record against Atlanta and Tampa Bay.

Atlanta missed the playoffs for the eighth straight season, now alone as the second-longest NFL playoff drought behind the New York Jets (15 years), thanks to the Panthers snapping their seven-year drought this season.

See MORRIS, 10A

# Monroe sweeps Dougherty in region openers

By Joe Whitfield  
Sports Editor

**ALBANY** - Rivalry games rarely ask for perfection. What they demand instead is poise — the ability to bend, wobble and still stand when the noise rises and momentum tilts. Friday night at Monroe High School, that distinction belonged to the home side.

Before a packed Albany crowd that treated the calendar's first Friday like a civic holiday, the Monroe Golden Tornadoes and Lady Nadas swept archrival Dougherty Trojans, taking a 62-42 win in the girls' game and a 60-51 victory in the boys' nightcap. Neither came easily, and that was the point.

The girls' opener looked settled early. The No. 3-ranked Lady Nadas played fast and free in the first half, racing to a 42-14 lead behind crisp ball movement and confident shooting. Then the baskets disappeared.

Monroe went cold after halftime — particularly from the perimeter — and Dougherty took advantage. Led by fearless point guard Dariona Simmons, the Lady Trojans outscored Monroe 19-8 in the third quarter, trimming a once-comfortable margin and injecting doubt into a building that had grown loud early. Simmons scored six in the period, while Teaylia Hawkins added seven, and Reginae Hill swished a three from the corner to give Dougherty some excitement.

The fourth quarter settled into a grind, which suited Monroe just fine.

"We didn't play well in the second half, not at all," Monroe coach Jennifer Acree said. "I changed the lineup, trying to get more playing time and different matchups. I'm hoping we'll have Glendalys back soon so we'll have more depth, because we need to step up our game."

Junior post Glendalys Harvey has missed the past two weeks with an injury. Even without her, Monroe leaned on star power. Kie'Aundria Acree scored 27 points to lead the Lady Nadas, Taylor McKinzy added 15 and Maleyah Hines finished with eight as Monroe improved to 11-1. Simmons paced Dougherty with 11 points, while Hawkins and Alyssa Christian scored nine apiece.

If the girls' game was about holding on, the boys' contest was about finding footing before the floor gave way.

Dougherty dictated the opening minutes with physical defense, double- and triple-teaming Brayden Burns in the paint and turning loose balls into fast-break points. When David Burgess scored on consecutive possessions — a layup followed by a three — the Trojans led 12-4 and forced Monroe coach Michael Hoffpauir into an early timeout.

Monroe's response came on the defensive end.

Full-court pressure flipped the game's temperature, producing turnovers and transition chances. The Tornadoes tied

the game at 12-12, but Dougherty answered again. Mikel Roberts drilled a three near the end of the quarter to give the Trojans an 18-14 lead after one, then hit another early in the second quarter to stretch the margin to 23-15.

The turning point came moments later. On a fast break, Elijah Rivers found Burns streaking toward the rim. Burns rose, finished with authority, and the gym responded the way rivalry gyms do — loudly, instantly, and without apology. Monroe followed with a 14-0 run, including a three from Tristen Terry, and carried a 29-23 lead into halftime.

Once Monroe established control defensively, the margin grew the way rivalry games often do — slowly, stubbornly and just out of reach. Dougherty closed to within seven behind another Roberts three and a Will Dublina drive, but could get no closer.

"We had a few defensive series where we played solid defense and were able to convert in transition," Hoffpauir said. "We didn't play together early and it ruined our efficiency, but those defensive stops pushed us over the top."

Burns led Monroe with 15 points, Terry added 14, Robert Adams scored nine and Hiram Holloway chipped in seven. Roberts paced Dougherty with 18 points, while Dublina and Armeen Walker scored eight apiece. Burgess finished with seven.

Monroe (11-2) will host Cairo on Tuesday, while Dougherty (5-7) trav-



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Monroe's Robert Adams battles for two points under the basket Friday night among three defender; Marcus Heath, David Burgess and Mikel Roberts.

els to Peach County. Friday night, though, belonged to Albany's oldest rivalry — not because it was flawless, but because Monroe proved, once again, that control matters most when everything else feels loud.

## USF QB Byrum Brown to visit Auburn, former coach

Field Level Media

South Florida quarterback Byrum Brown is entering the transfer portal and planning to visit Auburn and former Bulls head coach Alex Golesh, ESPN reported Saturday.

Brown, a 6-foot-3 senior from Raleigh, N.C., has one season of eligibility remaining. On3 first reported that he would visit Auburn this weekend.

He passed for 3,158 yards with 28 touchdowns and seven interceptions and also rushed for 1,008 yards and 14 TDs in 12 games in 2025. He opted out of the Dec. 17 Cure Bowl against Old Dominion.

Golesh compiled a 23-15 re-

cord in three seasons at USF before being hired on Nov. 30 to replace Hugh Freeze at Auburn.

In four seasons with the Bulls, Brown completed 64.8% of his passes for 7,690 yards and 61 touchdowns and rushed for 2,265 yards and 31 touchdowns in 35 games.

Brown would have an immediate opportunity to start at Auburn, where quarterbacks Jackson Arnold, Ashton Daniels and Deuce Knight all have entered the transfer portal, according to 247Sports' portal list. The Tigers finished 99th in passing in the FBS this season with 197.1 yards per game.



Special Photo: Tommy Gilligan-Imagn Images

Byrum Brown is entering the transfer portal and is expected to visit Auburn, where former South Florida coach Alex Golesh was recently hired, according to reports.

## Falcons edge Saints to give Panthers NFC South title

Field Level Media

**ATLANTA** — Zane Gonzalez made all four of his field goal attempts, Dee Alford had a crucial fourth-quarter interception, and the Atlanta Falcons beat the visiting New Orleans Saints 19-17 on Sunday.

With the win, Atlanta (8-9) sent the Carolina Panthers to the postseason. Had the Falcons lost, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers would have clinched the NFC South. Kirk Cousins threw for 180 yards and a touchdown, while Drake London had 78 receiving yards and a score for the Falcons, who finished the season on a four-game winning streak.

Tyler Shough threw for 259 yards and a touchdown, while adding a score on the ground for the Saints (6-11), who saw their four-game winning streak snapped.

Leading 10-7 at halftime, Atlanta doubled its

advantage on Gonzalez's 51-yard field goal with 8:50 remaining in the third quarter.

New Orleans had a touchdown taken off the board on its ensuing drive, as Dante Pettis' offensive pass interference negated Kevin Austin Jr.'s 1-yard score. The Saints settled for Charlie Smyth's 29-yard field goal to pull within three at the 2:15 mark of the third.

Gonzalez pushed the Falcons' lead back to six with his 38-yarder with 10:43 left in the fourth.

After punts from each team, Shough's 29-yard rush pushed the Saints' possession to Atlanta's 23. Three plays later, Alford picked off Shough's pass and returned it to New Orleans' 27 with 3:14 left.

Gonzalez then drilled another 38-yarder, giving the Falcons a nine-point edge.

The Saints answered just 1:41 later, with Shough's 16-yard touchdown pass to Ronnie Bell pulling New Orleans within two. Atlanta recovered the

subsequent onside kick to seal the win.

After Atlanta's three-and-out began the game, A.J. Terrell stripped Juwan Johnson on New Orleans' first play. Xavier Watts recovered and the Falcons took over on the Saints' 39.

Atlanta advanced to New Orleans' 12, but Carl Granderson's diving interception on a screen pass returned the ball to the Saints.

Falcons reserve Jammie Robinson blocked New Orleans' punt, which was recovered by Atlanta's Feleipe Franks on the Saints' 5-yard line. After a holding penalty pushed the Falcons back, Cousins connected with London for a 15-yard touchdown pass to give Atlanta a 7-0 lead with 3:02 left in the opening quarter.

Smyth missed a 56-yard field goal on the Saints' next drive. Atlanta took a 10-point advantage on Gonzalez's 40-yard field goal at the 10:19 mark of the second quarter.

## From 9A MORRIS

Morris, who was previously the Buccaneers' head coach from 2009-11, was a Falcons assistant coach from 2015-20 and was Atlanta's interim head coach in 2020. He had a 16-18 record in two seasons as the Falcons' full-time head

coach and a 37-56 career record as a head coach with no playoff appearances.

The Falcons took stunning losses to the New York Jets, Miami Dolphins, and Carolina Panthers (twice) this season. As it turned out, winning any of those four games would have been enough to win the NFC South and make the playoffs.

Fontenot has been the Falcons'

GM for the last five seasons after previously serving as the New Orleans Saints' assistant GM/vice president of pro personnel. The Falcons were 37-48 in Fontenot's five years in the role, with no winning seasons or playoff appearances.

Fontenot received criticism for how he handled the Falcons' 2024 offseason, when he signed quarter-

back Kirk Cousins to a four-year, \$180 million contract (\$100 million guaranteed) before drafting another QB, Michael Penix Jr., with the No. 8 overall pick in that year's NFL Draft.

However, his all-defensive 2025 draft appears to have transformed a defense that had been among the league's worst. The Falcons set a franchise record with 57 sacks this season, led by 10.5 from first-round rookie James Pearce Jr.

## From 9A FOOTBALL

coaches say they want. Which raises an uncomfortable question about whether they are being honest anymore.

"In this win-now mentality, coaches don't have time to develop a Lane Sceals," McCrae said. "They can go get a 20-year-old with college experience from the portal and try to save their job."

That sentence explains modern college football more clearly than any mission statement.

This is no longer about development. It is about fear. College coaches are operating in survival mode — dog-eat-dog, job-to-job, year-to-year. Nobody is willing to put dinner on the table in the hands of an 18-year-

old when a ready-made transfer is sitting there, plug-and-play.

"The pressure to win now, even in places that have never won, is unreal," McCrae said. "Fan bases with unrealistic expectations drive it. Money drives it."

College football still markets itself as education and opportunity. In practice, it has quietly removed opportunity from the youngest players — while congratulating itself on efficiency.

The get-rich-quick scheme used to be something college athletics claimed to resist. Now, McCrae argues, it is the foundation of the entire system.

"The whole reason you wanted to go to college has flipped on its head," he said. "It's disheartening for these kids."

And it doesn't stop at the Division I level. McCrae said Division II pro-

grams are now waiting on portal players before offering high school seniors. Everyone is waiting. Everyone is hedging. Nobody wants to commit.

"I've got kids who would have had offers by now, and I can't get a sniff," he said. "These kids just want an opportunity to play football and get a college degree."

Point University has offered Sceals and Daniel. Others have not. McCrae finds himself explaining a system where patience is preached, development is promised — and opportunity keeps getting deferred.

What troubles him most isn't the chaos.

It's the acceptance. "Money is flowing hand over fist," he said. "How can adults who say they care about college football look at this and say this is a good thing? Where are the

dadgum adults?"

He paused.

"It's greed," he said. "And the ones paying for it are the kids."

McCrae doesn't expect the transfer portal to disappear. He doesn't expect college football to correct itself without intervention. But he believes the sport is sprinting toward something it won't recognize when it arrives — a system where development is inefficient, loyalty is optional and education is reduced to a slogan.

High school football will keep producing players ready to be developed.

College football, meanwhile, has decided development takes too long — and has made its peace with who gets left behind.



Special Photo:

Former Philadelphia Phillies star Lenny Dykstra was charged with drug-related offenses after authorities said drugs and paraphernalia were discovered during a traffic stop on New Year's Day.

## Ex-World Series champ Lenny Dykstra facing drug charges

Field Level Media

Lenny Dykstra, a three-time All-Star and a World Series champion, is facing drug charges in Pennsylvania.

Dykstra, 62, was a passenger in a 2015 GMC Sierra truck early New Year's Day when it was pulled over for a traffic violation, per The Athletic. According to reports from the Pennsylvania State Police, a trooper said he found Dykstra, 62, with unspecified drugs and paraphernalia.

He was arrested but not taken into custody on suspicion of possession of narcotics and narcotics-related equipment. Specifics about the type of drugs were not available.

The traffic stop occurred in Greene County, about 30 miles east of Scranton, where Dykstra now resides.

This is not the first legal trouble Dykstra has faced.

In late 2012, he was sentenced to 6 1/2 months for bankruptcy fraud, when he was found to have hidden or sold valuable assets and memorabilia when he filed for bankruptcy. He also served time for grand theft auto and giving a false financial statement. He also faced charges in 2012 for indecent exposure. He faced drug and terroristic threat charges after a brouhaha with an Uber driver in 2018, charges that were dropped by a judge the following year as part of a plea deal to a lesser offense.

Dykstra was selected by the New York Mets in the 13th round of the 1981 MLB Draft out of high school in Garden Grove, Calif., and played there until he was traded to the Phillies in mid-1989. He retired after his final season with the Phillies in 1996.

He won the World Series with the Mets in 1986, the epic seven-game showdown with the Boston Red Sox. That postseason, Dykstra hit .300 with three home runs and six RBIs.

In 1993, he finished second to Barry Bonds in Most Valuable Player voting after leading the National League in plate appearances (773), at-bats (637), hits (194), runs (143) and walks (129).

An outfielder, Dykstra played in 1,278 career games, hit 81 home runs and added 404 RBIs. He also stole 285 bases and walked 640 times while batting .285.

# OBITUARIES

**James William Dyer**  
James William Dyer, 68, died Dec. 15, 2025 in Albany, Ga., following a long illness. He was born April 9, 1957, in Battle Creek, Mi. He attended Fletcher High School in Jacksonville Beach and graduated from Valdosta State University in 1981. He worked for years as an insurance adjuster in northeastern Florida. Preceded in death by his parents, George Coleman and Betty Jean Dyer, and a brother, Jeffrey Lee Dyer, all of Atlantic Beach, Fl. Survived by two sons, Jeremiah Paul Dyer of Jacksonville, Fl., and Nathan Clyde Dyer of Navarre Beach, Fl., and two brothers, Scott Allen Dyer of Atlantic Beach, Fl., and Timothy Wade Dyer of Jacksonville, Fl. Services are pending.

*"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;"*

**Ecclesiastes 3:1**

## 7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 children and grandchildren (11)	_____
2 enjoying enormously (9)	_____
3 bubbly water (7)	_____
4 last number at a concert (6)	_____
5 in an emotionless way (6)	_____
6 showed uncertainty (8)	_____
7 returnable for refund, maybe (9)	_____

SCE	DE	NTS	SEL	ISH
REL	TZ	FAL	RED	ALE
ECT	DEF	NDA	ER	FLA
IVE	TLY	TE	FIN	ING

Saturday's Answers: 1. ACTIVATED 2. HALLWAYS 3. GRADUALLY 4. WELLINGTON 5. HUSTLE 6. NEUROLOGIST 7. AMYGDALA 1/5

## 7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 O, in chemistry (6)	_____
2 scolded (10)	_____
3 popular cryptocurrency (7)	_____
4 backlit outline (10)	_____
5 reptiles or pecan candies (7)	_____
6 best-selling author Elin (11)	_____
7 keeps for later (5)	_____

HIL	SHED	OXY	IN	ADM
ONI	TL	BI	LH	TUR
TCO	DERB	OUE	GEN	SAV
RAND	ES	ES	TTE	SI

Monday's Answers: 1. DESCENDANTS 2. RELISHING 3. SELTZER 4. FINALE 5. FLATLY 6. FALTERED 7. DEFECTIVE 1/6

### CELEBRITY CIPHER by Luis Campos

Celebrity Cipher cryptograms are created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another.

" H W X C J H D O Z ' D Y F V B M C W F H W Y H V W  
J X W T W J T Z C J Z M W K J F D J L W V B D C Y M  
C Y M R A K C M W K J X W T J S Y A Z Z C W R ."  
— H . T . I J R W D

Previous Solution: "Sometimes movie-making happens like clockwork; other times, like a car accident." — Eric Roberts

TODAY'S CLUE: *g s i e n b e s*

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### CELEBRITY CIPHER by Luis Campos

Celebrity Cipher cryptograms are created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another.

" B G X M B Z V C / B X Y K N Z X U J Z G L Z A M  
M B Z V C . / K N B J B J X V T X F J K N Z L X J Z .  
/ T N Z D Z I Z D B X Y / B X Y T N X K B J  
Y B J J B G S . " — Y X D P J K D X G C

Previous Solution: "Perhaps it's only when people are dead that we can safely show how much we cared about them." — P.D. James

TODAY'S CLUE: *l s i e n b e j*

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### Albany Classifieds

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#### Albany Legals

#### Construction/Service Bids

**CITY OF LEARY, GA SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

**STILL WATERS ENGINEERING**  
PROJECT NO.: L0501.004  
ARPA Grant No.: GA-0011785

#### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Sealed Bids for the construction of the **Sanitary Sewer System Improvements and the Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements** will be received, by the **City of Leary**, at the **City of Leary - 39292 Mercer Avenue, Leary, Georgia 39862** until **11:00 AM** local time on **January 29, 2026**, at which time the Bids received will be publicly opened and read. No bids may be withdrawn after the closing time for receipt of bids for a period of sixty (60) days except as specifically detailed in the Instructions to Bidders.

Work of the **Sanitary Sewer System Improvements** Project consists of a **Phase I - Investigation Phase** including: +/- 7,930 LF Pre-Construction Video Inspection, +/- 17 Manhole Locates, and +/- 17 Raise Manhole to Grade.

Work of the project also consists of a **Phase II - Construction Phase** including: +/- 4,640 LF 8" Cured In Place Piping (CIPP), +/- 630 LF 12" CIPP, +/- 1,140 LF 15" CIPP, +/- 31 Service Restatements (for CIPP), +/- 1,710 LF 8" to 8" Pipebursting, +/- 500 LF 12" to 12" Pipebursting, +/- 12 Service Restatements (for Pipebursting), +/- 220 VF Manhole Rehabilitation, +/- 5,620 LF of Post-construction Video Inspection, all appurtenances necessary for complete installation. Contract includes providing all materials, labor, and equipment necessary to complete construction. Scope of work of the Construction Phase services are subject to modification based on the results of the Investigation Phase services.

Work of the **Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements** Project consists of providing and installing a **Mechanical Micro Bar Screen Package, Biofiltration System Package, Inline UV Disinfection System Package, Sludge De-watering System Package, Lift Station Rehabilitation Package, Stationary Generator Set, Electrical & Control Improvements**, the construction on a sludge retention basin as shown in the plans, and all site work, piping, and appurtenances necessary for complete installations.

Bids will be received for a single prime contract for the **Sanitary Sewer System Improvements** and a separate single prime contract for the **Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements**. Bids shall be on a lump sum and unit price basis, with alternate bid items as indicated in the Bid Form.

The Issuing Office for the Bidding Documents is: **Still Waters Engineering, 130 Veterinary Way Unit-2, Leesburg, GA 31763, 229-496-5700**. Please contact **Brian Henderson** at [bhenderson@stillwaterseng.com](mailto:bhenderson@stillwaterseng.com) or **Nikki Griffith** at [officeadmin@stillwaterseng.com](mailto:officeadmin@stillwaterseng.com) to request contract documents and specifications. Prospective Bidders may examine the Bidding Documents at the Issuing Office on Mondays through Fridays between the hours of **8:30 AM - 5:00 P.M.** and may obtain copies of the

#### Construction/Service Bids

Bidding Documents from the Issuing Office as described below.

Bidding Documents also may be examined at the **City of Leary**; during the City's regular business hours.

Bidding Documents may be obtained from the Issuing Office during the hours indicated above. Bidding Documents are available electronically (as portable document format (PDF) files) for a non-refundable charge of **\$300** for each contract. Paper copies of bid documents are also available for an additional **\$100** non-refundable charge. Upon Issuing Office's receipt of payment, Bidding Documents will be sent via email or other means of electronic file distribution. The date that the Bidding Documents are transmitted by the Issuing Office will be considered the prospective Bidder's date of receipt of the Bidding Documents. Partial sets of Bidding Documents will not be available from the Issuing Office. Neither Owner nor Engineer will be responsible for full or partial sets of Bidding Documents, including Addenda if any, obtained from sources other than the Issuing Office. **Bids will not be accepted from prospective bidders not on record with the Issuing Office as having purchased and received a complete set of Bidding Documents.**

Bid security shall be furnished in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders. If awarded the Contract the successful bidder will be required to furnish a Performance Bond and Payment Bond, each in the amount of one hundred percent (100%) of the Contract amount. Bonds must be provided by sureties appearing on the U.S. Treasury Department's most current Circular 570 Listing and be licensed in the State of Georgia.

All permits required for the construction of this project are expected to be approved prior to the date of the bid opening.

Acquisition of property for easements, right of way, etc. is not expected to be required for this project.

This project is expected to be funded all or in part by the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) through State and

#### Construction/Service Bids

Local Fiscal Recovery Program. Federal Requirements including 2CFR Part 200, Appendix II will apply to any contract awarded.

The City of Leary reserves the right to reject any or all bids including without limitation the rights to reject any or all nonconforming, nonresponsive, unbalanced or conditional Bids; and to make an award in the best interest of the City of Leary.

Owner: **City of Leary, GA**  
By: **Hon. Calvin Cox**  
Title: **Mayor**  
Date: **12-30-25**

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# CROSSWORD

- |   |   |                                 |  |
|---|---|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>ACROSS</b>   | 7 Came up   | 35 River through Paris          | 47 Org. working against age discrimination |
| 1 Pantry platform   | 8 Trivia night venue                                      | 36 Mex. neighbor                | 50 Unclothed                               |
| 6 Contrail, essentially   | 9 "Frozen" snowman  | 38 Grand _____                  | 51 Pharmacy offerings                      |
| 11 Auction offer  | 10 Try again  | 39 French wine classification   | 54 Sit alongside                           |
| 14 Humped beast at a desert oasis   | 11 Sings one's own praises                                | 42 Corp. leader                 | 55 Billionth: Pref.                        |
| 15 "Go me!"   | 12 Means to administer medication                         | 43 Dog park sound               | 57 Taper off                               |
| 16 Eggs, to a biologist   | 13 Texas city with the Cowboys and the Wings              | 44 Gretel's brother             | 60 Tax prep pro                            |
| 17 "This could've been a lot worse"   | 18 Sci-fi franchise with "Legacy" and "Ares" installments | 45 Baltimore ballplayer         | 61 SSW's opposite                          |
| 19 _____ or nothing   | 22 Bioluminescence produced by marine microorganisms      | 46 "Did you notice I was gone?" | 62 Disappointing firecracker               |
| 20 Draped dresses in Hindi films  | 23 Garments that might have feet, familiarly              |                                 | 63 Female sib                              |
| 21 Paleontologist's find  | 24 Dine, quaintly   |                                 |  |
| 23 Tire gauge meas.   | 25 Grumble from the recently roused                       |                                 |  |
| 26 Schleps  | 27 Rugby play with tight formation                        |                                 |  |
| 28 High point of a trip to Sicily?  | 30 Some organic chemistry students                        |                                 |  |
| 29 Play with, as a trampoline   | 32 Blue pol   |                                 |  |
| 31 Jewel boxes  | 33 Joins one's partner in retirement?                     |                                 |  |
| 34 Reject   |   |                                 |  |
| 35 Confident about  |   |                                 |  |
| 37 Antiwar gathering of world leaders   |   |                                 |  |
| 40 "Women Talking" novelist Toews   |   |                                 |  |
| 41 CNN journalist Hill  |   |                                 |  |
| 44 Hit that may go out of the park  |   |                                 |  |
| 47 Alternative to "Yours truly"   |   |                                 |  |
| 48 Extremely dry  |   |                                 |  |
| 49 Finish by  |   |                                 |  |
| 52 "That's gotta hurt"  |   |                                 |  |
| 53 Sentra automaker   |   |                                 |  |
| 56 Archer's projectile  |   |                                 |  |
| 58 Distress signal  |   |                                 |  |
| 59 Supporting musicians, or what can be found in 17-, 31-, 37-, and 44-Across |   |                                 |  |
| 64 Tree with serrated leaves  |   |                                 |  |
| 65 Remove a wooden pin from   |   |                                 |  |
| 66 Listless feeling   |   |                                 |  |
| 67 Filmmaker Ang  |   |                                 |  |
| 68 Warty hoppers  |   |                                 |  |
| 69 28 of the cards in a Monopoly set  |   |                                 |  |

#### ANSWER TO TODAY'S PUZZLE:

S	D	E	D	D	S	D	V	O	L	E	E	T
I	N	N	E	G	E	P	N	N	W	T	E	
S	D	N	V	B	P	K	O	V	B	S	O	S
F	O	O	I	V	D	N	E					
H	E	R	E	S	V	N	N	U	E	I	R	O
V	O	I	R	E	M	V	A	I	R	I	M	
S	E	S	V	O	E	O	O	O	N	O	P	M
V	N	I	E	S	E	T	O	L	I	S	P	
T	I	S	S	O	F	S	I	R	V	S		
L	T	V	D	V	O	S	L	O	N	S	S	L
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B	I	D	O	R	A	P	A	V	A	L	F	E

01/06/26

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By Robert S. Gard  
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01/06/26

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# Wild Hog Supper, Eggs and Issues and more ... another new year under the Gold Dome

By Jill Nolin  
Georgia Recorder

**ATLANTA** – It’s a new year at the Gold Dome, though technically it’s really the start of the tail end of the two-year biennium. So happy half-new year in Georgia politics?

Here are some of the key dates and events to know as we roll into the new year:

**Jan. 11:** Long seen as the kickoff event of the legislative session, the Wild Hog Supper will be held at the Georgia Freight Depot. It’s an event hosted by Feeding Georgia, which is a network of regional food banks, in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Agriculture. This gathering has been a tradition for six decades, and the proceeds go toward addressing food insecurity in the state.

**Jan. 12:** The Georgia General Assembly gavels into session for 2026. The first task may seem like a mundane one, but it will be big news for Gold Dome dwellers: Setting the official legislative meeting schedule, including when everyone’s favorite day – sine die, or the last day of the session – will fall on the calendar.

**Jan. 14:** Members of the business community will gather bright and early at Mercedes-Benz Stadium to hear from Gov. Brian Kemp and legislative leaders for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce’s annual Eggs and

Issues event. The speeches often provide a sneak peek of the top power players’ legislative agenda.

**Jan. 15:** Georgians for a Healthy Future hold their policy-packed Health Care Unscrambled event at the Georgia Freight Depot. This year, the keynote speaker is Katie Keith, who is the founding director of the Center for Health Policy and the Law at Georgetown University’s O’Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law.

**Jan. 21:** It’s maternal health awareness day at the Capitol, organized by Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies.

**Jan. 23:** The Georgia Budget and Policy Institute will hold its annual insights conference, which will feature analysis of the new state budget proposals and how changing federal policies will impact Georgia.

**Jan. 28:** People in recovery and their allies will rally at the Georgia Freight Depot and state Capitol for addiction recovery awareness day, brought to you by the Georgia Council for Recovery.

**Jan. 29:** Is a storm a brewin’ or is that the sound of parents and their children, caregivers and advocates coming to the state Capitol to promote kid-friendly policies? Strolling Thunder, which is organized by GEEARS, is all about urging Georgia’s leaders to think of the children.



Special Photo: Jill Nolin/Georgia Recorder

Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Tyler Harper speaks at the Wild Hog Supper in 2024. The annual event helps kick off the Legislative Session in the state.

## Albany Utilities announces temporary delay in billing

Staff Reports  
news@albanyherald.com

**ALBANY** – Albany Utilities has announced a temporary billing delay caused by an issue within its billing system that has impacted the processing of bills.

As a result, some customers may experience a delay in receiving their utility bills. The Utilities Authorities’ billing operations remain active, and a spokesperson for the

utility provider said teams are working diligently to resolve the issue and resume normal billing schedules as quickly as possible.

Albany Utilities officials said they appreciate the community’s patience and understanding during this time.

Customers with questions regarding their bill are encouraged to contact Albany Utilities Customer Service at (229) 883-8330.



File Photo

Albany Utilities Authority officials have announced that billing issues have caused a delay in the processing of some bills.

## Birth Announcements

Unless otherwise noted, the following births all took place at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in Albany between Dec. 22 and Dec. 27, 2025:

Coleman, Lydia Michelle, daughter, was born Dec. 22 to Porsha and Orlando Coleman of Thomasville.

Mulloney, Graham Edward, son, was born Dec. 22 to Taylor and Justin Mulloney of Leesburg.

Rosa, Beatrix Moreira, daughter, was born Dec. 23 to Roberta and Guilherme Rosa of Leesburg.

Duncan, Indigo Moon, daughter, was born Dec. 24 to Venus Ganey and David Duncan of Albany.

Gabo, Emmanuela Mortel, daughter, was born Dec. 26 to Maria Mortel and Thomas Gabro of Albany.

Schultz, Ruby Ann, daughter, was born Dec. 25 to Leigh Schultz of Albany.

Wilson, Blaze D’Andrea, son, was born Dec. 27 to Asianna Brooks and Da’Quavious Wilson of Albany.

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