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Sunday, February 7, 2021

Published Weekly



Valentine's Day is a time for 'giving'

Valentine's Day is a time for giving candy, flowers, cards, and other gifts to those special loved ones in our lives. Shown here, outside Sweet Sensations in Downtown Fowlerville, is four-year-old Raelyn Coyne with a pretty red, heart-shaped box of chocolates. The young lady attends New Creations Pre-School at the United Brethren Church and is the daughter of Corey & Amanda Coyne. Amanda is the owner of Massage Rehab in Fowlerville.

With the holiday coming next Sunday, Feb. 14, there's still plenty of time to buy something special for your loved ones at area businesses. Also, with the restaurants re-opened, although at restricted capacity, there's an opportunity to go out for breakfast, lunch, or dinner next weekend or, if you choose, order 'take out' and celebrate at home.

Smith Elementary News

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm
School Hours: 8:50 am – 3:32 pm
* * *

IMPORTANT DATES:

February 15 – NO SCHOOL – President’s Day Recess
March 5 – End of 2nd Trimester for K-5th
March 11 – K-5th ½ Day Schedule - Dismissal Time 12:02 pm (6th -12th Full School Day)

March 11 – K-5th P/T Conferences 1:00-4:00 pm, K-12th P/T Conferences 5:00-7:30 pm
March 19 – NO SCHOOL – Full PD Day for Teachers
March 29 – April 2 – NO SCHOOL – SPRING RECESS
April 5 – NO SCHOOL – EASTER MONDAY RECESS
April 6 – School Resumes
* * *

Medication—If your child requires any prescription or non-prescription medication during the school year, a parent or guardian must bring the medication in to the Smith Office to drop it off and complete the necessary paperwork. **School Board Policy states that children are not allowed to transport medication.**
* * *

FYI- Each school building in the Fowlerville Community School District has a Child Study Team / Response to Intervention process in place, which is a vehicle for staff members to review student performance, concerns, and collaboratively develop interventions. If you have concerns about your child’s development and are interested in more information on special services, contact his/her building Principal.

NOTICE:

Fowlerville Agricultural Society Fair Board is calling a Special Meeting for all Ag Society Members on **February 18th at 7pm** at the Fowlerville Fairgrounds, to discuss and vote on a proposed sale of land. Please contact the Fowlerville Fairgrounds with questions at 517-223-8186 or fair@fowlervillefamilyfair.com
(1-31, 2-7 & 2-14-21 FNV)

Caleb Jenkins Column



What Patriotism Actually Is: Fixing Flaws in Love

‘Patriotism’ is a word thrown around very loosely these days, both in positive and negative ways. It has become a buzzword for some and a trigger for others, and for all involved, it has become politicized to the point of being unrecognizable. As Americans, we glibly categorize things we like as patriotic and things with which we disagree as treasonous. For a concept we reference so frequently, I do not think we truly understand what patriotism is. It is something around which we all should be able to rally, yet its misuse and abuse across the political spectrum drives us further apart.

What does patriotism actually look like? Over the next few articles, I will cover just a few of my thoughts on the matter, but I think the points chosen are integral components of patriotism that are often forgotten or ignored. The first factor should not come as a surprise since I have written about it and referenced it many times. Patriotism is not blind to errors but is committed to improvement.

Some believe patriotism is ignoring anything critical in America’s past or present. The common tell of this perspective is the use of “yeah, but.” “Yeah, America should not have done X thing in the past, but <insert excuse or pivot off topic>.” This desire to defend our country’s reputation is a deep part of our identity as Americans and is nothing new.

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote about the many Americans he encountered in the 1830s who refused to admit any negative critiques about their country but would talk his ear off about how wonderful America is.

At its core, this is a wonderful trait, and it is something we should be proud of as Americans! We love our country and are loyal to it. We believe in the importance of our traditions and institutions, and we are thankful for our freedoms and way of life. We have also had to defend these rights and traditions on many occasions both militarily and politically. They are hard-won, and I think that is partially why we are so quick to defend them, even at the slightest hint of verbal critique.

This fundamental loyalty and love of country are admirable, and often unique, aspects of an American. However, this should not be used as a crutch to ignore legitimate critiques or not address issues from the past or present. First, we should not be blind to errors because our love of country should run deeper than that. Our patriotism should be strong enough to withstand a critical look. If you unconditionally love someone, then you do not stop loving him or her just because he or she is not perfect. None of us are! And neither is our country, so we do not need to feel like our patriotism is shaken when we recognize that there are and have been flaws.

Second, this deep love for country should motivate us to address the flaws, and they cannot be properly addressed if they are not known and discussed. Unfortunately, this is sometimes abused when people are not interested in addressing problems and are truly just hostile toward our country. This is also wrong because it is not making America better; it is attacking our country just out of animosity. However, we cannot react in kind and refuse to communicate and work toward a better America.

It is not treasonous to admit flaws, but that should not be the only goal. America’s mistakes do in fact need to be addressed, but they should be approached fundamentally with a love of country and a desire to make it the best it can be. *Despite* its imperfections, I still believe America is the greatest nation on earth. This is patriotism in action, and it is an opportunity to bring us closer together.

Grief Share Seminar/Support Group reopening in March

Grief Share, which is sponsored by Family Impact Centers and is held at the Family Impact Center Wellness Center located on 9430 W. Grand River just west of Fowlerville, is scheduled to begin a new group on Wednesday, March 3, from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

This faith-based program is for anyone who is grieving the loss of someone close. It will run consecutively for 13 weeks, with the last meeting occurring on May 26, and is free of charge.

For more information or to register for Grief Share, please call Barb at 517-223-4428 as soon as possible.

ATTENTION BINGO PLAYERS:

VFW Post 6464 announces

the restarting of Bingo

We are now open on Fridays

with our next one on

February 12th

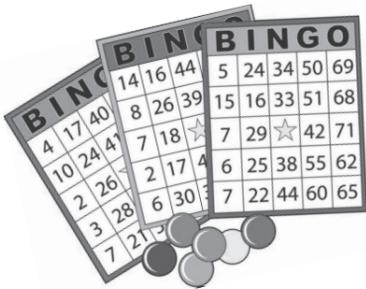
Doors open at 4:00pm

Bingo will start at 6:30pm

Masks must be worn unless eating or drinking.

Contact tracing will be followed, you must sign in with your name and phone number.

We must have 40 players to start play. Capacity of 100 people.



Breakfast will resume

on February 21st

8:00am until noon

Masks must be worn until eating or drinking.

Contact tracing will be followed, you must sign in with your name and phone number.

Capacity of 100 people.

Must close by 10pm

Spacing of 6 feet must be followed and no more than 6 people per table.



High School contact sports to resume this Monday, Feb. 8

In a televised report broadcast by Channel 6 Lansing, it was announced that high school contact sports will resume this Monday, Feb. 8. The TV station carried live coverage of the news conference held by Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer this past Thursday afternoon on its website.

Along with making this announcement that contact sports would resume, Whitmer reiterated her goal to get kids in the classroom by March 1st.

In the Fowlerville and Webberville schools, these contact sports include boys and girls basketball, wrestling, and competitive cheer.

The announcement comes from an order issued by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Under the order, contact sports can take place provided masks are worn during practices and competition. If masks cannot be worn, participants must be regularly tested for COVID-19 consistent with guidelines issued by MDHHS.

“Safety protocols like wearing masks and testing will help keep kids, coaches, and families safe and allow our schools to remain open for in-person instruction,” the governor said.

Spectators are allowed with up to 250 people in stadiums that seat less than 10,000 and up to 500 people at venues that seat over 10,000 people.

The order remains in effect through Monday, March 29.

Correction on article about ‘New Fowlerville head librarian’

Note: The new Director for the Fowlerville District Library, Ellen Peters, asked to clarify what her job entailed at the Spokane City Public Library. The article about her appeared in last week’s Jan. 31, 2021 issue. She thought the question was about the size of the entire library system rather than the region she managed.

“Prior to accepting the position of Director for Fowlerville District Library, I was the south region manager for Spokane Public Library. The entire system served almost a half-million citizens in the city and county (there is a reciprocal agreement in place between the two). When I first became regional manager, there were a total of six branches in the SPL system, two of which were under me, one of which was SPL’s busiest branch. They’ve recently built a third branch called “The Hive” in the south region, a creative artisan/maker space that I was privileged to help envision. The regional budget I managed was about \$980,000 (SPL’s total budget runs about \$11 million). Spokane County Library District is the library system where I worked prior to SPL, and they have ten branches.

Thank you for introduction to this amazing community. I am looking forward to engaging with everyone soon and sharing our exciting plans!

Fowlerville Fire Department Report

January 28th

1:30 am. Medical emergency on Second Street in the Village.

January 29th

12:18 pm. Medical emergency on White Pine Street in the Village.

6:01 pm. Report of a structure fire in the area of Fowlerville Road and Van Buren Road. No incident found.

6:51 pm. Medical emergency on N. Grand Avenue in the Village.

January 30th

6:10 am. Medical emergency on Kern Road in Iosco Township.

9:49 am. Medical emergency on Gregory Road in Handy Township.

7:06 pm. Medical emergency on James Drive in Handy Township.

January 31st

10:35 am. Medical emergency on Sherwood Road in Conway Township.

12:11 pm. Assist Livingston County Ambulance on Bradley Road in Iosco Township.

6:06 pm. Medical emergency on Glen Mary Drive in Conway Township.

8:21 pm. Camper fire on Nicholson Road in Handy Township.

11:26 pm. Medical emergency on Collins Street in the Village.

February 1st

7:30 am. Medical emergency on Nicholson Road in Conway Township.

7:53 pm. Medical emergency on Iosco Ridge Drive in Iosco Township.

February 2nd

1:00 pm. Medical emergency on Frank Street in the Village.

February 3rd

3:09 am. Medical emergency on Cedar Road in Handy Township.

8:34 am. Medical emergency on Country Corner Drive in Handy Township.

11:41 am. Medical emergency on Cedar Road in Handy Township.

11:44 am. Medical emergency on Sharp Road in Handy Township.

8:00 pm. Power lines down on Grand River in Handy Township.



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Fowlerville District Library News

Upcoming Programs

All programs are intended for Fowlerville School District residents. Call (517) 223-9089 for more information, or check out our Facebook Page.

All programs will be held virtually via Zoom, Facebook Live or YouTube unless otherwise indicated. Program descriptions, locations, and details on how to register for each program are below.

All programs require registration and is done by sending a Facebook Personal Message to the Library or by emailing to info@fowlervillelibrary.org, unless otherwise indicated. Zoom invitations will be sent out the day before the program date.

From A to Z with Mrs. D – ongoing through Zoom

There are a limited number of spots currently open in our early literacy and social development program for children ages 2 1/2 through 4 years old. If you're interested in more information, please call Mrs. D at the Library, or email us for details. This group meets weekly through April.

FREE SHOT FRIDAYS!

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Our front lobby is still closed. Sorry for the inconvenience.

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Virtual Community Mosaic Board: ongoing

The mosaic project is available through Letsticktogether.com so there is no need to leave the house on a cold winter's night to participate because it is all online. You may visit every day and can place up to 75 pieces per visit. There is a total of 3996 digital stickers in this project and everyone helps on the same board. With the help of the community the final picture will be revealed when it is done. The project link is: <https://letstickto/session/17ca1579> and the link can also be found on our Facebook as well as on our website.

Phone a Story and First Chapter Fridays: Available 24/7

Preschool - 12th Graders - Call 517-858-2700 anytime to hear a full children's story, or a sample of a J Fiction/Chapter book or YA/Teen novel. Recordings are changed every two weeks.

MiLibraryQuest: January 1st – February 14

6th - 12th Graders - An anonymous tip has come in that a thief will steal an iconic Michigan landmark on Valentine's Day. We're recruiting teenage private detectives to stop the heist! Figure out who the thief is and what they're stealing to prevent the crime and you'll be entered to win a reward. The Mi Library Quest challenge is made up of public libraries across Michigan and is supported in part by the Library of Michigan. Open to Fowlerville Teens. No registration is required. Learn more about the Quest at milibraryquest.wixsite.com/quest1.

Study Bunny Craft: Tuesday, February 16th, at 5:30 PM

Teens - Break up your studying and join us on Zoom to make this cute bunny craft. Supplies are limited. Kits are available for pickup starting Feb 11. There are many colors available.

Livingston County Libraries Virtual Yo-Yo Trick Workshop: Saturday, February 20th, 2020 at 11 AM or 12 PM via -Zoom

Kids Ages 7 and Up. – Please join the Livingston County Libraries in a live online Yo-Yo Workshop. Watch instructors from Yo-Yo Tricks.com show off their moves and learn some moves of your own. Registrants can pick up a free Yo-Yo from

Fowlerville District Library beginning Saturday, February 13 through Friday, February 19. Registration begins February 6, 2021 at 10:00 am and is done through the Cromaine Library.

This program is paid for by Sport Port, an initiative of Project Play: Southeast Michigan in partnership with the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation and Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.

Winter Wreath: Thursday, February 18th, at 5:30 pm via -Zoom

Adults – Gather on Zoom and let Crafty Cindy show you how to put together a snowflake wreath. A glue gun is required for this project. If needed, there will be glue guns available to checkout. Supplies are limited. Kits are available for pick up starting Feb 15.

Beyond the Book Series: The Hate U Give: Thursday, February 25th, at 6:30 pm via—Zoom

Adults –February's selection in our "Life From Another Perspective Theme" for our Beyond the Book Group is *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Please read the book and watch the movie at home, then meet up with friends on Zoom to discuss them both. Everyone who signs up will get an opportunity to check out the movie and watch it on their own. Registration is required. Sign up with a valid email address to receive a book and a Zoom link. Registration is done in person inside or through curbside service at the Library. Books are limited and only available to one per household.

FDL Response to New COVID Emergency Order

In response to Emergency Order MCL 333.2253 issued by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Fowlerville District Library will be open by appointment only and will continue to offer curbside service during our regular hours. The use of our curbside is encouraged. Each appointment will be limited to thirty minutes by one household at a time and can be arranged by calling or emailing the library. Masks will be required. We will also be offering print by email which can be picked up through curbside or in our Entryway. Your first ten copies each day are FREE. Internet is always available for patron use in our parking lot and side yard. Please continue to use the book dropbox outside the building or leave your items in the library lobby, when available.

Monday-Thursday

9:30am – 7pm

Friday

9:30am – 5pm

Saturday

10am – 2pm

How to Use Curbside Service

Step 1: You can make requests: by calling the Library directly, emailing us or make your holds through the FDL's card catalog (Max 10 items) –Not sure what you would like to read? Use our reader's advisory at the desk, they can help! All you need is to give them a subject, author, or genre, and they will do the rest.

Step 2: One hour after your request has been made, please come to the Library and park in the curbside pickup designated parking located in front of the side yard.

Step 3: From your car, call the Library and someone will come out with your requested materials.

Step 4: Please present your library card or driver's license and your materials will be given to you.

Follow us on Facebook: [@fowlervillelibrary](https://www.facebook.com/fowlervillelibrary) or visit our website at www.fowlervillelibrary.org. Email any questions to: info@fowlervillelibrary.org



Dick Scott MOTOR MALL

Fowlerville High School's "ATHLETES" OF THE WEEK



Emma Wilber



Ian Hartke

Bowling

Emma Wilber and Ian Hartke are both Freshman this year who have shown an eagerness to learn and shown tremendous growth in the short time we have had our season.

Every week through the season two Fowlerville H.S. athletes will be saluted for their efforts. Athletes will be selected by the coaching staff and Athletic Dept. For that "Winning Deal" on a new or used car or truck, see Dick Scott Motor Mall.

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Savvy Senior Column

By Jim Miller

How Much Do You Have to Make to File Income Taxes?

Dear Savvy Senior,

What are the IRS income tax filing requirements for retirees in 2020? My income dropped way down when I was forced into retirement last March due to COVID, so I'm wondering if I need to file a tax return this year.

Unexpected Retiree

Dear Unexpected,

Whether or not you are required to file a federal income tax return this year actually depends on several factors: How much you earned last year (in 2020), the source of that income, your age and your filing status.

Here's a rundown of this tax season's IRS tax filing requirement thresholds. For most people, this is pretty straightforward. If your 2020 gross income – which includes all taxable income, not counting your Social Security benefits, unless you are married and filing separately – was below the threshold for your filing status and age, you may not have to file. But if it's over, you will.

Single: \$12,400 (\$14,050 if you're 65 or older by Jan. 1, 2021).

Married filing jointly: \$24,800 (\$26,100 if you or your spouse is 65 or older; or \$27,400 if you're both over 65).

Married filing separately: \$5 at any age.

Head of household: \$18,650 (\$20,300 if age 65 or older).

Qualifying widow(er) with dependent child: \$24,800 (\$26,100 if age 65 or older).

To get a detailed breakdown on federal filing requirements, along with information on taxable and nontaxable income, call the IRS at 800-829-3676 and ask them to mail you a free copy of the "1040 and 1040-SR Instructions for Tax Year 2020," or you can get it online at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov).

Check Here Too

There are, however, some other financial situations that can require you to file a tax return, even if your gross income falls below the IRS filing requirements. For example, if you earned more than \$400 from self-employment in 2020, owe any special taxes like an alternative minimum tax, or get premium tax credits because you, your spouse or a dependent is enrolled in a Health Insurance Marketplace (aka Obamacare) plan, you'll need to file.

You'll also need to file if you're receiving Social Security benefits, and one-half of your benefits plus your other

gross income and any tax-exempt interest exceeds \$25,000, or \$32,000 if you're married and filing jointly.

To figure all this out, the IRS offers an interactive tax assistant tool on their website that asks a series of questions that will help you determine if you're required to file, or if you should file because you're due a refund. It takes less than 15 minutes to complete.

You can access this tool at [IRS.gov/Help/ITA](https://www.irs.gov/Help/ITA) – click on "Do I Need to File a Tax Return?" Or, you can get assistance over the phone by calling the IRS helpline at 800-829-1040.

Check Your State

Even if you're not required to file a federal tax return this year, don't assume that you're also excused from filing state income taxes. The rules for your state might be very different. Check with your state tax agency before concluding that you're entirely in the clear. For links to state tax agencies see [Taxadmin.org/state-tax-agencies](https://www.taxadmin.org/state-tax-agencies).

Tax Prep Assistance

If you find that you do need to file a tax return this year, you can free file through the IRS at [IRS.gov/FreeFile](https://www.irs.gov/FreeFile) if your 2020 adjusted gross income was below \$72,000.

Or, if you need some help, contact the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (or TCE) program. Sponsored by the IRS, TCE provides free tax preparation and counseling to middle and low-income taxpayers, age 60 and older. Call 800-906-9887 or visit [IRS.treasury.gov/freetaxprep](https://www.irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep) to find out about services near you.

You can also get help through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide service, a participant in the TCE program that provides free tax preparation in-person, online and by phone. To find out about service options in your area, call 888-227-7669 or visit [AARP.org/findtaxhelp](https://www.aarp.org/findtaxhelp). You don't have to be an AARP member to use this service.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit [SavvySenior.org](https://www.SavvySenior.org). Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.



Thank you to all who have supported us in the past and who will continue to do so in the future. We wouldn't be who we are if it wasn't for you.

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Great country living in Howell! This nice updated 3 bedroom, 2 bath home features over 2,300' sq.ft. of living space on 10 beautiful acres. Features include natural fireplace in the family room, central air, Andersen windows and stainless-steel appliances. Updated roof, furnace, water heater, flooring, paint and remodeled baths. Plenty of storage with the attached 2 car garage and 34x48 pole barn with concrete floor, water, electric and insulation. Large deck for summer days with room to relax and entertain. \$369,900.

Charming 2 bedroom, 1 bath home in the Village of Fowlerville. This home features beautiful hardwood floors, loads of built in storage and nice original trim. Relax in the large Florida room for additional space and 1st floor laundry. Updates over the years include furnace, roof, windows and siding. Oversized lot allows for room to build a garage and garden area. \$164,900.

Great location! Less than 1/4 mile from paved roads and close to town and schools. This nice ranch home features 3 bedrooms, 2 baths and a full basement. Loads of storage in the detached 2 car garage and large 1 acre yard. Bring the family and make this your dream home. \$150,000.

Beautiful country 5 acre setting on a paved road for this 1977 built 1 owner ranch home. Features include 2 large bedrooms, 2 baths, 1st floor laundry and partially finished walkout basement with spacious family room. Relax on the covered front porch or rear deck and enjoy the view. Paved drive and oversized 2 car attached garage. \$230,000.

----- VACANT LAND -----

Beautiful 3.4 acre parcel within 1/2 mile from pavement in the Fowlerville schools. This parcel has some mature trees on it and over 450 feet of road frontage. \$32,500.

Nice large build site in the Village of Fowlerville with lots of mature trees and possible walkout site. \$20,000

Nice 40 acres with an abundance of wildlife for you to enjoy. This parcel has a west branch of the Red Cedar River that runs through. Ready for your dream home to be surrounded by nature. \$165,000.

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Livingston County takes part in annual Point-in-Time Count that measures number of homeless people

This past Wednesday, January 27, Michigan communities participated in an annual event to produce a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness during the coldest month of the year. The Point-In-Time (PIT) count takes place on the last Wednesday of January and is required for homelessness programs that are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

During the traditional PIT count, communities tally the number of people in shelters (including domestic violence shelters) and the number of people who are unsheltered (e.g., sleeping in tent cities, in their cars, or in abandoned buildings). This year, due to risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, communities could request a waiver for the unsheltered portion of the PIT count. Many Michigan communities, including 61 rural counties falling within the Michigan Balance of State Continuum of Care, will not be participating in the unsheltered portion of the PIT Count.

The Livingston County Homeless Continuum of Care did not request a waiver and completed the traditional PIT count.

In Livingston County, there were 7 teams with 14 volunteers from various agencies including: United Way, The Salvation Army, ST Vincent De Paul, The Livingston Family Center and The Connection Youth Services, Severe Weather Network, OLHSA, Livingston County Catholic Charities, and community volunteers.

The PIT count occurred during the hours of 10:00 pm and midnight. Two unsheltered individuals were found, during this timeframe and given resources as well as offered shelter.

The actual report to HUD will include those in local shelters, transitional homes and these unsheltered folks.

In this chart, you can see how many people, locally are being sheltered on a nightly basis.

St. Vincent de Paul	4
LACASA	10
The Salvation Army	13
OLHSA	4
Connection Youth Services	2
Severe Weather Network	11

The PIT Count Committee Chair, Lynda Brown Schultz of The Connection Youth Services, would like to acknowledge the many county agencies and community members who took the time to plan this count and who went out on the coldest night of the year to identify and provide care to any homeless individuals and families in our county.

“I witnessed this group of people show up with empathy for those who may need assistance and resources. Thank you!” she said.

The PIT count is just one tool Michigan communities can use to raise awareness of homelessness at the state and local level. In addition to the PIT count, Michigan is a leader in collecting and evaluating data on experiences of homelessness through the Michigan State Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS). The Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness recently published the 2019 annual report which identifies that over 61,000 individuals experienced homelessness in Michigan in 2019.

Locally, we have updated resources as well. The Housing in Livingston County Fact Sheet, the Runaway and Homeless Youth in Livingston County Fact Sheet and the Financial Stability Fact Sheet were all updated in 2020. These fact sheets attempt to help our community understand important issues that impact our county.

These Fact Sheets as well as others are located on the Human Services Collaborative Body’s website and can be found here:

<https://www.livgov.com/hscb/Pages/assessmentandevaluation.aspx>



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Michigan Senate Report

By Lana Theis,
22nd District

Senate, House committees to talk about student sports ban this Tuesday, Feb. 9

A joint hearing of the Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee and the House Education Committee will be held Tuesday, Feb. 9 at noon to discuss the impact of the Whitmer administration’s cancellation of student athletics.

Sen. Lana Theis, R-Brighton, who chairs the Senate committee, and Rep. Pam Hornberger, who chairs the House committee, have invited Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Director Elizabeth Hertel and Chief Medical Executive Dr. Joneigh Khaldun to testify, as well as the Michigan High School Athletic Association and Detroit Public Schools Community District Superintendent Nikolai Vitti, Ed.D.

The committee meeting will take place in the Senate Hearing Room of the Boji Tower, located at 124 W. Allegan St. in Lansing. It will also be streamed live at misenate.viebit.com.

Senate resolution urges lifting the suspension on winter high school sports

The Michigan Senate adopted a resolution on Jan. 28 urging Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to lift the suspension on winter high school contact sports and allow play to resume immediately.

Senate Resolution 7 was adopted earlier in the day by the Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee, chaired by Sen. Lana Theis.

“As has been the case for much of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s executive orders in response to the coronavirus, the science doesn’t back up her actions to cancel youth and prep sports,” said Theis, R-Brighton. “Almost all athletes in our state who have been tested for the virus were negative and they have been abiding by all the rules that MDHHS and the governor have imposed on them, yet they still have not been allowed to play. Meanwhile, the evidence is gathering that athletes are

suffering from mental health issues, including anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation — a terrible and avoidable outcome.”

The resolution cites the executive director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association, who indicated over 30,000 rapid COVID-19 tests conducted on athletes over the last three months for fall sports was 99.8%. Also cited are data from a national survey of high school and college students, which indicated 87% reported stress and anxiety, while 57%

The Salvation Army thanks community for donations

Christmas is over and The Salvation Army Red Kettles have been packed up until next year. The 2020 bell ringing season was full of challenges that included less kettle locations, minimal volunteers and many more. Covid brought on its own challenges from ensuring everyone was safe to volunteers who became sick and had to cancel. All of which worried The Salvation Army of Livingston County.

Reaching into January, The Salvation Army still had not met their goal of \$385,000. However, Lt. Rob Leach had faith that things would work out and they did! God was good to The Salvation Army of Livingston County this past Christmas season, blessing us with many generous donors and several record-breaking weekends.

“I am deeply moved by the people in this community for continually showing their support for their friends in Livingston County,” said Lt. Leach, adding that “Your generosity gives hope to those who are struggling especially during these trying times. Christmas had an Army and that Army are the folks of Livingston County that wanted to ensure friends, neighbors and family were taken care of this holiday season and into the next year. Thank you for all you do to help us and for Rescuing Christmas this year!”

The Salvation Army of Livingston County raised 100% of their \$385,000 Christmas goal before January 31st, the end date for the Christmas fundraising season.

“We would like to thank all of the individuals, corporations, organizations and families that donated time and dollars,” said Lt. Leach. “With the community support that we have received over the past year, we are excited to see what 2021 will bring.

For more information on programs, events and opportunities with The Salvation Army of Livingston County contact the local corps at 517-546-4750, visit the website www.salvationarmylivingston.org or find them on facebook www.facebook.com/salvationarmylivingston

reported that their mental health had worsened because of the coronavirus.

“Virtually every aspect of athletics benefits those who participate, from physical exercise, to social interaction, and the development of leadership skills,” Theis said. “Beyond that, the teamwork and the healthy competition taught by sports are components of a well-rounded childhood education. What is not beneficial is this governor’s seemingly political, rather than science-based, decisions, resulting in the theft of thousands of student athletes’ opportunity to compete. Just let them play.”

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Secretary of State unveils agenda “to advance the vote, protect democracy”

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson last week unveiled her legislative agenda for elections, calling it “Advancing the Vote, Protecting Democracy,” with the state goal of expanding voter accessibility and further strengthen the infrastructure and security of Michigan elections.”

“Michigan voters want elections to be accessible, strong and secure,” said Benson. “We saw this in 2018 when voters enshrined expanded voting rights in our state constitution, and again in 2020 when record numbers of voters exercised their new rights. Our job now is clear: to defend and protect democracy by ensuring that no matter how one votes, who they vote for, where they live, or what they look like, their vote will be counted.”

“Advancing the Vote, Protecting Democracy outlines” a number of initiatives, all designed (Benson said) “to ensure equitable access for voters, strengthen Michigan’s elections infrastructure and guarantee the security of elections.” Specifically, Benson is proposing the following:

- Require absentee ballot applications be mailed to registered voters every federal election cycle;
- Mandate ballots postmarked by Election Day and received shortly after are counted;
- Establish early in-person voting;
- Make Election Day a state holiday to facilitate voting and make it easier for citizens to serve as election workers;
- Allow overseas service members and spouses to return their ballots electronically;
- Require translated election materials where a significant non-English-speaking community lives;
- Provide funds to ensure voting locations are ADA-compliant and establish curbside voting;
- Allow processing of absentee ballots two weeks prior to Election Day;
- Prohibit deceptive election practices that deter or mislead voters;
- Prohibit open carry of firearms within 100 feet of a voting location;
- Mandate training standards for election challengers and election workers; and,
- Require a statewide risk-limiting audit of election results prior to state certification.

Benson said that she announced her “Advancing the Vote” plan on the first day of Black History Month in tribute to the many Black Americans whose sacrifice helped bring about expanded voting rights for all citizens.

“Today, we stand on the shoulders of the brave men and women who have fought for voting rights and fair elections in our country,” said Benson’s Assistant Secretary of State Heaster Wheeler. “They recognized what we all know: Voting rights are civil rights, and accessible, strong and secure elections benefit every Michigan community and every Michigan citizen.”

The Benson Administration is working with members of the state Legislature to draft and introduce bills that embody the “Advancing the Vote” plan, which is already receiving support from State Representative Matt Koleszar, vice chair of the House Elections and Ethics Committee and State Senators Jeremy Moss, Adam Hollier, and Paul Wojno.

All four of them, like Benson, are Democrats.

Benson pointed out that the proposal comes at a time when state lawmakers across the country on both sides of the aisle are laying out plans that could impact voting rights. According to a report by the Brennan Center for Justice, state legislators across the country have filed 106 bills – triple the number at this time last year – to generally make it harder to cast a ballot.

Koleszar, Moss, Hollier and Wojno quotes:

“The state Bureau of Elections, local clerks and election workers around the state worked tirelessly to execute one of the most safe, secure and successful elections in recent history despite unprecedented challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We learned a lot about meaningful steps we can take to expand equitable access to the ballot box, strengthen our voting infrastructure and increase security and transparency going forward. I strongly support Secretary Benson’s legislative recommendations and look forward to showing the rest of the nation how democracy can thrive in the 21st century.” -- Rep. Matt Koleszar

“In Michigan, every vote should be cherished, not challenged, and after a widely successful 2020 election, I hope we can build upon the proven safety and security of our free and fair election system. I look forward to working with my legislative colleagues to ensure that our election administrators have the resources they need to process absentee ballots earlier to expedite the ballot reporting process, and allow adequate time to address innocent mistakes and errors that lead to ballots being rejected.” -- Sen. Jeremy Moss

“We need to allow our service members and their family members overseas to return ballots electronically because they deserve peace of mind in knowing that their votes will

be counted.” Sen. Adam Hollier.

“I look forward to working with Secretary Benson and my legislative colleagues to make Michigan’s election system work for everyone. That is why I’ve introduced Senate Bills 8 and 9 to streamline the voter registration process for Michiganders on active duty. I look forward to working with Secretary Benson and my colleagues in the Legislature in our continued effort to make Michigan’s election system work even better for everyone.” Sen. Paul Wojno

Republican lawmaker takes issue with Secretary of State’s legislative agenda

State Rep. Ann Bollin criticized the legislative agenda, called “Advancing the Vote, Protecting Democracy,” that was unveiled by Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson last week.

The Republican lawmaker from Brighton said that the priority must be centered on “improving Michigan’s elections, not the Secretary of State’s political goals.”

Benson is a Democrat.

“Election integrity is my top priority heading into this year, and I’m committed to leading the way in restoring the public’s trust by improving our elections process,” Bollin said.

“Secretary Benson expressed a desire to work on reforms with legislators on both sides of the aisle,” she continued. “Unfortunately, so far, she has only demonstrated an interest in partnering with legislators who happen to be members of her own political party.

“If her goal is truly to work together in a bipartisan manner, I can’t imagine why she would continue to bring up emotionally charged policy proposals that have already been struck down by our courts.

“Our focus must be on improving transparency, protecting election integrity and restoring the public’s trust – not on constitutionally questionable proposals that advance the Secretary of State’s own political agenda,” she added.

Bollin was recently named as the chair of the House Elections and Ethics Committee.

Ingham County Clerk tells Senate committee that election was secure

Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum made another visit as a witness at a Legislature hearing concerning the recent election, stating that the process was secure and the voting results are accurate.

She also challenged Legislators, namely Republicans, to admit that the election was conducted fairly and to end what she called the “toxic response.”

Byrum, a Democrat and former legislator, testified last Tuesday before the Senate Oversight Committee on the subject of Post-Election Certification and the Auditing process.

She was joined by Kent County Clerk Lisa Posthumus Lyons, a Republican, along with Grand Rapids City Clerk Joel Hondorp and Lansing City Clerk Chris Swope.

In reference to the movie where the lead character is forced to re-live the same day over and over doing the same things, Byrum said, “It is appropriate that today is Groundhog Day, because professional Elections Administrators like me are having to tell Legislators over and over that Michigan’s elections are the safest and most secure in the nation.

“In my previous testimony in front of the Committee, I laid out the safeguards that are in place leading up to an election, and today I spoke about the checks and audits that come afterward to ensure that the election was conducted in a way that meets our state’s very high standards,” she noted.

Byrum explained the process of Certification of the Unofficial Election Results by the Ingham County Board of Canvassers, and post-election audits that occur after Michigan’s elections. It was noted that the auditing process for the November 3, 2020 General Election is still taking place.

“In some cases across the state, ballots have been counted, canvassed, certified, and audited three to four times,” Byrum told committee members. “While I appreciate the motivation to ensure that the process was completed accurately, we can definitively say that it was. To continue to hold hearing after hearing searching for fraud that does not exist is inappropriate and a partisan show that wastes taxpayer dollars.”

Byrum asked that legislators do their part to move forward from the toxic response that’s taken place since the November Election.

“If the members of the Committee truly wish to support the administration of safe elections now and into the future, the first step is restoring public trust,” she said. “I call on the members of the Committee to stand up in public and say what they know to be true: that the November 2020 General Election was conducted fairly, that the results were accurate and that the ‘Big Lie’ perpetuated by the former President was just that, a lie. Only then can the public truly start to come together and restore the faith in our elections.”



Rep. Ann Bollin Column

Election reforms needed to improve integrity, restore trust

During both my time as a township clerk and state representative, I have always been adamant about one important principle: Election integrity. And running elections with the highest level of integrity must always be a priority.

This past election cycle left voters with questions and concerns about our election process, how this election was handled and how future elections could be impacted.

Thousands of Michigan voters have spoken out about feeling disenfranchised. We must work together to ensure that proper checks and balances are in place to ensure every eligible vote counts, and if our laws are not followed then people need to be held accountable. We must do everything we can to restore the public’s trust in our elections. Our local clerks worked through extraordinary circumstances, ever-changing directions from the Bureau of Elections, and a mass of misinformation to deliver fair elections in 2020.

While the election may be behind us it is important to continue a thorough review and update our laws to ensure best practices are in statute and people are confident that their vote counts. We must work together to ensure voters, candidates, and clerks have confidence in our elections from beginning to end. I am confident we can improve on our existing laws and provide the public with the necessary checks and balances so that they know their vote counted. That will be my top priority this term. Here are some of the areas that I think need reform to restore the public’s confidence: **Accurate voter rolls.** We must make sure our election officials are doing a better job updating the Qualified Voter File and maintaining accurate voter rolls.

Same-day registration. This practice was added just recently after voters approved Proposal 3 of 2018. While the concept is widely supported, we always knew the implementation would take some work. We must focus on working out the flaws in this system and putting best practices into state law to ensure clarity and consistency for voters across the state.

Absent voter counting boards. The new focus on absentee voting has made counting boards more important than ever before. We must set clearer rules for how these boards operate and how we can ensure the process is transparent and election laws are followed. **Processing absentee ballots.** We must closely examine how and when absentee ballots are pre-processed and counted, and what tools we can give our clerks to smooth out the process without risking the security of our elections or the sanctity of our votes.

Training for election workers and volunteers. Providing improved training standards for clerks, election workers, poll watchers and canvassers must be a priority, and could help prevent confrontations like those seen at the TCF Center this past election.

Accountability. If the laws are not followed or there is fraud, the bad actors must be held accountable.

Post-election audits. We must ensure the public can have confidence that our elections are run within the law and the results are accurate.

In the 16 years I spent as a local township clerk, I worked relentlessly to ensure I ran clean elections. I will continue to be an advocate for checks and balances in our election laws and a strong voice for election integrity. I am committed to bringing an end to the disenfranchisement to ensure every eligible voter can vote freely, secretly, independently and securely and fixing the problems exposed by this past election cycle.

State Rep. Ann Bollin, chair of the House Elections and Ethics Committee for the 2021-22 legislative term, represents southeast Livingston County in the Michigan House. She previously served for 16 years as Brighton Township Clerk.

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State lawmakers across the country introducing both ‘restrictive’ & ‘expansive’ voting legislation

By Steve Horton

A recent study by the Brennan Center for Justice showed that after an historic turnout and increased mail voting in 2020, state lawmakers across the country are pulling in opposite directions by introducing both ‘restrictive’ and ‘expansive’ voting legislation.

Of course the Republicans would not characterize their proposed bills as ‘restrictive’, but rather as “restoring transparency and integrity to the election process and addressing concerns about how the voting was handled,” while the Democrats would likely portray their ‘expansive’ legislation as “making voting easier and more accessible and expanding the franchise.”

The study noted that the 2021 legislative sessions have begun in all but six states, and state lawmakers have already introduced hundreds of bills aimed at election procedures and voter access — vastly exceeding the number of voting bills introduced by this time last year.

The Republican legislators, responding to allegations of voter fraud and election irregularities, have introduced three times the number of bills to tighten-up voting access and practices as compared to this time last year. Twenty-eight states have introduced, prefiled, or carried over 106 more restrictive bills this year (as compared to 35 such bills in fifteen states on February 3, 2020).

On the flip side, Democratic state lawmakers are seizing on an energized electorate and persistent interest in election reform (which is likewise reflected in Congress). To date, thirty-five states have introduced, prefiled, or carried over 406 bills to expand voting access (dwarfing the 188 expansive bills that were filed in twenty-nine states as of February 3, 2020). Notably 93 such bills were introduced in New York and New Jersey.

With unprecedented numbers of voters casting their ballots by mail in 2020, legislators across the country have shown particular interest in absentee voting reform, with more than a quarter of voting and election bills addressing absentee-voting procedures. Only seven of the forty-one states that have introduced election bills have *not* proposed policies to alter absentee voting procedures in some way.

Also in reaction to 2020, four states have proposed legislation that would modify how presidential electors are allocated, and eleven states have introduced bills to adopt the national popular vote compact.

Here are the highlights of the study.

* * *

OVERVIEW OF RESTRICTIVE BILLS

Thus far this year, 28 states have introduced, prefiled, or carried over 106 bills to restrict voting access. These proposals primarily seek to:

- (1) limit mail voting access;
- (2) impose stricter voter ID requirements;
- (3) limit certain registration policies;
- (4) enable more aggressive voter roll purges.

Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Missouri, Mississippi, New Jersey, and Texas have each had several bills introduced that fall under one or more of those four categories. Georgia lawmakers reportedly plan to introduce bills to require an excuse to cast an absentee ballot, mandate photo ID when returning an absentee ballot, and ban ballot drop boxes, among other changes.

Restrictions on Mail Voting

More than a third of restrictive bills introduced this year seek to limit mail voting. Legislators are taking aim at mail voting at every stage, with proposals to circumscribe who can vote by mail, make it harder to obtain mail ballots, and impose hurdles to complete and cast mail ballots.

Limiting who can vote by mail: Five bills in three states would make the “excuse” requirement more stringent for absentee voting or eliminate “no excuse” mail voting. The Missouri bill, for example, would eliminate Covid-19 concerns as an excuse while three different proposals in Pennsylvania seek to eliminate no-excuse mail voting, a policy just adopted in 2019.

Making it harder to obtain ballots: Arizona and —two of the battleground states in the recent election— have introduced bills that would eliminate the permanent early voter list. Two bills in Arizona and one in New Jersey would make it easier for officials to remove voters from the permanent absentee list. In addition, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington are considering bills to limit who can send absentee ballot applications to voters without an affirmative request. A New York bill would restrict who can submit absentee ballot applications on another voter’s behalf.

Barriers to Completing or Casting Ballots

Restrictions on assistance to voters: A single Arizona bill would further restrict who can assist voters in collecting and delivering mail ballots (existing policy already limits such assistance to family and household members), add a voter ID requirement for turning in mail ballots in person, and require

all mail ballots to be notarized. Legislators in Alaska, Kansas, Kentucky, and Maryland have proposed bills to strictly limit who can assist in returning a voter’s ballot, while a South Carolina bill would impose a photo ID requirement for anyone returning another person’s absentee ballot.

Witness signatures: Four states have introduced legislation to make it harder to satisfy existing witness requirements. Arizona’s bill would also require all mail ballots to be notarized. South Carolina’s bill would require a witness to include their driver’s license or state voter registration number, and Virginia’s bill would ask witnesses to print their name and provide their residential address. The Alaska proposal states that if a court invalidates the witness signature requirement because of a state of emergency, the requirement goes back into effect after the emergency declaration expires (AK SB 39).

Limitations on absentee ballot return options: A Virginia bill would prohibit absentee ballots from being returned to any location except the office of the general registrar, thus precluding the use of ballot drop boxes.

Other bills have proposed limits on ballot counting

Stricter signature matching requirements. In South Carolina, where a federal court had enjoined signature matching before the November 2020 election, proposed legislation would affirmatively impose a signature matching requirement for absentee ballots. Likewise, in Pennsylvania — where the state supreme court ruled that ballots could not be rejected based solely on mismatched signatures — a proposal would require rejection of absentee ballots on that basis unless the perceived mismatch is cured within six days of notification.

Increased poll watcher access. At least two states, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania, have introduced legislation to increase poll watcher access to absentee ballot processing and canvassing activities. New Hampshire’s bill would require that members of the general public be permitted to observe “without obstruction.”

Ballot receipt & postmark deadlines. Three states have introduced bills that would require that mail ballots be received earlier in order to be counted. A Kansas bill would eliminate the secretary of state’s discretion to count ballots received later than three days after election day. In response to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court’s decision permitting the counting of timely-postmarked ballots received within three days of election day, one proposal would require all ballots not received by election day to be rejected and seeks to prohibit modification of that rule by court order. In Iowa, where absentee ballots must be postmarked by the day before election day, a new bill would require voters to mail their ballots at least ten days before election day.

Stricter Voter ID

Legislators in 10 states have introduced 18 bills to impose new or more stringent voter ID requirements for in-person voting (either for early voting or election day).

--In six states that do not require voters to present ID at the polls, legislators have introduced bills to impose that requirement.

--Three bills in Missouri and New Hampshire would institute stricter voter ID requirements for early in-person voting.

Two states with existing voter ID requirements, Mississippi and New Hampshire, are considering bills to eliminate the use of certain forms of ID. The Mississippi bill would prohibit the use of out-of-state drivers’ licenses, while the New Hampshire bill would prevent the use of student IDs.

--New Hampshire has also introduced a bill that would require voters to include a photocopy of their photo ID with their absentee ballot applications and their completed mail ballot.

Limiting Voter Registration Access

--Mississippi and New York legislators have both introduced bills requiring voters to produce proof of citizenship in order to register to vote. Meanwhile, Texas introduced a bill stripping voter registration authority from county clerks and requiring the secretary of state to send voter registration information to the Department of Public Safety for citizenship verification.

--Seven bills have been introduced to rollback or limit opportunities for election day registration, with legislators in four states introducing bills to eliminate election day registration entirely.

--Alaska legislators have introduced bills to roll back automatic voter registration by eliminating opt-out registration from the state’s permanent fund dividend application system.

More Aggressive Voter Purge Practices

Six states have introduced 13 different bills that would make it easier to conduct voter roll purges. For example, three bills in Mississippi would require a comparison of the voter rolls against other databases to identify non-citizens, and would require removal from the rolls of voters who fail to respond to a notice within 30 days with proof of citizenship. A New Hampshire bill would permit election administrators to remove voters from the rolls based on data provided by other states, a practice that federal courts have found violates the

National Voter Registration Act.

* * *

OVERVIEW OF EXPANSIVE BILLS

State legislators are also proposing policies to expand access to voting. Indeed, of the 41 states with new election bills, 35 states have introduced expansive policies, for a total of 406 expansive bills introduced or carried over into 2021. These bills focus primarily on:

- (1) mail voting;
- (2) early voting;
- (3) voter registration;
- (4) voting rights restoration.

Many of these voting reforms have been introduced in states like New York (with 56 expansive bills) and New Jersey (with 37). But a significant number of these proposals have been introduced in states with histories of having stricter voting eligibility, including Mississippi (39 bills), Missouri (21 bills), and Texas (53 bills).

Mail Voting

A substantial plurality of bills that expand access relate to mail and absentee voting, with many policies aimed at addressing the challenges that voters and election officials encountered in 2020.

--Twenty-seven bills in eleven states would permit all voters to vote by mail in all elections (eliminating the excuse requirement). This would make permanent the expansive policies that most of these states — except Indiana, Mississippi, and Texas — temporarily adopted in 2020 to facilitate mail voting access during the pandemic.

--Twenty bills in 12 states would create or reform the notice and cure process to ensure that voters who make a technical mistake on their mail ballots get a chance to remedy those errors.

--Thirteen bills in eight states affirmatively authorize or

Continued on page 11

Letter to the Editor

Ann Bollin must step down as representative of the Michigan 42nd legislative district as a result of the claims she made in the 17-Jan. article published in the *Detroit News*. If taken as knowledge of fact, her claims would disqualify her as winner of the race. Bollin’s knowledge of misconduct by either election officials, or particular voters without making specific charges against those responsible only casts a dark shadow of doubt, suspicion, and hypocrisy over her candidacy. Republicans can never again legitimately claim victory until they acknowledge that the 2020 election was free, fair, and void of reasonable doubt. If Ann Bollin has contrary evidence, THEN let her bring it forth.

The claim of voter disenfranchisement must be accompanied by some evidence that there were particular voters who were not permitted to exercise their right to vote, or that their vote was not counted, and who was responsible for the disenfranchisement. Ironically, it has also been claimed by Republicans that there were people who were over enfranchised, and who should not have voted, which continues to beg the question of who these voters are, and who allowed them to vote. Similarly, the claim that voter signatures were not verified or validated requires specificity as to which signatures were not legitimate, and who failed to validate them. Additional claims that there were votes cast by unregistered voters, or even dead people, comes with the same burden of proof.

Bollin whines that change in our voting system must be made, as if she herself has no power as a representative in the majority party in the legislature to remedy such systemic irregularities. This is a red herring, but an indication that she intends to do nothing legislatively to correct any would be problem with our elections, but rather to cling to victim status while also claiming to have won her race for the legislative seat. The only noted point of her article is to restrict same day voter registration, and for what purpose, but to disenfranchise voters. Her rationale is farcical.

As long as Republicans cast a vote of no confidence in our election system, they cannot be legitimate winners. In both the 2016, and 2020 elections Donald Trump said that the election was rigged, unless he won. It cannot be the case that our elections are only legitimate when Republicans win. Ann Bollin claims victory, but also that the election was rigged, and therefore she cannot win.

For Republicans to continue to suggest that “irregularities” in the 2020 election must be investigated, even as all of their legal challenges have been dismissed by the courts, is only to say that they do not like the result. Ann Bollin cannot serve honorably while holding this perfidious position, and must step down immediately as a demonstration of her integrity, if she has any, and allow a special election to be held.

Paul Richardson,
Brighton

Editor’s Note: The ‘Detroit News’ op-ed by Rep. Ann Bollin that’s referred to in the Letter is also in this issue of the ‘Fowlerville News & Views’ on the preceding page 8.

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Smith Elementary highlights 'Classroom of the Week'

With so many events at Smith Elementary School not taking place this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the safety measures that are in place, Principal Kathy Gibson and staff are going to highlight a 'Classroom of the Week.' Shown here are students from the first-grade class taught by Mrs. Devota.

From left, front row: Michael Stephens, Eli Rice, Trey Gorman, Brantley Fountain, Jaxen Phillips; middle row: Nathan Novakowski, Quinn Doane, Bryn Eberhardt, Zoey Canup, Josie Donohue; back row: Ivan Hartke, Michael St. Charles, Aviance Walker, Isla Sheffer, Macyn Jakubus, Maddox Limonoff, and Mrs. Devota. Not pictured: Ella Yeager, Wyatt Potchynok, Luke Krolczyk, and Henry Cram.

What Exactly is Freedom?

By Jace Arledge

I would like to start this column by saying, 'these words that you are reading, are researched, thought out, and also, my opinion.' Nothing here outside of the researched pieces, constitutes the idea that this is how we all should be or believe. It is hopefully a way for people to look at things from a different viewpoint. Thank you for continuing to read...

FREEDOM (definition from Merriam-Webster, this is only one of the many it gives)

The quality or state of being free: such as

a: the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Freedom. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/freedom

Let's chew on that for a minute... OK times up..

In recent news, there have been various people speak about how they are angered by certain media powerhouses "limiting or squashing" their freedom to speak their beliefs. Many of my own friends get a bit irritated when I question the content of memes that they share, and what the intent is. I always find someone who likes to reply "that's the problem today, everyone is offended by freedom of speech!!"

That isn't the case.

The issue is, as I stated in my last column, "With power comes great responsibility." Unfortunately, many can't handle the pressure of that responsibility. See, to just shout out to the world that you hate this or that, or think this about someone is your right, your freedom. It's the manner in HOW you share your thoughts/beliefs where the problem lies.

Your freedom to express your words doesn't give you license to be mean or degrade anyone. There is a fine line between freedom of speech and hate speech. When your words are hurtful to someone else, they no longer fall under constitutional freedoms. Actually, words have such an impact on people, it is important for us to stop and think before we speak, or push the send button.

So, the next time you want to share your opinion, first ask yourself, 'how will this come across to those who will be hearing or reading my words.' It takes a little longer, but in the end you are making a difference.

Stay kind my friends and love deeply!!

Till next time...

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‘Expansive’ voting legislation, continued

require local officials to provide mail ballot drop boxes. Drop boxes were the subject of 35 cases litigated in 2020, most of which involved petitioners seeking to authorize or expand the use of drop boxes, while others claimed that state law did not authorize their use.

--Nine bills in seven states would extend the mail ballot receipt or postmark deadline.

--Nineteen bills in 13 states would allow election officials to start processing mail ballots before election day, which would speed up initial reporting on election results.

Early Voting

Reflecting a similar interest in offering voters more flexibility, lawmakers in 14 states have proposed expansions to early voting, which would ease election day burdens on voters and election administrators alike.

--Twenty four bills would implement early voting for the first time.

--Seven bills would enlarge an existing early voting period.

--Eight bills would increase the number of early voting sites.

Easing Voter Registration

State lawmakers are also looking for ways to make it easier for voters to get registered.

--Thirteen states have introduced bills to implement same-day registration, which would allow voters to register and cast their ballots on the same day, including election day. (This is already allowed in Michigan as part of the No-Reason Absentee Ballot Initiative that was passed by voters in the 2018 election.

--Nineteen states and the District of Columbia have adopted automatic voter registration in the last six years. Eleven states have introduced bills this year that, if enacted, would enable them to join this group.

--Legislators in Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas have introduced bills to allow voters to register to vote online.

Rights Restoration

Momentum continues in support of restoring voting rights to individuals with past convictions. Last year, California voters overwhelmingly passed a constitutional amendment to restore voting rights to everyone in the community and Iowa’s governor issued an executive order that ended the state’s policy of permanent disenfranchisement for those with felony convictions.

This year, 15 states have introduced policies to restore voting rights or ease current restrictions for people with past convictions. Legislators in Mississippi have introduced 12 such bills to expand or restore voting rights. The Sentencing Project estimates that Mississippi disenfranchises over 214,000 citizens living in the community — more than 54 percent of whom are Black — because of past convictions.

In addition to state bills, much attention has been directed to the comprehensive set of democracy reforms laid out in the For the People Act (H.R. 1 in the House of Representatives and S. 1 in the Senate), as well as the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Consistent with these efforts, New York and Virginia have introduced state voting rights acts

Allocating Presidential Electors

One area of focus for legislatures this year is the manner in which presidential electors are allocated. Currently, only two states — Nebraska and Maine — allocate electors by congressional district on a proportional basis, while the remaining 48 states allocate electors using a winner-take-all system.

Four bills seek to alter these approaches. The Nebraska legislature, for example, has introduced a bill to allocate electors using the winner-take-all system. This follows a split of Nebraska’s electoral college votes in the 2020 presidential election. Under current circumstances this change would favor the Republican presidential ticket.

By contrast, a Wisconsin proposal would allocate electors by district (effectively adopting the current Nebraska model), while a Mississippi bill would appoint presidential electors by district, with two electors chosen at large. The Wisconsin proposal, had it been in effect this past November, would have aided the GOP Trump-Pence ticket instead of all of the electoral votes going to the Democratic Party’s Biden-Harris slate.

An Oklahoma bill seeks to have the state legislature choose presidential electors unless and until there is a federal law requiring voter ID and auditable paper ballots.

Eleven states have introduced proposals to adopt the national popular vote interstate compact, under which participating states would allocate their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who wins the national popular vote. The agreement would go into effect only if participating states represent an absolute majority of electoral college votes. Several states have already joined; however, Maryland has introduced a bill to remove itself from the compact.





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Pastor Tom Tarpley

Share Your Faith

When any segment of people, whether it be a small community or a nation, begins to live in open defiance to God's will, it is not long before openly sinning against God and man becomes the standard way of life in that region. Throughout the Holy Scriptures, we can see the consequences of people

who abandoned the Creator God and began worshipping the gods of their choosing.

Our created gods will never satisfy our most significant spiritual need: to be in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Living in a relationship with Jesus, after we have surrendered and committed ourselves to live in obedience to His Will, is the most rewarding experience we can ever hope to enjoy while on this earth.

On that same note, living in disobedience and rebellion against God's Will creates problems that can be overwhelming and cause us to lose hope. I see this happening to the people in America today.

The root cause of what is happening in our country is that we do not fear God and have become disconnected from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

J.J. Packer explains it like this, "Until we understand who God is and develop a reverential fear of Him, we

cannot have true wisdom. True wisdom comes only from understanding who God is and that He is holy, just, and righteous. Deuteronomy 10:12, 20-21 records, "And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is your praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes."

The fear of God is the basis for our walking in His ways, serving Him, and, yes, loving Him."

When I read about the price others paid for disobeying God, it is a reminder that we Americans could face the same fate as they did if we continue to live in disobedience to the teachings in God's Holy Scripture.

I share my faith with others hoping that I might help others see our only hope lies in turning back to God, going to our knees in prayer, and humbly asking His forgiveness.

The theme throughout scripture, from Genesis through Revelation, is to share our faith with others. Jesus commanded us, "Go out into the world and make disciples" Matthew 28:18. Today's problem is that many will not accept the commission given to us by Jesus.

Have you given any thought to the fact that not to share your faith is an act of disobedience? The Scripture commands us to share our faith with others. Jesus and the disciples practiced it. They practiced it repeatedly, not just once or twice. This was the theme of Jesus's teaching, and at his ascension into heaven, it was his last command to us. It is more commonly called "The Great Commission."

Many people struggle to remain hopeful when it seems as if everything they believed in is falling apart. The number of people committing suicide is increasing. The amount of alcohol and drug use is higher now than it was a year ago. It is hard to get an appointment with a psychiatrist or a therapist because their caseloads have doubled. Crime is on the increase, and the overall state of our country's mental condition has declined considerably since this time last year. It is challenging to have a conversation with someone today where the topic does not turn to the dismal situation taking place around us. For this reason, I have vowed to share my faith and speak words of encouragement as often as I can.

Some people fail to realize that America is not the first nation to find itself suffering from spiritual malnutrition. We are not the first to turn away from God in pursuit of pleasure, wealth, power, and fame.

We are following in the footsteps of others who have disobeyed God, and we are making the same mistakes.

Nevertheless, there is hope for us. We do not have to suffer the consequences that others suffered. We have the opportunity to repent and turn back to God.

God can eliminate this unprecedented chaos we are going through in no time at all. But it will take a nation of repented hearts and praying people. I am glad we serve a forgiving God.

If you are not sharing your faith, you could be holding back a blessing that God wants to give to someone. You may be the one person who can reach that person who has given up all hope.

Please don't ever think that you cannot make a difference because you can. Believe it or not, you do make a difference to someone even though you may have no idea about who that person(s) may be.

We never know who may be watching us. Therefore, as Christians we must maintain an attitude of joyous thankfulness. We must live in an above reproach manner, and we should do nothing that might give someone reason to question our faith in God.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" John 16:33.

Jesus faced the same kind of trials and inhumane situations that are present today. Because of His love for God and His faith and belief that God would do everything He promised, Jesus was able to reject the spiritual forces of this world that tried to distract and prevent Him from living in obedience to the purpose for which He came to earth to fulfill.

We can live as Jesus lived if we have the faith that He had. I encourage you to share your faith. It's what God commands.



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—Area Deaths—



Robert E. Smith

Robert Enoch Smith of Fowlerville, better known as Bob, passed away peacefully on January 31, 2021.

Bob turned 101 years old on December 27, 2020!

Bob was born to Temple and Julia Smith in his family's farmhouse. He achieved many accomplishments in his life.

The short list is working on his family farm that he owned after his father died. He then was married and started a family. He served as the Senior Legislative Counsel for Michigan Farm Bureau for 28 years before retiring and was known as "a legislative whirlwind." Prior to that he was an officer for the Livingston County Farm Bureau and then Michigan Farm Bureau.

Bob was a member of the Livingston Intermediate School District's board of education for 35 years, with 27 of them as the president. He also served on the Blue Cross Blue Shield board and the SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments) board.

In his younger years, he served as the supervisor for Handy Township and was a member of the Fowlerville Fair Board. In addition, Bob was a life member and Past Master of Fowlerville Masonic Lodge #164, a member of the First United Methodist Church of Fowlerville, and belonged to the Fowlerville Rotary Club.

Bob enjoyed public speaking, social events, dancing, music, and chocolate. Every morning he would say, "It's going to be a great day."

He is survived by his daughter, Julie Miller, and his granddaughters, Kati Venturato and Angie Venturato. He was preceded in death by his parents, Temple and Julia Smith; his wife of 65 years, Joan; and his daughter, Connie Venturato.

The visitation took place at Herrmann Funeral Home on Thursday, Feb. 4, from 11 a.m. to 12 noon, prior to the service. Funeral services began at 12 noon, with Pastor Tom Tarpley officiating. The Fowlerville Masonic Lodge conducted a special service at 12:45 p.m. Burial followed at the Greenwood Cemetery in Fowlerville.

Memorial donations can be made to: the FFA, Fowlerville Masonic Lodge #164, Fowlerville First United Methodist Church, the Order of the Eastern Stars, or The Guest House of Fowlerville.

Arrangements were handled by Herrmann Funeral Home of Fowlerville.



Ronald Bruce Helzerman

Pastor Ronald Bruce Helzerman went home to be with the Lord on January 29, 2021. He was born on August 15, 1943 in Highland Park, Michigan. He was reunited with his Father, Theodore Helzerman, his Mother, Ruth Helzerman, and his sister in law, Ruth (Tremble) Helzerman who had gone on before him. He will be lovingly remembered by his wife of 55 years, Jane Helzerman, who diligently and faithfully cared for him through the end of his journey.

He will also be remembered by his brothers: Richard (Brenda) Helzerman, Edward (Diann) Helzerman, Raymond (Karen) Helzerman, Douglas (Sandra) Helzerman, Larry (Debby) Helzerman. A sister: Marjory (David) Smith. An uncle: Robert (Audrey) Lucks. His sons: Timothy (Karen) Helzerman, Mark (Christi) Helzerman, David (Hannah) Helzerman, Stephen (Samantha) Helzerman. His daughters: Christy (James II) Dare, Amy (Dan) Navalta. Also, 32 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren, and several cousins, nieces, and nephews

Ron was a humble servant of the Lord. He was a bold witness, faithfully involved in full-time ministry for 45 years. He also served as pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church for the past 23 years. His greatest passion and what motivated him the most was the publishing of scriptures. His work in the Bearing Precious Seed ministry was his driving force. "By love serving one another." He was interested in getting the Word of God into the hands of people separated by language, miles, and culture. S.O.S. was his motto representing Souls Over Seas. He loved to take mission trips to Mexico and Canada, visiting many churches to encourage pastors and congregations to get involved in this monumental undertaking. He had a gentle, meek, and quiet spirit. He would often say, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." He was a loving husband and dedicated father. He worked hard to provide for the family and put other's needs before his own. Dad, you will be greatly missed!

Our family is thankful for the Angela Hospice staff who made his final days peaceful. Also, we are deeply grateful to Pastor Chris Staub and his dear wife Pam for their support. Mrs. Staub was there for us morning and evening every day graciously serving and helping.

A visitation and funeral service for Ron was held Thursday, February 4, 2021 at Silvery Lane Baptist Church.

A burial took place Friday, Feb. 5, 2021 at 3:00 PM at Greenwood Cemetery in Fowlerville.

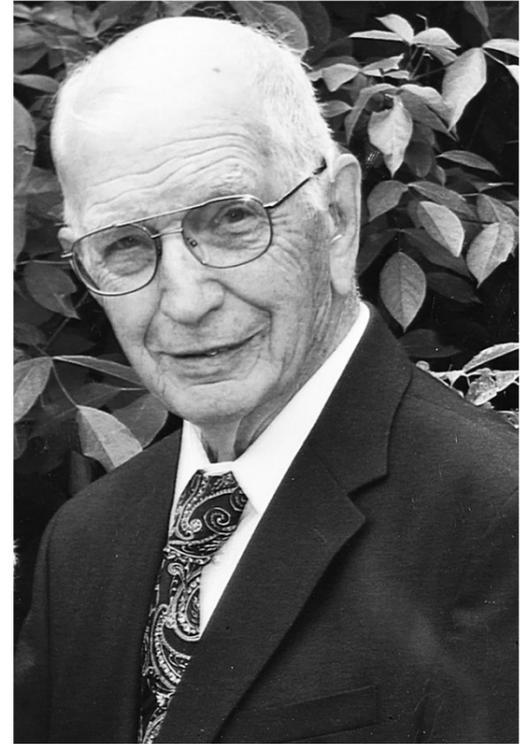
Michigan residents advised to beware of law-enforcement scam calls

Michigan residents are advised to beware of scammers posing as law enforcement agencies or other companies demanding payment for warrants or services via gift card. The warning was issued last week by the office of Attorney General Dana Nessel.

The AG's office noted that recently, illegal robocalls have been reported detailing that bad actors are spoofing – falsifying the phone number that appears on your caller ID – local law enforcement phone numbers, and when answered, they may claim the victim's name is on a package of drugs and money and/or there is a warrant out for their arrest. The scammer tells the victim to wire money and/or purchase gift cards. They are then instructed to provide the gift card numbers over the phone to take care of the warrant.

The Michigan Department of Attorney General provides a host of resources available online specifically related to robocalls. From identifying the signs of a scam call to actual recordings of such calls, this information is in place to equip anyone with the tools they need to combat this public nuisance. A library of consumer alerts is also available to the public and number of scam examples.

If you believe you are the target of a scam, but want to be sure, hang up the phone immediately and independently verify the identity of the caller. Call the phone number you know to be correct and never give out any personal information to someone who initiates a phone call. To report fraud or if you have a general consumer complaint, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Team online or by calling 877-765-8388.



Robert Hart Ruttman

Robert Hart Ruttman, known as Bob, was born January 16, 1926 to August Ruttman and Mary (Hart) Ruttman on the family farm in Iosco Township, Mi. Bob passed away January 27, 2021 in Fowlerville, at the age of 95. He married Lydia Bowers on June 1, 1946 and had three children: Cindy (Fred) Krebs, Becky (Harold) Browning and Mark (Kate) Ruttman. They also have an honorary daughter Kathy (Dennis) Graves.

Bob was a dairy farmer until 1974. That year, he and Lydia joined the Peace Corps and traveled to Kathmandu, Nepal, where he worked as an agricultural consultant.

Upon return to the US, the couple purchased a cabin in Lewiston, Mi and made this their permanent residence in 1985. While living in Lewiston, Bob worked as a real estate agent and as a sanitation attendant at the township "dump". The couple returned to Fowlerville in 2015 to be closer to their family.

Bob was a member of the Fowlerville Masonic Lodge, the Michigan Farm Bureau, the Michigan Milk Producers Association and the American Holstein Friesian Association. He served as Iosco Township Supervisor, was on the Fowlerville Fair Board, was a director of the Livingston County Soil Conservation, and was also an avid hunter and fisherman.

Bob loved his newspaper puzzles, visits from family, playing euchre, indulging in a big bowl of butter pecan ice cream, making his renowned peanut brittle and his trademark Toast Lifters.

Bob is survived by his wife, Lydia, of 74 years; children, Cindy, Mark and Kathy; grandchildren, Dianne (J), Jodi (Jamie), Pete (Amber), Shawn, (Perry), John (Jessica), Elizabeth (J.R.), Nancy, Bobby, Rick, Mary (Matt), Martha (Luke), nineteen great-grandchildren, many nieces, nephews and extended family. He is preceded in death by his daughter, Becky; brother, Frank (Betty); and sisters, Celia (Hollis) Lounsbury, and Ruth (Leslie) White.

Due to Covid, a private funeral service was held at Herrmann Funeral Home on Wednesday, February 3rd at 11am. Bob's family then invited friends join them for memorial service and luncheon held at Krebsview Farms at 12:30pm.

Monetary contributions can be made to Bob's church in Lewiston—the Congregational Church of Christ—or the The Guest House, in Fowlerville. Online condolences may be expressed at pjherrmannfuneralhome.com.



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Michigan DNR Fishing Tips—

Four tips for catching northern pike in winter

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2. Keep your bait lively by using both a well-aerated bait container and very sharp hooks to minimize injury.
3. Consider using something flashy with your bait, such as a small spinner blade, to entice pike in murky water.
4. Don't be afraid to keep some slush around your hole in the ice to prevent pike from being spooked by your opening.

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Webberville Report



Senior Spotlight—Hayden Heinig
By Bree Stanfield

The room lights up when senior Hayden Heinig walks in—he has such a positive attitude, energy and sense of determination.

"I would say that Hayden is a hard worker and never gives up," secondary teacher Mrs. Kerry Keuvelaar said. "This will serve him well in life."

Heinig is this week's Senior Spotlight and is the son of Alan and Colette Heinig and brother to Emma Heinig, who is a freshman at Webberville High School.

In Heinig's life he has had many influences, among them is Mrs. Keuvelaar.

"Mrs. Keuvelaar has been a big influence in my life," Heinig said. "She has always inspired me to be the best person I can be."

As a junior and now as a senior, Heinig has attended the Wilson Talent Center.

Heinig is a part of a program called Career Start at WTC. Career Start is a program that teaches communication skills, teamwork, and increases employability skills. Heinig works in the school store for Career Start.

Heinig has many friends at WHS, one of them being Joshua Moran who is also a senior this year.

"Hayden made an influence on me with his kindness and always being funny and making me laugh whenever I'm going through my own problems," Moran said.

After graduation, Heinig plans on going into the workforce, and in ten years he sees himself in a flourishing job, committed relationship and just enjoying life as a whole.

He has positive words for students to help them find success.

"The advice I would give to underclassmen is to get good grades," Heinig said. "Show respect for your teachers. They're preparing you for the future."

VINA Community Dental Center accepting new patients

Now is the perfect time for Livingston County residents to apply to receive dental care at VINA. The clinic fully reopened in August 2020 and has since taken care of the post-COVID rush of patients that accumulated during the five-month long closure. VINA is continuing to schedule regular check-ups and hygiene appointments for current patients.

During this time of the year, VINA schedules less basic dental appointments, making now the ideal time for new patients to apply and have their first appointment. With the economic impact of COVID-19, many Livingston County residents now qualify for VINA but may not be aware.

To qualify for VINA, patients must be residents of Livingston County for the past six months, have no dental insurance and have an income at or below 225% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This is an annual income of \$28,102 for an individual and \$38,047 for a couple. For more information about applying and requirements, visit the VINA Eligibility page.

VINA provides a multitude of services, depending on the dental needs of each patient. Services include oral cancer screenings, fillings, cleanings, x-rays, extractions, crowns, dental education and more. VINA patients only pay \$25 for basic dental visits and \$10 for hygiene visits.

Safety is a priority for those coming to VINA for dental work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients wait in their vehicle until their doctor and chair are ready for them. Upon entering the building, all staff, volunteers and patients



Webberville Elementary Staff Spotlight

Mrs. Kari Radzwion is the school psychologist for Webberville Community Schools. Before becoming a psychologist, she was a high school English and Psychology teacher. As a trauma-certified educator, Mrs. Radzwion strives to incorporate trauma-informed strategies in her practice. Student support, and evaluations for special education services are a large part of her job.

She lives in Williamston with her husband, a daughter, and their two dogs. Their family is excited about their second child, who is due in May 2021!

NIESA Fire Report (Northeast Ingham Emergency Service Authority)

Wednesday January 27th and Thursday January 28th were quiet days for NIESA, there were no emergency responses.

On Friday January 29th NIESA responded to five calls, one medical emergency and four fire responses. The medical emergency was in Williamstown Township. There were two fire responses in Wheatfield Township, one in Williamstown Township, and a mutual aid response to Fowlerville. The fire responses in Wheatfield Township were for an odor investigation at a residence, and the second was for fire alarm activations at a residence. No fire was found at either location. The response into Williamstown Township was also for fire alarm activation at a residence, which turned out to be faulty detectors.

Saturday January 30th NIESA responded to four emergency medical calls. Two of the responses were in the Village of Webberville, one was in Leroy Township, and one in Locke Township.

On Sunday January 31st NIESA received three emergency medical calls. The responses occurred in Locke Township, Leroy Township, and Williamstown Township.

Monday February 1st NIESA responded to six calls. Five responses were for medical emergencies, and one was a vehicle accident. Four of the emergency medical responses occurred in the City of Williamston, and one was in Williamstown Township. The motor vehicle accident occurred in Williamstown Township on Haslett Rd.

On Tuesday February 2nd NIESA responded to six emergency medical calls, and one vehicle accident. The vehicle accident was car vs deer, and was in Wheatfield Township. The six emergency medical calls occurred in the following areas; three in the City of Williamston, two in Williamstown Township; and one in Leroy Township.

answer screening questions and have their temperature taken. Patients, staff, and volunteers are required to always wear masks, aside from patients during their dental exams or procedures.

VINA has new COVID safety equipment to keep patients, staff, and volunteers safe. This includes air purifiers in the clinic and waiting room. There are also sneeze guards and hand sanitizer in the waiting room for when patients check in and out for their appointment. All staff and volunteers wear appropriate PPE when in contact with patients to minimize potential exposure and transmission.

VINA Community Dental Center of Livingston County is a non-profit outreach facility that provides affordable dental care and education to more than 1,500 patients in Livingston County with limited finances. VINA improves quality of life through better oral health, promoting dental care seeking behaviors and elevating prevention awareness. "VINA" stands for Vision, Integrity, Need, and Action.

Gov. Whitmer launches bipartisan \$30M Michigan Reconnect program

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer joined with Republican and Democratic legislators last week to announce the launch of the \$30 million Michigan Reconnect program, the largest effort in state history to ensure that more than 4.1 million Michiganders who are 25 or older and do not have a college degree will have an opportunity to earn a tuition-free associate degree or skills certificate.

“All Michiganders deserve a pathway to a good-paying job, whether they choose to pursue a college degree, technical certificate, or an apprenticeship,” Gov. Whitmer said during a virtual news conference. “Michigan Reconnect will connect thousands of Michiganders to good-paying jobs and connect businesses with the talent they need to thrive in their communities. I’m proud of the hard work that has gone into creating this historic new opportunity and look forward to continuing bipartisan work with lawmakers toward our goal of ensuring 60% of Michiganders will have a postsecondary degree by 2030.”

Michigan Reconnect will pay the cost of tuition for eligible adults who want to pursue an associate degree or skills certificate at their in-district community college. The program also offers skills scholarships to help cover the cost of tuition through more than 70 private training schools with 120 programs that offer certificates in high-demand careers in industries such as manufacturing, construction, information technology, healthcare or business management.

Michiganders can submit applications at Michigan.gov/Reconnect. The application takes less than five minutes to complete and can be done on a mobile device.

Reconnect scholarships are accepted by all Michigan community colleges and are even available to eligible adults who are already enrolled in their local community college. The program pays the remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees after other state and federal financial aid have been applied. For those who choose to attend an out-of-district community college, Reconnect will pay the in-district portion of tuition.

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) is administering Reconnect in partnership with the Michigan Department of Treasury.

“Reconnect offers a path for so many Michiganders hoping to begin – or complete – their education and career journey,” said LEO Acting Director Susan Corbin. “This program, like so many others we’re focused on, will help expand opportunity for all Michiganders and make Michigan a better place to live, work and play.”

To be eligible for Michigan Reconnect, you must:

- Be at least 25 years old when you apply
- Have lived in Michigan for a year or more
- Have a high school diploma
- Have not yet completed a college degree (associate or bachelor’s)

Funding for Michigan Reconnect was introduced in Gov. Whitmer’s FY 2020-21 budget proposal. A bipartisan group of legislators – led by state Sen. Ken Horn, R-Frankenmuth, state Sen. Jim Ananich, D-Flint, state Rep. Ben Frederick, R-Owosso, state Rep. Sarah Anthony, D-Lansing, and former

state Rep. Sheryl Kennedy, D-Davison – approved \$30 million in state funding.

Michigan employers’ ability to find highly skilled and capable employees is more difficult than ever and is cited as a top concern in the most recent Michigan Future Business Index Report. Michigan Reconnect will help address the dual challenges of the state’s widening talent gap and aging workforce.

As of 2019, only 41% of Michigan’s working-age residents had an associate degree or higher, placing Michigan at 31st in the nation. The average age of Michigan’s 365,232 residents currently enrolled at a community college is 25.7 years old, and more than 36% are 25 or older, according to the Michigan Community College Association.

“Even if Michigan were able to keep every high school and college graduate, it wouldn’t be enough to fill our state’s talent gap,” Sen. Horn said. “Our aim with Michigan Reconnect is to meet our state’s workforce need by encouraging and assisting residents to afford and achieve a college credential or advanced certificate. Now our state has a tool to reach out to adults wanting to pursue postsecondary education, if they choose to.”

New scholarship initiative offers historic tuition-free opportunity for more than 4.1M Michiganders age 25+ to earn an associate degree or skills certificate

Michiganders without a college degree or training credential often face economic challenges. A 2020 analysis by the American Association of Community Colleges reports the median earnings of full-time employees with a high school degree is \$40,510 annually, while those with an associate degree make \$50,079 per year, based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

“Michigan Reconnect is a win for Michiganders across our entire state,” Rep. Anthony said. “When adults earn degrees and gain new skills, they have the ability to advance in the workplace, earn higher wages and fulfill lifetime dreams.”

Several organizations from all sectors of the state’s economy have pledged to work as Reconnect Champions to promote awareness of the program, including the Michigan Manufacturers Association.

“By helping workers get the training they need to thrive, businesses will have the much-needed skilled talent required to succeed,” said MMA President and CEO John Walsh. “Michigan Reconnect helps businesses across the state increase the size and quality of our workforce and serves as an incredible asset for economic mobility.”

Individuals looking to take advantage of Reconnect who are unsure what they’d like to study are encouraged to consider some of Michigan’s high-demand careers. A list of those careers and wages by occupation and region is available on the Michigan Reconnect website.

A virtual news conference tour through March will also introduce Michigan Reconnect benefits to audiences across the state. The events will feature state legislators and local leaders representing community colleges and business and workforce development organizations, as well as testimonials from prospective Michigan Reconnect applicants from every region of the state.

While more than 8 in 10 parents of a Michigan high school student expect their child to earn a college degree, 70% said that high costs are a barrier, according to a survey commissioned by the Michigan Association of State Universities.

Michigan Reconnect is an ideal solution for those families and students who initially decided they couldn’t afford to pay tuition to attend community college or feared taking on student loan debt, Gov. Whitmer noted.

The program builds on the success of the Futures for Frontliners initiative Gov. Whitmer launched last September and to which more than 120,000 Michiganders submitted applications by the Dec. 31 deadline.

The nation’s first program of its kind, Futures for Frontliners offered tuition-free college or high school completion to Michiganders who provided essential front-line services during COVID-19 Stay Home, Stay Safe orders between April and June 2020.

Approximately 20,000 Michiganders who applied but didn’t qualify for Futures for Frontliners and are 25 years or older will automatically be eligible for tuition-free college assistance with Michigan Reconnect.

Eligible residents can learn more and apply for Michigan Reconnect at michigan.gov/Reconnect.

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Iosco Township Notice of Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting February 23rd, 2021, 7:00 P.M. Iosco Township Hall 2050 Bradley Rd., Webberville, MI 48892

The Iosco Township Zoning Board of Appeals will be holding a meeting at 7:00PM on Tuesday February 23rd, 2021 to review petitions for zoning variances for the following petitions:

A petition has been filed by Austin Humble, 4520 Dutton Rd, Gregory, MI 48137, Property ID # 4709-29-100-002, for a variance of the Iosco Township Zoning Ordinance at the property referenced above, that would allow the applicant to erect a barn within the 25 feet of his side property line instead of the required 50 feet.

A petition has been filed on behalf of Nichole Walker, 5833 Hay Rake Hollow, Gregory, MI 48137, Property ID # 4709-33-300-041, for a variance of the Iosco Township Zoning Ordinance at the property referenced above, that would allow the erection of an accessory structure that will result in the structure being beyond the front plane of the house.

The Public has the right to appear before the Zoning Board to express their views and opinions on the request. Written comments should be sent to the Township at the mailing address above, Attention: Clark Humrich, ZBA Chair.

Julie Dailey
Iosco Township Clerk
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Little Glad Early Childhood Center knows that families want the best environment for their children and to be able to see the program where they are entrusting their children. To support families...Little Glad is offering Private, COVID-safe tours and enrollment.

Beginning February 16, early enrollment will start for the following:

- Free Preschool for 4 year olds-GSRP Great Start to Readiness
- Early enrollment for 18 months to 12 year old for Fall 2021
- Summer Fun programming for this summer beginning June 13th.

Please call 517-223-6480 or email, Lisa Leonard at leonardl@fowlervilleschools.org to get more information on how to have a private and safe tour of Little Glad Early Childhood Center.



Michigan House Report

By Bob Bezotte, 47th District

This past week I began meeting with my House committees. As the vice chair of the Local Government and Municipal Finance committee and a member of Insurance Policy, Military, Veterans, and Homeland Security, and the Communications and Technology committee, I look forward to working on bills that will benefit the people of Livingston County.

On the House floor this week, we voted on the COVID-19 relief supplemental package. I am glad we were able to take action with a recovery plan that includes getting kids back in the classroom and participating in sports and other extracurricular activities.

As your state representative, my main goal is to be accessible to the people of the 47th District. On Friday February 19th at 4pm, I will be holding a virtual coffee hour through Zoom. I will have Dianne McCormick and Dr. Juan Marquez from the Livingston County Health Department joining me to discuss the vaccine rollout in our county. You can find the link to register on my Facebook page "State Representative Bob Bezotte" or contact my office for the registration link.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to reach out to my office at 517-373-8835 or RobertBezotte@house.mi.gov.



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—Area Deaths—



Eric Dean Spencer

Eric Dean Spencer, 53, of Owosso, passed away on Saturday January 23, 2021 at his home with pancreatic cancer. Cremation has taken place and a private family memorial service to honor his life will be at Cedar River Chapel in Beaverton MI and Metal Night in Owosso MI, further details will be announced by his family and Watkins Brothers Funeral Home, Jennings-Lyons Chapel.

Eric was born in Detroit MI, on December 5, 1967 to Gladys Smith and Danny Spencer. He graduated from Owosso High School in the Class of 1986. Eric briefly went to Great Lakes College to become a minister but moved on working for the auto industry for many years at LDMI Technologies for 13 years as Process Auditor and Ventra 10 years as Quality Control Inspector, both in Fowlerville MI. Eric and Kim met in Fowlerville the year of 1998 and on August 7, 2011 Eric married Kimberly Sue Croslin in Owosso MI.

Eric is survived by his mother Gladys Smith of Owosso MI and his father Danny (Jane) Spencer of Beaverton MI. His wife, Kimberly, their children, Timothy (Jackie) Guldi, Karlene Guldi, and Catheryne Guldi, his grandson Benjamin Clark, and one on its way this Summer (Tim n Jack). Also his siblings, Michael Banas, Michelle Conger, and Eric has several step siblings, nieces and nephews that he DEARLY LOVED. Forever Soulmate Friend Ricki Jacobs and Jacobs Family. Special Loving Family Friends, Dankert, Dice, Hall, Hickmott, Laube, Pitt and Wiedmyer families, Cedar River Chapel And Best Mother in law Clara Binetti.



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MINUTES
January 28, 2021**

The regular electronic meeting of the Marion Township Board was held on Thursday, January 28, 2021 at 7:30 pm. Members Present: Hanvey, Andersen, Beal, Donovan, Lloyd, Durbin, Lowe. Members Absent: None. The following action was taken: 1) Call to Order. 2) Call to the Public. 3) Motion carried to approve agenda as amended; motion carried to approve consent agenda. 4) Motion carried to adopt a resolution to approve submitting permit for Coon Lake Canadian Geese management and nest destruction for 5 years. 5) Motion carried to postpone discussion on Tamarack Place until review is done by attorney. 6) Motion carried to authorize staff to assign 26 REUs owned by Elkow Homes to designated lots in Marion Oaks. 7) Motion carried to send Harvest Drive potential violation to Carlisle Wortman for enforcement. 8) Motion carried to adopt resolution to authorize clerk to sign four-year agreement for Howell, Pinckney, and LESA school elections. 9) Correspondence & Updates. 10) Call to the Public. 11) Motion to adjourn at 9:05 pm.

Tammy L. Beal, MMC
Township Clerk
Robert W. Hanvey
Township Supervisor
(2-7-21 FNV)



**U.S.
Congress
Report**

By Elissa Slotkin,
8th District, U.S. House
of Representatives

**Joins Bipartisan Group Urging Action
on US-Canada Border Policy**

U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin (MI-08) joined two dozen members of Congress from both parties in a letter sent last week to the Biden Administration, urging officials to take steps to safely reopen our northern border with Canada to non-essential travel. This letter is in response to President Biden’s January 12th executive order, which directs members of the Cabinet to submit a plan to implement appropriate public health measures at land ports of entry.

“I’ve heard from so many Michiganders: we need a plan to safely re-open our border with Canada,” Slotkin said. “So many Michiganders have family members and property across the border, and the uncertainty that comes with month-by-month extensions of the closure just doesn’t work with how we operate here in our state, or in Canada. In the meantime, we have seen humanitarian exceptions move in the past month, so contact our office at 517-993-0510 if there’s a medical or humanitarian issue we can assist with.”

The U.S.-Canada border has been closed to non-essential travel since March. Slotkin is advocating that through binational cooperation, the United States can put together a comprehensive, long-term plan for safely reopening the border — instead of the month-by-month approach that has been taken to date. The letter also calls on the Biden Administration to prioritize the safety of those working on the northern border by ensuring all Customs and Border Protection officers are able to be vaccinated, and to enable land border access for the Michiganders who own property in Canada or have loved ones across our northern border. “As we approach one year of restricted travel, we also must recognize the significant impact these restrictions have had on individuals, families, businesses, and communities on both sides of the border,” members said in the letter. “The continued ritual of monthly extensions without substantive signs of collaboration or progress only increases uncertainty and amplifies hardship for the border communities we represent – including those on U.S. soil accessible only through cross-border transit.”

Statement on COVID Relief Rule Vote

U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin (MI-08) released the following statement on last Wednesday’s vote allowing the budget reconciliation process to move forward as a potential vehicle for passage of a COVID relief bill: “I believe the best way forward for the next COVID relief bill is a negotiated, bipartisan agreement that reflects the outstanding needs of the American people. To that end, I welcomed seeing the promising bipartisan talks President Biden has hosted at the White House last week. While I am voting yes today on the possible use of the budget reconciliation process to pass another round of COVID relief in March, I hope it doesn’t come to that. I strongly prefer that the Biden Administration, the Senate and House leadership make a good-faith attempt to negotiate a bipartisan package before that March timeline. “In addition, the next COVID package should be focused on the needs related to the pandemic itself, not used as an opportunity to push through consequential issues unrelated to the pandemic. The American people want to know that their government is serious about pandemic relief and is capable of healthy, bipartisan debate and negotiation, and I urge all sides to use these next few weeks to negotiate as such in good faith.”

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**Fowlerville High School
CTE Student of the Week**



Photo by Mike Jain of Michigan Photography

Jack LaPres

Congratulations to this week’s Career Technical Education Student of the Week at Fowlerville High School, Jack LaPres! Jack is being recognized for his efforts in the Emergency Medical Technician program through Livingston Career & Technical Education. This is a one-year program which provides senior students the chance to get a jumpstart in the medical field. Students attend class daily at Livingston County EMS’s main base and complete clinicals on Livingston County EMS ambulances. Through this program students have the opportunity to earn their EMT license, which then affords them the opportunity to work on an ambulance.

Participating students come from several high schools within the county. Through this program students get to experience what being a first responder really looks like. Being a part of the EMT program also means getting to learn about different sectors of healthcare. This is an excellent opportunity and may help guide students as they decide what specific area of healthcare they may want to pursue for a career.

When asked his favorite part about the class, Jack stated, “My favorite part of class is the bond you make with your classmates. We are a bunch of different people from different schools, different backgrounds, different walks of life but we are all there with the same goal, we all want to complete the course and pass our national registry and get our EMT license and go make a difference in the world.”

Jack’s future career goal is to work for a fire department in a big city. He stated, “It’s been a dream of mine growing up watching my dad be a firefighter in Howell.” Following in his father’s footsteps has always been something he’s wanted to do. Jack took a big step last year and completed the Fire Academy program and was then able to secure a position with the fire department. When asked about how this class is helping to prepare him for his future career goals, Jack stated, “This class is preparing me by giving me the training and skills I need to have to go into a big fire department and help people as well as being able to work efficiently in a team setting.”

Some specific things Jack has learned this year include, how to administer different kinds of medication, assisting with cuts and bruises, and how to support people who are experiencing shock due to a traumatic event.

To those considering this program, Jack stated, “Take it. Plain and simple take it, even if you don’t see yourself working in this career it’s great information to know for life in general.” Jack emphasizes that this class isn’t particularly easy as there is plenty of work involved, but he feels, “it’s all worth it in the end.” Congratulations once again to Jack LaPres!

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Michigan DNR Showcase

Generations of Michigan steelhead fishing

By Bradley Parsons

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

On a frosty winter morning, two anglers are on their way up to the first fishing hole on their favorite steelhead river.

As the father and son gear up, the only sounds they hear are the water running and the snow crunching beneath their feet.

Over the next 10 minutes, these woods will awaken with the sounds of chickadees and other birds. As the sun cuts through the clouds, it melts frost off the branches, dripping into the river's slow, churning waters.

Anticipation gathers within the minds of the two men, with a looming battle of epic sport about to occur.

The son looks at his dad, who nods back. They know within the first three casts they are going to have a fish on the line.

The first cast passes the bait through the water with no takers. Any minute now ...

"Right about there," the father mumbles as he casts.

Almost immediately, the float on the line drops and the water erupts. Out comes a shiny, chrome steelhead, fighting with all its might, trying to shake the hook.

This time of year, steelhead battles are creating magical memories like this across the Great Lakes State.

Michigan provides access to half of all the fresh water in the United States, thanks to four of the five the Great Lakes, more than 11,000 inland lakes, and 36,000 miles of navigable rivers and streams.

This enormous volume of water, and the state's world-class fisheries it supports, provide fishing opportunities of all kinds in every season.

During late fall and early winter months, steelhead river fishing becomes a prized pastime for anglers seeking a unique challenge.

Steelhead is a name given to migratory rainbow trout that are born in rivers but spend most of their lives in the ocean or the Great Lakes. Steelhead are not native to Michigan.

These beautiful fish, first brought to Michigan waters from the west coast in the 1885, are known fighters that provide great table fare – a combination making them a popular sport fish in Michigan.

Hayden Gosen, a fourth-generation steelhead angler from Sanford, in Midland County, caught his first steelhead on the Pere Marquette River at a young age, with guidance from his father, Craig Gosen.

The Pere Marquette, Muskegon and Hersey were the first three rivers in Michigan to have steelhead stocked in the late 1800s.

"I actually caught my very first steelhead on my own when I was 5 years old," Hayden said. "The passion, the thrill, the adventure, the chase of catching a wild steelhead that's

traveled all the way from the Great Lakes up into these rivers... I never know what the next cast is going to bring and that's the adventure I'm always chasing."

Steelhead river fishing has provided a generational influence that has fueled the Gosen family's interest and enjoyment of Michigan's natural resources for more than 70 years.

Craig was born and grew up in Spaulding Township and learned the sport of steelhead fishing from his grandmother, Mary Vleet, during visits with family on the East Branch of the AuGres River in Iosco County.

"I started going to the East Branch of the AuGres River and got my first steelhead when I was 7 and I was hooked on it at an early age," Craig said.

When Hayden was old enough to fish, Craig mentored him and passed on his knowledge of the sport



Hayden and Craig Gosen display trophy steelhead catches. (Hayden Gosen photo)

through many fishing trips. The two have bonded and spent a lifetime together chasing steelhead.

"He's taught me everything I know," said Hayden, who today lives in metropolitan Detroit. "There is no way I would be an avid angler if he wouldn't have taught me everything he knows, and if his grandparents wouldn't have taught him what they knew."

Hayden recalls that before he could even walk, Craig would tow him in his little red wagon down the banks of the AuGres.

"Steelhead fishing to me, it's a passion. I have a love for it," Hayden said. "That passion was instilled at a young age. For years, until I could catch fish on my own consistently, I was my dad's 'net man,' his right-hand man."

Like most sportfishing adventurers, the Gosens find significant meaning and connection in participating. Little things, like taking a break and enjoying a sandwich together while sitting on the riverbank, help create lasting memories.

Fishing together is special for the Gosens.

"The bond between a father and a son sharing the same passion together – now that's priceless," Hayden said.

"I enjoy the challenge, the thrill, the fight of catching a steelhead. It's gonna be that next memory that I'll remember for the rest of my life. That's what keeps me going, what will that next cast bring me?"

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources manages the state's steelhead populations through numerous fisheries management activities, including fish stocking and regulations.

The Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery, established in 1927 near Kalamazoo, and the Thompson State Fish Hatchery, opened near Manistique in 1922, rear Michigan's steelhead that are stocked in public waters.

"Michigan's steelhead planting program has really expanded fishing opportunities to countless rivers around the state," said Craig, who now lives in Sanford. "I think it's an excellent program."

Steelhead travel from the Great Lakes and spend their winters upstream, finishing their stay spawning during spring months. Michigan geography offers a plethora of winter steelhead fishing opportunities found in all regions of the state.

During the winter season, Lake Michigan's rivers are among the prime places to find steelhead. Popular destinations include the Betsie, Muskegon, Grand, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph rivers. Some additional rivers elsewhere in Michigan offering steelhead runs include the Cheboygan, Clinton and Huron Rivers – which feed Lake Huron – and the Chocoley River, which flows to Lake Superior.

"There's endless opportunities to steelhead fish in Michigan," Craig said.

In recent years, the DNR has promoted steelhead fishing through various projects, including a steelhead hatchery video produced at the Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery. The video featured Hayden and Craig Gosen as anglers.

In winter 2020, a second DNR video expanded this effort highlighting winter steelhead fishing, capturing a Sunday scene of Hayden's family fishing on the Pere Marquette River. This video highlights Hayden's journey to locate, hook, fight and land steelhead, surrounded by the snowy banks of a wintery Michigan river.

Anglers interested in trying steelhead fishing can visit Michigan.gov/Fishing to learn more about getting started. A Michigan fishing license is required to pursue steelhead. Fishing regulations are published in the DNR's Fishing Digest, available at Michigan.gov/DNRDigests.

Charter and guide services offer steelhead opportunities around the state. These captains and guides are valuable stewards passing on the sport to future generations.

"Enjoy the surroundings and get outside," Craig said. "The state has tremendous resources to participate in and view. With steelhead fishing, either walking the bank or floating the river, you get to enjoy that all at the same time."

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