

The Courier Herald

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026

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Under investigation...

District Attorney calls for GBI probe into Dublin City Schools finances

By RODNEY MANLEY
Staff Reporter

Dublin Circuit District Attorney Harold McLendon has requested a GBI Investigation into the Dublin City School District's finances.

"The purpose of this request for investigation is to ensure an independent and thorough review of whether any criminal statutes have been violated and is made in service to the confidence of the people, who have made it clear they need answers," McLendon said Tuesday.

According to a news release from the DA's office, McLendon formally requested that the Georgia Bureau of Investigation conduct an independent investigation "into financial irregularities associated with the Dublin City School District."

"According to information provided through state monitoring and audit processes, the Dublin City School District has reported unpaid employer obligations to the State Health Benefit Plan and projected budget deficits and negative cash balances in the magnitude of millions of dollars. These figures represent reported liabilities and projections and do not consti-

tute findings of criminal conduct," the DA's said in the release.

"The district attorney's office is not a law-enforcement investigative agency. While it has limited authority to review and evaluate potential criminal violations, primary investigative responsibility rests with law-enforcement agencies such as local police, sheriffs, or the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Because of the

GBI
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Surrounded by family, new Dublin school board member Jeff Davis is sworn in by Superior Court Judge Trey Taylor/RODNEY MANLEY

New member, new chairman pledge to bring changes to Board of Education

By RODNEY MANLEY
Staff Reporter

The Dublin City Board of Education's new chairwoman and new member pledged big changes at the board's first meeting of the year, including improved financial oversight, more accountability and "radical transparency."

SCHOOL BOARD
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Kyle Dinkheller's father, Kirk, thanked local law enforcement and friends for remembering his son who was shot and killed in the line of duty 28 years ago Monday on Whipple's Crossing Road/PAYTON TOWNS III

LCSO deputy remembered for sacrifice

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

On Jan. 12, 1998, around 5:34 p.m., Laurens County Deputy Kyle Dinkheller pulled over a driver who he clocked speeding on I-16. The driver pulled over on Whipple's Crossing Road and Dinkheller pulled behind his Toyota truck. What Dinkheller's patrol vehicle camera showed was a shootout that killed the 22-year-old deputy.

The driver - Andrew Brannan - was captured the next day. He was found guilty a few years later and executed on Jan. 13, 2015.

Last Monday morning, law enforcement officers, family and friends gathered at the memorial site on Whipple's Crossing Road.

"It seems like yesterday," said Dinkheller's father Kirk. "I appreciate each and every one of you to come out. All I want to remind you is to go home at the end of your shift to be with your families because we are not able to do that anymore."

Kirk appreciated the officers and officials who continue to show up at his son's memorial every year, especially when it was 30 degrees outside.

"It is always uplifting to come here every year," he said. "I still love the fact that everybody still remembers my son."

Treutlen County Sheriff Thomas Corbin was a young deputy in Treutlen when he heard about what happened.

"I came up here and we stayed all night," Corbin said. "It was a terrible night."

He quoted Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6: "Trust in the Lord with all of your hearts and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

"We do live in terrible times," Corbin said. "The world is in chaos. We watch the news and we cannot even believe the decisions that are being made. When you are in a situation, back off and evaluate the situation. Don't handle it by yourself. Use your head. If you have to react, don't hesitate and do what you want to do. I hope you never have

to make a decision (to use deadly force). Put your trust and faith in God. Be safe. Go home at night and take care of your families."

Laurens County Sheriff Larry Dean stated that law enforcement personnel are unique in that they run towards the danger while others run the opposite direction.

"In the last 15 years, it is just amazing how much this country has changed," Dean said. "And yet, we live in a rural area where we do have a lot of support for law enforcement. When you get up every day, take a little moment to spend a least two to three minutes in prayer with God. God is in control,

DINKHELLER
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Kight remembered as 'humble' man

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

Laurens County Attorney Billy Kight did not seek the spotlight. Even when his commissioners asked him to join them for recognition, he turned it down.

"He didn't want to be noticed," said Jimmy Rogers, county commissioner chairman. "He wanted to do his job, step back and let someone else get recognized for it. We would want him to join us, but he would

say, 'Y'all go ahead. I'm okay.'"

Kight passed away on Jan. 9. He was 74. Visitation was held Monday night and his service took place Tuesday morning.

Kight served as Laurens County's attorney since 1993.

"He was a wonderful, humble man," said Laurens County Administrator Bryan Rogers.

Rogers has known Kight for 25 years. Rogers cred-

ited Kight for helping him when he arrived in Laurens County at the age of 32.

"He helped me as a county administrator and personally when becoming a husband and a father," Rogers said. "He helped me every step of the way. I ate breakfast and lunch with the man for 25 years, five days a week. He was humble and I think that is what everybody needs to remember about him, although he was the smartest man I

knew from an intelligence standpoint. He spoke about being humble more than he spoke about being intelligent. The most important aspect in anything he did was to be simple and humble. He was a really private person but he treated everybody with respect and he went out of his way to help everybody. We are all going to miss him."

County commissioner Trae Kemp had a good rapport with Kight, even when they were on opposite sides of an issue.

"When he thought I was wrong he would tell me without hesitation," Kemp said. "The most important factor is not that Laurens County lost a lawyer. He was more than a lawyer.

ing disagreeable. He was a really good guy and I am going to miss him a lot."

When it comes to Kight, commissioner Rogers believes many people will have about the same things to say about the longtime county attorney.

"He had so much wisdom stored up in his head," Rogers said. "I would cut up with him and tell him to put that knowledge somewhere on paper. He could handle the job with a flip phone and paper."

"He served us well as a county attorney and friend," he added. "He is gone from us now, but he doesn't have to be forgotten. He is hard to replace, and it'll be hard to replace him. But we'll remember what he said to us and that will help us do our jobs. He will be missed by us commissioners and the people in the county."



Billy Kight served as county attorney since 1993 /SPECIAL PHOTO

Billy was probably one of the most trustworthy people I have ever met. I could talk to him about almost anything and he could always disagree without be-



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OBITUARIES

**Debran Taylor Braziel**

Debran Taylor Braziel, 71, of Dublin, Ga., passed away peacefully on Jan. 12, 2026.

Born on June 16, 1954, in Columbia, South Carolina, Debran was a beacon of love and kindness to all who knew her. She was the cherished daughter of the late Lowell James and Harriett Edwards Taylor.

Debran's life was a testament to her unwavering faith and her capacity for love. She was a devoted wife to her husband of 47 years, James Braziel, and a nurturing mother to her children, Katie Darnley (Hugh) of Dublin and Ben Braziel (Jenny) of Winder. Her role as Mimi to her adored grandchildren, Mayes Darnley, Liam Darnley, Daisy Braziel, Hutson Darnley, Lily Braziel, Emily Darnley and Silas Braziel, was one she embraced with joy and pride. Debran's family was the cornerstone of her life, and her love for them was boundless.

She is also survived by her brothers, Mark Taylor of Atlanta and Jay Taylor (Amy) of North Augusta, South Carolina, along with several nieces and nephews who will miss her dearly.

Mrs. Parker was a lifelong resident of Washington County, the daughter of the late William Elmer Doolittle and the late Hilda Brantley Doolittle. She was the wife of the late Jesse Lee Parker, and a loving mom to her three children. Mrs. Parker loved to cook, and to read and collect cookbooks. She also enjoyed working with her flowers and taking care of her animals. Her greatest joy in life was spending time with her family, especially her granddaughter and two great grandsons. Mrs. Parker was a member of Tabernacle United Methodist Church where she served as church pianist for many years. In addition to her parents and husband she is preceded in death by her brother Billy Doolittle and his wife Jean.

Mrs. Parker is survived by her daughters, Jessie Lisa Parker of Sandersville, and Jana Maria Parker of Duncwoody; son, Anthony Mark Parker and his wife Robin of Wrightsville; granddaughter Geneve Parker Stevenson and her husband Hayden of Wrightsville; great-grandsons, Parker Nolan Stevenson and Gunner James Stevenson; brother, Bernard Doolittle and his wife Faye of Sandersville; and her fur babies, Sophie, Midnight, and Morris.

The family would like to thank April Meeks and the staff of Georgia Hospice Care as well as Mrs. Parker's caregivers, Viola Fraley, Shelia Washington and Diane Johnson for their dedicated care of their mother.

Condolences may be made online at mayandsmithfuneraldirectors.com

**Nell Doolittle Parker**

Mrs. Nell Doolittle Parker, 94, of Hwy 24 West, Sandersville passed away peacefully on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026, at her residence surrounded by her family. A funeral service to celebrate her life was held on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026, at 3 p.m. at the chapel of May and Smith Funeral Home with burial following at Brownwood Cemetery.

Rev. Jeff Cook and Mr. Jimmy Childre Jr. will officiate. Pallbearers will be Jimmy Childre Jr., Dr. Rick Halverson, Dr. Kim Kitchens, Keith Parker, Kevin Parker, Carlton Parker, and Matthew Norwood. The family will greet friends on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026, from 2 p.m. until the hour of service at the funeral home.

Debran's life was a testament to her unwavering faith and her capacity for love. She was a devoted wife to her husband of 47 years, James Braziel, and a nurturing mother to her children, Katie Darnley (Hugh) of Dublin and Ben Braziel (Jenny) of Winder. Her role as Mimi to her adored grandchildren, Mayes Darnley, Liam Darnley, Daisy Braziel, Hutson Darnley, Lily Braziel, Emily Darnley and Silas Braziel, was one she embraced with joy and pride. Debran's family was the cornerstone of her life, and her love for them was boundless.

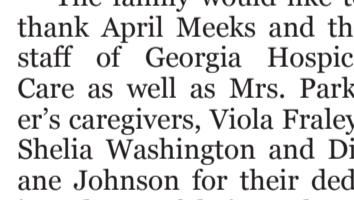
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Georgia Democratic lawmakers try to rein in ICE

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Democrats in the state Senate fired a political volley at President Donald Trump Tuesday, with a package of bills aimed at the way his administration has enforced the laws, particularly for immigration.

Labeling his administration "rogue" and a "regime," they called on state Republicans to back legislation that would limit the president's authority to deploy military reserve units and rein in Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, one of whom shot and killed a mother in Minneapolis last week.

"We have seen ICE

physically assault people who are just protesting or lawfully observing, and we just saw in Minneapolis ICE murder Renee Good," Sen. Josh McLaurin, D-Sandy Springs said. "Obviously, the officer did what he was not trained to do, which was step in front of the car, escalate."

The Trump administration has defended the action, saying the officer feared for his life after previously being injured by a vehicle during an enforcement action. Minnesota sued the Trump administration to block ICE deployments.

McLaurin, who is running for lieutenant governor, introduced Senate Bill 397, which would allow citizens to sue ICE officers for alleged violations of civil rights.

Another bill, Senate Bill 391, would require authorities to obtain a judi-

cial warrant before taking immigration enforcement actions at certain locations, including churches, hospitals, libraries and schools. A third, Senate Bill 390, would require the Georgia governor's permission for entry of National Guard forces from other states. Finally, Senate Bill 389 would require ICE officers to wear a badge and remove their masks.

Federal officials say the masks are necessary to protect officers against personal threats, such as "doxxing" when personal information is maliciously distributed online and "swatting" when police are called to homes on false pretenses.

That last bill was by Sen. Kim Jackson, D-Stone Mountain, who noted that lawmakers do not wear masks despite having been doxxed and swatted. And brimmed hats are the only apparel on Georgia State

Patrol officers' heads. "If our brothers in their gray hats can stand up and show their face, then so can ICE," said Jackson, the Senate's minority whip. "It is cowardice. And it's time to unmask ICE."

Democrats tried to link their anti-ICE campaign to the increasingly charged political issue of affordability, saying immigration enforcement was disrupting local economies while costing taxpayers billions.

But their salvo was apparently charged with blanks. The likelihood of these bills becoming law is vanishingly small, judging from the reaction of Sen. Jason Anavartate, a Republican from Dallas and the Senate's majority leader.

"They want the state to regulate the federal government when that's not necessarily the role of the state," he said.

Senate Republicans to address affordability

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — The Republican leaders of Georgia's Senate will push to reduce both income and property taxes while targeting other cost-of-living issues during a legislative session that will be influenced by election-year politics.

Senate leaders gave a brief outline of their priorities at the Capitol Tuesday, the second day of their 40-day session.

Last week, a high-priority Senate study committee wrapped up its work, issuing a recommendation to eliminate the state income tax by 2032, with gradual cuts starting in 2027. And on that same day, House Speaker Jon Burns, a Republican from Newington, announced his plans to pare back local property taxes.

On Tuesday, the Senate majority leader, Dallas Republican Jason Anavartate,

said his chamber's caucus "can and will do everything in our power" to embrace both approaches to bring down costs for taxpayers.

He also said Republicans would target institutional investors who "gobble up" houses then resell them, driving up prices for regular homebuyers while "Wall Street billionaires" profit.

The Senate will also consider ways to expedite building permits, he said. Developers criticized local building departments for causing expensive delays during a hearing in November, but local officials said developers were filing sloppy plans that slowed the review process.

Both the Senate and the House are also interested in improving literacy. Burns said last week that he wanted to see literacy coaches in every elementary school, and Anavartate said Tuesday that the Senate wanted to provide resources to ad-

dress the concern.

Anavartate also mentioned resources for foster children and to combat chronic absenteeism, also the subject of a Senate study committee last year.

Also on the agenda are "guardrails" around technology accessible by children including artificial intelligence, he said.

The senators did not offer much detail about how they would accomplish their goals. Property taxes fund about half the cost of public education, so curtailing school districts' authority to raise tax revenue could result in service cuts.

Anavartate said some school districts were flush with money while others were broke, and "we have to figure out what is that right balance." He had a similar answer about how to curb institutional residential investors: "I think we have to address the balance and there will be more to come on that."

Georgia Senate bans local gun storage laws

By MARK NIESSE
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — The Georgia Senate voted along party lines Tuesday to ban cities from requiring gun owners to lock up their guns in cars, the first bill approved in this year's legislative session.

The bill is a response to a Savannah ordinance that outlawed leaving handguns, rifles or shotguns in unattended vehicles unless they're securely stored. A Chatham County judge ruled in November that the ordinance is unconstitutional.

The legislation now heads to Gov. Brian Kemp for his signature or veto. The Senate approved the bill 32-21 on Tuesday after it passed the state House on the final day of last year's legislative session.

State Sen. Colton Moore, a Republican from Trenton, said the bill would protect the rights of gun owners. In Savannah, 41 people received citations under the city's ordinance, which

comes with a maximum penalty of a \$1,000 fine and 30 days in jail.

"You can travel the state freely knowing you're not going to be a victim of a crime and then be made a criminal as we've seen in Savannah," Moore said during the Senate debate on Senate Bill 204. "We're putting freedom back into the hands of the citizenry."

Savannah's ordinance required guns left in vehicles to be securely stored in a glove compartment, console, locked trunk, or behind the last upright seat of a vehicle without a trunk. The ordinance also mandated that unoccupied vehicles must be kept locked

when there's a gun inside.

State Sen. Derek Mallow, a Democrat from Savannah, said the ordinance reduced gun thefts in Savannah by 30% in the year since the city enacted it in 2024.

"The city overwhelmingly supports the Second Amendment, but they also believe that public safety is at risk when guns are stolen from unlocked cars," Mallow said. "They can fall into the wrong hands very easily."

The bill also allows weapons carriers who receive citations to sue local governments for \$25,000 plus attorney fees.

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The City of Dublin will be closed on January 19th, 2026 to Observe Martin Luther King's Birthday.

Garbage p/u as follows:

Monday, Jan. 19th, 2026 no garbage p/u.

Tuesday, Jan 20th, 2026 will be Monday and Tuesday route customers.

All other routes will stay the same

Friday, Jan. 23rd, 2026 will be recycle for Monday and Tuesday route customers.

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OUR TAKE...

In honor of MLK Jr.

Editor's note: In honor of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, the following is an excerpt from "The Negro and the Constitution," the first public address given by a 15-year-old King, during a 1944 speaking contest at Dublin's First African Baptist Church.

Negroes were first brought to America in 1620 when England legalized slavery both in England and the colonies and America; the institution grew and thrived for about 150 years upon the backs of these black men. The empire of King Cotton was built and the southland maintained a status of life and hospitality distinctly its own and not anywhere else.

On January 1, 1863 the proclamation emancipating the slaves which had been decreed by President Lincoln in September took effect—millions of Negroes faced a rising sun of a new day begun. Did they have habits of thrift or principles of honesty and integrity? Only a few! For their teachings and duties had been but two activities—love of Master, right or wrong, good or bad, and loyalty to work. What was to be the place for such men in the reconstruction of the south?

America gave its full pledge of freedom seventy-five years ago. Slavery has been a strange paradox in a nation founded on the principles that all men are created free and equal. Finally after tumult and war, the nation in 1865 took a new stand—freedom for all people. The new order was backed by amendments to the national constitution making it the fundamental law that thenceforth there should be no discrimination anywhere in the “land of the free” on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude ...

The spirit of Lincoln still lives; that spirit born of the teachings of the Nazarene, who promised mercy to the merciful, who lifted the lowly, strengthened the weak, ate with publicans, and made the captives free. In the light of this divine example, the doctrines of demagogues shiver in their chaff. Already closer understanding links Saxon and Freedman in mutual sympathy.

America experiences a new birth of freedom in her sons and daughters; she incarnates the spirit of her martyred chief. Their loyalty is repledged; their devotion renewed to the work He left unfinished. My heart throbs anew in the hope that inspired by the example of Lincoln, imbued with the spirit of Christ, they will cast down the last barrier to perfect freedom. And I with my brother of blackest hue possessing at last my rightful heritage and holding my head erect, may stand beside the Saxon—a Negro—and yet a man!

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

"It's not about standing still and becoming safe. If anybody wants to keep creating they have to be about change."

- Miles Davis

DAILY SCRIPTURE

"While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."

- Daniel 4:31

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

January 15, 2026 is...

- National Bagel Day
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Day
- National Pothole Day
- Wikipedia Day
- National Strawberry Ice Cream Day
- National Hat Day

The Courier Herald

LOCAL MATTERS



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GEORGIA TRUST

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This newspaper is committed to the idea that the press should tell the truth without prejudice and spread knowledge without malicious intent.

Thoughts on a 3 decade friendship and Iran

I'm going to get a haircut this week. Please try to contain your excitement over this.

The lady that cuts my hair has been doing so about 30 years. My first haircut with her was quite random. I just dropped into one of the several places in Cobb County's Cumberland Mall when I determined things had grown a bit shaggy sometime around Atlanta's hosting of the 1996 Olympics.

We've since moved from mitigating cow licks to re-creating hair lines. I now know her not only to be kind, but an amazing person. Despite me having moved to the Georgia coast years ago, no one has cut my hair since we met but her.

She works hard six days a week. I've listened to stories about her raising two sons, and now her third grandson. She's seen me at my best and helped get me through my worst. There was a too long stretch of several months in there where she wouldn't accept payment from me, knowing I didn't really have her meager fee to spare. I'm proud to call her a friend.

There's something about a barber or stylist that gets people talking. I guess once you've let someone into your personal space and alter your appearance you have already accepted a certain level of trust. Real talk occurs during haircuts.

Over three decades, we've had our share of real conversations. We know many of each other's problems and worries. We know a lot about each other's families. We know where we're coming from in dealing with our day to day, which brings

GEORGIA POLITICS



By CHARLIE HARPER

me to the point of telling you more about her.

She has a slight but beautiful accent with her perfect command of English, but her native language is Farsi. She was born in Iran. Her religion is Baha'i Faith. Her story is pure American.

I had never heard of her religion until she told me about her journey. Her family had to escape Iran when the late Shah was overthrown in the 1970's.

Baha'i is a peaceful religion that is politically agnostic. Their followers are often the first people targeted by religious fundamentalists during revolutions, and often executed, as the oppressors can make a point to all other groups while receiving little pushback from Baha'i's.

Her family first fled to a neighboring country, then Canada, and after several months made it to America. Her sons know their native culture and country well, but have been raised as Americans. This is now their forever home.

I'm old enough to remember the revolution, as I was about 10 as it unfolded. Much of my political aware-

ness was galvanized by the events of that era.

Economically, the oil embargos produced a stagflation that caused inflation much worse than we've experienced over the past few years. We also saw our national might openly questioned and mocked by the new regime holding 52 hostages from our embassy in Tehran for 444 days.

The Ayatollahs have used their oil money not for the Iranian people, but to finance a terror network that has destabilized the middle east and openly threatened and undermined the west. It is understandable why most Americans view Iran as an enemy, if not the enemy.

Through our years of visits, I've grown to understand an Iran that once was. It's what Iran still is in the heart and soul of many expatriates as well as those who live oppressed under the current regime.

There remains a great pride of an Iran that had the most educated population in the region. It was forward thinking. It combined centuries of culture with a hip vibe. The standard of living for most Iranians was

among the best in the world. There are strong hopes and dreams of what Iran might one day be again.

There have been uprisings against the current regime several times since our haircuts began. We've discussed them all.

Each time, you could see and hear the hope and determination. You could also see the stoic resolve that a now half century of persistence has mandated.

Maybe this is the time that the people can live freely. Maybe Iran can one day be a leader again in the west, instead of being the chief architect and financier attempting to undermine it. But maybe the wait will continue.

Thus far, at least publicly, America has only sent words of encouragement to those protesting for change. What we know for certain is that things are becoming increasingly violent. Those fighting for peace are literally putting their lives on the line.

We also know that regime change has open possibilities. What happens next, even if the Ayatollah falls, will likely be messy. "They lived happily ever after" is an ending reserved for fairy tales, not global politics.

I'm looking forward to my haircut not because I'm overdue, but because there will be a warm hug. On my end, it will be one of encouragement and of shared hope.

Say a prayer for those in Iran and what they must endure over the days and weeks ahead. Their success will influence if not outright determine our next chapters in world history.

die."

Georgia's safety net is already weaker than most. More than 450,000 Georgians are without insurance despite the failed Pathways program and due to the Republican refusal to expand Medicaid.

For years, ACA subsidies have helped bridge that coverage gap divide for middle- and lower-income families. Those are the same families seeing premiums spike for 2026 coverage.

The question before Georgia lawmakers is not whether Congress might act — they've already shown an inability (or unwillingness) to do so. It's whether Georgia leaders can acknowledge the pain families are feeling and whether they'll abdicate the responsibility to help their constituents.

Affordability isn't a "hoax" or a "con job" as Trump has said. It shows up in kitchen-table decisions and late-night calculations. It determines whether parents can keep coverage for their children, whether workers can manage chronic conditions and whether a single unexpected bill tips a household into crisis.

As the 2026 session begins, lawmakers have a choice. They can argue over ideology, debate process and posture for the future — or they can confront the present and recognize that health care affordability is at the core of the economic pressure crushing Georgia families. They can decide to finally take action.

For Georgia families, democracy must finally deliver — or we'll all pay the price.

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

Rising health care costs are crushing Georgia families



FINE PRINT
STACEY ABRAMS

In early December, I received a desperate text from a wife and mother who runs a small business. She and her husband rely on the ACA for insurance, but with the cost increasing from \$750 a month to \$2,500 a month — triple the rate — they will have to forgo coverage. Her daughter may be able to stay on Peachcare for Kids, but she's not sure.

Georgians aren't surprised by what's happening in Washington as Republicans refuse to simply extend the subsidies that have worked. Here at home, Republicans annually reject billions of dollars to save rural hospitals and reduce costs across the state.

Instead, we get piecemeal policies that serve far fewer than needed and pad the pockets of consultants.

Republican lawmakers point to Georgia's Pathways to Coverage program, but that only offers limited assistance to certain low-income residents who otherwise do not qualify for Medicaid. Pathways reaches only a narrow slice of Georgians and leaves working families exposed — particularly those who rely on ACA marketplace plans.

Too often, corruption is a companion to authoritarianism, a useful byproduct of ignoring the will of the people to serve the ideological and economic whims of those in charge. If Georgia wants to instead take care of its people, then state lawmakers must pursue real plans to address the affordability crisis, starting with

the ACA and Medicaid.

Democrats have said they plan to revive legislation to create a state health care affordability program aimed at lowering premiums.

Refusing to follow the proven success of 40 other states, Georgia Republicans are going to bid for \$1.4 billion to salvage rural health care, money made available with the signature Trump bill that slashed ACA subsidies to fund tax breaks for billionaires.

This pursuit for a slice of a \$50 billion hush fund for states facing the economic cliff on rural health care costs is particularly absurd for Georgia, as lawmakers have refused more than \$20 billion that could have funded much more. They have repeatedly rejected a loaf of bread and now seek praise for begging for crumbs.

The disconnect is cruel, and it has deep consequences for our families.

Rising health care costs are accelerating the broader affordability crisis. When the cost of taking care of illnesses and injuries rises, families do not suddenly find extra money. They cut back elsewhere. A doctor's visit gets postponed. A credit card balance grows. Rent is paid late. Less food gets put on the table.

In a state where many households are already living paycheck to paycheck, higher health care costs have the potential to ruin people's lives. Sen. Jon Ossoff put it plainly: "This is life or death. People will

Dublin Police Department

- On Dec. 22, around 9:36 p.m., an officer responded to Dewey Street about a Flock alert to shots fired.

Upon arrival, officers began watching Flock live cameras while others walked the area. An officer talked with a resident who said she heard one shot fired, then when she walked outside, she saw a car speeding off with a man hanging out the passenger side window firing another shot. While watching the camera system, the officer saw a Dodge Challenger, Toyota Camry and a Hyundai Sonata, all leaving the area at a high rate of speed.

While patrolling the dead end of Dewey Street, an officer saw the Hyundai pulling into location. The officer exited his patrol car as the driver and passenger exited the Hyundai. The officer told them to stop, but the passenger continued to walk

at a fast pace before running away.

The officer chased but was unable to catch the passenger. The officer was able to later find the driver identified as Tykwan Octavius Butler, 29. An investigation led to Butler being charged with possession of amphetamine and possession of firearm by convicted felon.

- Holly Mullis, 32, was charged with theft by shoplifting at Walmart on Highway 80 West, around 5:58 p.m. on Dec. 24.

Upon arrival, an officer met with loss prevention personnel who reported they had seen a woman, who turned out to be Mullis, using the self-checkout to skip-scan items and bag them. She was apprehended at the exit where a search of her bags revealed stolen merchandise totaling \$34.06.

During the interaction, Mullis admitted to taking the items and expressed remorse for her actions. She was arrested and transported

**POLICE BEAT...**

ed to the police department where she was issued a citation and released on summons.

- Jacqueline Tylette Betton, 42, was charged with driving while license suspended or revoked at the intersection of Industrial and Fairview Park Drive around 12:08 p.m. on Dec. 26.

An officer conducted a traffic stop on a blue Kia Niro for an individual not wearing a seat belt. Betton's license returned suspended. She was arrested and transported to the police department. The officer was unable to get Betton's fingerprints because the machine was not working. She was released on summons.

- Takeshia Patrice Dupree, 40, was charged with theft by shoplifting and obstruction of law enforcement officers at Dollar General on Hillcrest Parkway around 1:24 p.m. on Dec. 26.

An officer was pointed in the direction the suspect went after leaving the store. The officer drove up to her and Dupree dropped her items and began running. She was caught, arrested and transported back to the Dollar General.

The store manager said the woman comes into the store several times during the week. The manager said the woman was acting suspicious by watching her watch her. The manager saw

Dupree grab a bag of candy and stuff it into her bag in the buggy. The woman walked around the isle, left the buggy and ran out the door.

Dupree was transported to the sheriff's office where she was released to the jail staff.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- On Dec. 15, around 4:52 p.m., a deputy initiated a traffic stop on a red Nissan Altima for impeding the flow of traffic. Clifford Moss, 23, of Dublin was charged with driving under the influence of drugs.

- On Dec. 10, a deputy made a traffic stop on a black Nissan Pathfinder in reference to a false tag on Highway 257.

- A theft occurred on Rose Avenue around 9 p.m. on Dec. 16.

- Around 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 17, a deputy was dispatched to SWS Recovery and Transport LLC on Va-

lambrosia Road in regard to a disturbance.

- A deputy talked with a man on Dec. 10 about a theft that happened on Rocky Ridge Road around 8 a.m. on Dec. 3.

- On Jan. 6, around 12:40 p.m., a deputy responded to Highway 80 East in reference to a theft report.

Editor's note: This information is public record and was taken from reports of local law enforcement agencies. These reports do not reflect guilt or innocence. An "arrest" does not always indicate incarceration. Readers are cautioned that people may have similar names. Police Beat does not identify minor children, victims of sexual assault, suicide attempts or medical conditions. Cases dismissed do not appear if the newspaper is notified before deadline.

**TELL IT!**

CALL 272-0375, EMAIL CHTELLIT@GMAIL.COM, OR TELL IT! AT COURIERHERALDTODAY.COM

Audit says you have over twice the staff you need and yet you still won't cut IGA. Going to run yourself in the ground trying to keep it going. Close the door and try to salvage something.

The audit shows that the board way over paid Fred - that is on them. And the HR director and the finance director should have been fired.

Will charges be brought against the one presenting false financial documents? Isn't that a crime?

Dublin City will shut down! Same board, they haven't made enough cuts, Mrs. Pool is in over her head, board members still blaming and not taking responsibility, and no more advancements.

Did board members

not think to ask how positions paid for with Covid money would be handled when Covid money was gone? Not very bright!

Give back your Super of the Year award Fred! You drove Dublin City into the ground and made us a joke. While you made money!

Why is there no mention of the City of Dublin's homestead exemptions voted on in November's election?

These latest revelations of the Dublin City School System is just the tip of the iceberg. I hope we can soon find out where the rest of the \$13 million went. Stay tuned!

To all my heroes down there, I envy you. You get to find out information and hound people about it. I'd do it, but I'd rather be on the outside pounding the beat and going around and finding stories. I'd rather aggravate those people up there at the courthouse. I'd take some pictures and find some stories. I'm also a good story teller. It has been so long since I've been around stuff like that. I probably wouldn't be able to use a typewriter. I sure wish I could do what y'all do and I'm proud of you. Y'all have a good one.

Can we recall Fred's Super of the Year award - because he was fraud of the years? He created this culture and he was in charge. So arrogant.

It is time for Dublin City to admit these messed up. It is not repairable - too far in the hole. Give up your charter and let's move forward with consolidation and

prosecutions.

Anyone with a brain could see a system the size of Dublin should not have had the number of employees and programs they had. Somebody should have been asking questions. But Fred had a blank check.

The HR director is at fault too. They should have known what positions fund-

They had to approve that.

Mr. Townsman, you are a man after my own heart. My poor Bulldogs lost. You have a 2017 t-shirt and I got one too when they won. But your wife gave you a better present of a sweater. That was real cool. I wish I had an old lady like that. I come to tears after that article.

NEWS DIGEST

The Dublin City Council will hold a pre-council meeting at 11 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 15 to be followed by its council meeting at noon. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Invocation and Pledge to Flag
- Discussion and action on resolution #25-05 to appoint a city clerk and election superintendent
- Approval of Jan. 2 city council meeting minutes
- Approval of bills over \$15,000
- Approval of purchases over \$15,000
- Discussion and action on resolution #26-02 to approve an agreement for the development of a comprehensive safety action plan for SS4A with Foresite Group, LLC
- Discussion and action on resolution #26-03 to approve and accept the terms with vision zero safety action plan for the 2024 SS4A grant

locations are and if their name is still on the register. This can be done electronically or if a person prefers, they will have hard copies for them to fill out.

The MLK Day Dublin's day of service will be held on Monday, Jan. 19 at St. Peter Baptist Church, 912 Martin Luther King Dr. Events begin with a feeding and care bags for the unhoused from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. This will be done in partnership with the local Alpha Kappa Alpha Tau Omicron Omega Chapter, St. Peter Church and 1KWS. They will distribute meals and care bags to the unhoused neighbors. Volunteers are needed. A youth movie night will be held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. This will be a free community movie night for youth ages 10 to 18 (all ages welcome) to watch "The Hate U Give." Pizza will be provided.

Local 7-day Forecast:**The next 48 hours:**

THURSDAY:
49°

Windy with increasing amounts of sunshine.
Sunrise: 7:34 a.m.



THURSDAY NIGHT:
20°

Clear and very cold.
Sunset: 5:49 p.m.



FRIDAY DAY:
55°

Plenty of sunshine.
Sunrise: 7:33 a.m.



FRIDAY NIGHT:
37°

Clear to partly cloudy with a stray shower late.
Sunset: 5:50 p.m.



Saturday

1/17

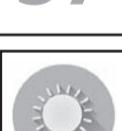
HIGH/LOW

60/30

Partly sunny.

Sunrise: 7:33 a.m.

Sunset: 5:51 p.m.



Sunday

1/18

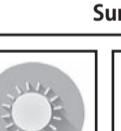
HIGH/LOW

48/31

Plenty of sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:33 a.m.

Sunset: 5:52 p.m.



Monday

1/19

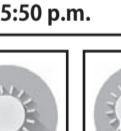
HIGH/LOW

53/28

Plenty of sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:32 a.m.

Sunset: 5:53 p.m.



Tuesday

1/20

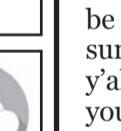
HIGH/LOW

52/26

Plenty of sunshine.

Sunrise: 7:32 a.m.

Sunset: 5:54 p.m.



Wednesday

1/21

HIGH/LOW

59/34

Increasing clouds.

Sunrise: 7:32 a.m.

Sunset: 5:55 p.m.

River levels...

Oconee (at Dublin) 3.97'
Ocmulgee (at Macon) 6.42'

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGER AT RISK SERVICES

The Laurens County Board of Commissioners (LCBC) is soliciting statements of qualifications from firms interested in providing Construction Management At-Risk (CMA) services for the Renovations and Additions to the Laurens County Senior Center in East Dublin, Georgia. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeks to identify potential providers of the above-mentioned services. Some firms that respond to this RFQ, who are determined by the Owner to be especially qualified, may be deemed eligible and may be invited to offer proposals for these services. LCBC reserves the right to reject any or all statements of qualifications or proposals, and to waive technicalities and informalities at their discretion.

The project involves all site work and building Renovations and Additions to the existing Laurens County Senior Center located at 112 Nathaniel Drive, East Dublin, Georgia.

The prospective CMA firms will provide preconstruction services which may include, without limitation, technical review, cost verification, cost evaluation, value engineering, schedule development, and schedule evaluation, in addition to management of the construction. In addition, CMA firms will be responsible for methods of construction, safety, and the scheduling and coordination of the work of all construction and miscellaneous contracts required for completion of the project within its predetermined budget and schedule. The successful CMA will be required to work collaboratively with the Architect and the Owner.

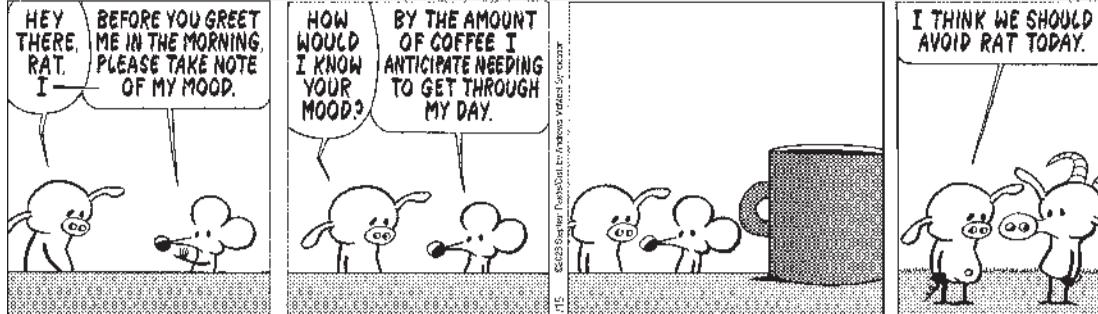
Interested parties should contact Bryan Rogers, County Administrator, to obtain a copy of the RFQ document. CMA firms wishing to submit their qualifications in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Request for Qualifications package must do so on or before Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 2:00 P.M..

Mr. Bryan Rogers
County Administrator
117 E Jackson Street Dublin, GA 31040
e-mail: rogersb@lclga.com
phone: (478) 272-4755
fax: (478) 272-3895

The Courier Herald cordially invites you to a reception in honor of **Harriett Claxton** Thursday, January 29th 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. @ the Dublin Carnegie 311 Academy Ave.

Join us and celebrate her lifelong contributions to the community and the legacy of 50 Years Ago and 85 Years Ago.

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



BY STEPHAN PASTIS

GARFIELD



BY JIM DAVIS

OVERBOARD



BY CHIP DUNHAM

DEFLOCKED



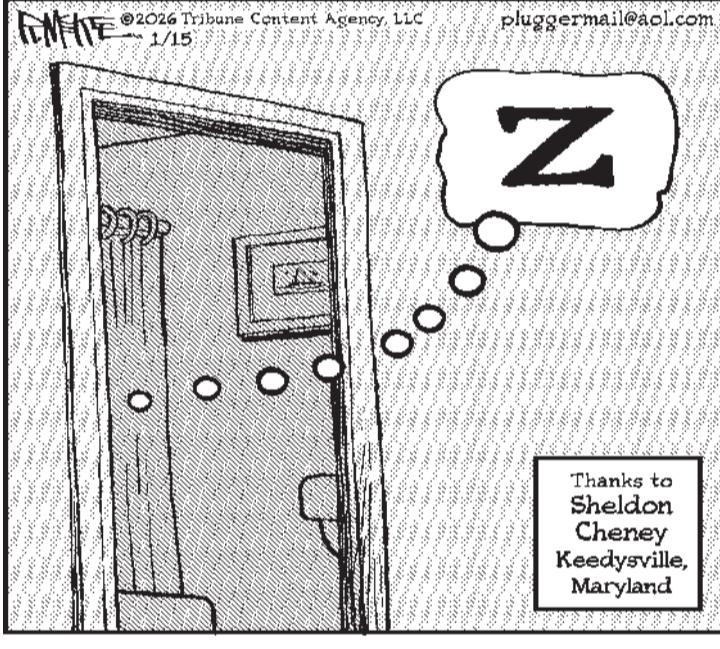
BY TOM WILSON

ZIGGY



BY TOM WILSON

PLUGGERS



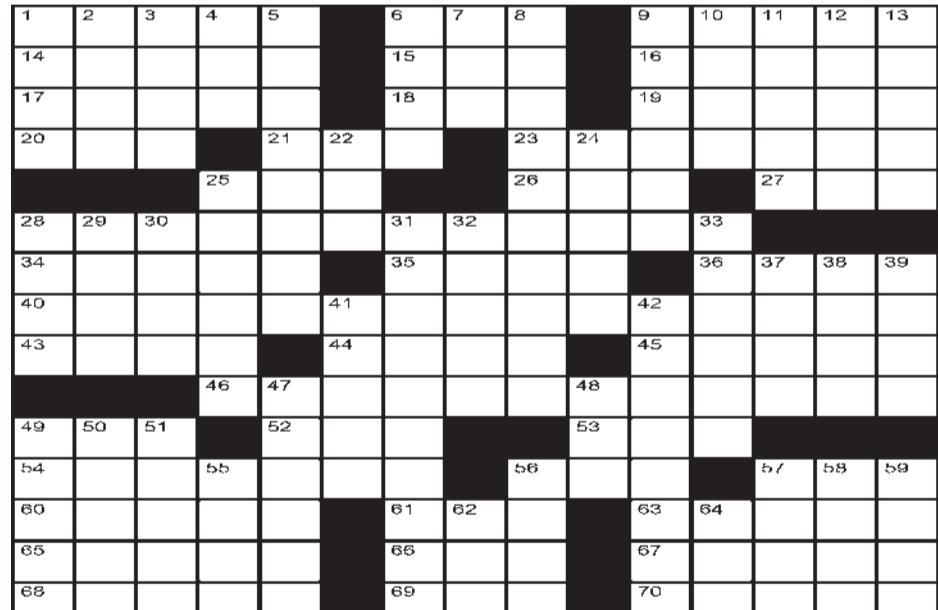
BY JEFF MACNELLY

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

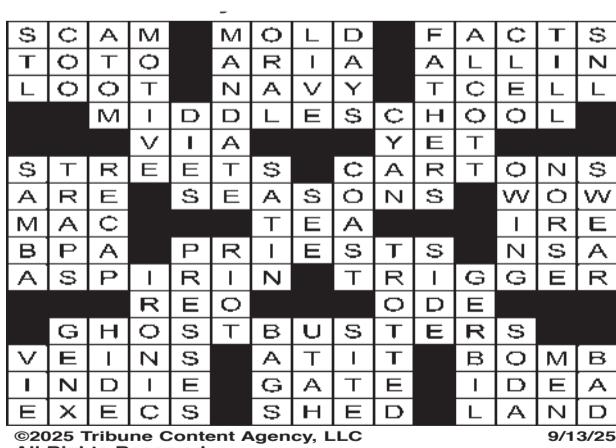
ACROSS

1 Robber
6 Advanced degree: Abbr.
9 Drinking utensil
14 Cuban line dance
15 Serving of corn
16 Computer failure
17 Begin to flower
18 Yes vote
19 Uplift
20 Strong desire
21 First word of the Lord's Prayer
23 Royal staff
25 Embrace
26 Bird of basketball
27 Consumed
28 Amazon Prime offering: 2 wds.
34 Steadfast
35 Indian flatbread
36 Seized property, for short
40 All-inclusive breakfast roll: 2 wds.
43 Wheeling, — Virginia
44 Payment to a landlord
45 Online greeting
46 Gatorade and Propel: 2 wds.
49 Bunny's jump
52 Angeles
53 Dubai's land: Abbr.
54 Tombstone inscription
56 Wager
57 " it or lose it"
60 Race with legs
61 Japanese sash
63 Force onward
65 Shattered
66 "Oh no! A mouse!"
67 Lymphatic system parts
68 Totally full
69 Meet with
70 "Johnny B. —"

1 Pinkberry competitor
2 Golf target



Created by Stella Zawistowski

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Brother-in-law's new squeeze is a familiar face!



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

and other consequences gets through to her.

DEAR ABBY: Please help me move forward. My brother-in-law is dating a woman my husband was intimate with once before we were married.

It makes family functions very awkward for me, but most of the family sees it as the past.

It was the past, but it is now in our faces. My husband feels the same way.

Do we just keep the peace and stay away from functions as she seems to be more accepted than I am? We have been married 37 years. Are we being unreasonable? -- CONFUSED IN THE EAST

DEAR CONFUSED: Oh, my. It seems like "who goes around comes around." It's a shame that you can't leave the past -- a one-night stand more than 37 years ago -- in the past and find the humor in this. I suspect it happens more often than you think. Please quit regarding this as a competition between you and your brother-in-law's girlfriend. Your husband chose YOU. End of contest. If there is cause for embarrassment, it should be hers, not yours.

DEAR ABBY: My wife, "Muriel," and I have been together for 10 years and married for seven. She has worked in animal rescue for much of her life. Muriel thinks she has to save them all. No amount of explaining the financial

DEAR STUMPED: I'll try. I will also venture to say that 21 animals living in a house may not be healthy for all concerned. Because your wife is unable to listen to reason, contact animal control services in your city or county and explain what's going on. (I'm surprised one of your neighbors hasn't already tipped them off.) Your wife may have a heart of gold, but those creatures deserve a better standard of care than what your wife can give them.

DEAR ABBY: I delivered mail for 36 years. For 25 of those years, my route was in a retirement community. I'm retired now, and it upsets me when I am not contacted when someone I was friendly with for 25 years passes away. This is happening more and more.

Yes, I was their mail lady, but I was also their friend. I got to know and love all my customers. Their children knew who I was. The ones I was closest to are the ones whose deaths upset me the most because I wasn't notified. I know I'm not a relative, but still it hurts. If they read this, they will know who they are. I'm not angry. I'm just hurt. Do you understand? -- RETIRED MAIL LADY IN ARIZONA

DEAR MAIL LADY: Yes, I understand, and I also empathize with you. However, the "children" you describe may not have notified you about their parents' deaths because, unless they had your contact information, they didn't know how to reach you.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Thursday, January 15, 2026

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES

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THE GOAT AT PLAY

East-West vulnerable, North deals

NORTH		EAST		SOUTH		WEST	
♦ A	J 8 7 4 2	♦ K	Q 10 9	♦ A	9 8 7 6 5	♦ A	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
♦ 7 6 2		♦ K	9 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ K	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ K	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
♦ K		♦ Q	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ Q	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ Q	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
♦ A K Q 9		♦ A	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ A	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ A	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
WEST		♦ 6 5	♦ 5 4 3	♦ 4 3 2	♦ 3 2 1	♦ 2 1 0	♦ 1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
♦ 10 8 7 4 3		♦ 8	♦ 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 7 6 5 4 3
♦ 8 7 6 5 2		♦ 9	♦ 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 8 7 6 5 4 3	♦ 8 7 6 5 4 3

The bidding:
NORTH 1♣ 3♦ 5♣ 6♦
EAST Pass 2♦ 4♦ 5♦ 6♦
SOUTH 1♦ 3♦ 4♦ 5♦ 6♦ 7♦
WEST 1♣ 2♦ 3♦ 4♦ 5♦ 6♦ 7♦ 8♦

Opening lead: Six of ♠

Today's deal is from the Cavendish Pairs, an invitational event with large cash prizes. Many pairs bid to this marginal slam which made easily on a non-spade lead. Say a diamond to the king, heart to the 10, ruff a diamond, heart to the queen, give up a heart and claim 12 tricks. Some East

players doubled the final contract, not because of their trump holding, but because of their spade holding. The double was a Lighter Double, asking for a lead of dummy's first-bid suit. Declarer, with careful play, can still succeed on a spade lead. Win with the ace, lead a diamond to the king, and lead three rounds of clubs, hoping to discard a spade on the third club. East ruffs the third club, South over-ruffs, and ruffs a diamond in dummy. East ruffs the fourth club but declarer discards his low spade. Now South can ruff East's spade king, ruff a diamond in dummy, and take the winning trump finesse for his contract.

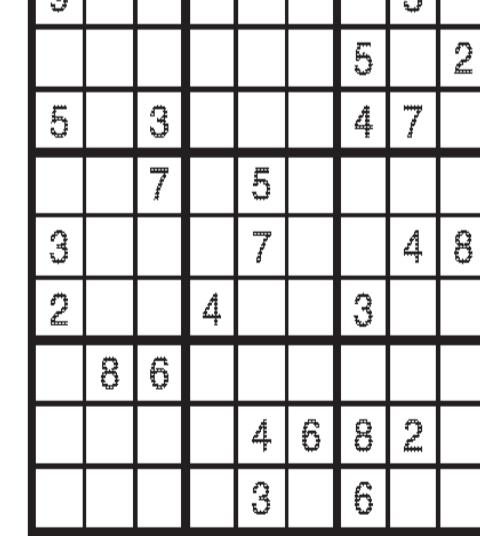
At one table, East was Bob Hamman, perhaps the greatest player of all time. Hamman ruffed the third round of clubs with the king of hearts! This gave declarer an appealing option. South discarded his spade instead of over-ruffing. He could now ruff two diamonds in dummy and hope the jack of hearts fell in one or two rounds. Down one! You might not agree with declarer's play, but that does not take away from Hamman's imaginative defense.

(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this paper.)

SUDOKU

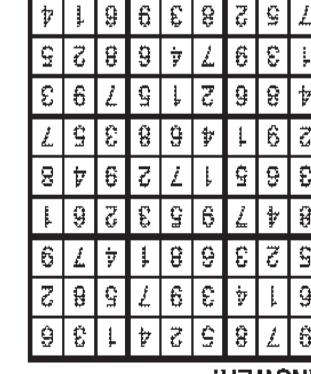
Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!



Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



Falcons start strong weekend with WACO split, sweep up Saturday night at Bleckley

WL girls, Dublin boys take round 2 rivalry games

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

Region 2-High A's basketball standings took a key turn last Friday as the East Laurens boys rounded an early bend, and the Lady Falcons were rerouted from their unbeaten path, in a couple of pivotal home games against Washington County.

The Lady Hawks took control of first place (and relegated East to second) as they rode a confident second half from an earlier deficit to the 60-52 win.

The Falcons rolled, 74-65, to return the favor in knocking WACO off the top of the league's boys landscape. Both teams now stand tied with four once-beaten behind leader Southwest Macon (which remains perfect in region play after blowing out Central for a fourth win Friday).

It was by no means a watershed moment at this still way-too-early juncture in the season, but the split (followed by a sweep of Bleckley County as they quickly continued region action Saturday night) made the Falcons 3-for-4 in the significant stretch that – if nothing else – kept both their squads near the front of a crowded pack of contenders in region races that remain very wide-open.

The East Laurens girls certainly had their chances in the weekend's lone loss – a WACO matchup that reminded a great deal of the highly volatile games the teams played both times they met in last year's regular season, each with one catching fire to overcome the other's double-digit advantage in the second half.

This one was just as streaky in either direction, but had the Lady Falcons with a firm upper hand for the first two and a half quarters.

Their start, in fact, was borderline dominant, with the lead knocking on the door of double digits quite early in the first period.

Jameria Bing hit a 3 to stretch it to eight, 14-6, only midway through the quarter. And East Laurens wasted no time getting the 16-7 spread at the end of one up to 11 early in the second.

The Lady Hawks crept back within five (a score of 24-19) by halftime, and continued to close in over the first few minutes of the third. But the threat was only a false alarm as Bing showered in two more 3-pointers to key a run that rode the lead back to 10, and ultimately 14 (40-26) by the 3-minute mark.

Right on script, WACO – with Jade Kitchens and Aeria Hagans leading the surge – turned the corner with a 12-0 run made up mostly of fast-break opportunities to finish out the quarter. And it was quickly a whole new ballgame, with East Laurens up 40-38, going to the last eight minutes.

The Lady Falcons ended their several-minute drought with a point-blank basket to start the fourth, and WACO answered directly in kind. But the Hawks finally went on top as Hagans stroked a left-wing 3 to pull ahead 43-42, and set the pace from there.

East Laurens stayed close, as Bing splashed another triple opposite and a set of Deanna Lowther free throws tied the score at 49, but was overwhelmingly eaten up by turnovers (numbering 41 against WACO's 33) as things seemed to come unraveled.



BADA-BING: Jameria Bing hit all four of the Lady Falcons' 3-pointers for a share of her 16 points that led Friday night's scoring/**HORACE AUSTIN**

The Golden Hawks went backdoor to immediately regain the lead, 51-49, then forced a turnover to double it. Another possession change, and a Kitchens basket, made it 55-49 to conclude the sequence in which the ball didn't leave East's own half of the court.

The Lady Falcons narrowly avoided a fourth in a row off a deflected pass, but got it downstairs to briefly cut two points out of the deficit. A free throw later got it back to three.

But their remaining chances went unconverted as WACO scored seven straight in the last two minutes.

Double-doubles by Garyanna Mitchell (15 points, 10 rebounds) and Deanna Lowther (13 and 18 boards) went along with Bing's 16 points for the East Laurens scoring lead.

Kitchens had 24 points, eight rebounds, five assists and six steals, and Hagans 19 points, five re's and six steals, to lead the Lady Hawks.

The Falcon boys got off to a slow start, as WACO scored their game's first seven and led by 11 at one point in the initial quarter. But East Laurens got things going, inching back to within two by the end of the first quarter, then tying the game up on a set of free throws by Braylon Makaya, then Jeremiah Rozier.

The G-Hawks led 35-34 at the half, but East Laurens opened the third quarter on an 11-0 run. The Falcons, who didn't give up the first WACO points until just before the four-minute mark, led the period by a count of 25-8.

They were ahead by as much as 20 early in the fourth. And that lead only became questionable as the guests rallied to reduce it to seven – but no fewer – in the last four minutes.

Skyler Snead put up 16 points to lead three East Laurens scorers in the double digits. Zion Dixon had 13 and six rebounds, and Kelvin King added 12. Jeremiah Rozier contributed nine points and five assists.

East Laurens girls 59, Bleckley Co. 57

Mitchell drove the length of the court for a buzzer-beating shot to break a late tie as the Lady Falcons (10-3, 4-1 region) rebounded with a win Saturday night in Cochran.

Bleckley chipped away at their fluctuating lead, which ranged from big early to four points at halftime, then 12 by the end of three, to re-tie the game with about 15 seconds left. This time, they were able to keep their composure and avoid fewer



ATTACKING THE RIM: Most of the 23 East Laurens field goals from 2-point range in Friday's win came right at the basket. Zion Dixon sends it down softly here for one of several strong finishes in the second half that helped him reach 13 points in the final scoring/**HORACE AUSTIN**



BROOKLYN HEIGHTS: Brooklyn Jackson (left) soars to the hoop for one of her multiple fast-break baskets that carried West Laurens through the second half of Saturday's wins at Dublin. The junior, met in a midair celebration by Leah Brown (right) after the final buzzer, scored 19 to conclude her highest-scoring weekend of the season/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



UNQUENCHABLE: Kam Stanley, Dublin's leader with 20 points, goes strong to the source for one in a steady stream of Irish baskets that made up Saturday's torrential start/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

of the mishaps that accumulated in abnormally high numbers Friday night. Head coach Danielle Lowther is hopeful her team's handling of those high-pressure moments (which have seldom been too big for members of this newly-overhauled lineup) will only continue to improve.

"We have some young or inexperienced players in key positions," she said. "They are making their 'growing mistakes' in key moments of the game and that's expected. We had to go back to the drawing board at practice and practice those game situations the last few days and moving forward. We've just got to get better every game and focus on that mental toughness that's needed to get through tough games."

East Laurens boys 43, Bleckley Co. 39

Five blocked shots helped the Falcons (10-3, 4-1 region) survive a low-scoring nailbiter that was also tied up near the end, only with about 90 seconds remaining. They'd score four unanswered points in that stretch to pull away for a fifth-straight win.

Bryson Hazlegrove logged 12 points and nine rebounds for the East Laurens team lead. Rozier scored 10. Dixon added eight points and

five boards.

Baldwin 69, West Laurens girls 55

Brooklyn Jackson started off a big weekend with 20 points, as Maddie Ridgway chipped in a key 17 and Jahailee Snead and London Williams added eight each, to keep the Lady Raiders competitive against a second-place Baldwin squad that they challenged a first time around.

But four for the once-beaten Bravettes put up 12 or more (Suri Clark was their leader with 20 to match Jackson's output) to pace them to a third-straight.

Baldwin 73, West Laurens boys 48

The odd-numbered quarters were, once again, a doozy for the Raiders as Baldwin used a 19-2 edge in the first and 31-18 disparity in the third to blow open a second-straight game before it really got started.

Kingston O'Neal and Brandon Stephens scored a dozen each, and Drew Kinchen 11, to lead West Laurens once its offense got going.

"(We're) a young inexperienced team trying to figure out how to win," said Raider head coach Izell Stephens. "We must be willing to commit to the little things

such as rebounding and taking care of the basketball to allow us to increase our chances of winning."

Baldwin's Karez Demory had 18, Jared Mundie 14 and Zion Grant 13.

Dublin girls 59, Jefferson Co. 13

The Lady Irish locked down the defensive end, holding Jefferson County to two points in the first quarter, and no more than five in any of the remaining three, on their way to a second win of region play.

They were never threatened after racing out to an 18-point lead after eight minutes, then growing an edge of 24 to 39 by the end of three.

Jefferson Co. 48, Dublin boys 45

Down 13 at the half, the Irish spent the duration of quarters 3 and 4 valiantly chiseling away at a gap on the scoreboard that they worked back to three at one point midway through the third. But Jefferson County was too tough to catch.

It got back out of reach, and only back within as Jaydon McRae and Chris Dixon (Dublin's only scorer in double figures, with 12) stacked baskets around a pair of missed Warrior free throws to get within two.

JeffCo left five out of six at the line before hitting two key ones to get its lead back to three after Dixon buried two on the other stripe to make it a one-point game. But the Irish were luckless from the field, and after a misfire on a wide-open layup moments earlier, failed to get a shot up with a chance to tie on the final possession.

Dublin was 0-for-10 from 3. QuanTavis Lovett had 11 rebounds.

West Laurens girls 47, Dublin 39

Jackson, with 19, and Ridgway, with 15, finished

SCOREBOARD

GIRLS HOOPS
Friday
Dublin 59, Jefferson Co. 13

Monday
Trinity 74, CCA 48

Tuesday
East Laurens 84, Jefferson Co. 7
Dublin 64, Toombs Co. 59
Gatewood 53, Trinity 47
West Laurens 71, Westside Augusta 46

BOYS HOOPS
Monday
CCA 82, Trinity 46

Tuesday
EL 62, Jefferson Co. 60
Toombs Co. 56, Dublin 47
Trinity 56, Gatewood 50
Westside 79, WL 74

PREP SCHEDULE

BASKETBALL
Friday
Trinity at Brentwood
Howard at WL
Washington Co. at Dublin
/6 p.m.
Dodge Co. at EL 7 p.m.

Saturday
EL at Treutlen/5 p.m.
Dublin at Johnson Co.
/6 p.m.

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off their strong weekends with a bang as the Lady Raiders (6-8, 4-5 region 4-AAA) grabbed hold of a close game late in the second half.

They had some frustrating stretches without points – one of the biggest coming midway through the third as Dublin (5-7, 2-3 region 2-High A) staged a 9-0 run to go ahead 30-26.

But Jackson took charge on some coast-to-coast plays to spark a strong finish to the third, which West Laurens closed on a 6-0 to finish up two, and several more in a singlehanded stretch of about four consecutive baskets leading up to Ridgway's clincher on a 13-foot jumper with about a minute to go.

Dublin 70, West Laurens boys 58

The Irish improved their long-range shooting only slightly, to the tune of two made 3-point shots, from the night before, but still dominated thanks to ample transition baskets originating with turnovers from a West Laurens lineup that, for most of Saturday's game, couldn't keep a possession together.

The Raiders (3-13, 1-8 region) settled things down after getting boated to the quarter and halfway marks (where they faced 13 and 14-point deficits respectively), working their way back to within seven after a strong start to the third.

But Dublin (3-8, 0-5 region) reheated after the brief lull, and rattled off 16 unanswered points to roll to the final buzzer.

Lovett had 10 rebounds and two blocked shots for another in his long streak of outstanding performances on the defensive end. Kam Stanley's 20 points, Chris Dixon's 11 and Patrick Caldwell's 10 led a collection of Irish scorers with noteworthy nights.

West's count was topped by O'Neal (18), Shannon Adkins (12) and Stephens (11).

Next...

Tuesday's action took all four of the county's teams on the road, East to Jefferson County, Dublin to Toombs County (the lone non-region matchup of the four), Trinity to Gatewood and West Laurens to Westside of Augusta.

GBI**Continued from page 1**

potential for criminal implication of public officials, DA McLendon has submitted this request for investigation to the GBI to preserve a conflict-free, independent investigation by an agency which also has specialized financial and technical investigative divisions suited to the task."

On Monday, at the city

school board's first meeting of the year, four members – new chairman Amanda Smith, newly elected Jeff Davis and longtime members James Lanier and John Bell – all said they would support a criminal investigation, though no vote was taken on the matter.

"If there is anything that can be prosecuted, I will stand behind that to the last breath God gives me on this

earth, that I will see those people who did that put into jailhouse. I don't care who it is," said Lanier.

Local lawmakers requested the special audit after state officials discovered in August that the district owed \$6 million in overdue payments to the State Health Benefit Plan and revealed a projected \$13 million budget deficit. It confirmed the root causes

– over hiring and overpaying employees, wasteful spending and lax oversight – but also identified specific concerns ranging from late tax payments to the IRS, "abnormally" high credit card spending and unwarranted travel and expenditures.

The audit also pointed to instances of family members traveling on out-of-town leadership retreats at the system's expense and

undocumented payments to a local florist.

"I am interested, now that the state audit is done, in having law enforcement review the findings and determine whether any criminal activity occurred," said Smith.

"There is a continuing demand, and rightly so, for accountability," said Davis. "I will say this: Law enforcement is aware of our situa-

tion, and that's all I'm going to say about that."

Lanier and Smith both previously had stated publicly their support for a criminal investigation.

The special audit examined expenditures from 2021 to 2024 and concluded the system used almost \$20 million in federal emergency COVID funds, mostly to meet payroll and to mask its financial troubles.

SCHOOL BOARD**Continued from page 1**

who is in her first term on the board, finished first in a contested vote to unseat chairman Kenny Walters.

Smith is believed to be the first female chair of the board in 125-plus years.

She and newly elected member Jeff Davis promised to bring positive changes to the board. Smith said steps are already being made to improve financial oversight and tighten controls.

"We are not just hoping

for improvement to happen," said Smith. "We are taking action by following state recommendations and implementing the people, practices and controls necessary to ensure lasting improvement.

Davis said regaining the public's trust should be a priority, saying, "Everyone deserves accountability for the situation we're in."

"The most important thing for this board to do is rebuild trust with everybody involved," he said. "Transparency has gotten a lot. It's important to

me that we not just look like we have nothing to hide, but that we actually have nothing to hide. That's what I'm gonna be working for, is radical transparency."

Davis thanked The Courier Herald for its coverage and for "holding this board accountable," and promised to provide requested public documents in a timely manner, which has been a problem between the board and the newspaper for years.

Davis and other board members thanked the teachers and staff continuing to do their jobs well

during difficult times, while acknowledging the impact on students.

"What I want for y'all is no less than the best," Davis said. "Y'all deserve no less than what anyone else has."

Smith, Davis and longtime board members James Lanier and John Bell also said during board comments that they would support a criminal investigation, now that a long-awaited state audit on the district's finances have been released.

Lanier said the board members need access to

more financial information than they had been allowed to see in the past.

"We do have ownership of that, as a board," Lanier said of the financial crisis. "But as a board, I make decisions based on information we get, and then I don't know what that information is because I'm told that I can't look at it."

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and revealed a projected \$13 million budget deficit. It confirmed the root causes – overhiring and overpaying employees, wasteful spending and lax oversight – but also identified specific concerns ranging from late tax payments to the IRS, "abnormally" high credit card spending and unwarranted travel and expenditures.

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TEACHER LAWSUIT**Continued from page 1**

owed more than \$6 million in overdue payments to the State Health Benefit Plan, then found it to be broke and headed for a huge deficit by the end of the fiscal year. It has since had to get advances on state QBE funding to meet payroll in September, October, November and December.

White's claim contends that school officials already knew they were broke when they hired her and others last spring. A financial report submitted as evidence showed the district had a \$1.3 million deficit in March 2025 – about the time teacher contracts were issued – and a general fund deficit of \$1.8 million dating back to July 2024.

DINKHELLER**Continued from page 1**

just remember that."

Gerald Frazier, former LCSO deputy and current senior adult pastor at Dudley Baptist Church, asked for prayer to remember Dinkheller's sacrifice.

"Kyle gave his life for us, our community and for the safety of folks who live here," Frazier said. "We pray for God to remind us often of (Dinkheller's) sacrifice. Remind us often of your love and your support for his family. I pray, God, for each of these men and women in law enforcement that you will bless them and bless their families, and that you will keep them safe each day as they carry out their mission."



Kirk Dinkheller talks with Jeff Harrison, who lost his son in the line of duty/PATTON TOWNS III

Lee Weaver, Dublin Georgia State Patrol Post Commander pointed out the different law enforcement agencies who gathered at the site.

"I'd like to say to the Dinkheller family, thank you for supporting us," Weaver said. "Thank you for allowing the law enforcement community and

the public safety community to support you guys each year as we come here."

Dublin Police Chief Keith Moon said they may all wear different badges but they are one family.

"The worst thing we can ever do is let (Dinkheller's) memory be lost in time," Moon said. "Show up every time and remember the sacrifice that he made for this community."

Kirk told the officers that he is tired of going to law enforcement funerals.

"I don't want anybody else to do that," he said. "It's no fun."

Kirk saw his friend Jeff Harrison, who lost his son Dylan - a Dudley native - in the line of duty in Alamo on Oct. 9, 2021.

"(Jeff) and his whole

family is in the same small boat that I am in," Kirk said. "I can be there for (the Harrison family) like everybody was there for me."

Harrison said they are waiting for the man who is charged with his son's death to go to trial. Harrison knows he and Kirk are a part of a group no one wants to be a part of.

"Kirk knows how my family feels and what we are going through," Harrison said. "We are fortunate that we have that friendship and we can talk about things others cannot understand. We certainly don't want anybody else to have to go through something like this because it is life changing."

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