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Owners Mick Boyle and Dominic Keane in front. Right to left pictured - Mayor Read, Tara Bowrey, Jennifer Rose, Council Members Tom Peterson, Anthony Amos and Billy Bates.

The Auld Shebeen Celebrates 20 Years: "Thanks to the Community"

BY PHILLIP KIM

May 18 marked the 20th anniversary of The Auld Shebeen, the authentic Irish pub in the City of Fairfax.

Mayor Catherine Read, members of the City Council, and Fairfax City Economic Development Officials joined a packed room of customers in congratulating the beloved owners of the restaurant on Saturday afternoon.

Mayor Read presented co-owners Mick Boyle and Dominic Keane with a plaque honoring "20 years of excellence" to an erupting round of cheers and applause.

"Our pub here is really about family, community, and making relationships," Keane said in his acceptance speech. "It's

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THE AULD SHEBEEN...

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The Fairfax Independent, your source for local news, stories, and community updates. Established in our beloved City of Fairfax and operating since July 4, 2024, The Fairfax Independent part of a consortium of local newspapers published by The Independent News Press.

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Letter from the Editor: Growing Together

Dear Readers,



Welcome to the June edition of The Fairfax Independent. We are 10 months old in print circulation. Our birth in the City was on the Fourth of July, 2024, marked by our City paperwork being approved sometime last June. Last month was a fork in the road for our beloved newspaper. And we get to stay on the path we have planned out ahead.

I will be sharing a bit more in the next edition about where we are headed with our

leadership, team of writers, and organizational expansion. But for right now, we are almost ready to celebrate our first birthday on this Fourth of July!

Thank you to all our beloved readers, business advertisers, and financial contributors for your support, love, and encouragement. We get to share one more edition with you.

With much gratitude and love, Tania



WELCOME SAM DOUGLAS
WRITER

Sam Douglas is a college student at George Mason University majoring in communication with a concentration in journalism. In Spring 2025 he was the assistant news editor for Mason's student-run newspaper, the Fourth Estate, where he has written about everything from board meetings to protests. Sam is passionate about writing and journalism, and believes that local news is the backbone of any community. Sam joined The Fairfax Independent this May.



WELCOME PHILLIP KIM
WRITER

Phillip graduated from George Mason University with a degree in Media Production and Criticism. A proud Korean American and longtime Virginia resident, he hopes to use the power of journalism to celebrate and bring the local community together. Phillip joined The Fairfax Independent this May. We cannot wait to implement Phillip's idea for our own podcast and YouTube channel!

Kasten Awarded STAR Scholarship



McLean High School senior Grace Kasten received the P.E.O. Sisterhood STAR Scholarship, nominated by Chapter CD of Littleton, NC, and recommended by Jet and Paula Taylor of Gasburg, VA. She also earned a \$500 Boddu/Nekkanti Dance Scholarship. The STAR Scholarship, established in 2009, recognizes outstanding high school senior women for excellence in leadership, academics, extracurriculars, community service, and future potential, requiring enrollment in a U.S. or Canadian accredited college or university.

Grace captains McLean High's Varsity Dance Team, competes with Adrenaline Dance Studio, co-founded her school's Girls in STEM club, serves on the McLeadership

team, mentors younger students, and volunteers at Kaiser Permanente. The daughter of Marshall and Julie Kasten of Falls Church, VA, she will graduate on June 3 and plans to study nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to become a Nurse Practitioner.

Chapter CD, serving Littleton since 2001, is part of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, founded in 1869. This major women's organization has nearly 5,500 chapters and over half a million members, providing over \$432 million in educational support to more than 125,000 women and owning Cottey College. P.E.O. empowers women through education. More information is available at www.peointernational.org.

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Fairfax Co., City to Match Meals Tax In 2026

BY PHILLIP KIM

Fairfax County will join Fairfax City in levying a 4% meals tax starting on January 1, 2026. This revenue is intended to diversify the county’s income streams and reduce reliance on real estate taxes.

On May 6, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted 9-1 in favor of the meals tax. The new tax applies to restaurants, food trucks, cafes, and other businesses that sell prepared food and drinks in Fairfax County, excluding areas within the twins of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna, which have their own meals taxes.

Two days later, Fairfax City Council voted down the proposal to raise its existing 4% meals tax from 4% to 6%, the maximum rate allowed by the state.

“We live in unpredictable economic times and we didn’t want to disenfran-

chise small businesses, especially restaurants,” Council Member Anthony Amos said. “We also wanted to see how the city would do now that the county has implemented meals tax and we have the same rate for the first time in over 20 years.”

Before, Fairfax County restaurants only charged a 6% statewide sales tax while ones in the city charged 10%, including the 4% meals tax. Now, establishments in the two localities will both charge 10%.

“It evens the playing field for my business,” Bill Hamrock, owner of Hamrock’s Restaurant and Kelly’s Oyster House in Fairfax City, said. “For the past 20-plus years, Fairfax City has been a more expensive place to eat because of the meals tax. Now, with Fairfax County adding the meals tax, now we’re even.”

The definition of prepared food extends from dine-in orders to carry-out, catering, and even prepared foods at

grocery stores and theaters. Groceries, unprepared food, vending machine items, and drinks sold alone are exempt.

Hamrock let out a sigh of relief upon hearing the news of the City Council’s decision.

“I am extremely pleased that they did not add two percent to meals tax,” he said. “I believe they listened to everything that the business owners had to say. I 100% believe that they listened and I’m very pleased.”

When the proposal was first announced, Hamrock penned an op-ed on The Fairfax Independent protesting the idea.

“This proposal will significantly hurt restaurants in Fairfax City,” he said then. “This is how Fairfax City restaurants will be viewed. More expensive. It is an unfair advantage to our neighboring communities.”

The meals tax takes money out of business owners’ pockets. They can raise prices of menu items to make up for this loss, but only so much until customers stop coming at all.

“Restaurant industry is a complete different industry since COVID five years ago,” Hamrock said. “Labor went up, probably, 30% in the last five years. Every single item that come in the restaurant probably increased close to 25%. We can’t add everything back to the customer, so restaurants have to eat some of those costs.”

While the effect of the county’s new tax remains to be seen, Hamrock urged that the city would not revisit raising the meals tax again.

“It’s not fair to restaurants,” he said. “Don’t come to restaurants looking to raise money for governments. Restaurants already have expenses and the expenses only increase.”

THE AULD SHEBEEN... From Page 1

been our absolute pleasure. I love our long-term relationships.”

“Thanks to everybody in the community, Mayor, Council, and everybody for showing up, and all our staff, front and back of the house,” Boyle added.

Boyle, Keane, and Brian Dolphin joined hands to start The Auld Shebeen shortly after settling in Virginia. They dedicated their heart and soul into the restaurant to make sure it would succeed.

“We were putting in 60 to 70 hours a week,” Keane said. “It was challenging in the first few years, but it was good.”

Even today, the owners come to work almost every day to ensure the quality of the service is top-notch. Employees and regular customers have come to know the owners as dear friends.

“Customers could be coming in regularly for 10 years and move out of the area, but they still message you and say,



Auld Shebeen front

‘hey,’” Boyle boasted. “I think there is only one day of the week where there isn’t one of us here. People recognize that.”

“We’ve met a lot of lifelong friends and customers and had some great staff over the years,” Keane said. “It’s just been a blessing and a pleasure for us.”

Through all hardship, owners knew that residents were bound to fall in love with their business.

“That’s what the Irish pub is, a place where all are welcome,” he said. “We want everybody to come in, enjoy themselves, feel relaxed, and feel welcomed. Everybody can come for a little while, forget



Brian Gaffney

about the stress of the world out there, sit down and enjoy a pint and a meal, and make some new friends.”

The Auld Shebeen is not just a restaurant. It is a continuation of Irish culture and heritage. Every weekend, customers dining in can enjoy nonstop performances of Irish music.

“Brian Gaffney has played music for us for 20 years, keeping the Irish culture going every Friday and Saturday night, and it’s just so important,” Keane said. “He probably plays 320 days a year.”

The owners were young fathers when the establishment took off. Now, The Auld She-

been is an integral part of their families’ lives.

“Our kids pretty much grew up here,” Boyle said. “It was difficult but, like anything, you look back on it with great memories.”

Participants encouraged the owners to keep striving for excellence and preserving the Irish heritage.

“You’re more than just a business, you are a place where people have made memories,” Mayor Read stated in her speech. “The fact you have live music - the fact you have embraced the Irish culture and brought it to our city - is really important.”

“We are grateful and just looking forward to the next 20 years. Congratulations,” said Jennifer Rose, Executive Director of the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce.

Other attendees included City Council Members Anthony Amos, Billy Bates, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Tom Peterson, and Stacy Hall; Fairfax City Economic Development Authority Commissioner Kathleen Paley, Fairfax City Office of Economic Development Director Chris Bruno.

The Stark Reality of Federal Government Layoffs and Their Impact on Northern Virginia

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Any caring resident of Northern Virginia has likely encountered someone affected by a federal government layoff by now. They are our friends and neighbors represented in numbers.

Sweeping federal workforce reductions are expected to significantly impact Virginia's economy in 2025, with Northern Virginia facing the most severe consequences, according to recent data from the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service released in April. This downturn represents a fundamental economic shift for the Commonwealth, a state heavily reliant on federal spending. Northern Virginia, in particular, anticipates substantial layoffs,

contract cancellations, and subsequent economic repercussions, threatening both employment and regional stability.

The Weldon Cooper Center's second economic forecast for the Commonwealth is set to lose approximately 32,000 jobs in 2025, a 0.8% decline from the previous year, marking a contraction that contrasts sharply with national job growth during the same time. This loss is driven primarily by federal government cuts – both direct workforce reductions and declines in federal contracting – highlighting the heavy reliance the state places on federal employment. Northern Virginia stands at the epicenter, home to the majority of those 321,516 civilian federal workers residing in the state, many concentrated in industries critical to national security and government services.

Federal government layoffs are creating instability for contractors, worsening employment problems in Northern Virginia's administrative, professional, technical, and manufacturing sectors, which heavily depend on federal spending, according to Jeff Claybaugh (WTOP, 2025).

Beyond the raw number of 32,000 federal job losses, Virginia faces significant consequences. The Weldon Cooper Center predicts rising unemployment, reaching 3.9% in 2025 and potentially 4.7% in 2026—the highest since the pandemic. This increase threatens the state's recent history of stable job growth and low unemployment.

Northern Virginia's economy is heavily reliant on federal employment, making it vulnerable to job cuts that can significantly harm the region's economic health. The numerous residents working for federal entities and their contractors mean that job losses will have widespread negative consequences for retail, hospitality, and local services. According to the Weldon Cooper Center, government contracting supports over 441,000 jobs in Virginia, which is approximately 16.1% of the state's total employment.

These reverberations also affect local government revenues, with an anticipated

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THE STARK REALITY...

Trump Signs 'Take It Down Act' to Crack Down on AI Deepfakes

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

The Take It Down Act was driven by the experiences of numerous victims affected by non-consensual AI-generated explicit content or commonly known as revenge porn.

Their stories all across national media highlight the profound personal and societal impacts of deepfake technology:

At 14, Elliston Berry discovered that a classmate had used AI to create fake pornographic images of her, which were then shared on Snapchat. These images circulated for nine months, causing significant emotional distress. Berry later testified before Congress, urging the passage of the Take It Down Act to protect others from similar harm.



First lady Melania Trump signs the TAKE IT DOWN Act alongside President Trump, lawmakers and victims of AI deepfakes and revenge porn, during a signing ceremony in the Rose Garden. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

Francesca Mani, a high school student in New Jersey, was targeted by deepfake images created by peers. Her case prompted the state to enact laws imposing civil and criminal penalties for the creation and dissemination of deceptive media, including deepfakes.

Model Regina Knoll and actress Uldouz Wallace, both based in Los Angeles, found their social media photos manipulated into explicit deepfake content. The widespread distribution of these images led to significant personal and professional repercussions, includ-

ing loss of work and emotional trauma.

Rana Ayyub, an Indian investigative journalist, known for her critical reporting, was subjected to a deepfake pornographic video in 2018, which was circulated widely online.

The experience led to severe psychological distress and highlighted the use of deepfakes as tools for silencing dissenting voices.

On May 19, 2025, President Donald Trump signed the bipartisan Take It Down Act, a major step against AI-generated deepfake pornography and non-consensual explicit imagery. Co-sponsored by Senators Ted Cruz and Amy Klobuchar, the law makes it a federal crime to create or distribute sexually explicit deepfakes without consent, carrying penalties of up to three years in prison.

Online platforms must remove such content within 48 hours of a valid complaint, with enforcement led by the FTC. First Lady Melania Trump supported the legislation as part of her "Be Best" campaign.

While widely praised for protecting victims, the law has drawn criticism from civil liberties groups over potential free speech and privacy concerns. Still, it marks the strongest federal action yet on the misuse of AI.

Small Business Month

BY CAROLINE CHU

Recently, Fairfax City celebrated its small businesses with Small Business Month, which ran from April 28 to May 31. This event encouraged people to support local shops by offering special deals, supporting charities, and taking part in a big retail fair at the end of the month. Many small businesses were facing financial challenges due to recent federal spending cuts and tariffs. In order to boost the economy, the Fairfax City Economic Development office created this event to encourage more customers to purchase from local stores and services. It offered Northern Virginians the valuable opportunity to explore what Fairfax had to offer and support local entrepreneurs.

Throughout May, many businesses offered discounts and promotions to increase foot traffic. Fitness centers



like Fairfax Pilates, OSA Martial Arts, Kaizen MMA, and eXurb Fitness provided deals such as free trial classes, discounted packages, and waived registration fees. Beauty businesses, including Smiley Skin Beauty and DIY Scent Studio, had special offers like reduced prices on waxing and bonus gift cards. Other stores, like Fran's Cake and Candy Supplies, Paradise Games and Gifts, Mode on Main by Mara, and Ace Hardware, also gave discounts and prizes.

As benefits for participating, small businesses received extra promotional

help in the form of social media exposure and listings on the event's website. They also had chances to be featured by social media influencers and reposted by the Small Business Month account (@FairfaxCitySmallBusinessMonth).

This year's Small Business Month also focused on helping local charities. Each week, donations were collected for a different nonprofit. The first two weeks supported the Chris Atwood Foundation, which helped people affected by substance abuse, and Britepaths, which provided food and financial help to families in need. From May 11th to 17th, the focus was on the Humane Society of Fairfax City, which collected cat food and cat beds for animals. The final week, May 18th to 24th, supported The Lamb Center, a shelter for the homeless, which requested donations of new men's undershirts and boxer briefs. Donation bins were also

set out for participating businesses, such as Bond's Escape Room or Cinema Arts Theatre, in order to maximize the convenience of shoppers.

The event will end with a Retail Fair on May 31 in Old Town Square, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shoppers could patronize many local businesses, including Kaizen MMA, Mode on Main by Mara, Lucy Loves, and Romp n' Roll. The fair will also feature fun activities like fashion shows and Pilates classes, making it a lively day for the whole community.

New 1-800-STRIPER® Franchise Arrives in Fairfax, VA

PRESS RELEASE
NEW BUSINESS

Fairfax, Virginia welcomes a new 1-800-STRIPER® franchise, launched on April 7th, offering business and property owners a cost-effective solution for restoring commercial and industrial parking lots, as well as other paved surfaces.

Founded over 25 years ago, 1-800-STRIPER® believes that maintaining a positive impression doesn't require expensive parking lot repairs. Often, fresh pavement markings are sufficient.

The company specializes in customized parking lot and paved area layouts, ensuring ADA compliance, safety, and efficient traffic flow. Their services also include

layout and line painting for sports courts, interior markings for parking garages and factories, and temporary markings for special events and construction sites.

Founded in 1999 by Luke Mear, 1-800-STRIPER® addresses the need for affordable pavement marking, offering a budget-friendly alternative to costly repairs. With over a million lines painted, the company is known for prompt service and quality. Mike Dhunjishah, owner of 1-800-STRIPER® of Fairfax, a military retiree, is dedicated to quality, community connection, and veteran employment in Northern Virginia, emphasizing the safety and aesthetic benefits of clear markings. Fairfax businesses can call 703-570-6141 or visit <https://1800striper.com/striper-of-fairfax> for a free estimate.

Mountain Mike's Pizza



Mountain Mike's Pizza to Debut in Virginia with Three-Unit Development Deal "Pizza the Way it Oughta Be!®" is coming to Virginia! Mountain Mike's Pizza, a leading family-style pizza chain for over 45 years, is making its mark in the state with three upcoming units slated for Fairfax and Loudoun Counties.

The national brand, known for its legendary crispy, curly pepperonis, massive 20-inch Mountain-sized pizzas and dough made fresh daily, is partnering with Aldie resident and multi-brand operator, Niraj Hemrajani, to bring the brand's mouthwatering pizzas and family-friendly atmosphere to Virginia.

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Overview of Fairfax City FY 2026 Budget

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

On May 6, 2025, the Fairfax City Council approved the FY 2026 budget and the FY 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The total budget for all city funds amounts to \$290.2M, a 10.0% increase from FY 2025. The General Fund budget for FY 2026 is \$198.6M, representing a 9.9% increase and maintaining the city's 17.7% unassigned general fund balance, which supports its AAA bond rating.

Key aspects of the approved budget include full funding of the city school tuition contract at \$71.4M, a \$12.6M or 21.4% increase from the previous year. The real estate tax rate was set at \$1.0550, a \$.0250 increase leading to an average household increase of \$959, factoring in property value appreciation. Additionally, stormwater and wastewater rates will each increase by 6.0% to support utility infrastructure. The meals tax remains at 4.0%.

City officials stated that the budget process involved significant effort

to understand community impacts, especially considering economic uncertainties, federal workforce reductions, and rising school tuition costs. Mayor Catherine Read highlighted the unanimous approval and the council's commitment to navigating economic challenges. City Manager Bryan Foster emphasized the budget's investment in the community's future while acknowledging upcoming fiscal challenges and a commitment to maintaining financial balance and service quality.

Throughout March and April, the mayor and city council held work sessions and public hearings, exploring various scenarios to minimize the impact on residents and businesses before reaching agreement on tax rates. The city also hosted a budget open house on April 2, attended by over 125 people who learned about funded services, programs, and taxes.

Fiscal year 2026 begins July 1, 2025, and continues through June 30, 2026. The adopted FY 2026 budget will be posted by July 1 on the following City website at [fairfaxva.gov/budget](https://www.fairfaxva.gov/budget).

INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE

July 4th, 2025
Downtown Fairfax
10am - Noon
Rain or Shine



The City of Fairfax's Independence Day Parade and Fireworks began in 1967. Organized by the Delta Alpha Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi Sorority, the parade has become the largest in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The parade has all the requisite ingredients for the Fourth of July: marching bands, floats, Shriners' little cars and big motorcycles, old fire engines, clowns, and the scorching sun. The parade has featured flyovers by the Flying Circus Aerodrome – and, in 1996, a hot air balloon race. Historically, the parade has been followed by an Old-Fashioned Fireman's Day, in which area fire companies compete in fire-fighter-related activities; however, it has now turned into the "Future Fire Fighter's Day", which provides children's activities on fire safety and education.

Come out and celebrate! For more information on this year's Fourth of July Parade, please visit the following City website at <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/GOVERNMENT/PARKS-RECREATION/SPECIAL-EVENTS/INDEPENDENCE-DAY-CELEBRATION/PARADE>



Hometown Celebration

A Hometown Celebration
Sunday, June 29
5PM - 8PM
Veterans Amphitheater • 10455 Armstrong St., Fairfax

Join us and start celebrating early at A Hometown Celebration in the Veterans Amphitheater (adjacent to City Hall). The event will feature games for all ages, food trucks from Fairfax City businesses – and a concert by the award-winning City of Fairfax Band.

We hope you will join us at this beloved event!

INFORMATION;
<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/independence-day-celebration/hometown-celebration>

City of Fairfax Schools Superintendent Jeff Platenberg Announces Retirement After 40 Years of Public Service

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

After a remarkable 40-year career in public education, City of Fairfax Schools Superintendent Jeff Platenberg has announced his retirement, effective July 31, 2025. Platenberg made the announcement during the School Board meeting on May 5, sharing his deep reflections on a career filled with significant achievements and community impact.

"While there is always more work to be done, I am profoundly proud of what we have achieved together," Platenberg stated in his speech, emphasizing the collaborative spirit that has characterized his tenure. He described his service to the City of Fairfax as a true honor, expressing gratitude for the students, staff, and families that have been integral to his journey.

Mr. Platenberg joined the City of Fairfax Schools after honing his skills in educational leadership and management across multiple school districts, including Fairfax County Public Schools, where he served as Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Transportation.



Jeff Platenberg - Fairfax City Website

A highly regarded leader in educational facility planning, Platenberg holds a certification in educational facility planning, is a licensed general contractor, and has been honored with numerous accolades throughout his career. These include prestigious recognitions such as the Association of School Business Officials International Eagle Award and the Education Week "Leader to Learn From." His commitment to excellence in education earned him the Bammy Award for

"What is Right in Education."

Under his guidance, the City of Fairfax Schools expanded both academic and support services significantly. Some of the highlights of Platenberg's accomplishments include:

- ✓ Cooperative Advancements**: Laying the groundwork for an Electrical Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at Fairfax High School.
- ✓ Student Support**: Implementing behavioral and transitional support roles across all grade levels to better serve students' diverse needs.
- ✓ Partnership Growth**: Deepening partnerships with George Mason University, which enhanced student mentorship programs, tutoring services, and early admission opportunities.
- ✓ Facilities Improvement**: Leading successful bond referendums to modernize elementary school facilities while completing various capital projects focusing on safety upgrades,

including ADA enhancements and athletic facility renovations.

Platenberg has also prioritized school security, introducing new staff, surveillance technology, and entryway improvements to ensure a safe learning environment.

"Relationships are the foundation of great schools," he stated. "I'm most proud of the collaborative culture we built with our principals, staff, city partners, and community. We are a small division that accomplishes extraordinary things." This philosophy has been central to creating an environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

As Superintendent Platenberg prepares to retire, the School Board has accepted his announcement and is set to begin the process of identifying his successor in the coming weeks. His retirement not only marks the end of a significant chapter for the City of Fairfax Schools but also leaves a legacy of excellence, collaboration, and student-centered focus that will influence the district for years to come.

Search for Fairfax City Manager Still Ongoing

BY SAM DOUGLAS

Five months after the removal of Laszlo Palko from the City Manager position, Fairfax is still searching for a permanent candidate to hold the position.

A spokesperson from the City Manager's Office said there has been no updates on the search for a permanent City Manager.

Palko, after being in the position for almost eight months, was fired on December 10 without cause by the Fairfax City Council in a 4-2 vote. The reasons for his dismissal are currently unknown.

Frustration has been expressed at Palko's dismissal, including by Kate Doyle-Feingold, who was on the Fairfax City Council when Palko was let go.

"I know many residents are upset because of the lack of cause and because Mr. Palko is already well-respected and appreciated in our city – I am also upset about the complete absence of cause and harmful effects to our city. This short-sighted action hurts our city and residents," Feingold wrote in an op-ed published by The Fairfax Independent in December.

After Palko's dismissal, Deputy City Manager Valmarie Turner served as Interim City Manager for a month before Bryan Foster was named the acting City Manager in January.

Foster had previously been the Deputy City Manager in Manassas before being scooped out of retirement by Fairfax. Since taking office in January, Foster has played a key role in ironing out the budget for FY26, which was approved on May 6 and will take effect on July 1.

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Why Now May Be the Smartest Time to Move in the DMV Real Estate Market

BY ZINTA RODGERS-RICKERT
RED TRUCK REALTY GROUP

While economic activity has remained relatively stable across the country, several Federal Reserve districts are beginning to show signs of a slowdown. Uncertainty surrounding future trade policies and tariffs is contributing to a more cautious business climate. Car sales have ticked upward, but tourism has slowed, and many companies are holding off on hiring decisions due to ongoing tariff concerns.

So, what does this mean for the late spring and summer real estate market?

Despite the economic mixed signals, the real estate market in the DMV region is showing resilience. Whether you're looking to buy, sell, or simply explore your options, this could be an ideal time to make a move. More listings are hitting the market, and many buyers are motivated to settle in before summer begins. Making strategic moves now could lead to a smooth closing and the chance to enjoy your new home just in time for the warmer months.

Interest rates are another key factor. While they continue to fluctuate, mortgage rates are

currently in the high 6% range – still lower than where they started earlier this year and below the levels seen at this time last year. That said, volatility has left many buyers and sellers unsure of what's next. The market feels like it's holding its breath, but waiting too long could mean missing the right opportunity.

Here's the truth: trying to "time the market" is rarely effective. Home prices in the DMV remain steady, and in some areas, they're still rising – thanks to tight inventory and solid demand. Having a well-thought-out plan and being ready to act when the right home becomes available is a smarter approach than sitting on the sidelines.

For sellers, well-prepared homes are still drawing strong attention. When clients follow professional guidance – from making essential updates to using high-quality photography and strategic marketing – results are strong. In today's market, success still comes down to three fundamentals: presentation, pricing, and positioning.

Remember, opportunity often hides in uncertain times. By staying informed and acting with intention, you can navigate the market confidently and come out ahead.



National Homeownership Month in June shines a spotlight on supporting the American Dream of homeownership. It's also a time to recognize the organizations that help individuals and families to achieve their goals.



REAL ID in Effect

BY CAROLINE CHU

Effective May 7 2025, Virginians and other residents in the Washington, D.C. region must possess a REAL ID-compliant driver's license or another federally approved form of identification in order to board domestic flights or enter secure federal facilities and military bases. This requirement, part of a Congressional Act to improve national security, will impact all travelers in the United States, including those using Dulles International Airport (IAD) or Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).

A REAL ID is an upgraded version of a driver's license or ID card, recognizable by a star in the upper right hand corner. In Virginia, obtaining a REAL ID is optional. However, residents of Northern Virginia and the surrounding region are encouraged to plan ahead if they do not possess a REAL ID, especially those who frequently fly through IAD or DCA. While REAL ID is not mandatory for Virginia residents, those without it must present other federally accepted forms of ID, such as a U.S. passport or Department of Defense ID, when flying domestically or entering federal facilities or military bases that enforce the REAL ID requirement.

Standard driver's licenses and ID cards in Virginia remain valid for most purposes, such as driving, voting, verifying identity at banks and retail stores, or receiving federal benefits. But beginning May 7 2025, these standard IDs will no longer be sufficient for

the certain purposes mentioned above, and will display the phrase "Federal Limits Apply" the next time they are renewed.

The process of obtaining a REAL ID in Virginia includes two key steps. First, residents must complete an application. This can be done online through the Virginia DMV website or by filling out a paper form at a customer service center. Second, applicants must bring specific documentation to their appointment. Applicants must present one proof of identity (such as a valid passport or birth certificate), one proof of legal presence, two proofs of Virginia residency, and documentation of their Social Security number if one has been issued. If the applicant's current name differs from the one on these documents, they must also bring certified proof of any legal name changes, such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree, or court records. All documents must be originals; photocopies and temporary documents are not accepted, though printouts of approved online residency documents are allowed.

There is an additional \$10 fee to upgrade to a REAL ID, which is added to the cost of the license or ID card being applied for. For example, renewing a driver's license typically costs \$32, while a license replacement only costs \$20.

More information, including a document checklist, FAQ page, and a printable brochure, can be found through the Virginia DMV's official website: dmv.virginia.gov/licenses-ids/real-id.

Media Bias

ESSAY BY HANNAH LEE

News outlets constantly release jaw-dropping headlines, while accounts of events vary by news channel. In the political scene, name-calling and libel seem endless, particularly with the most recent presidential election. Yet, with these same companies being the only means of receiving direct, real-time reporting, how can viewers know what is reliable?

Daily news has been crucial for the day-to-day lives of humans for centuries. How else would the world know about the birth of a new pygmy hippopotamus in Thailand? Or about rapid wildfires in California? Live reporting has unarguably become the linkage between nearly every country and demographic, gathering the world together into a tight-knit web. Despite the global benefits of news reporting, however, the grand-scale channels and companies financially supporting such reports may have their own agendas. This differing sense of directionality contributes to the pervasive issue of media bias, defined by Stony Brook University as "...a tendency to the perceived or real partiality of journalists and news producers within the mass media". Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) specifically highlight how various methods of tilted writing, including selective omission, word choice, and credibility ascribed to the primary source, convey differing impressions of the same events.

What is the relationship between media bias and news outlets?

This issue is particularly alarming when considering news reporting in politics. Following the occurrence of different events, news outlets often publish articles in which they gauge the factuality, effects, and implications of certain issues. Within the context of political coverage, articles provide readers with a window to gauge the integrity and weight of candidates' statements and actions. Media sources that publish political coverage often warp the information that is relayed to the public, driving intentional polarization in different readerships. Levendusky (2013) found that politically biased media sources intentionally release information molded through predispositions in order to further support certain partisan agendas--most often left- or right-leaning ones. He reported that such sources specifically draw on those who are already considered "politically extreme" rather than attempting to appeal to centrists and

moderate-minded individuals, resulting in heightened social divisions. Since politically extreme readers are loyal to news sources adhering to their political beliefs, they place heavier trust in such media which, in turn, continues to publish information conforming to this viewpoint--a premeditated effect further supported by the concept of a Bayesian consumer inferring that the quality of a source is higher when conforming to prior expectations (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006). While this cycle highlights the relationship between politically extreme readers and media sources, a majority of citizens, whom do not fall into this category, have grown to recognize such bias, with increasingly driven polarization and distrust in the news media triggering concerns regarding the media's ability to provide society with grounded information (Kohut, 2004). This growing fear is echoed by Ralph Schroeder in Media Systems, Digital Media and Politics, who underscored Americans' fear of even greater polarization after witnessing how the gravitation towards extremes has continued to stubbornly persist for years (Schroeder, 2018). Beyond a political scope, however, media bias seeps into a national and more pressing issue. Untruthful and warped reporting serve as a threat to free debate, transparency, and the Western order as citizens of entire nations are fed with information that has the powered platform to "influence opinions of masses" (Aggarwal, 2020). The social repercussions triggered by bias exposure are also starkly adverse, including a plethora of issues such as "group polarization, intolerance of dissent, and political segregation" (Spinde et al., 2022).

In context of the election

On September 10, 2024, Harris and Trump engaged in a nationally televised debate, delving into their vastly different stances on policies and issues. The candidates' dialogue ranged from matters such as reproductive rights to immigration statuses at the United States and Mexico border. In the aftermath, articles established the "fact-checking" of statements provided by both leaders, which according to Matthew Markowitz and colleagues, is a "central need and ethos" for major news outlets amidst an era of "misinformation and propaganda" (2023). Furthermore, the creation of fact-checking was deemed as essential for politicians by citizens (Markowitz et al., 2023). Despite the release of such articles, the Pew Research Center (2024) reported that 73%

of U.S. adults reported seeing inaccurate news regarding the election somewhat often, while 52% found it difficult to discern truthful information.

The issues, however, were not only from one side. While the phrase "fact-checking" painted articles in a seemingly objective light, many indicated hints of bias when examined using bias detection guidelines from the University of Virginia. Certain indicators included only spotlighting one perspective and lacking assessment of opposition.

When examining articles of different partisan leanings--with their classifications being organized by AllSides--articles from both left, moderate, and right news outlets all outwardly displayed bias in varying manners. For instance, some sources utilized strong language when describing certain claims made by candidates; adjectives such as dehumanizing, unsubstantiated, and debunked were used unsparingly. Meanwhile, other sources displayed bias in more subtle manners. Some excessively fact-checked one candidate over the other, rather than providing even numbers of fact-checks on both candidates. While this may have resulted from the overall difference in the prevalence of misleading or untruthful statements made by each candidate, the uneven number of fact-checks could contribute to readers' perceptions as viewing one candidate more negatively than the other. Lastly, the titles of different articles were found to vastly differ. While some merely stated the issue at-hand--a fact-check of claims from the Trump-Harris debate--others made use of controversial claims made by candidates. While this method was likely used in a provocative manner to draw in viewers and readers, it could establish a sense of bias against or for certain candidates prior to the audience's actual reading of the paper.

Regardless of the specific scenario, articles from varying political leanings hinted at signs of bias, whether it was against or for certain candidates. Even articles with headlines including the phrase "fact-checking" should not be blindly trusted. This checks out with the noted behavior of news outlets--they will often appeal to audiences with already-extreme views and further support such perspectives. However, this is particularly risky in the context of today. While the presidential debate was months ago, news ar-

ticles regarding recent events cover critical information that Americans must be up-to-date with for the sake of safety and awareness. However, readers should consume such information with knowledge of the unavoidable media bias that lies in all news reporting. Readers should be familiarized with the common tell-tale signs of bias; the guidelines by the University of Virginia and the University of Michigan are helpful starting points. Using sources such as AllSides and Ad Fontes to know which outlets lean which partisan direction also enable a better understanding of the starting point that companies are reporting from. Finally, reading a variety of sources fosters a better understanding of the various angles from which companies and other Americans are interpreting an event, and that final interpretation is dependent on you--the reader.

References cited in this essay will be added to the online publication of this essay on The Fairfax Independent website at <https://fairfaxindependentnews.press/media-bias>

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Congressman Gerry Connolly Passed Away At 75: End of An Era. He Will Be Missed By Many.

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Remembering Connolly

Connolly's family released a statement honoring his life and service:

"It is with immense sadness that we share that our devoted and loving father, husband, brother, friend and public servant, Congressman Gerald E. Connolly, passed away peacefully at his home this morning surrounded by family," a statement from his family read. "Gerry lived his life to give back to others and make our community better. He looked out for the disadvantaged and voiceless. He always stood up for what is right and just."

U.S. Representative and Northern Virginia's beloved, Gerald "Gerry" Connolly, a stalwart of Northern Virginia politics and a dedicated public servant, passed away on May 21, 2025, at the age of 75. He died peacefully at his home in Fairfax, surrounded by family, after a battle with esophageal cancer.

A Legacy of Public Service

Gerry Connolly's political career began in 1995 with his election to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, where he served as chairman from 2003 to 2009. During his chairmanship, he was instrumental in the transformation of Tysons Corner into a major



Connolly and his daughter Caitlin during 2015 Fairfax City July 4 parade / Wiki (Jarek Tuszyński)

business center and in obtaining funding for the Silver Line Metrorail extension to Dulles Airport. In 2008, Connolly was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives for Virginia's 11th Congressional District. As a Congressman, he became a strong advocate for federal employees, supporting key legislation such as the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act and the 2014 Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA), which aimed to modernize federal IT

systems. His career in public service extended over three decades.

Leadership and Advocacy

Gerry Connolly, who served on the House Oversight and Foreign Affairs Committees, was recognized for his focus on government accountability and innovation. He became the ranking member of the House Oversight Committee in 2024 and held this role until April 2025, when he stepped down due to a recurrence of his illness. Beyond his domestic work, Connolly was also involved in foreign policy, frequently speaking out against authoritarian regimes and supporting human rights.

Final Days

Born on March 30, 1950, in Boston, Massachusetts, Gerry Connolly earned degrees from Maryknoll College and Harvard University. In April 2025, citing health concerns, Connolly announced his decision not to seek re-election. Connolly is survived by his wife, Cathy Smith, and their daughter, Caitlin.

His death is the third of a House Democrat in office this year, highlighting his significant impact on colleagues and constituents. Funeral arrangements and details about a special election to fill his congressional seat have yet to be announced.

The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: A Hidden Crisis That Demands Our Attention

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Maya was a bright 15-year-old girl living in a bustling city. She loved painting and had dreams of becoming an artist. But behind her vibrant artwork was a world of pain. Maya had been enduring sexual abuse at home, a secret she kept hidden, fearing disbelief and blame.

The trauma began to manifest in her behavior. She started skipping school, not because she didn't care, but because the environment reminded her of her abuser, who was a family member. When she did attend, her teachers noticed she was withdrawn and often fell asleep in class.

One day, after a particularly harsh confrontation at home, Maya ran away. She was found by the police a few days later and, instead of being offered support, she was charged with truancy and

sent to a juvenile detention center.

Inside the facility, Maya's trauma was compounded. The staff lacked training in trauma-informed care, and Maya was subjected to strict discipline without understanding the root of her behavior. She felt isolated, misunderstood, and her mental health deteriorated.

Maya's story isn't unique. According to the report, many girls who experience sexual abuse are funneled into the juvenile justice system due to behaviors stemming from their trauma, such as running away or truancy. Instead of receiving the care they need, they're criminalized and further traumatized.

In communities across the United States, there is a silent and troubling crisis unfolding — one that too often goes unnoticed and unaddressed. This crisis is

the sexual abuse to prison pipeline that ensnares countless girls, particularly girls of color, forcing a heartbreaking trajectory from victimization to incarceration.

The report, *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story*, co-authored by the Human Rights Project for Girls, the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, and the Ms. Foundation for Women, lays bare the disturbing realities behind this pipeline and calls for urgent reforms to stop this cycle of harm (*The Sexual Abuse To Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story*, 2025).

The Unseen Path from Abuse to Arrest

Understanding this issue requires us to look beyond the surface. National data reveal staggering statistics: one in four American girls will experience some form of sexual violence before turning 18. Moreover, a significant portion of these assaults occur at terrifyingly young

ages; nearly half of all female rape survivors were victimized before they reached adulthood. Girls between the ages of 16 and 19 face sexual violence at rates four times higher than their peers — an epidemiological truth that demands attention.

Yet, in a cruel paradox, many girls who endure such trauma find themselves funneled into the juvenile justice system, not as survivors, but as offenders. This is the essence of the sexual abuse to prison pipeline. Victims of trafficking, girls running from abuse, or those struggling in foster care are frequently arrested—sometimes for acts directly connected to their victimization, such as prostitution charges or truancy—that criminalize their reactions to trauma rather than acknowledge their suffering.

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THE SEXUAL...

School Bus Camera: \$250 fines for passing

BY SAVI MAMGAIN

The County and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are partnering to introduce a school bus arm camera program designed to deter drivers from passing stopped school buses, thereby protecting the vulnerable children getting on and off these vehicles.

In 2010, National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASPTS) passed a resolution initiating the first national survey to determine the prevalence of illegal passing of school buses. For example, the 2019 survey found that on a single day during the 2018-19 school year, over 95,000 vehicles illegally passed school buses across 39 states, which extrapolates to millions of violations annually nationwide. According to the FCPS News Center, May 10, 2025



released, that in 2017, a School Safety and Security Council white paper on school bus safety found that FCPS school bus drivers, who are periodically asked to count how many stop arm violations they encounter, reported a collective 1,453 vio-

lations in a single day.

These violations often occur despite the extended stop arms and flashing red lights designed to protect children boarding or alighting from buses.

Many drivers ignore the stop arm signals and flashing red lights, which are there to alert road users to the presence of children. To address this critical issue, the new program will install 50 bus camera systems throughout the county. These systems will function automatically, capturing footage of vehicles that illegally pass stopped buses, allowing for enforcement of the law.

The program started on April 9, 2025 with a 30-days trial period. Starting on May 12, drivers who are caught on video violating the stop arm rule will be issued a \$250 fine, which will be sent via mail.

More information about the School Bus Camera program is available on the following Fairfax County website at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/school-bus-cameras>.

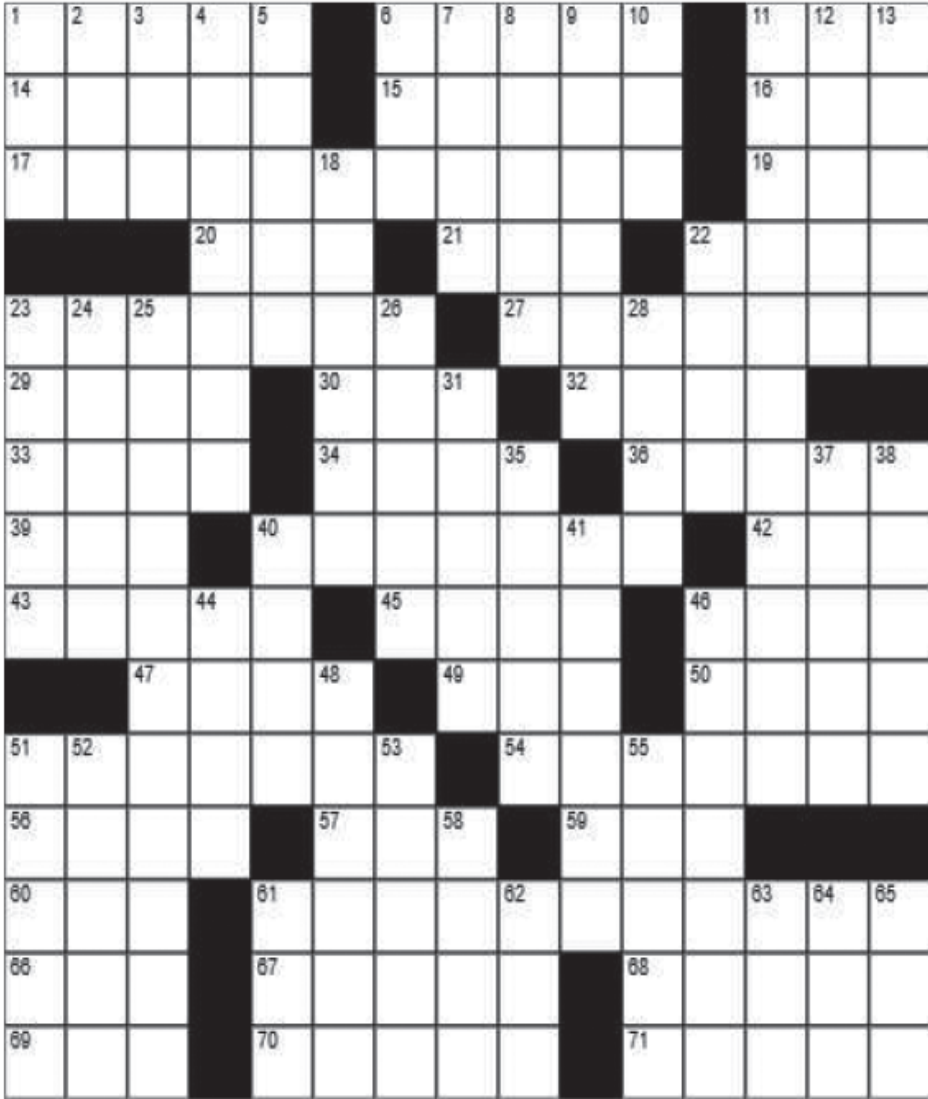
BestCrosswords.com - "Rhyming Pairs" by Allen Vaughan on 5/13/2025

Across

1- Seashore; 6- Wears well; 11- Jokester; 14- Combat gear; 15- Contest submission; 16- Wedding vow; 17- Damage from normal use over time; 19- "Just kidding!"; 20- Tom Clancy subj.; 21- Dry, as wine; 22- Antitoxins; 23- Actress Bening; 27- Obstinate; 29- Active sort; 30- "___ Got a Secret"; 32- "Rats!"; 33- On the road; 34- Some paintings; 36- Move crabwise; 39- Former Russian orbiter; 40- Old as the hills; 42- Family man; 43- Tangle; 45- Dorothy's pup; 46- Warble; 47- Zilch; 49- King in a Steve Martin song; 50- Machu Picchu builder; 51- "The Joe Rogan Experience," for one; 54- Trailblazer; 56- Ill-mannered; 57- Vast expanse; 59- "Are you a man ___ mouse?"; 60- Beehive State native; 61- Steakhouse entree; 66- Pro-Second Amendment grp.; 67- Rich tapestry; 68- Miscue; 69- Suffix with auction or musket; 70- Necklace stone; 71- Country Music's Travis;

Down

1- Crow cry; 2- Metal in rocks; 3- Doctors' org.; 4- Witchcraft; 5- Characteristic; 6- ___ Zeppelin; 7- Kitchen pests; 8- War horse; 9- Located the source of; 10- Damascus' land: Abbr.; 11- Entertain lavishly; 12- Deck out; 13- Insinuated; 18- Country; 22- Apple's digital assistant; 23- Boston beer man Samuel; 24- Unhappy kind of situation; 25- Beloved; cherished; 26- Kick out; 28- Ramadan observance; 31- "The Waste Land" poet; 35- Frame job; 37- Jousting's weapon; 38- Mystery writer's prize; 40- "The West Wing" actor; 41- Concept; 44- Marathon, e.g.; 46- Ol' Blue Eyes; 48- Give one's word; 51- Epitome of wrinkliness; 52- Bizarre; 53- ___ firma; 55- Harmony; 58- A long way off; 61- Maple sugar, once; 62- Lang. of the deaf; 63- Ornamental vase; 64- Curtain holder; 65- Saute;



Op-Ed: When Wayward Judges Overstep Their Boundaries, We All Lose: Reflections by a defense attorney from a troubling day in Arlington's courtroom 10A

BY ANDI GELOO

In late November, I sat in Arlington County Courthouse's courtroom 10A and witnessed a scene that left me deeply unsettled as a veteran defense attorney. A young prosecutor, Abhimanyu Mehta—whose name fittingly translates to "warrior" in the mythological Mahābhārata story about war—stood before Judge Daniel S. Fiore advocating for the dismissal of charges against a young black man, 31, whom I'll refer to pseudonymously as Ross Lamas. Charged in late 2022 with one count of felony intent to distribute drugs and four counts of illegal possession of a firearm, Mr. Lamas' case had been delayed multiple times over two years. Lamas sat quietly with his public defender, Brad Haywood, waiting for what should have been a routine resolution.

Mr. Mehta's request to dismiss the charges, now before the court for the third time, was grounded in legal precedent, ethics and justice. Yet, Judge Fiore refused to allow Mr. Mehta to speak, preventing him from addressing the inequities that yet another delay would impose on Mr. Lamas and repeatedly talking over him. In response to Mehta's request to respond and be heard "No, sir. You may not," said Judge Fiore.

Judge Fiore said again and again that he had not read a five-page brief filed by Parisa Dehghani-Tafti, the elected Commonwealth Attorney, and, thus, didn't want to hear any arguments. The memorandum was a quick analysis of the dismissal statute Virginia Code § 19.2-265.6 that Mr. Mehta was trying to argue to support an agreed motion to dismiss — something that had already been previously argued and the issues were not new to the court. The exchange grew heated, Judge Fiore's demeanor seemed to hint at potential contempt charges, leaving Mr. Mehta to wonder if he was being cautioned for simply doing his job. The judge's voice was harsh with impatience, and his eyebrows raised at Mr. Mehta. The judge grew visibly angry, his skin flushed and jaw tense, calling a recess ostensibly to regain his composure.

Upon returning, Judge Fiore offered an abstract and confusing analogy about the contempt powers of the court, saying, "an important aspect of a judge is to realize ... two things. One, that between stimulus and response is time. Those aren't my words. Those are an existential philosopher's words. And, between response and — stimulus and response is time, and it's important that time not be given up," leaving observers, including myself, scratching their heads.

This incident caught my attention because dismissals like these are standard courtroom procedures. Prosecutors frequently move to drop cases after evaluating the evidence, and Virginia Code 19.2-265.6 makes it clear that judges "shall" grant these motions unless clear and convincing evidence shows the decision was influenced by bribery or bias. There was no such evidence here. In fact, the alleged crime lacked an identifiable victim. The statute's intent is clear: to ensure prosecutorial discretion remains within the executive branch, separate from judicial interference.

Yet Judge Fiore's resistance to this statute was more than just puzzling—it was alarming. Prosecutors, as constitutional officers, have broad discretion to make decisions based on the facts of each case. They weigh evidence, consider witness credibility, uncover biases, and sometimes decide not to pursue charges altogether in the name of justice. This independence is a cornerstone of our legal system, ensuring justice prevails over mere conviction rates.

But what I witnessed was a troubling overreach by the judiciary, a direct challenge to prosecutorial independence. Why would a judge obstruct a dismissal supported by both law and facts?

PATTERN OF CONCERNING BEHAVIOR

Digging deeper, I learned this wasn't an isolated incident. Judge Fiore has a reputation for unnecessary delays, resistance to plea agreements, and unequal

treatment of defendants. Attorneys have described him as a judge more focused on asserting his authority than delivering justice. One attorney called him a "self-important megalomaniac," while others noted his actions and delays often leave litigants financially and emotionally drained. A court reporter shared that "every time we went to Arlington and got him, it was going to be a long drawn out proceeding with no winners, and everyone was a loser in the room because of the judge."

This pattern of behavior reveals a judiciary that, in some cases, seems disconnected from its core purpose: to serve justice impartially.

THE CASE AGAINST ROSS LAMAS

Mr. Lamas' ordeal began on Oct. 21, 2022, when Arlington police officers received a report of a domestic disturbance at the Shelton apartment building on 24th Street. On the scene, they noticed property damage at the Lucky 7, a convenience store connected to the Shelton, and they began an investigation of the property damage. While investigating property damage, the detective misidentified Mr. Lamas, leading to his arrest on Dec. 28, 2022, for felony destruction of property. The erroneous identification also prompted a search of Mr. Lamas' home, which yielded further charges against him.

Over time, the case unraveled. This past Aug. 22, public defender Brad Haywood filed a motion to dismiss, arguing that key evidence obtained in violation of Mr. Lamas' Fourth Amendment rights, which protect against unreasonable searches and seizures, should be suppressed. Specifically, Mr. Haywood argued that the arrest was based on a detective's mistaken identity of Mr. Lamas on the property damage claim, leading to an unlawful search of his home and seizure of additional evidence. Furthermore, Mr. Haywood argued that the detective had unfairly targeted Lamas, wrongly identifying him as a suspect in the property damage case despite doing nothing wrong. The motion was denied.

In an interesting turn of events, later that day, an Arlington County Police detective who testified at the suppression hearing was accused of allegedly delivering a racially-charged insult to Lamas' father, who was present in court. On Sept. 2, Mr. Haywood filed a motion to re-open the motion to suppress and a motion to dismiss due to racial animus. An internal investigation by the Arlington County Police Department followed. According to court transcripts dated Nov. 14, both prosecution and defense attorneys acknowledged that the detective had committed perjury on at least two occasions in the past 17 years. Additionally, all parties agreed, as evidenced by transcript, that the detective's actions constituted a formal finding of factual misconduct and a sustained determination of wrongdoing.

On Nov. 14, with unwavering conviction, Commonwealth's Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti moved to dismiss the charges under Virginia Code 19.2-265.6. This move shows that the office prioritizes fairness and individual rights, even when acknowledging and addressing systemic flaws.

The transcripts from the Nov. 14 hearing reveal the desperation felt by Lamas, who at one point exclaimed, "Yeah, man, I've been dealing with this charge for two years now, and you---" The judge swiftly intervened, cautioning the public defender, "You need to advise your client to remain quiet."

Even with an egregious misidentification of the defendant and findings of serious misconduct and perjury by the commonwealth's witness and a statute that requires him to do so, Judge Fiore still refused to grant the agreed dismissal, dragging the case out unnecessarily, causing Mr. Lamas to endure repeated court appearances, jeopardized employment and community stigma.

SEPARATION OF POWERS: A FUNDAMENTAL SAFEGUARD IN JUSTICE

Virginia Code 19.2-265.6 embodies

the principle of separation of powers, ensuring that the judiciary cannot overstep its bounds and interfere with prosecutorial discretion. Prosecutors, as members of the executive branch, are entrusted with the authority to assess evidence, uncover biases, and make decisions that uphold justice. This balance of power is a cornerstone of our democracy, designed to prevent any one branch from wielding unchecked authority.

Yet, in this case, Judge Fiore’s refusal to grant a dismissal supported by law and facts exemplifies judicial overreach. The statute clearly states that dismissals “shall” be granted unless there is compelling evidence of misconduct—evidence that was wholly absent in this instance. This judicial interference not only undermined the prosecutor’s role but also violated the principles that safeguard fairness in our legal system.

JUDICIAL MISSTEPS AND THEIR HUMAN TOLL

By December, Mr. Lamas’ case reached another impasse. Mr. Haywood, who had resigned from the public defender’s office, sought to continue representing Mr. Lamas as court-appointed counsel. Despite Mr. Haywood’s deep knowledge of the case and Mr. Lamas’ trust in him, Judge Fiore denied the motion.

This decision exemplified a disregard for the practical realities of the case. It prioritized procedural formalities over justice, needlessly complicating Mr. Lamas’ defense and prolonging his ordeal. Only when Mr. Haywood offered to work pro bono, did the judge begrudgingly allow him to continue, placing the financial burden of legal costs on Mr. Haywood and the defendant when his client was entitled to state assistance.

Finally, at a Dec. 18 hearing, Judge Fiore did what should have been done months earlier. He dismissed the case, but not at the hearing, later in a written order.

RESTORING BALANCE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

This case underscores a critical flaw in our justice system: the unchecked power of rogue judges. Virginia Code 19.2-265.6 was enacted precisely to prevent such overreach, ensuring that prosecutors can exercise discretion without ju-

dicial interference. The law was enacted in response to judges who were overturning plea agreements and encroaching on clearly delineated roles established by the principle of separation of powers. As former Virginia state Senator Joe Morrissey aptly noted during legislative debates on the enactment of this statute, “If the Commonwealth, the Executive Branch, makes a decision... the judiciary can’t interfere.” Prosecutors are elected to reflect their community’s values and priorities, and their independence is essential to a functioning democracy. [EMBED: https://virginiasenate.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=3&clip_id=3567 beginning at 5:45:55.]

In late 2020, state Senator Scott Surovell spoke to the Virginia Senate and advocated for legislation that would restore our system of separation of powers, saying, “We have independently elected Commonwealth’s Attorneys in this state for a reason. They are independent constitutional officers. The reason we elect them locally is to exercise their discretion about their local values, their local priorities, and what’s important in their jurisdictions. And that’s why we have independent constitutional officers and why we don’t let them be hired by the Board of Supervisors or a city council.” (Id. beginning at 5:52:32).

Sen. Surovell added, “When I introduced this bill in the regular session...and I explained to everybody that we needed to put something in the code because there were judges, because judges might not drop a case when the prosecutor said that, the members of the crim-sub-committee looked at me and said ‘Who’s ever heard of that?’ Then two weeks later, the news hit that in Arlington County, the judges weren’t doing it, and then a month later in Norfolk, they weren’t doing it. That’s why this bill is needed.” [Id. beginning at 5:53:15]

This statute was largely enacted on the backdrop of rogue judges throwing out even reasonable plea agreements presented to the courts for consideration. This statute reflects the intent of the General Assembly to restore the balance of the separation of powers.

Judge Fiore’s actions not only violated the letter and spirit of this statute but also inflicted unnecessary delay and harm on a young man seeking justice. His behavior—marked by delays, contempt threats, and petty rulings—reveals a judiciary more concerned with ego than equity.

As citizens, we must hold our judges accountable. Judicial appointments should come with rigorous oversight and consequences for misconduct. Moreover, legislators must take tangible steps to address problematic judges they have appointed. The integrity of our justice system depends on it.

For Mr. Lamas, the case is finally over. But the questions linger: How many others have been subjected to similar injustices? And what will it take to ensure that no one else endures such unnecessary suffering?

It’s time to demand better—from our judges, our legislators and our system as a whole. Justice is not just a concept to which to aspire—it is a duty we must actively protect from courtroom 10A to the rest of our judicial system.



“Andi” Geloo is a defense attorney, first-generation immigrant and author of “Andi’s Law,” which expanded the rights of citizens seeking protection from defamation. She earned her law degree from George Washington Law School with high honors and practices law in Fairfax County and Northern Virginia. She also covers pro bono matters for underprivileged families throughout Virginia and writes for various local publications. She can be reached at Andigeloolaw@gmail.com and fairfaxvirginialawyer.com.

THE STARK REALITY...
From Page 5

shortfall approaching \$250 million in the state budget this year due to decreased tax collections from a shrinking workforce and reduced economic activity. The human cost is equally substantial. Displaced federal workers face difficulties transitioning to the private sector as job openings rarely align neatly with the specialized skills and compensation levels of federal employment. Experts warn of potential brain drain as some may relocate outside the Commonwealth in search of suitable opportunities. “Virginia is losing jobs while the rest of the country is creating jobs,” Dr. Eric Scorsone said and reported in the Virginia Business Journal. “That has a lot of negative implications. People might decide to leave Virginia to look for jobs elsewhere. There might be some form of brain drain.”

Virginia’s General Assembly is addressing potential federal government layoffs by tasking special committees with developing responses. Their focus includes expanding safety nets, increasing housing assistance and utility relief, and strengthening community organizations to aid impacted workers. Fairfax County officials are advocating for emergency legislation and state support to prevent a wider economic crisis across Virginia. The situation is considered urgent and dire for the Commonwealth.

We would like to invite our readers to participate in this important discussion by writing an op-ed and emailing to info@theindependentnewspress.com or by commenting online to this post <https://fairfaxindependentnewspress/2025fedlayoffs>



VIRGINIA HAS JOBS
With over 228,000 open jobs
<https://virginiahasjobs.com/>

The George Snyder Trail Controversy: "Oh, what a tangled web we weave,"

OP-ED BY SUE KUILER,
FAIRFAX CITY RESIDENT

The rationale for building an over \$21.M, 1.7-mile through-the-woods George Snyder Trail (GST) is falling apart. Initially, the purpose of the GST was to get people from Point A to Point B and support local businesses along Fairfax Boulevard. How does a through-the-woods trail away from businesses do that? How does the less expensive alternative design concept, which creates a shared-use path along Eaton Place and Fairfax Boulevard, not do that?

According to Secretary of Transportation W. Sheppard Willard III, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is not in the business of building recreational bike trails except when that is the only way of getting from Point A to Point B. He made his remarks at the May 8 meeting to obtain public comments about the proposed VDOT FY2026-2031 Six-year Improvement Program. However, after bicycle advocates voiced their support of the

through-the-woods GST and proponents of an alternative design concept characterized the GST as a recreational bike trail, the Secretary qualified his statement by noting that Northern Virginia is a little different and recreational bike trails may be the way to get people moving around.

So, is the through-the-woods GST a way to get people from A to B? A way to get people moving around and, if so, to what end? To support local businesses? Why are shared-use paths not feasible?

Past engineering studies include plans for making Fairfax Boulevard safe for pedestrians and bicyclists by installing shared-use paths. Furthermore, the city's GST web site states, "Fairfax City has developed a conceptual design for a shared-use path on Fairfax Boulevard. The 850-footlong path will run between the end of the soon-to-be constructed George T. Snyder Trail and the start of the Wilcoxon Trail, linking the two trails."

How then is the alternative design

concept that calls for shared-use paths along Eaton Place and Fairfax Boulevard not feasible when the city staff plans a GST extension in one of the busiest sections of Fairfax Boulevard? How is making Fairfax Boulevard and Eaton Place safer for biking and walking instead of bulldozing through a stream valley not a better option of moving people from A to B and bringing people to local businesses?

The alternative design concept map shows the route of the through-the-woods GST and the alternative shared-use path along Fairfax Boulevard and Eaton Place. It was developed by Council member Tom Peterson and refined by David Summers, Head of Public Works. The map clearly shows that the alternative moves people from Point A to Point B and brings them closer to the businesses along both roads than the through-the-woods recreational GST.

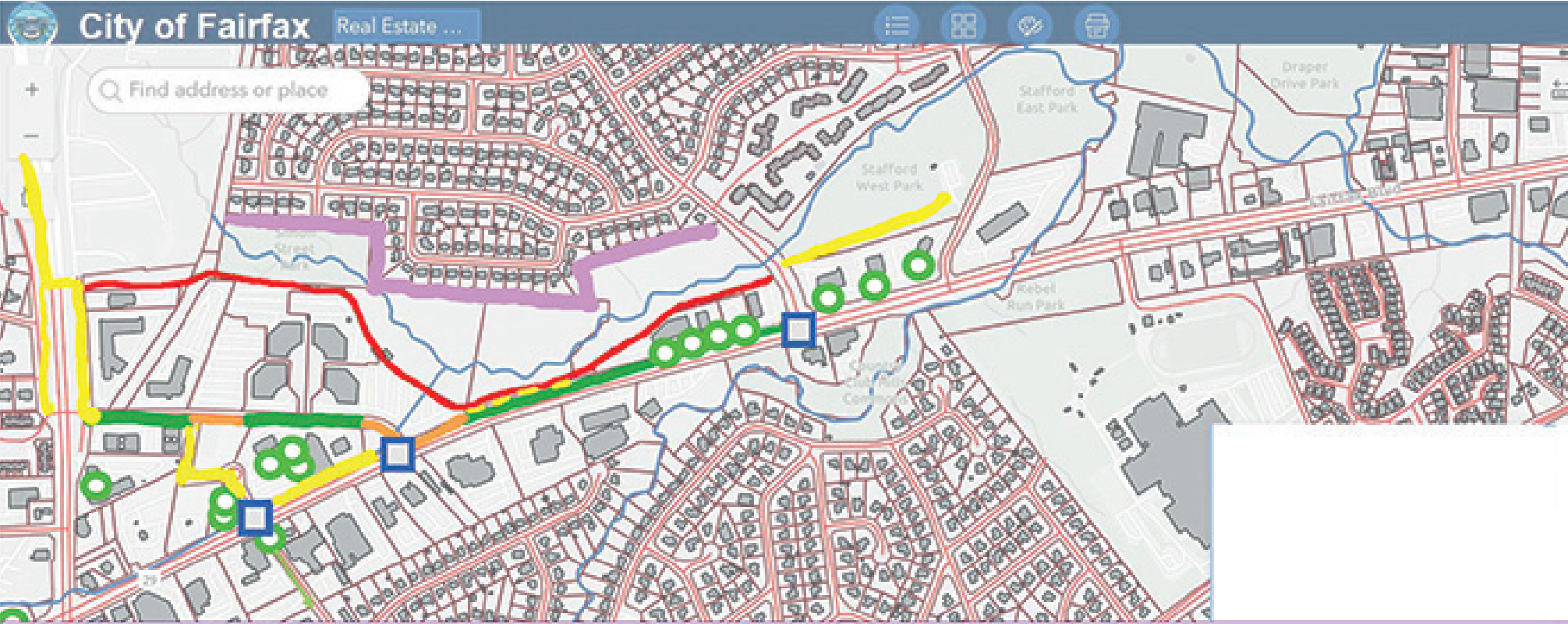
Unfortunately, there is now a concerted effort to push the through-the-woods project forward with no substantive con-

sideration of the alternative.

Here is a summary of the case against the through-the-woods GST:

- ✓ The GST is an expensive transportation project (over \$21.5M for 1.7 miles). Any cost overruns will be out of taxpayers' pockets. The city already has too many expensive-to-build and expensive-to-maintain projects. Very few have been vetted by the community in any substantive way. Contrary views have been ignored.
- ✓ It is redundant and unnecessary because the city has already committed to making Fairfax Boulevard and Eaton Place safer for bicyclists and walkers by providing safe passage between Route 123 and the Wilcoxon trailhead (on the south side of Fairfax Boulevard east of Harley Davidson).

Turn to Page 17 →
THE GEORGE SNYDER...



KEY

RED LINE IS THE GST ALIGNMENT UNDER CONSIDERATION

YELLOW LINES ARE EXISTING OR APPROVED BIKEWAYS (dashed yellow line may be partly designed)

ORANGE LINES ARE PROPERTIES IN PLANNING STAGE OF REDEVELOPMENT

GREEN LINES ARE CONNECTING SEGMENTS OF PROPOSED BIKEWAY SEGMENTS TO COMPLETE A CONTINUOUS BIKE-

WAY FROM I-66 TO FAIR WOODS PARKWAY.

BLUE SQUARES ARE KEY INTERSECTIONS THAT SHOULD BE MADE SAFER FOR BIKES AND PEDESTRIANS

GREEN DOTS ARE THE LOCAL BUSINESSES THAT CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS WILL BE ABLE TO ACCESS IF THESE MODIFICATIONS ARE MADE.

PINK LINE IS BORDER OF MOSBY WOODS NEIGHBORHOOD.

Current Status of Major Developments in Fairfax City

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Ongoing Construction

The Overlook at Fairfax Boulevard project is currently under construction with 60 homes being built, including 40 townhouses and 20 condos. Construction incorporates underground utilities, public open spaces, playgrounds, and commercial spaces, with prices for townhomes and condos starting at around \$900,000 and \$600,000 respectively.

Beacon Landing Affordable Apartments, a fully affordable housing project replacing an old motel, is under construction with an anticipated opening in 2026 after 14-16 months of work. This project provides permanent supportive housing with on-site services and security features.

Construction has started on the WillowWood (N29 Apartments) Phase I, a mixed-use, seven-story building with 260 units and ground-floor retail space. The project includes a substantial parking garage and community amenities like a pool and café seating.

The Glebe View Townhouses are in the pre-construction phase, with a groundbreaking scheduled for September 28, 2024. This development will include energy-efficient affordable townhouses on land donated by Fairfax Presbyterian Church.



Under construction stock photo

Infrastructure improvements are underway, such as road reconfigurations and reconstruction on Fairfax Boulevard to support the growth from these developments and other large-scale projects in the county that enhance connectivity related to Fairfax City.

Planning and Approval

The City Centre West mixed-use project has received city approval with construction expected to take two years pushing toward mid-2026 for completion. This project includes residential units, commercial offices, retail, and public plaza space.

The Christopher at Fairfax City

mixed-use development remains at the concept and pre-application briefing stage with the City Council and Planning Commission holding briefings in early 2025. Requests for rezoning and special permits are underway.

The Judicial Complex redevelopment is in planning stages with design work expected to complete in early 2025. Construction is slated to begin by 2027 after demolition of certain buildings and extensive community engagement.

Upcoming and Funded Projects

The new fire station project near University Drive is moving forward with property purchased and feasibility stud-

ies completed. Concept design proposals will soon be presented to the City Council with construction estimated to take around 18 months once started. The project timeline currently suggests construction may occur from spring 2025 through summer 2026.

Major intersection improvements at Fairfax Blvd, Farr Avenue, and McLean Avenue are awarded and scheduled for construction starting spring 2025 through summer 2026 to improve safety and pedestrian accommodations. This \$8.75 million federally funded project addresses a complicated intersection by simplifying traffic flow and adding new crosswalks and traffic signals.

The City has proposed a FY 26 budget aimed at supporting ongoing development with \$105 million appropriated towards 130 capital improvement projects through FY 30, including transportation and general government enhancements directly supporting development growth.

We have compiled this list of development activities that are at various stages. These updates will be made on The Fairfax Independent searchable website at <https://fairfaxindependentnews.press>. Readers are welcomed to share their thoughts on the comment section on our website.

THE GEORGE SNYDER.. From Page 16

- Here are the benefits and features of the alternative design concept of a shared-use path along Eaton Place and Fairfax Boulevard:

 - It includes five bridges, retaining walls, and 380 feet of boardwalk and major re-grading, requiring heavy construction activity in the area for two years or more. This is in addition to the Stafford stream restoration project nearby.
 - It will destroy several acres of woodlands in the green buffer that separates Mosby Woods from Fairfax Boulevard.
 - It will remove at least 600 mature trees, countless smaller trees and saplings, shrubs, and flowering plants, and, when the bulldozers start rolling, destroy the roots of many other mature trees.
- It connects bicyclists from the new I-66 bike trail on Route 123 to the Wilcoxon Trail near the Fairfax Circle, thus meeting the purpose of the GST grant, without destroying the woods wildlife habitats.
 - It saves taxpayers dollars by eliminating the through-the-woods route that duplicates the city's ongoing, planned, and approved transportation projects that aim to make Fairfax Blvd safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - It connects cyclists directly to local businesses on Fairfax Blvd instead of bypassing businesses as did the
- through-the-woods design.

 - It minimizes year-over-year operations and maintenance (O&M) costs because it uses existing and improved infrastructure instead of the additional O&M costs for through-the-woods asphalt trails, boardwalks, and retaining walls.
 - It makes Eaton Place and Fairfax Blvd safer for cyclists who commute to work.
 - It is a well-lit and patrolled route as opposed to the through-the-woods route.
 - It improves pedestrian safety along more of Fairfax Blvd with safer crossings and buffered sidewalks than the through-the-woods design.
- It preserves our precious and scarce forests and wetlands and wildlife habitats.
 - It connects to bikeable segments that are already in place.
 - It enables the "Tree City" to demonstrate good stewardship of our dwindling green spaces by making the streets safe for people and by working to support vibrant, walkable communities – an objective in all versions of the Comprehensive Plans and other documents.
- So, the question is: Will the City Council be responsible and explore ways to build the safe alternative instead of the expensive-to-build and expensive-to-maintain through-the-woods trail?

We will see.



Photo Courtesy: Babur Lateef Campaign Website

An American Pope, an LG Endorsement, and More

BY CHAP PETERSEN
REPUBLICATED FROM
THEVIRGINIAATTORNEY.COM

Congratulations to Pope Leo XIV, f/k/a Robert Francis Prevost, who was elected the head of the Roman Catholic Church on May 8. It’s hard to overestimate the significance of his election.

In the 1970’s, John Paul II was an obscure Polish bishop; after being elected Pope in 1978, he became the voice of Communist resistance and contributed in a direct and immediate way to the end of the Cold War.

We don’t know how Leo will develop his papacy. (Those who analyze him on “left vs right” politics don’t understand the office). But whatever he does, it will change the world. That’s how Americans do it.

Secondly, the voting is underway in Virginia’s Democratic primary. In the LG race, I count Aaron Rouse and Levar Stoney as friends. But my vote will go to Babur Lateef for one simple reason: he’s got guts.

I first met Babur in 2011, when he ran as a longshot Democratic challenger against incumbent Corey Stewart for Board

Chair of Prince William County. Ten years later, Babur was the PWC School Board Chair. He had my back when we fought both to reopen schools in 2021 and end the mask mandate in 2022.

Unlike a lot of politicians during COVID19, Babur was focused on kids. He didn’t give in to hysteria or use the public schools as a political tool. (As I will explain later, the state of K-12 education in Virginia is our most important issue). He also handled the first collective bargaining for PWC schools. So he’s ready for big boy politics. Happy to endorse Babur for statewide office.

Locations are Giant - Fairfax and Oakton, Fairfax Regional Library, Oakton Community Library, eXurb Fitness, De Clieu Coffee & Sandwich -Main St, Kader's Barbershop, Main Street Bagel, and lobby of our office.

Election Calendar	
Candidate Filing Deadlines	
Candidates may begin collecting petition signatures.	January 1, 2025
Independent candidates for local offices may start filing ballot access documents and submit petition pages to the registrar's office of candidates' locality of residence.	January 2, 2025
Deadline for independent candidates for local offices to file ballot access documents and submit petition pages.	June 17, 2025, at 7:00pm
June 17, 2025 Democratic Party Primary Election	
Early Voting Period	Friday, May 2 - Saturday, June 14, 2025 ⌕ Weekdays 8:30am - 5:00pm ⌕ Open for Saturdays, June 7 and June 14, 2025, from 8:30am - 5:00pm
Deadline to Register or Update Registration Information	Tuesday, May 27, 2025 ⌕ Applications must be received by 5:00pm in-person; 11:59pm online. ⌕ Applications submitted by mail must be post-marked on or before Tuesday, May 27.
Deadline to Apply for a By-Mail Ballot	Friday, June 6, 2025 ⌕ Applications must be received by our office by 5:00pm
Election Day	Tuesday, June 17, 2025 ⌕ Polls will be open from 6:00am - 7:00pm
November 4, 2025, General and Special Elections	
Early Voting Period	Friday, September 19 - Saturday, November 1, 2025 ⌕ Weekdays 8:30am - 5:00pm ⌕ Open for Saturdays, October 25 and November 1, 2025, from 8:30am - 5:00pm
Deadline to Register or Update Registration Information	Monday, October 13, 2025 ⌕ Applications must be received by 5:00pm in-person; 11:59pm online. ⌕ Applications submitted by mail must be post-marked on or before Monday, October 13.
Deadline to Apply for a By-Mail Ballot	Friday, October 24, 2025 ⌕ Applications must be received by our office by 5:00pm
Election Day	Tuesday, November 4, 2025 ⌕ Polls will be open from 6:00am - 7:00pm

Movies Under the Moon



Second Fridays
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INFORMATIONS:

[https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/
community-events/movies-under-the-moon](https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/community-events/movies-under-the-moon)

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

2025 THEME:
"Freedom, Flip Flops and Fireworks"

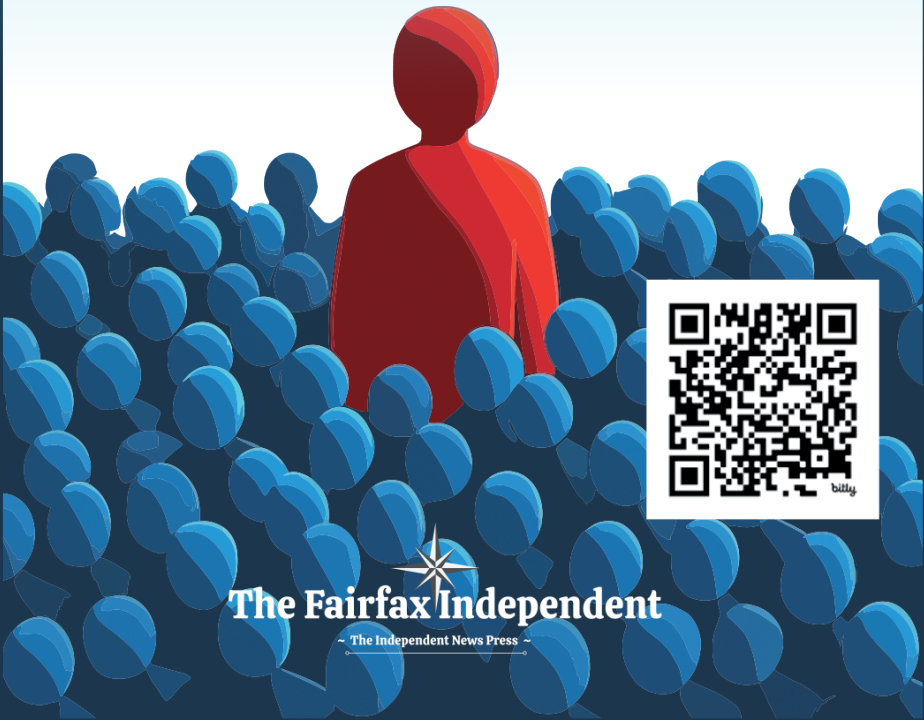
www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/independence-day-celebration



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Reston Pride's 8th Annual Pride Festival

BY BRI MORGAN (SHE/HER)
PRESIDENT, RESTON PRIDE

Reston Pride's 8th annual Pride festival starts on May 31st 6-9pm with its first ever Rising Voices concert featuring young local queer bands. Following that, we have our main festival on Sunday June 1st from 11am-6pm. This year our theme is RISE UP! Both events are free. Both events are being hosted by Lake Anne of Reston Condominium Association at historic Lake Anne's Washington Plaza. People can expect exciting drag performances by Katya Attensun and her troop of amazing performers as well as live music sponsored by and in partnership with the Reston Community Center. We will also have over 70 local vendors, sponsors and non-profits. In addition, it will feature a community art project and an artistic homage to the ladies of Stonewall. All this and more! Last year we had around 6000 visitors and we expect to have at least that many this year. You can find us on all of the socials or at [RestonPride.org](https://restonpride.org).



Pride Flag / Reston Pride Website

Dates

- ✓ May 31st 6pm-9pm Reston Prides "Rising Voices" Concert
- ✓ June 1st 11am-6pm Reston Pride's 8th annual Pride Festival
- ✓ Location. Washington Plaza / Lake Anne, Reston VA 20190

On Sunday, Metro will have 2 dedicated shuttle busses from the Silver line's Wiehle Station direct to Lake Anne and back during festival hours.

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME



Based on the Victor Hugo novel and songs from the Disney animated feature, The Hunchback of Notre Dame showcases the film's Academy Award-nominated score, as well as new songs by Menken and Schwartz. Peter Parnell's new book embraces story theatre and features verbatim passages from Hugo's gothic novel.

- ✓ Friday, July 18, 2025
- ✓ Saturday, July 26, 2025
- ✓ Katherine Johnson Middle School
- ✓ 3801 Jermantown Rd. Fairfax, VA 22030

INFORMATION:

www.fairfaxcitytheatre.org/current-season/the-hunchback-of-notre-dame

Enjoy Independence Day in the Nation's Capital with fantastic fireworks and patriotic festivities



<https://washington.org/visit-dc/ways-celebrate-independence-day-washington-dc>

Each year, Washington, DC celebrates the Fourth of July with a bang, meaning there are plenty of DC-flavored ways to honor Independence Day. Read below for some of our favorite selections and make sure to check out other summer activities in DC, including where

to watch the fireworks on the Fourth. And stay tuned for ways to celebrate America's 250th through July 4, 2026.

Watch the fireworks against the DC skyline of monuments and memorials

Watching the fireworks is

one of the highlights of Independence Day in Washington, DC and fortunately, the city and the surrounding area offer a plethora of scenic viewing options. Find the spot that works best for you and create a memorable evening.

Tune In to 'A Capitol Fourth'

A Capitol Fourth, the star-studded concert that always precedes the epic fireworks show on the National Mall, will air on PBS and can also be enjoyed in-person; just make sure to get there early. The star-spangled birthday party begins at 8 p.m. Visit the event website for more details as the holiday draws closer.

Experience Independence Day at George Washington's Mount Vernon

The annual Independence Day celebration at Mount Vernon includes visiting the estate's museums, enjoying gorgeous views from the mansion's piazza, strolling through the gardens, visiting the final resting place of George and Martha Washington and much more. Tickets are available now.

Explore the culinary capital

Check out DC's outdoor dining spots, including beer gardens and patios, or celebrate the stars (and stripes) at the District's award-winning and high-value restaurants. Enjoy brunch specials at Brasserie Liberté, Dirty Habit and The Pembroke. Plan a picnic with curated baskets from Ellington Park Bistro, choose from all-American selections

at Yardbird and District Winery or indulge in themed macarons from Olivia Macaron.

Party in the USA with panoramic views

There are plenty of great rooftop bars that offer the ideal setting for watching the fireworks in the District. In the past, VUE Rooftop Lounge and Terrace at Hotel Washington, the Conrad Hotel's Summit Rooftop, La Vie, Top of the Gate at the Watergate Hotel, Hotel Hive, Lady Bird at Kimpton Banneker Hotel, L'Arden-te, CityBar at Hyatt Place Washington DC/National Mall and Tag Rooftop Bar at The Ven at Embassy Row have offered special events that make for great Independence Day (or should we say night) revelry.

Revisiting the History of George Mason University Korea

BY PHILLIP KIM

George Mason University Korea was established through a landmark effort led by then State Senator Chap Petersen, whose legislative initiative laid the foundation for a Korean branch of the Virginia-based university. Senate Bill 712, passed in 2010, authorized the creation, operation, and governance of a George Mason University campus in South Korea, recognizing the mutual educational and economic benefits of such a global partnership. Petersen's vision materialized with the establishment of the Mason Korea campus in Songdo, Incheon, which officially opened its doors in 2014.

Songdo, a modern international city built on reclaimed land within the Incheon Free Economic Zone, was chosen as the campus location due to its innovative infrastructure and positioning as a dynamic hub in Northeast Asia. Mason Korea's establishment was part of the broader Incheon Global Campus initiative, a national project overseen by the Korean government and Incheon Metropolitan City, aimed at fostering global higher educa-

tion and nurturing future leaders.

Starting with a modest enrollment of approximately 20 students and just two undergraduate programs, Mason Korea has experienced remarkable growth over the past decade. As of recent years, the campus boasts over 1,000 students representing more than 18 countries, reflecting its rise as a truly international institution. This expansion has been accompanied by the diversification of academic offerings, with six undergraduate degrees and two graduate disciplines currently available, supported by a strong emphasis on global learning and cross-cultural exchange.

The partnership between George Mason University and Korean authorities has been reinforced through multiple memoranda of understanding with local universities and government bodies, including Fairfax City. Key collaborations include agreements with the Incheon Free Economic Zone Authority (IFEZA), augmenting industry-academic cooperation in critical sectors such as biotechnology, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and

information communication technology. These strategic alliances facilitate joint research projects, internships, and educational programs, offering practical opportunities for students and strengthening ties between academic and commercial entities in both countries.

Leadership at Mason Korea has articulated an ambitious vision for the institution's future. Dean Joshua Park emphasizes Mason Korea's role as a global educational hub dedicated to fostering international talent while embedding unique Korean elements into the campus identity "Mason Korea upholds the identity of George Mason University, while blending unique Korean elements, offering the best of both worlds," Mason Korea Campus Dean Joshua Park told the assembled group. Initiatives include expanding the international student body to 40–50 percent within five years and establishing honors colleges and new institutes focused on cutting-edge fields like serious games, artificial intelligence, and robotics.

Mason Korea's institutional strategy focuses on internationalization, academ-

ic innovation, and community integration in Incheon. Through collaboration with neighboring universities such as Inha University and Incheon National University, Mason Korea offers integrated master's programs and double-major opportunities, enriching academic pathways for Korean and international students alike. The campus also supports local startups and facilitates pathways for Korean companies to penetrate the U.S. market, reflecting an emphasis on fostering economic and educational exchanges with tangible regional impact.

Today, Mason Korea stands as a testament to the power of legislative advocacy, international cooperation, and educational ambition. From the legislation that enabled its creation to its current growth as a vibrant, globally connected university campus, Mason Korea exemplifies the promise of global education in the 21st century. With a decade of achievements behind it and bold plans ahead, Mason Korea is poised to continue influencing the educational landscape of both Korea and the United States for years to come.

GMU Record-Breaking Spring Commencement: Over 11,000 Graduates

BY SAM DOUGLAS



Sam Douglas / The Fairfax Independent

1,415 students graduated from George Mason University at the end of the Spring 2025 semester, a record for the school. An additional 531 certificates were awarded, bringing the number of students honored by Mason during its university-wide commencement ceremony on May 15 to 12,106.

The number of graduating students is an increase from last year, as 10,242 graduated at the end of the Spring 2024 semester, with 646 certificates being awarded.

Of note, Class of 2025 graduate Yevin Nikhel Goonatilake made history as the youngest person to earn a master's degree from George Mason University at the age of 16. This achievement followed his earlier milestone in

December 2024, when he became the university's youngest bachelor's degree graduate with a perfect 4.0 GPA at just 15 years old.

In addition to the university-wide commencement, graduates were honored by the specific college they graduated from. Degree Celebrations lasted from May 14 to May 17, with each of Mason's ten colleges celebrating their graduates.

The College of Engineering and Computing held two Degree Celebrations, as the information technology and computer science majors were in the top five most common majors among undergraduates.

In total, 6,875 undergraduates were honored, as well as 3,975 graduate students and 400 earning their

doctorate. Additionally, 165 graduated from the Antonin Scalia Law School.

The school's new record could be broken next year, as enrollment continues to rise. Mason's Class of 2026 was the school's largest freshman class in their history when they arrived in 2022, at around 4,200 students. The Class of 2028 was even larger when they arrived, at over 4,600.

This record number comes at a time of uncertainty for Mason. University President Gregory Washington announced during the school's May 1 Board of Visitors meeting that graduate enrollment was slipping, attributing it to factors such as uncertainty with the federal government and the Department of Education as well as the revoking of visas to 15 Mason students earlier in the semester.

FIFA Club World Cup 2025: Global Football’s Biggest Clubs Converge

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

The FIFA Club World Cup 2025 marks a groundbreaking chapter in international club football, unfolding across the United States from June 14 to July 13, 2025. For the first time, this prestigious tournament has expanded to feature 32 elite clubs from all six continental confederations, competing for global supremacy in a historic four-week showdown.

The Club World Cup has evolved from a compact annual event for continental champions into a sprawling spectacle that reflects football’s global reach and commercial growth. This

21st edition heralds a new era with an expanded 32-team format played in a June-July window, designed to rival the scale and excitement of the FIFA World Cup. This edition brings together established giants and rising contenders from Europe, South America, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and North America.

The tournament will unfold in 12 iconic stadiums across 11 U.S. cities, including Miami’s Hard Rock Stadium where the opening match features host club Inter Miami against African powerhouse Al Ahly. For fans in the DC area, games will be held at Audi Field. The final battle for glory is set at New Jersey’s MetLife Stadium, promising a

fitting stage for crowning the new king of club football.

The FIFA Club World Cup 2025 doesn’t just promise unforgettable football—it symbolizes a historic convergence of the world’s foremost clubs in a competition that celebrates the sport’s global unity and commercial ambition. As the U.S. hosts this landmark event, fans have an unprecedented opportunity to witness the future of club football unfold live or from anywhere on the planet.

Soccer fans can get more information about this event on the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 website at [fifa.com](https://www.fifa.com).



Old Glory DC: Final Games

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Old Glory DC is a professional rugby union team based in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, competing in Major League Rugby (MLR). Founded in 2018 by local business leaders and former rugby players Chris Dunlavey and Paul Sheehy, the team began regular-season play in 2020. The Scottish Rugby Union holds a minority ownership stake in the club, contributing to its international connections and development strategies.

Initially, Old Glory played exhibition matches in 2019, attracting significant local interest. They played their early seasons at Cardinal Stadium and later at Segra Field in Leesburg, Virginia. In 2024, the team moved to the Maryland SoccerPlex in Germantown, Maryland, which has a capacity of 5,000 spectators.

Under the leadership of head coach Simon Cross, appointed in July 2023, Old Glory has focused on developing local American talent while incorporating experienced international players. Notable players include captain Jamason Fāanana-Schultz and top scorer Jason Robertson.

Significance of Club Name: Old Glory DC
After considering hundreds of name options



proposed by our fans and advisors, club leaders selected Old Glory DC as the team’s official name, a name that speaks to the region’s patriotism and the unique role of our home city as the nation’s capital.

“The response to our Name-The-Team challenge was incredible, with close to 1,000 fans participating,” co-owner Paul Sheehy said.

“We had so many great names to choose from, but in the end, we felt we had to choose a name that could only really work in Washington, and that is inclusive of all of the diverse members of our community.”

“And we think our fans will see the deeper meaning,” co-owner Chris Dunlavey added. “Yes, it’s a flag, but Old Glory has been places. It’s battle-scarred. It’s weather-beaten. But still, it flies proudly. It symbolizes all the strength, resilience, commitment, and substance over style that are the hallmarks of rugby and, for that matter, the American character.”

Old Glory DC continues to build its presence in the MLR and the local sports community, aiming to grow the sport of rugby in the United States. To catch a game, readers can get more information on Old Glory DC’s website at <https://oldglorydc.com/schedule/>.



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July & August in Manassas**

For more information, please visit
taniahossainphotography.com/mini



Fairfax Ultimate Leagues
To foster the growth, teach, and play ultimate frisbee to youth and adults in and around Fairfax County.

<https://www.fairfaxultimate.org/>

Take Me Out To The Ballgame!

BY CAROLINE CHU

Known affectionately as “America’s Pastime,” baseball has long held a prominent position in the American cultural landscape. From the nostalgic flavors of stadium foods such as hot dogs or peanuts to treasured card collections filled with the likes of Babe Ruth or Willie Mays, baseball has left a profound mark on generations of American fans. More than simply a spectator sport, baseball has also found itself in the hearts and lives of millions of athletes across the country. Many an American can recall the satisfying crack as their wooden bat hit home or the heart-pounding run to first base.



Even despite the skyrocketing popularity of football and basketball in the United States, the sport has maintained a faithful, massive following throughout the decades; according to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s (SFIA) Topline Participation Report for 2023, baseball participant numbers are approximately 16.7 million, the largest recorded figure since the SFIA survey began in 2008. Although some may argue that baseball is a declining sport, rule changes in the Major Baseball League (MLB), increased efforts to engage the younger generation, and its nostalgia-inducing role in American culture have helped maintain its relevance in an increasingly fast-paced world.

The start of baseball season, which began in the spring, served as a symbol of the end of winter and a tantalizing reminder of the upcoming summer; it’s a welcome relief that can be especially exciting for Northern Virginia residents, who have endured weeks of biting weather and are eager for a change of pace. Now that summer has officially arrived, however, the balmy warmth and extended daylight make it the perfect time to enjoy baseball. Those looking to experience the sport locally can attend a nearby high school’s games, play a small game in their backyard or park, or head to Nationals Park to catch a Washington Nationals game and enjoy the full summer baseball experience.

For fans in attendance at National Park this summer, the Washington Nationals’ 2025 season offers a hopeful glimpse at a team on the rise. As of mid-May, they hold a 21–27 record, placing them fourth in the National League East. Despite coming off the heels of a seven game losing streak, the team recently displayed resilience by sweeping the Baltimore Orioles in a three-game series, one of which was a 10–4 victory. Shortstop CJ Abrams led the charge with two home runs and a double, contributing to the Nationals’ first five-homer game since 2023. On the pitching side, Michael Soroka earned his first win since July 21 2023 with a strong outing against Baltimore.

Offensively, the team has made notable strides. By already hitting 50 home runs in 48 games, they’ve made significant improvements from the 62 games it took last year to reach the same benchmark. Although the Nationals still play in a tough division, their recent momentum has sparked hope among the fanbase. A win isn’t a guaranteed result of a trip to the Nationals Park this summer; however, Virginia residents can at least be hopeful that the team they’re watching has potential.

It’s the 33rd Annual Barbecue Battle!



The country’s best pitmasters will descend on DC to show off their unique flavors and cooking techniques for discerning judges.

INFORMATION:
<https://bbqindc.com/>

25

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TO WIN

AARP Scam Jam Story

BY LAYLA MOHRAN

The issue of scamming older adults only progresses. An unfortunate epidemic that harms people who may be afraid to speak up. In 1996, Adult Protective Services (APS) angrily called the San Diego District Attorney with regards to the lack of protection against elder fraud cases. This call is what brought Paul Greenwood's, an AARP Fraud Watch Network advisor, attention to the issue at hand. To find the root of the problem why this injustice went unnoticed for so long, Greenwood provided seven possible reasons why older adults may not speak up about how they were scammed. Impairment, isolation, shame, loyalty to the abuser, fear of losing independence, reliance on the abuser, and fear of retaliation are the main causes of staying silent.

In response to the issue of fraud and scams regarding older adults, an eight year on-going event named Scam Jam is being held to prevent the spread of fraud. This is where people get educated on the possible threat.

At Scam Jam, attendees are able to speak with representatives from local agencies and nonprofits. Attendees can also speak with Greenwood, hear a panel discussion of local police and filmmakers from the Heroes of Adult Protection (HOAP) docuseries, and enjoy a complimentary lunch.

At the 2025 Scam Jam event, an episode from HOAP, named "Mountain Daisy," was played for the attendees. The episode told the story of an elderly woman named Daisy who had her relatives get

her off of her property to take advantage of her. Daisy lived on a mountain in Oregon with not many others around. Daisy and her husband kept to themselves, not leaving their home often. As Daisy and her husband grew older, they needed more assistance around the house. One day, a few of Daisy's distant relatives visited and offered to help her in return for putting their names on the property deed. Instead of providing the agreed help, they ruined her property, leaving it a mess with junk all over her yard. The relatives proceeded to threaten to burn down Daisy's house after her husband died. Daisy was helpless and alone, which is common among seniors. "I don't think people realize so many seniors have nobody and don't know what APS is," APS investigator Patty Nelson, who was assigned to Daisy's case, said. Daisy was able to get restraining orders against the

relatives that were threatening her in order to keep them away from her land. However, her nephew Chris ignored the order, and remained on the property, continuing to threaten and frighten Daisy. Chris would pound on her door at night, get his dogs to bark and shoot gunshots randomly. Luckily, Daisy was able to get back into court to request another restraining order against Chris. Daisy was able to get the help she needed with law enforcement and help from an APS investigator.

Help is always available for older adults. You are not alone. Adult Protective Services is available to almost any older adult in need. Do not be afraid to speak up. For more information about the 6th annual scam jam, please visit the AARP's website at <https://states.aarp.org/virginia/fairfaxscamjam>

BestCrosswords.com - "Rhyming Pairs" by Allen Vaughan on 5/13/2025 (solution)

Across

1- Seashore; 6- Wears well; 11- Jokester; 14- Combat gear; 15- Contest submission; 16- Wedding vow; 17- Damage from normal use over time; 19- "Just kidding!"; 20- Tom Clancy subj.; 21- Dry, as wine; 22- Antitoxins; 23- Actress Bening; 27- Obstinate; 29- Active sort; 30- "____ Got a Secret"; 32- "Rats!"; 33- On the road; 34- Some paintings; 36- Move crabwise; 39- Former Russian orbiter; 40- Old as the hills; 42- Family man; 43- Tangle; 45- Dorothy's pup; 46- Warble; 47- Zilch; 49- King in a Steve Martin song; 50- Machu Picchu builder; 51- "The Joe Rogan Experience," for one; 54- Trailblazer; 56- Ill-mannered; 57- Vast expanse; 59- "Are you a man ____ mouse?"; 60- Beehive State native; 61- Steakhouse entree; 66- Pro-Second Amendment grp.; 67- Rich tapestry; 68- Miscue; 69- Suffix with auction or musket; 70- Necklace stone; 71- Country Music's Travis;

Down

1- Crow cry; 2- Metal in rocks; 3- Doctors' org.; 4- Witchcraft; 5- Characteristic; 6- ____ Zeppelin; 7- Kitchen pests; 8- War horse; 9- Located the source of; 10- Damascus' land: Abbr.; 11- Entertain lavishly; 12- Deck out; 13- Insinuated; 18- Country; 22- Apple's digital assistant; 23- Boston beer man Samuel; 24- Unhappy kind of situation; 25- Beloved; cherished; 26- Kick out; 28- Ramadan observance; 31- "The Waste Land" poet; 35- Frame job; 37- Jousting's weapon; 38- Mystery writer's prize; 40- "The West Wing" actor; 41- Concept; 44- Marathon, e.g.; 46- Ol' Blue Eyes; 48- Give one's word; 51- Epitome of wrinkliness; 52- Bizarre; 53- ____ firma; 55- Harmony; 58- A long way off; 61- Maple sugar, once; 62- Lang. of the deaf; 63- Ornamental vase; 64- Curtain holder; 65- Saute;

1	C	O	A	S	T		L	A	S	T	S		W	A	G
14	A	R	M	O	R		E	N	T	R	Y		I	D	O
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23	A	N	N	E	T	T	E		27	D	E	F	I	A	N
29	D	O	E	R		30	I	V	E		32	D	A	R	N
33	A	W	A	Y		34	O	I	L	S		36	S	I	D
39	M	I	R		40	A	N	C	I	E	N	T		42	D
43	S	N	A	R	L		45	T	O	T	O		46	S	I
			47	N	A	D	A		49	T	U	T		50	I
51	P	O	D	C	A	S	T		53		P	I	O	N	E
56	R	U	D	E		57	S	E	A		59	O	R	A	
60	U	T	E		61	S	U	R	F	A	N	D	T	U	R
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69	E	E	R		70	P	E	A	R	L		71	R	A	N



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Youngkin's Social Media Policy

BY LAYLA MOHRAN

As the overuse of social media plagues the youth of today, parents worry for the future of their children and how social media will impact mental health and their day-to-day lives. In response, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin worked to reduce this problem through legislation by implementing a new law, acting as an amendment to Virginia’s Consumer Data Protection Act. The new law will require that social media apps check each user’s age to ensure that the law reaches the targeted group. So far, Snapchat, Instagram, Youtube, and TikTok are expected to implement the new law. Any users found to be under the age of 16 will have a screen time limit of one hour each day, causing the app to be restricted after one hour of use. State Senator Schuyler VanValkenburg, who co-sponsored the legislation, also agreed that social media “hinders their ability to do well in school, and you see how much it hinders their socialization with their friends” shared with WJLA News.

Initially the law included those under the age of 18, hoping to limit the use of social media and addictive feeds for them as well. However this idea did not make it to the final bill. Youngkin worked to expand the law further with more amendments, but they were rejected. Despite this, the law proceeds to be further developed. Tech companies like Meta have shown their support for the new restriction on social media as it is similar to the restrictions they have placed

on instagram through teen accounts. 10 News reported that an app that has been created to implement this new action is already working to be used in West Virginia this fall. Eddie Worth from the Safe Surfin’ Foundation hopes for this to be introduced to Virginia soon to allow it to start being executed on January 1, 2026.

However, with the new law comes new concerns regarding possible loopholes that the youth may find. Parents know how sneaky kids can get, and can see how it may be easy to get around the new restriction. Jennifer Golbeck, a professor at the University of Maryland, agrees, saying she suspects that “other platforms popping up and kids figuring out creative ways to use them, or they’re just going to lie about their ages on the platforms they’re on already.” The new legislation allows for parents to have the ability to extend or reduce screen time, even with the restriction. Because of this, Nancy Hans, executive director of the Partnership for Community Wellness, emphasized the importance of parents also enforcing the law. Without the help from parents, the new rule will not be as successful as Youngkin wanted it to be. Another possible issue about the nature of the age verification process for apps includes identification. Since most people under 16 do not have an ID, the only other way to verify their age is with a passport or birth certificate. However, since these are important documents, parents are concerned about privacy violations.

The Battle Lines are Drawn in Manassas



BY CHAP PETERSEN
REPUBLICATED FROM
THEVIRGINIAATTORNEY.COM

On Monday, April 28, my legal team filed our appeal of the Prince William County Circuit Court’s October 31, 2024 ruling, which dismissed our lawsuit against the County Board of Supervisors for approving the Digital Gateway Project, permitting 37 massive data centers in the slice of agricultural land next to the Manassas National Battlefield.

Our clients are Prince William County neighbors, as well as the American Battlefield Trust which fights to preserve historic sites in American history. The bases for the appeal are multifarious but share certain themes:

1. The County Board failed to enforce its own Zoning Ordinance, i.e. by requiring the developer’s identification of lot lines, transmission infrastructure, and building locations and heights in the application;
2. The County Board failed to require a Special Use Permit, even though the development was outside the County’s Data Center Opportunity Zone;

What is Juneteenth? How to Celebrate in Northern Virginia

BY CAROLINE CHU

Juneteenth (also known as “Emancipation Day” or “Freedom Day”) is an annual holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. A portmanteau of the words “June” and “nineteenth,” Juneteenth earns its name from the historic day in 1865 when Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas to announce that African American slaves were free, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was decreed.

Although Juneteenth was only designated a federal holiday four years ago, it possesses a rich cultural history that spans centuries. After Granger’s announcement on June 19, 1865, celebrations localized in Galveston returned every year. These gatherings, often filled with prayer, music, and food, became important annual traditions for newly freed communities. These celebrations spread across Texas and eventually became prominent in other parts of the United States, coalescing into the modern, nationwide movement known today.

The push for the official recognition of the holiday surged after the summer of 2020, when nationwide protests against systemic racism and police

brutality broke out following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. On June 17 2021, President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law, making it the eleventh federal holiday; the decision had immense support from both sides of the aisle, as well as from civil rights groups such as the NAACP.

Today, Juneteenth is celebrated in cities and towns across America with parades, street fairs, cookouts, re-enactments, and educational events. In Galveston, the birthplace of the holiday, Juneteenth is celebrated jubilantly year-round. Attractions such as the Absolute Equality Mural, guided tours, an exhibit, and the “Freedom Walk,” a self-guided tour through five historic sites relevant to the holiday, provide visitors with an engaging myriad of activities through which they can deeply explore the significance of the holiday. In cities like At-



lanta and Washington D.C., organizers host parades, concerts, and food festivals. Red foods, including hibiscus drinks, barbecue, and red velvet cake, are both historic and current staples of the celebration. The color red is more than a flashy hue; it symbolizes resilience and sacrifice, as well as honors the cultural and West African roots of African Americans.

For Northern Virginians looking to celebrate Juneteenth, there is an abundance of local events taking place close to or on the holiday.

On June 5th, 12th, and 19th, the National Museum of the United States Army will be hosting a Juneteenth focused History Talk event that explores the role the U.S. Army played in the emancipation of slaves and honors the sacrifices of African American soldiers.

Fairfax City will be celebrating Juneteenth on June 14 from 10 AM to 2 PM

at Old Town Square. For more information, please visit the following Parks and Recs website at <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/juneteenth>

The National Museum of African American History and Culture, in conjunction with the Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, are organizing a genealogy program on June 14th. Through the program, visitors will conduct research on family trees whilst learning about the intricacies of African American genealogy.

On June 21st, Frying Pan Farm Park will be organizing a free Juneteenth event in order to explore the history of the free and enslaved African American members of the Frying Pan Baptist Meeting House. Visitors can attend tours that wind through the church and the surrounding grounds while learning about African American history.

The family day at George Washington’s Mount Vernon from June 19th to the 21st is an engaging opportunity to learn about the inspiring resistance of enslaved people before the Emancipation Proclamation. Among the activities offered, families can watch character performances, take tours of the estate, and attend a commemoration ceremony.

Celebrating Father's Day

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

Every year brings us Father’s Day when there is a mad rush to buy ties and socks while dads all across America wake up to master the grill. Okay, that dad joke was not that bad - you can laugh, ha!

Father’s Day is a heartfelt occasion dedicated to celebrating the men who have shaped our lives with strength, wisdom, and unwavering love. Falling on the third Sunday of June in many countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and India, this special day gives families a chance to honor and thank the father figures who play a vital

role in shaping families and communities.

The idea of Father’s Day originated in the early 20th century. Inspired by the success of Mother’s Day, Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, Washington, proposed the idea in 1909 to honor her father, a Civil War veteran who raised six children as a single parent. The first Father’s Day was celebrated on June 19, 1910. Though it took several decades to gain national recognition, it was officially declared a U.S. holiday by President Richard Nixon in 1972.

Father’s Day is now observed across the globe with various customs and traditions that reflect cultural values and fami-

ly dynamics. While the specifics may vary, the core sentiment remains the same: appreciation, love, and gratitude.

Let’s celebrate Father’s Day:

- ✓ Spending Quality Time: Whether it’s a backyard barbecue, a fishing trip, or simply a movie night, spending time together is often the most meaningful gift.
- ✓ Gifts and Cards: Personalized gifts, tools, tech gadgets, books, or handmade cards from kids are popular ways to show affection.
- ✓ Special Meals: Breakfast in bed, a favorite dinner, or a special outing to

dad’s favorite restaurant adds a personal touch.

- ✓ Public Tributes: Schools and community centers often host Father’s Day events, and many people take to social media to share tributes and cherished memories.

Father’s Day is a powerful reminder that love, responsibility, and support are at the heart of fatherhood. Whether celebrated with grandeur or quiet simplicity, the essence of the day lies in expressing love and appreciation. In a fast-paced world, taking a moment to say “thank you” to the fathers and father figures in our lives can mean more than we realize.

WorldPride DC Hosts Music Festivals, Sports Championships, and Art Exhibits

BY PHILLIP KIM

WorldPride 2025 comes to Washington, D.C., in celebration of its 50th anniversary between May 17 and June 8. Locals seeking exciting weekend activities can attend vibrant marquee events including electrifying music festivals, empowering marches, lively street parties, and cultural showcases.

“WorldPride is occurring at a crucial time,” the Capital Pride Alliance, the host of the event, wrote on their website. “We encourage everyone in our global community to participate in this historic moment.”

From May 23 to June 8, audiences can enjoy 50 different free choral concerts around the nation’s capital. Groups including Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington, D.C. (GMCW) will present diverse performances including premieres of new works.

Sports fans can register to participate in the Capital Cup Sports Festival



from May 28 to June 4. Athletes and spectators can celebrate pride through dodgeball, rugby, pickleball, volleyball, bocce, and swimming championships.

Participants have a chance to learn about civil rights activism at the WorldPride Human Rights Conference on June 4 through 6 at JW Marriott. One can register online for three days of inspirational lectures and advocacy workshops. Notable speakers include Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, Icelandic Minister of Industries Hanna Katrín Friðriksson, and model Yasmin Benoit.

The National Trans Visibility March

occurs from June 5 to 8, also at JW Marriott. Founded in 2019, the march calls for validation and protection of the transgender community. More information is available on ntvmarch.org.

WorldPride Music Festival takes place on June 6 and 7 at the RFK Festival Grounds. Global superstars Jennifer Lopez, Troye Sivan, Kim Petras, Paris Hilton, RuPaul, and more will headline two days of diverse performances.

WorldPride Parade commences on June 7 at 2 p.m. Participants will travel for 20 blocks spanning from 14th Street and T Street NW to Pennsylvania Avenue and 19th Street NW. The parade will be lined with floats, festive groups, and displays and is open to the public.

WorldPride Street Festival on June 7 and 8 along Pennsylvania Avenue offers two days of free music, artisan vendors, food courts, and beverage gardens. Headlined by DoeChii, the festival serves as a family-friendly event with a dedicated kids’ zone, Camp Pride.

On June 8 at 8:30 a.m., WorldPride will hold the International Rally at the Lincoln Memorial followed by March for Freedom to the U.S. Capitol building. The festivities will then ultimately conclude with a global celebration of the Street Festival and Closing Concert.

“Join the fight against hate and be part of ‘the Fabric of Freedom’ with thousands of community members, allies, and activists,” the organizers said.

Every day for the duration of WorldPride, attendees can head to the Welcome Center located on 737 7th Street NW for any and all information. The Welcome Center also features phone charging stations, lounge area, official merchandise, and curated art exhibit for all public to enjoy.

Locals interested in attending WorldPride Washington DC 2025 can gather more information from the event website at worldpridedc.org. While some events require prior registration, most events are open to the public.

250th Celebration of Washington Taking Command

**LOCATION:**
George Washington's Mount Vernon
3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway
Mount Vernon, VA 22121

**TIME:**
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**DATES:**
June 14, 2025

**PHONE:**
(703) 780-2000

Celebrate the 250th birthday of the U.S. Army and the historic moment when George Washington took command of the United States Army.

Visit an 18th-century military en-

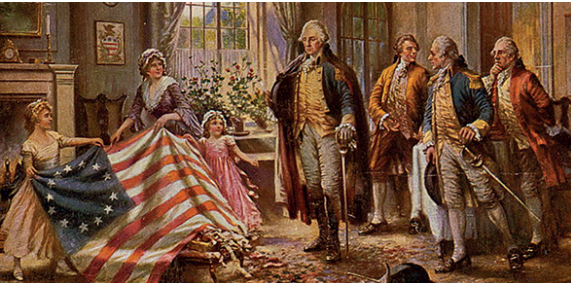
campment and witness military drills and firing demonstrations.

Plus, enjoy live patriotic music, a boat parade along the Potomac River, and a presentation with George Washington’s majestic horses.

INFORMATION

www.fxva.com/event/250th-celebration-of-washington-taking-command/43993/

FLAG DAY 2025



Almanac / Flag Day

HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE U.S. FLAG

January 1, 1776: The first United States flag, the “Grand Union,” was displayed by George Washington. It became the unofficial national flag, preceding the 13-star, 13-stripe version.

June 14, 1777: The Stars and Stripes were adopted by the Continental Congress as the Flag of the United States.

June 14, 1877: Flag Day was observed nationally for the first time on the 100th anniversary of the Stars and Stripes—and continues today.

June 14, 1937: Pennsylvania became the first state in the United States to celebrate Flag Day officially as a state holiday.

July 4, 1960: The new 50-star flag was flown for the first time—the flag that still flies today.

INFORMATION

www.almanac.com/content/flag-day-celebration-american-flag

Missing History in Virginia

BY CHAP PETERSEN
REPUBLICATED FROM
THEVIRGINIAATTORNEY.COM

I spent this weekend in Charlottesville celebrating the graduation of my daughter Mary Walton. Very proud of her.

In the colonial era, the town of Charlottesville and surrounding Albemarle County was the western frontier of Virginia. Beyond it lay the Blue Ridge mountains, the Shenandoah Valley and the fierce Shawnee Indians.

In 1777, in the midst of War with the British King, the Virginia legislature raised an army under George Rogers Clark, a militia captain and noted frontiersman. The mission was simple: protect the American settlers in far western Virginia (modern-day Kentucky) from the pillaging Shawnee, acting at the behest of the British general Henry Hamilton, who was called “the Hair-buyer” due to the sums he paid for American scalps, including women and children.

The ensuing campaign was one of the most impactful in American history. Clark’s small army tramped through the wilderness of western Virginia, then floated up the Ohio River till they reached the Wabash River in the winter of 1778. Deep in enemy country, holding their rifles above the freezing water to keep the powder dry, Clark’s men waded up the river. Reaching Hamilton’s fort at Vincennes, they attacked without warning, driving off the British and capturing the fort. Soon they controlled the entire Northwest Territory, beyond the Ohio River.

Having established his authority, Clark promptly made peace with the Shawnee, who recognized his martial skills by naming him “Long Knife.” That peace preserved the lives of hundreds of frontier settlers. In the Paris Treaty of 1783, the U.S. claimed all the land of the Northwest Territory, later forming the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan.

The campaign of George Rogers Clark made the fledgling United States a continental power, not just a few coastal colonies. A Century later, his achievements were commemorated by a hand-



<https://thevirginiaattorney.com/2025/05/19/missing-history-in-virginia/>

some statue along Main Street in Charlottesville, commending him as “Conqueror of the Northwest”.

A generation later, the United States had acquired the Missouri Valley through the Louisiana Purchase, thereby doubling the nation’s size. The territory was vast, lightly inhabited and completely unknown.

President Thomas Jefferson tapped his friend and Albemarle County neighbor, Meriweather Lewis, to lead an exploration and scientific study of the West. Knowing that there would be potential conflict, Lewis chose William Clark, a military officer and younger brother of George Rogers Clark, as his co-captain.

The Lewis and Clark expedition crossed the American continent to the Pacific Ocean while faithfully documenting the wildlife, mountain ranges and Indian tribes. For the first time, Americans visualized a “sea to shining sea” democratic empire. This was not a small thing.

In recognition of this local hero, the City of Charlottesville erected an downtown statue to Lewis and Clark, also depicting Sacajawea, the Shoshone native who joined the expedition and helped them negotiate a fragile truce as they crossed the Rockies.

Today, neither statue remains.
Each was deemed to be an example of “white supremacy” in 2021 and

thereupon removed by complacent local authorities. (Ironically these same authorities did not remove any statues of Thomas Jefferson or James Madison who both owned slaves and adopted slavery into

the U.S. Constitution).

Of course, modern America would not exist but for the efforts of men like Lewis and the Clarks. Empires are not created through philosophy lectures or Tupperware parties. It takes real humans who have a vision, put their lives at risk and impose their will on an uncertain outcome.

The birth of the United States, like every nation, was a violent affair. But it also had an extraordinary impact on world history. It has been the Land of Opportunity for hundreds of millions. It has been a breadbasket for the world’s hungry, a doctor to the world’s sick and a protector of billions faced by Fascism and Communism.

But for Lewis and the Clarks, none of this would have happened.

So why aren’t they recognized in Virginia?



**Gallery Talks:
Monthly Talks with Monticello
Experts**

From 1:00 PM - 1:45 PM
Albemarle County
Thomas Jefferson's Monticello
1050 Monticello Loop
Charlottesville, VA 22902

**June 20: Writing the Declaration
Emilie Johnson, Curator of Arts
and History**

While we celebrate the Declaration of Independence on July 4, the work of developing this world-changing document took place during the month of June. Emilie Johnson will explore the drafting phase of the Declaration of Independence, noting Thomas Jefferson’s inspi-

rations and the process of editing and approving the document.

**July 18: Jefferson's Phaeton Seat
Emilie Johnson, Curator of Arts
and History**

Taking a road trip this summer? Surely your vehicle has better climate control, gas mileage, suspension, and cupholders than Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 single-horse phaeton! Emilie Johnson will discuss this remarkable surviving example of one of Jefferson’s carriages in celebration of summer travels on the road.

INFORMATION

<https://va250.org/event-detail/?id=1495>

Response to Open Letter to Mayor and Council: George Snyder Trail

BY SHELLEY VANCE

 FAIRFAX CITY RESIDENT

I am responding to the article Open Letter to Mayor and Council: George Snyder Trail (Vol. 2 No. 5, May 2025) submitted by a city resident.

I, too, am a city resident and homeowner in the immediate neighborhood of the currently planned configuration of the George Snyder Trail (GST).

I disagree that there is an effort to stop the construction of the GST. I have been attending and speaking out at city

council meetings regularly since 2023, and have met no one who is against implementing some bike trail connectivity between Route 123 and Fair Woods Pkwy, and east to connect with Draper Dr. at Fairfax Blvd. The choice is not a bike trail or not; it's a question of the footprint of the GST.

For years, concerned citizens have been suggesting alternatives that preserve our trees by using Eaton Pl., Stafford Dr. Park, Stafford Dr., Cardinal Rd., Draper Dr. Park, and Fairfax Blvd. Just so you don't think I am a NIMBY resident, my personal favorite has been along the segment of Cardinal Rd. that runs right in front of

homes in my neighborhood where the GST is currently situated between Stafford Dr. and Cardinal (Ranger) Rd. Park. Cardinal Rd. is a paved street equipped with lights and no through traffic.

Among other advantages, these alternatives would prevent the disruption of our dwindling wetlands and the removal of roughly 600 trees over and above the nearly 500 that have recently been removed for the nearby stream restoration. (Contrary to the previous suggestion, no trees have yet been removed for the GST.)

I also think that the open letter mis-

represented how pedestrians and bicyclists would both use a GST situated along Fairfax Blvd. I don't believe the city is planning that the existing sidewalk will henceforth be used by bicyclists. The idea is to create a safe and parallel use if Fairfax Blvd is part of the ultimate configuration.

The city council voted 6-0 to pause the GST implementation in order for city staff to develop alternative GST configurations, and VDOT has agreed to consider them.

We all do better when we have a better trail.

Virginia Lawyers Can't Uphold Professionalism While Honoring a Segregationist

BY KARIN KISSIAH

 NEW SOUTH LAW, LLC

Every lawyer in Virginia must take a mandatory professionalism course as part of their bar admission, a course designed to teach integrity, fairness, and respect in the practice of law. Yet, in 2025, this course still bears the name of former Chief Justice Harry L.

Carrico—a man whose judicial legacy includes defending racial segregation and upholding laws that denied basic rights to Virginians.

For decades, Carrico sat at the top of Virginia's legal system. He was the author of *Loving v. Commonwealth*, the decision that upheld Virginia's ban on interracial marriage. His ruling sought to deny people the right to marry based on race, reinforcing the kind of systemic discrimination that held Virginia back for generations. If he had his way, some of us, and our neighbors, friends, and colleagues simply

wouldn't exist, let alone practice law in this state. And he was not merely a man of his time following the law—his decision was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court just a year later, making clear that he was on the wrong side of history even as he wrote it.

The legal system that governs every aspect of our lives still chooses to honor a justice who upheld exclusion rather than those who fought against it. For attorneys, sitting through a required course with his name on it reinforces an institutional history that should not be upheld. It signals that our full participation in the profession remains conditional—that we are permitted to be here, but the structures around us were not built with us in mind.

And this extends far beyond lawyers. If the legal profession is unwilling to acknowledge the harm caused by elevating figures like Carrico, what does that mean for the people who seek justice in our courts? What does it say to the communities whose rights have

long been denied when even a basic acknowledgment of history is seen as too much to Ask?

Attaching Carrico's name to a course on professionalism is more than a contradiction—it is an ongoing injury. It forces lawyers and the people we serve to confront, again and again, the reality that the legal system still protects its own history over those it is meant to serve.

This is not about erasing history. It's about recognizing it and demonstrating that Virginia's legal community is capable of growth. The Virginia State Bar has an opportunity to prove that it is not defined by its past but by its commitment to an inclusive profession. It's time to rename the course.

Karin Kissiah is a distinguished criminal defense attorney with over twenty years of experience in both trial and appellate courts. She has tried cases before juries in Georgia, Virginia, and the Military Commissions at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

THE BATTLE...

 From Page 25

3. The County Board failed to properly advertise the public hearing and then refused to defer it on December 12, 2023 – after the defect was pointed out – because it was the last hearing when the “lame duck” Board could act.

All these points were brought before the Circuit Court judge. In each case, the Court ruled that the Board's decision was “fairly debatable” and, therefore, any errors or omissions could be swept under the rug.

In terms of the notice, the Court went a step farther: it made a “factual finding” on October 31 that the failure of the County to advertise the hearing was due to an error by The Washington Post. There was no actual evidence on this point, either from the County or the Post. In fact, the FOIA records we uncovered showed that the notice had been prepared but never actually purchased.

Whose fault? Who knows?

Quite simply, the Circuit Court made a plain error in “finding” on this issue, without sworn testimony and actual evidence.

On June 24, I will argue the case to the Virginia Court of Appeals. And if we prevail, then ...

The Third Battle of Manassas is not yet over.

JCP Notes: On May 1, 2025, the Fairfax Bar Association celebrated “Law Day” at the offices of Weiner, Spivey & Miller, PLC. An annual event bringing together attorneys, judges, law enforcement officers, accordion players and beer trucks. What could go wrong?

Old Food Color, New Food Color

BY HANNAH LEE

Vibrant shades of red and blue are seemingly the trademarks of American candy. Such colors, however, do not occur naturally.

Synthetic dyes have been used to color American foods for decades, helping to provide the signature vivid appearances that most are familiar with. However, health advocates have long called for the removal of such dyes in food ingredients, citing their adverse health effects in the hyperactivity of children, potential cancer-causing risks, and a plethora of other issues. Dr. Peter Lurise, president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest,

spoke on this issue, stating, “Their only purpose is to make food companies money. Food dyes help make ultraprocessed foods more attractive, especially to children, often by masking the absence of a colorful ingredient, like fruit.”

This was addressed by U.S. health officials’ declaration to urge food makers to filter out the use of petroleum-based artificial colors in food production, specifically to eliminate the use of synthetic dyes by the end of next year. Rather than providing a formal agreement, health officials announced that they would rely on voluntary efforts from the food industry, and that the Food and Drug Administration would be establishing guidelines and a

timeline for the industry to swap synthetic dyes with natural alternatives, which have long been used by Canada and Europe. While this move is intended to promote the health of American children, it has not all been smooth sailing.

Despite claims regarding the health issues of synthetic dyes, the Food and Drug Administration has continued to state that scientific evidence supports the safe nature of foods containing color additives. Meanwhile, other associations have stated that the entire removal of such dyes by the end of 2026 will prompt other issues, such as a spike in grocery prices. Different angles to this complex issue have carried different arguments,

but the promised changes are likely to be noticeable soon.

The Food and Drug Administration announced that they would be initiating the process to revoke authorization for Citrus Red No. 2—which is commonly used to enhance the peel coloring of oranges—and Orange B—often used for sausage casings—within the approaching months. Meanwhile, they are working to entirely eliminate FD&C Green No. 3, FD&C Red No. 40, FD&C Yellow No. 5, FD&C Yellow No. 6, FD&C Blue No. 1, and FD&C Blue No. 2 by the end of next year. These dyes are prevalent in cereals, candies, beverages, chips, and other token items of American pantries.

How to Write a Gratitude Journal: A Simple Habit That Can Change Your Life

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

In an age marked by stress and constant stimulation, cultivating gratitude is more than just a trend—it’s a proven strategy for improving well-being. One of the most accessible tools for this is the gratitude journal, a low-cost, high-impact practice that anyone can begin with just a notebook and a few quiet minutes.

But how exactly does one write a gratitude journal? Experts say it’s not about perfection—it’s about presence.

Step 1: Choose Your Medium

Whether it’s a dedicated notebook, a digital app, or even a section in your planner, pick a format that feels natural to you. The key is consistency, not complexity.

Step 2: Set a Time

Designate a specific time each day to write—morning to set the tone, or evening to reflect. Consistency helps train the brain to scan for positivity throughout the day.

Step 3: Start Small

Begin with 3 to 5 things you’re grateful for. These can range from



major events (a promotion, a health milestone) to small joys (a hot shower, a kind word, a good meal). The goal is to notice the value in both the extraordinary and the mundane.

Step 4: Be Specific

Instead of writing “I’m grateful for my family,” try “I’m grateful for the way my sister called just to make me laugh today.” Specificity deepens emotional impact and helps your brain relive the moment.

Step 5: Reflect, Don’t Just List

Take a moment to reflect on why you’re grateful for what you wrote. How did it make you feel? What did it change in your day or mindset?

Step 6: Reread and Reconnect

On hard days, revisit past entries. The practice of rereading can be a powerful reminder of how far you’ve come and how much you’ve already received.

Why It Works

According to studies from Harvard Medical School and UC Berkeley, journaling gratitude can boost mood, improve sleep, strengthen relationships, and even support physical health. The act of writing slows the mind and helps anchor positive emotions.

Gratitude journaling isn’t about ignoring challenges. It’s about balancing them with perspective. In a world that often demands more, a few minutes of gratitude can offer something rare: enough.



Fairfax Saturday Market

Saturdays, May 10 – Oct. 25
9:00 am – 1:00 pm

10500 Page Avenue
Fairfax, VA

The Saturday Market is a large market with approximately 40 vendors. It was established more than 25 years ago by the Downtown Fairfax Coalition. It is a busy market with lots of activity. Customers can expect lines at the most popular vendors and sometimes early sell-outs of popular items. At this time, the Sunday Market is not open - we are considering opening it at a later date. If that happens, we will post on this site.

Driving, Bicycling, or Walking? Our market is easily accessible and located only a block from historic Old Town Fairfax. Lots of free parking. We are family and pet friendly so bring your kids and your pets (leashed). Picnic tables are available for onsite dining.

INFORMATION
www.fairfaxsaturdaymarket.com



June is National Employee Wellness Month

BY TANIA HOSSAIN

June is National Employee Wellness Month, a time dedicated to highlighting the importance of employee well-being and encouraging organizations to foster healthier workplace environments. This annual observance provides an opportunity for employers to assess and enhance their wellness programs, promoting physical, mental, and emotional health among employees.

Why Workplace Wellness Matters

Work is a central part of life for many, making the workplace an important area for promoting health. Over 150 million American workers are affected by chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and mental health issues. This leads to lower productivity and more missed workdays. In the past year, about 69 million workers missed work due to illness, totaling 407

million lost workdays. Fatigue alone costs \$136 billion annually in health-related productivity losses.

Benefits of Wellness Initiatives

According to the Corporate Wellness Magazine, implementing effective wellness programs can yield numerous advantages:

Enhanced Productivity: Healthier employees are more productive and less likely to miss work. For example, DuPont Corporation reduced health-related absenteeism by 14 days per year after initiating a wellness program.

Cost Savings: Wellness programs can lead to significant financial benefits. Employers save an average of \$1,000 annually for each employee who quits smok-



ing and \$1,200 for each employee who lowers their cholesterol to normal levels. Pacific Bell Telephone Company saved over \$2 million annually in absenteeism costs and \$4.7 million in disability leave expenditures through their wellness initiatives.

Improved Teamwork: Wellness programs foster camaraderie among employees. Group activities like fitness classes or walking meetings encourage collaboration and strengthen workplace relationships.

Celebrating National Employee Wellness Month

Encouraging Walking Meetings: Promote physical activity and creativity by holding meetings while walking.

Supporting Rest and Mindfulness: Allow

employees to take short breaks for relaxation or mindfulness exercises to reduce stress.

Providing Fitness Opportunities: Offer discounted gym memberships or on-site fitness classes to encourage regular exercise.

By prioritizing employee wellness, organizations not only enhance individual health but also improve overall productivity and morale. National Employee Wellness Month serves as a reminder of the value of investing in the well-being of the workforce.

At our newspaper office, we shuffle dance at our standup desks and eat our lunch with a friend or colleague. What is your favorite workplace wellness activity? Please feel free to comment online at <https://fairfaxindependentnews.press/employeewellness>

THE SEXUAL...
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The System That Fails Vulnerable Girls

Once girls enter the juvenile justice system, the challenges multiply. The facilities and programs meant to rehabilitate instead often re-traumatize. These girls face environments that lack the resources, expertise, and gender-responsive frameworks necessary to address their complex experiences of abuse and trauma. The system is frequently ill-equipped to identify the root causes behind their behaviors, exacerbating the cycle rather than breaking it.

The consequences of such systemic failures are particularly harsh for girls of color. Although African-American and Latina girls constitute a minority in the general youth population, they make up an overwhelmingly disproportionate share of girls in juvenile detention facilities. This overrepresentation is tied not to differences in behavior but to deep-seated racial and gender biases that misinterpret trauma responses as criminality.

Criminalizing Trauma – A Destructive Policy

The punitive response to girls' trauma-related behaviors—such as running away, substance use, or truancy—amounts to the criminalization of survival instincts. These behaviors are natural reactions to overwhelming abuse and violence. Instead

of receiving help, these girls are too often locked up, punished, and stigmatized, creating new layers of victimization in the form of incarceration and institutional trauma.

This cycle is not only unjust but also counterproductive. It diverts resources and attention away from the true problem – the sexual abuse and exploitation that these girls have endured. Instead of receiving trauma-informed care, mental health supports, and community-based interventions, they are swept up in a system that reaffirms and amplifies their victimization. The criminalization of girls' trauma-related behaviors, such as running away, substance use, or truancy, punishes survival instincts developed in response to abuse and violence. Instead of receiving necessary support like trauma-informed care and community-based interventions, these girls are often incarcerated, punished, and stigmatized, leading to further victimization through imprisonment and institutional trauma. This punitive cycle is unjust and counterproductive, diverting resources from addressing the root cause: the sexual abuse and exploitation these girls have suffered. The system, instead of offering help, often reaffirms and amplifies their victimization.

Breaking the Cycle: Recommendations for Change

The report doesn't merely diagnose the problem; it offers actionable policy recommendations that can dismantle the abuse to prison pipeline. Strengthening

federal protections, like the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and fully enforcing the Prison Rape Elimination Act are vital steps toward safeguarding these vulnerable girls (The Sexual Abuse To Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story, 2025).

Furthermore, the report calls for the implementation of gender-specific physical and mental health care in juvenile justice settings, including comprehensive reproductive and trauma-related health services. These are essential to recognizing girls' unique needs and fostering their healing and reintegration (The Sexual Abuse To Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story, 2025).

Equally important is the need to end the arrest and prosecution of girls under 18 for prostitution, which is, by federal law, a form of child sex trafficking. Every effort must be made to identify girls as survivors entitled to protection and support—not as criminals to be punished.

Finally, law enforcement and juvenile justice professionals require extensive training in gender bias and trauma-informed care to respond appropriately to the realities of girls' lives. Safe, supportive group homes and community services specifically designed for girls must be developed and expanded to provide alternatives to incarceration (Stell Simonton, 2015).

Toward a More Just Future

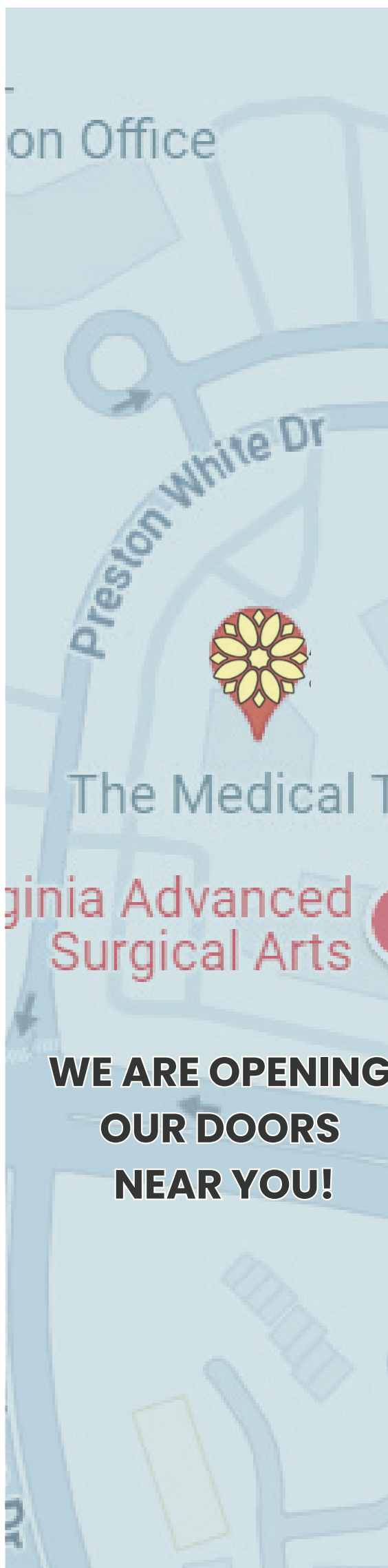
We cannot afford to turn a blind

eye any longer. The stories captured in The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story are more than statistics; they represent deeply human experiences marked by injustice and neglect. For every girl behind bars on a charge related to her victimization, there is an urgent call to shift our collective approach—from punishment to protection and healing.

This requires a systemic transformation—one that embraces trauma-informed, gender-responsive policies; invests in comprehensive health and social supports; and fundamentally rethinks how we treat the most vulnerable members of our society. Only by dismantling the sexual abuse to prison pipeline can we hope to ensure that no girl is further victimized by the very systems meant to protect her (The Sexual Abuse To Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story, 2025).

The time for action is now. Our communities—and our justice system—must recognize the imperative to care deeply about these girls' futures, listening not to labels but to their stories of survival and strength. It's a moral and practical responsibility we can no longer afford to ignore.

This analysis and call to action echo the foundational concerns from the The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story report, reminding us that the path forward is to treat girls not as criminals to be locked away but as survivors in need of understanding and support.



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