

Dedicated to
the Spirit and
Service of God

N.C.'s Twice-Weekly African-American Newspaper

RALEIGH, N.C.

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2022

Veteran Groups Seek Policy On Inequities

As a young man in Memphis, Tennessee, Robert Dabney Jr. wanted to blaze a path that could set his family up for a better life. So two weeks after high school graduation in 1998, at age 18, he joined the U.S. Army.

During nine years of service that included two tours in Iraq, Dabney was a combat medical

specialist. But after he left the Army in 2007 and returned to Memphis, married with children, he struggled to see what he'd gained from his service.

"I had exchanged my youth, ambition and vigor for a future that is limited just because of my mental health," said Dabney, who was diagnosed with post-

traumatic stress disorder and depression in 2013.

His experience seeking treatment through the veterans health care system was plagued with challenges, he said. After navigating the system as a Black veteran, he wondered if he might help others find more culturally competent services that the

federal government seemed ill-equipped to provide.

Testimony like Dabney's was being shared at the first-ever national policy conference for Black veterans in Washington on Thursday. Representatives from nearly 20 advocacy groups for service members of color were collaborating on a legislative agenda addressing longstanding racial, economic and social inequities facing more than 2 million Black American veterans.

"For many people from Black and brown (veterans) communities, we're starting from a different place in life," said Dabney, 42. "Being able to talk to people who started from that place, who have a mindset similar to yours as they went through the military, has a different meaning to us."

In addition to disparities in the military justice system, homelessness and unemployment, federal veterans benefits data show Black service members' post-Sept. 11 disability claims have been granted at lower rates than their white counterparts. Advocates say racial inequality in veterans' benefit access stifles or, worse, upends the lives of those who proudly served their country.

"The system isn't accommodating us, we're accommodating it," said Victor LaGroon, chairman

(See **INEQUITIES**, P. 2)



Morgan, 1st Black Lead Daytime Emmys Winner

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Mishael Morgan of "The Young and the Restless" won as lead drama actress, becoming the first Black actor to win in a lead category at the Daytime Emmys on Friday night.

Morgan was previously nominated in the supporting category. The 35-year-old from Trinidad and Tobago plays Amanda Sinclair on the CBS soap.

"I am being honored regardless of the color of my skin, regardless of my passport, for being the best at what I do," Morgan said. "Now there are little girls all around the world and they're seeing another step forward and they know that no matter their industry, no matter their vocation, no matter what, they can strive to be the best at what they do. Not only can they achieve it, but they will be celebrated."

John McCook earned lead actor honors for his role as Eric Forrester on CBS' "The Bold and the Beautiful." It was the 78-year-old's first win in four nominations.

"I am so glad to get this Emmy, any Emmy actually," he said. "General Hospital" won daytime drama honors, the ABC show's 15th triumph in the category. It was the fifth trophy earned by the show Friday.

Morgan is in her second stint on "Y&R." She first joined the soap in 2013 and stayed until 2018. She returned in 2019 as a different character.

"I am so immensely proud of our generation. We are breaking glass ceilings left, right and center, and I am so honored to be a

(See **1ST BLACK**, P. 2)

New Medicaid Expansion Pitch Surfaces

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina House Republicans pitched a plan Thursday that could authorize expanding Medicaid to hundreds of thousands of additional low-income adults, which their leader argued would bring more certainty to ensuring rural hospitals and substance abusers get help.

The legislation is being promoted by Speaker Tim Moore, who said it was a response to a wide-ranging health care access bill backed by GOP Senate leader Phil Berger that contains expansion and received overwhelming bipartisan support earlier this month.

Although many House Republicans don't like the Senate bill because it also contains too many controversial topics unrelated to expansion, Moore said he hoped offering an alternative would keep talks going.

"I don't know if the other chamber will agree to it or not," Moore told the House Health Committee, but "this is a way to move forward with a plan that I think will actually help at the end of the day without causing

the state any financial hit, and at the end of the day help those who need help the most."

Expansion has been intertwined with ongoing but separate negotiations between the House and Senate over proposed adjustments to the second year of a two-year state budget approved last fall. Berger has said Medicaid expansion ought to be inserted in the budget, something that Moore isn't willing to do.

Although lawmakers hope to end the legislative work session on or around July 1, the date the new fiscal year begins, they aren't required to adjourn. Moore and Berger met Thursday to work out difference that their lieutenants couldn't resolve. They said they still hoped to vote on budget legislation next week.

North Carolina is one of 12 states that haven't expanded Medicaid through what the federal 2010 Affordable Care Act offers to people making up to 138% of poverty guidelines. Republican legislative leaders were skeptical of expansion for years, saying they couldn't trust

Congress to keep covering 90% of the expenses. But that federal portion hasn't changed and the federal government has offered additional financial sweeteners that would give North Carolina an additional \$1.5 billion over two years to treat traditional Medicaid recipients.

Unlike the Senate proposal, the House plan doesn't accept expansion right away. Rather, it directs the state Department of Health and Human Services to develop

a "Medicaid Modernization Plan" that includes expansion.

A panel of 12 legislators would then review the plan in mid-December and make recommendations to the full General Assembly, which soon after "shall take action" to implement all or part of the plan in the form of legislation. Moore said he expected votes would be taken before a new edition of the General As-

(See **MEDICAID**, P. 2)

NNPA, Transformative Justice Coalition Announce National GOTV Campaign Targeting 10 Million More Black Voters

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA

Ahead of the all-important 2022 midterm elections, reports show that more than 55 million Americans remain unregistered to vote — and about 10 million

are African Americans who are eligible to vote but who are unregistered.

Whether the reason is because of apathy, suppression, or other means, the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and the Transformative Justice

Coalition seek to get to the bottom of why, with so much at stake, voter registration and GOTV mobilization remain lacking notably among Black Americans across the nation.

During the national convention marking the 195th-anniver-

sary celebration of the Black Press of America in New Orleans, leaders of both organizations announced a get-out-to-vote campaign aimed at registering and mobilizing GOTV for 10 million more African Americans to vote in time for the 2022 midterms.

"The NNPA has talked about the vote, and there is no better time for us to show our power," NNPA Chair Karen Carter Richards stated during the announcement at the national convention in the Big Easy.

"Let us take the lead and not be on the tail-end so we can show the present-day power of the Black Press," continued Richards, who publishes the Houston Forward Times.

"This is a great opportunity for us; we've got to make this happen." Attorney Barbara Arnwine, the founder, and president of the Transformative Justice Coalition, and her board chair and fellow lawyer Daryl Jones, told a captivated panel that their organization had recorded 72 voter suppression tactics to

(See **NNPA**, P. 2)



Justices End Roe, Now How Will Voters React?

WASHINGTON (AP) — The end of Roe v. Wade started in the Senate.

It was the Senate Republican partnership with President Donald Trump to confirm conservative judges, and transform the federal judiciary, that paved the way for the Supreme Court's landmark ruling to overturn the constitutional right to abortion.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell set the strategy in motion, engineering the Supreme Court's makeover by blocking President Barack Obama's 2016 nomination of then-Judge Merrick Garland and changing the Senate's rules to easily confirm Trump's picks. It was a long game that sought to lock in a conservative court majority for decades to come. Trump and McConnell, R-Ky., couldn't have accomplished it alone, needing the backing of almost all Republican senators to reshape the bench.

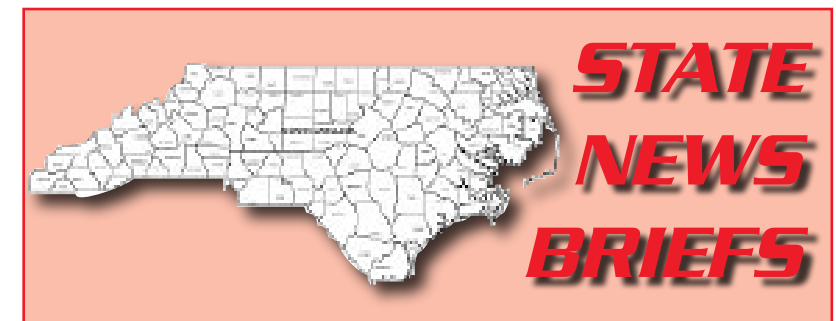
Now, Republicans are heading into a November midterm election that is poised to swiftly become a referendum on the court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, as voters decide which party should control Congress. With the nation polarized, Democrats are vowing legislation to protect abortion access and while Republicans want to impose further limits, including a nationwide ban on abortions.

"We are going to retake the Senate in November and we're going to hold the Senate for a long time," predicted Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., who celebrated the ruling on a conference call with reporters Friday.

The stakes are high with the control of Congress in the balance. With Biden's approval rating low and economic conditions grim with high gas prices and other signs of inflation, Republicans are favored to pick up seats in both chambers and regain control. Democrats have just a slim few-vote margin in the House and barely hold the evenly split 50-50 Senate because Vice President Kamala Harris casts a vote in case of a tie.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., warned that Republicans would be called to answer for their work and were planning even more draconian measures if they win control of Congress, including a nationwide ban on abortion.

"They cannot be allowed to do this," Pelosi said. "Make no mistake: The rights of women and all Americans are on the ballot this November."



POLICE IN CHARLOTTE SHOOT, SERIOUSLY INJURE ROBBERY SUSPECT

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Police in Charlotte say they shot and seriously injured an armed robbery suspect after he opened fire on officers.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department said it received a call Sunday before 1 p.m. about an armed robbery on Tuckasee Road.

Police say they encountered a suspect shot multiple times at officers, striking at least one patrol car.

Officers returned fire, and the suspect was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries.

(See **STATE BRIEFS**, P. 2)



Business & Finance

Piedmont Lithium Inc. Looks Abroad Amid NC Uncertainty

(Reuters) - Piedmont Lithium Inc.'s first steps toward securing lithium supplies will be in Quebec or Ghana, not the United States, as an intensifying North Carolina regulatory review delays the miner's goal of anchoring America's electric vehicle battery renaissance.

The delay has forced Piedmont to expand its strategy beyond its proposed North Carolina mine - a project it has touted as the best way to help secure American energy independence, but one that now faces a regulatory quagmire - and fund mines abroad. "We think two of our projects will happen faster than our Carolina Lithium project: Quebec and Ghana," said Chief Executive Keith Phillips. "The (North Carolina) regulators are doing a very good job. It's a rigorous process. It'll happen when it happens." Piedmont was founded in 2016 in Australia but moved its headquarters last year to North Carolina, where it hopes to dig a 500-foot-deep (150 m-deep) open-pit mine in a \$988 million project that would be one of the largest U.S. lithium mines.

The relocation was designed to be closer to EV manufacturing plants being built across the U.S. South by Toyota, SK Innovation and others.

Piedmont signed a deal in 2020 to begin supplying Tesla Inc

with lithium sometime between July 2022 and July 2023 from the North Carolina mine, but last year delayed the first shipments without a definitive date for when deliveries could begin.

Meanwhile, Albemarle Corp., the world's biggest lithium miner, is hiring staff and buying land in a neighboring North Carolina county as it mulls re-opening a mothballed spodumene lithium mine that would compete directly with Piedmont. REGULATORY QUESTIONS North Carolina regulators asked Piedmont in January for more detail on 12 points they felt were not adequately explained in the company's mining permit application, according to regulatory filings. Regulators asked Piedmont to explain how the proposed mine could affect water table levels, as well as how to modify mine site blasting on cloudy days to limit dust that could affect a nearby airport's operations. The state additionally has "many concerns" about Piedmont's plans to discharge chemicals into the public sewer system, according to the filings, and archaeologists have recommended that Piedmont erect a 25-foot buffer around four cemeteries at the mine site, a step that could force the company to change its development plans. Piedmont responded to the queries with more

than 1,000 pages of data, charts and other information that was posted to the state regulatory website on Wednesday afternoon.

Shares of Piedmont fell 5.5% to close Wednesday at \$46.38. While investor appetite for lithium stocks has been high in recent years, Piedmont has outperformed even among peers, hitting a record high near \$80 this past spring before softening. In March, it booked \$130.8 million in a secondary stock offering.

Seven analysts rate Piedmont stock a "buy" with all expecting it to trade higher, according to Refinitiv Eikon.

Piedmont said it has applied for U.S. Department of Energy loans, although the company would need to have its North Carolina permits before it would receive government support. The funds could not be used to dig mines in Quebec or Ghana. In January 2021, Piedmont bought a roughly 20% stake in Sayona and its Quebec lithium projects. First production is expected next year. Piedmont also took a 9% stake in Ghana-focused Atlantic Lithium, and committed to spending \$17 million on a feasibility study and \$70 million on building Atlantic's Ewoyaa lithium project. The market value of both investments has surged in the past year due in part to rising lithium prices. Piedmont will not operate



the mines in Quebec or Ghana but has agreed to buy at least half of each company's production of a lightly processed type of lithium known as spodumene concentrate.

"The potential for Piedmont to generate cash flow as early as 2023 is being overlooked by the market," said Canaccord Genuity

analyst Reg Spencer, referring to Quebec.

Pushback from residents and regulators is not Piedmont's only problem in North Carolina.

Albemarle, which supplies Tesla, appears set to reopen its Kings Mountain, North Carolina, mine in a mining-friendly county near Piedmont's proposed site.

In March, it bought 60 acres (25 hectares) that about that mine site, hinting at the company's future expansion plans. Albemarle has also recently posted job openings to help run the facility. Albemarle is conducting initial geological tests and the project could open by 2027, spokesperson Kim Ronkin Casey said.

Did Corporate Greed Fuel Inflation?

WASHINGTON (AP) — Furious about surging prices at the gasoline station and the supermarket, many consumers feel they know just where to cast blame: On greedy companies that relentlessly jack up prices and pocket the profits.

Responding to that sentiment, the Democratic-led House of Representatives last month passed on a party-line vote — most Democrats for, all Republicans against — a bill designed to crack down on alleged price gouging by energy producers.

Likewise, Britain last month announced plans to impose a temporary 25% windfall tax on oil and gas company profits and to funnel the proceeds to financially struggling households.

Yet for all the public's resentment, most economists say corporate price gouging is, at most, one of many causes of runaway inflation — and not the primary one.

"There are much more plausible candidates for what's going on," said Jose Azar an economist at Spain's University of Navarra.

They include: Supply disruptions at factories, ports and freight yards. Worker shortages. President Joe Biden's enormous pandemic aid program. COVID-19-caused shutdowns in China. Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And, not least, a Federal Reserve that kept interest rates ultra-low longer than experts say it should have.

Most of all, though, economists say resurgent spending by consumers and governments drove inflation up.

The blame game is, if anything, intensifying after the U.S. government reported that inflation hit 8.6% in May from a year earlier, the biggest price spike since 1981.

To fight inflation, the Fed is now belatedly tightening credit aggressively. On June 15, it

raised its benchmark short-term rate by three-quarters of a point — its largest hike since 1994 — and signaled that more large rate hikes are coming. The Fed hopes to achieve a notoriously difficult "soft landing" — slowing growth enough to curb inflation without causing the economy to slide into recession.

For years, inflation had remained at or below the Fed's 2% annual target, even while unemployment sank to a half-century low. But when the economy rebounded from the pandemic recession with startling speed and strength, the U.S. consumer price index rose steadily — from a 2.6% year-over-year increase in March 2021 to last month's four-decade high.

For a while at least — before profit margins at S&P 500 companies dipped early this year — the inflation surge coincided with swelling corporate earnings. It was easy for consumers to connect the dots: Companies, it seemed, were engaged in price-gouging. This wasn't just inflation. It was greedflation.

Asked to name the culprits behind the spike in gasoline prices, 72% of the 1,055 Americans polled in late April and early May by the Washington Post and George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government blamed profit-seeking corporations, more than the share who pointed to Russia's war against Ukraine (69%) or Biden (58%) or pandemic disruptions (58%). And the verdict was bipartisan: 86% of Democrats and 52% of Republicans blamed corporations for inflated gas prices.



After Roe, Democrats Seek Probe Of Technology Co's Use Of Personal Data

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the Supreme Court ending the constitutional protections for abortion, four Democratic lawmakers are asking federal regulators to investigate Apple and Google for allegedly deceiving millions of mobile phone users by enabling the collection and sale of their personal data to third parties.

The decision Friday by the court's conservative majority to overturn Roe v. Wade is expected to lead to abortion bans in about half the states. Privacy experts

say that could make women vulnerable because their personal data could be used to surveil pregnancies and shared with police or sold to vigilantes. Online searches, period apps, fitness trackers and advice helplines could become rich data sources for such surveillance efforts.

The request for an investigation of the two California-based tech giants came Friday in a letter to Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan. It was signed by Democratic Sens. Ron Wyden of

Oregon, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Cory Booker of New Jersey, and Rep. Sara Jacobs of California. It was sent shortly before the Supreme Court announced its decision overturning the 1973 precedent and noted that the court was likely to do so.

"Individuals seeking abortions and other reproductive healthcare will become particularly vulnerable to privacy harms, including through the collection and sharing of their location data," the lawmakers said in the letter.



Illinois Governor's Race Is Also Battle Among Billionaires

WAUCONDA, Ill. (AP) — The race to be Illinois' next governor is also a battle among billionaires, including two whose names won't appear on Tuesday's primary ballot.

Republican candidates Darren Bailey, who as a state lawmaker fought pandemic measures such as mask mandates, and former prosecutor Richard Irvin, the first Black mayor of Chicago's largest suburb, each has a benefactor who has pushed a different vision for the GOP and put their money behind it.

Billionaire businessmen Ken Griffin and Richard Uihlein — among the country's biggest Republican donors — have combined to pour more than \$60 million into the race. Griffin backs Irvin and Uihlein supports Bailey.

Billionaire Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker, meanwhile, along with the Democratic Governors Association, has spent millions trying to ensure Irvin, an Army veteran and Aurora mayor, isn't the GOP nominee.

The money has funded a monthslong barrage of ads that have attacked Irvin and propped up Bailey, the opponent Pritzker would rather face in November. The ads note Bailey's strident far-right positions, including being "100% pro-life," and his allegiance



Republican candidate for Illinois governor Richard Irvin speaks with employees during a tour of HM Manufacturing Inc. in Wauconda, Ill., June 21, 2022. Irvin is seeking the Republican nomination to face Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker in November. AP Photo

to former President Donald Trump — qualities that may help Bailey in a Republican primary but would be a liability for a general election in a state Trump twice lost by double digits. Trump endorsed him at a rally Saturday night in Mendon.

Although rich men in politics certainly aren't rare, there may never have been a battle of the billions to match this one in a state election, particularly in a primary. It's left Irvin, once considered

the front-runner, scrambling to convince GOP primary voters that he's the only one who can beat Pritzker.

"J.B. Pritzker is telling you that every time he takes out an ad. He's telling you that 'This is the guy I'm the most most afraid of,'" Irvin said during a stop at an Illinois manufacturing plant.

Irvin's downfall may be a record that is considerably more moderate than that of his GOP rivals.

Unlike Bailey and the four other men in the race, Irvin avoids saying if he voted for Trump or talking much about issues such as abortion, focusing instead on steps he would take to reduce crime and taxes. He has been criticized for saying "Black Lives Matter" during protests over police brutality that turned destructive in his hometown, then filming a TV ad where he said "All Lives Matter."

Bailey has built a reputation during three years in the Legislature as an uncompromising conservative unafraid to take people on.

"People say J.B. Pritzker wants me to win this primary because he believes that I'm the easiest opponent to beat," Bailey said during a campaign stop at a restaurant. "Well, I've got news for J.B. Pritzker: Be careful what you wish for because it's coming. Friends, we're going to win on Nov. 8."

Bailey, a farmer from rural Xenia, jumped onto the statewide scene in summer 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he filed a lawsuit against Pritzker over a stay-at-home order the governor issued to slow transmission of the virus. Bailey was seen by supporters as a maverick when he was escorted from the floor of the Legislature for refusing to wear a mask in defiance of Democratic leaders. His backers

like that he speaks often of his faith. Bailey, who speaks with a prairie twang, ends his nearly daily online video messages with prayer.

"He's a godly man. He isn't afraid to put his faith out there," said supporter Ruth Bast, 63, of Springfield.

The three billionaires — Pritzker, Griffin and Uihlein — have a long history of clashing politically in Illinois and elsewhere.

Griffin, the founder and CEO of

hedge fund company Citadel, has been a vocal critic of Pritzker's administration, particularly over the issue of crime in Chicago. In addition to the \$50 million he gave Irvin this cycle, he also spent millions to help get former Gov. Bruce Rauner elected in 2014 and on Rauner's loss to Pritzker in 2018. He bankrolled a successful campaign to block Pritzker and other Democrats from changing Illinois' tax structure to levy more on the highest earners.

Classifieds



ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety has the following contract in Greene County out for bid: C-11488 Greene CI Roofing Repairs. The bid opening is scheduled for: Thursday, 08/04/2022. To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://www.ips.state.nc.us/ips/AGENCY/PDF/14886800.pdf>