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the Spirit and  
Service of God

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## 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 LaGroom, 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)



## STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

Police say a firearm was uncovered on scene. No officers were injured.

**NC DOCTOR INDICTED IN MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SCHEME**  
CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — A North Carolina doctor has been indicted in connection with a scheme that defrauded federal programs of more than \$11 million, a U.S. attorney said.

Dena J. King, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, said in a news release that Sudipta Mazumder, 46, of Charlotte, is charged with six counts of making false statements relating to health care matters and a single count of health care fraud.

The indictment says that during 2019 and 2020, Mazumder was a doctor in Charlotte and worked as an independent contractor for a Delaware-based telemedicine company. During that time, Mazumder allegedly signed fraudulent orders for knee braces, leading to the filing of thousands of fraudulent reimbursement claims to Medicare and TRICARE.

According to the indictment, Mazumder falsely stated in those orders that she performed medical examinations of Medicare and TRICARE patients and falsely certified that the braces were medically necessary. Mazumder never examined the Medicare and TRICARE beneficiaries, and had little to no interaction with them, the indictment said.

Instead, prosecutors said, Mazumder received from the telemedicine company unsigned orders for orthopedic braces, which she signed and returned to the telemedicine company in exchange for \$20 for each purported assessment that she performed.

#### TRANS PEOPLE CAN CORRECT SEX ON NORTH CAROLINA BIRTH RECORDS

Transgender people born in North Carolina may now correct the sex designation on their birth certificate without undergoing surgery after a consent judgment issued by a federal court, attorneys for the plaintiffs said Thursday.

"This is a victory for all transgender people born in North Carolina that will help enable them to navigate life with safety and dignity," Omar Gonzalez-Pagan, counsel at Lambda Legal, said in a news release.

North Carolina's requirement that transgender people undergo sex reassignment surgery as part of establishing their identity was at the center of a lawsuit filed on behalf of an adult and two minors in U.S. Middle District Court in North Carolina last November.

Among the defendants named in the case was Kody Kinsley, secretary of the state Department of Health and Human Services. The department, which agreed to the consent judgment, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

A consent agreement is issued by a judge and is based on an agreement between the parties to a lawsuit to settle the issue. It's aimed at ending the litigation with an enforceable judgment. It is not construed as acknowledgment, admission or evidence of liability by the defendants, according to the document, and it cannot be used as evidence of liability in any current or future proceeding.

The lawsuit said adult plaintiff Lillith Campos is incorrectly identified on her birth certificate as male. It also said another plaintiff, a young man identified in the lawsuit as C.B., is incorrectly identified as female on his birth certificate while M.D., is a girl incorrectly identified on her birth certificate as male.

"I'm pleased to see this day happening, that the State of North Carolina now must recognize us for who we are," said Campos, a transgender woman born in North Carolina. "It was outrageous and dehumanizing that I was denied a birth certificate just because I didn't have surgery."

C.B., a 17-year-old, applauded the judgment, as did the mother of plaintiff M.D., the news release said.

"I'm glad that my daughter will be able to correct and align all her documentation that will allow her to avoid discrimination or exclusion at school, college, sports, or government agencies," the mother said. "No child or family should have to go through this trauma just because the government doesn't want to recognize transgender people for who they are."

Under the consent judgment, the state Department of Health and Human Services and other state government officials must provide accurate birth certificates that reflect an applicant's sex, consistent with their gender identity, without having to undergo surgery, a news release said.

Specifically, a transgender person born in North Carolina may correct the sex designation on their birth certificate by submitting a sworn statement, accompanied by a passport, a state-issued identification, or certification issued by a licensed health care professional, social worker or case manager that confirms the person's gender identity.

#### NORTH CAROLINA SPORTS BETTING LEGISLATION FALTERS IN HOUSE

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Legislation that would have authorized sports betting across all of North Carolina fell apart late Wednesday as the House narrowly rejected a key measure amid warnings about the dangers of gambling from an unusual coalition of social conservatives and liberal Democrats.

The House voted 51-50 not to approve one of two measures that, when combined, would have established the rules to authorize and regulate gambling on professional sporting events and out-of-state horse racing.

Prospects already looked shaky earlier Wednesday when the House voted by a similar 51-50 margin for a supplemental measure that would have mostly made changes to a separate, comprehensive bill unveiled last year that laid out the structure of how sports betting would be conducted. The supplemental measure focused on how gambling license operators would have been taxed and where the proceeds would have gone.

Several critics of the measures said state sanction of sports betting would create gambling addicts, leading to increases in theft, embezzlement and people deep in debt.

# Policy On Inequities—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of the Black Veterans Empowerment Council, which organized Thursday's conference. "We've got to have these systemic and legislative discussions because, until there's full transparency and accountability, people are going to continue to skirt the issues."

Slated speakers include the secretaries of the Veterans Affairs and Labor departments, as well as officials from some state and local veterans service agencies.

Richard Brookshire, a former Army combat medic who served in the Afghanistan War, said a major goal is to help the Black veterans community coalesce around "what's actionable" in a broader agenda that also targets historic inequity dating back to Black veterans serving in World War II.

"There needs to be a criti-

cal mass in the Black veteran community to demand it," said Brookshire, who co-founded the Black Veterans Project. "The seed has been planted and we're going to begin to see the tree bear fruit."

The Black Veterans Empowerment Council was formed in 2020 amid the national reckoning that followed the murder of George Floyd by police, as a roundtable of Black veterans groups to advise the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Council members said part of their work has been acquiring data to prove how Black veterans have unequal access to the benefits system.

According to Veterans Benefits Administration records analyzed by the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School and reviewed by The Associated Press, there are statistically significant differences

in disability claim outcomes for Black and white veterans. Although disability claim approval rates are low across the board, they are significantly lower for Black veterans.

Between 2002 and 2020, Black veterans had the lowest claim approval rate, at 30.3%, when compared to their non-Black counterparts. White veterans had 37.1% of their claims approved, while Hispanic veterans had an approval rate of 36% and Asian or Pacific Islander veterans had a rate of 30.7%.

Linda Mann, co-founder of the African American Redress Network at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, led a group of students that did an additional analysis on the benefits data. According to their findings, disparities in how Black veterans are rated on the severity of their condi-

tion amounted to lower disability compensation and decreased eligibility for other VA benefits.

These findings build on historic racial inequities in veterans benefits that stretch back to integration of the armed services in the late 1940s. Black service members who fought in World War II were either denied or prevented from taking full advantage of housing and educational benefits through the GI Bill. Black veterans of the Korean War had similar experiences with the program. Advocates say the generational effects of that discrimination, in terms of wealth, are still being felt today.

"What most people would usually say is we went through the civil rights movement and things are better," Mann said, but that was not borne out by the Freedom of Information Act statistics the advocacy groups received.

# New Medicaid Expansion—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sembly takes its seats in early 2023.

Though Moore said it's possible legislators still will reject the expansion plan, he called the proposal the best approach he's seen to help them understand what expansion is expected to accomplish. Otherwise, "they really don't know what they're voting for. They're buying a car without a test drive."

The idea would be for DHHS, an agency in Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's administration, to

negotiate with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on a Medicaid plan for North Carolina that would meet at least eight designated benchmarks. They would include projections that the existing state Medicaid program would save money, proposals to increase preventive health care and medical services in rural areas, and spending \$1 billion of the \$1.5 billion to address the state's "opioid, substance abuse and mental health crisis."

Berger is skeptical of the House proposal, pointing out that a legislative commission already studied expansion and other health care access issues earlier this year.

"So, the House has gone from 'No,' to 'Let's study it again,'" he said in a written statement. "It is past time for action."

Rep. Jimmy Dixon, a Duplin County Republican and Medicaid expansion skeptic, said Thursday that he thinks the proposal "threads the needle, and I'm will-

ing to support this approach," he said. The committee didn't take a vote Thursday.

Cooper has been a strong Medicaid expansion advocate since taking office in 2017, going so far as to veto a 2019 budget bill because expansion wasn't addressed. That led to a spending stalemate with Moore and Berger that never got fully resolved. Cooper would be asked to sign Moore's bill or any expansion plan approved by legislators that reaches his desk.

# Morgan, 1st Black Lead—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

vessel and experience this moment," she said. "It's because of everybody who is out there today who is proving to the world that we can and we will do this thing called equality and unity together."

Three "General Hospital" stars won honors and the soap's directing team won for the third consecutive year.

Kelly Thiebaud was chosen supporting actress for playing Dr. Britt Westbourne and Jeff Kober scored as supporting actor for his role as Cyrus Renault. Nicholas Chavez won as younger performer in the soap.

"Wow!" Chavez said. "Just a little over a year ago I was selling cars in a little beach town

in Florida. I always had the love and support of my family, but none of us had ever dreamed I'd be up on this stage."

A gleeful Thiebaud won on her first nomination.

"I cannot believe this. I am so shocked," she said. "My brother, when I first started acting, he followed my work and he's like, 'You're not that good.' So thank you for giving me something to rub in his face."

Kober is known for his extensive film and primetime work on such shows as "Sons of Anarchy" and "The Walking Dead."

"Wow, thank you for making me feel so welcome in daytime. What a trip," he said. "I love what we get to do for a living, it's play."

NBC's "Days of Our Lives" won for writing team.

Kelly Clarkson earned her third consecutive trophy as entertainment talk show host. Her eponymous show also won its second straight trophy for entertainment talk show. The singer is spending the summer with her children and didn't attend.

Tamron Hall picked up her second straight trophy as informative talk show host.

Steve Harvey of "Family Feud" won as game show host.

"Jeopardy!" won game show honors.

"Jeopardy!" is a show about facts," executive producer Michael Davies said. "Facts, with everything going on in the world,

are more important than ever. 'Jeopardy!' is the last place where everyone agrees about facts."

Daytime doyenne Susan Lucci, who starred on "All My Children" during the show's entire 41-year network run, received a standing ovation. She introduced the In Memoriam segment, which included a photo of her husband, Helmut Huber, who died in March. Michael Bolton crooned his hit "How Am I Supposed to Live Without You."

John Aniston of "Days of Our Lives" was honored with a lifetime achievement award for his 37-year role as Victor Kiriakis. The 88-year-old actor wasn't present.

# NNPA, GOTV Campaign—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

prevent a large population from casting ballots.

Among them are strict voter laws in many Republican-led states, deceptive practices like robocalls; early voting cuts; and voter intimidation.

"Black voters did our share in 2020," Arnwine remarked.

"Ninety-three percent of all eligible Black voters registered in Georgia. Yet, in the 2021 Georgia Senate run-off, 93 percent of all registered Black voters turned out. That's why people don't understand where the real power is."

Along with NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., Richards, NNPA Executive Board members Janis Ware, Fran Farrer, Cheryl Smith, and Jackie Hampton, Arnwine and Jones announced that the groups would utilize a multivehicle "voterade" to get out the vote.

They said individuals riding in new and COVID-safe tour buses would hit swing states ahead of the November elections to register and mobilize GOTV for 10 million new Black voters.

Chavis said artists from Roc Nation, the company run by hip-hop magnate and business mogul Jay-Z, would accompany the voterade in some cities.

Music superstar Stephanie Mills also pledged to "get on the bus with the Black Press and the Transformative Justice Coalition."

Chavis said he's convinced other celebrities will also join the national GOTV campaign.

"The first form of voter suppression is self-suppression," Dr. Chavis asserted.

"This last primary election showed that some of us were keeping ourselves from voting. There are 55 million unregistered Americans eligible to vote, and 10 million are African Americans," Chavis continued.

"What if those 10 million were registered? We wouldn't have worried about Donald Trump or the craziness of what the U.S. Supreme Court is doing now. Elections have consequences. The overturned Roe v. Wade, the overturned gun laws — are consequences of elections."

With more than 235 African American-owned newspapers and media companies serving as members, the NNPA represents the Black Press of America.

The Transformative Justice Coalition's mission includes the systematic change that achieves racial justice, gender, economic and social justice, and human rights through public education and engagement initiatives that attend equally to hearts and minds as well as the social systems and structure in which they exist.

Further, the coalition dedicates itself to informed civic engagement and equal voting rights for everyone.

They use a voting rights map of shame to inform the public of threats to America's democracy, how to protect their voting rights, and steps to take to ensure the ability to cast a ballot and make sure it's counted.

The organization also seeks the restoration of voting rights for ex-felons.

"[Anti-voting rights organizations and individuals] have

trained 10,000 people to be poll disruptors to go to only Black polling sites," Arnwine declared.

"They're not sending them to white polling sites, and if you watched the [Jan. 6] hearings, this is a concentrated effort to disempower Black voters," she stated.

According to Davis, more than 18 million people are eligible to vote but don't know it.

"They are the felony disenfranchised," Davis insisted.

"They are confused. It's intentionally done in various states. For example, in some states, you never lose your right to vote, and in some states, you can run for office if you're incarcerated," he explained.

The voterade would help educate voters and explain what's legal, among other things. "We're calling on all 235 NNPA members," Dr. Chavis encouraged.

"That call and response from our brothers and sisters are vital. It's movement time, it is time Get-Out-The-Vote" he declared further.

# NC Officials Identify First Case Of Monkeypox

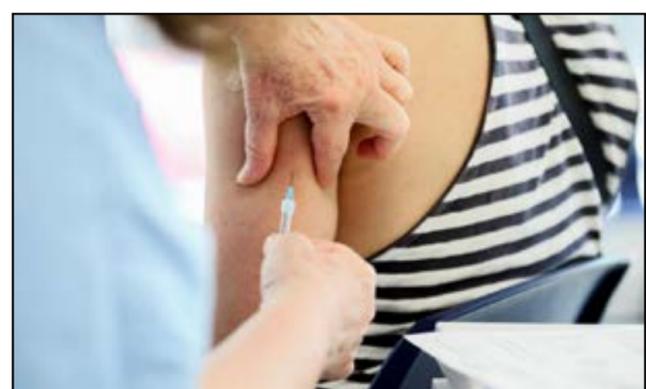
The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is reporting the first case of monkeypox virus infection in a North Carolina resident, identified by testing at the State Laboratory of Public Health. Monkeypox is a rare but potentially serious, viral illness that typically involves flu-like symptoms, swelling of the lymph nodes and a rash that includes bumps that are initially filled with fluid before scabbing over. Illness could be confused with a sexually transmitted infection like syphilis or herpes, or with varicella zoster virus (chickenpox). Most infections last two to four weeks.

NCDHHS is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, relevant local health departments and the patient's health care providers to identify and notify individuals who may have been in contact with the patient while they were infectious. Monkeypox is typically spread by skin-to-skin contact. The person is currently isolating at home. No further information will be shared about this case to protect the patient's privacy.

Since May 2022, 3,308 monkeypox cases have been identified outside of endemic regions worldwide, with 156 cases identified in the United States. There have been no deaths related to this outbreak. Epidemiologic investigation of these cases is ongoing. Information about international cases is available from the World Health Organization and information about U.S. cases is available from the CDC.

"The number of monkeypox cases has been growing in the U.S. and globally," said Dr. Zack Moore, State Epidemiologist and Epidemiology Section Chief. "Though this is the first confirmed case in North Carolina, we know there are likely other cases in the state. We are encouraging doctors to consider this in people who have a rash or skin lesion that looks like monkeypox."

Monkeypox is transmitted person to person through direct skin-to-skin contact, having contact with an infectious rash, through body fluids or through respiratory secretions. Such contact often occurs during pro-



A monkeypox vaccination administered at a clinic in Montreal earlier this month. PHOTO: CHRISTINNE MUSCHI/REUTERS

longed, face-to-face contact or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling or sex. While anyone can get monkeypox, in the current outbreak, many of the cases are in men who have sex with men.

People can take basic steps to prevent the spread of monkeypox. If you have an unexplained rash, sores or other symptoms,

see your health care provider — if you don't have a provider or health insurance, visit a public health clinic near you. Keep the rash covered and avoid sex or being intimate with anyone until you have been checked out. Standard household cleaners and detergents are effective at cleaning environmental surfaces and linens.

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Phone: 919-834-5558

e-mail: info@caro.news

www.caro.news

Facebook: TheCaroNews

Twitter: TheCaroNews

# 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>