Carolinian

Dedicated to the Spirit and Service of God N.C.'s Twice-Weekly African-American Newspaper

RALEIGH, N.C.

Black Maternal Health Week Pushes For Maternal Equity

increased significantly in the US, with Black women dying at a rate 3-4 times higher than non-Hispanic white women 1. This issue is alarming, as the maternal death rate among Black women in the US was already one of the highest among industrialized nations and has nearly doubled between 2018 and 2021 2. Helping to increase awareness of this issue, The Bump, a leading multi-platform brand for pregnancy and parenting, announced the expansion of the Reclaiming Your Power vodcast series within its Black Maternal Health Hub. The series features discussions and inspiring stories from notable Black women such as Olymbestselling author and founder the US. of Mama Glow Foundation, highlights how Black women that disproportionately affects



"The maternal mortality

pian Sanya Richards-Ross and outcomes for Black mothers in raise awareness and educate parents about this issue," said Jen Lee, Head of Marketing at Latham Thomas. The series health crisis is a pressing issue The Bump. "The Black Maternal Health Hub aims to inform,

rates while encouraging Black families to focus on the joy and celebration of expanding their families. We are committed to providing authentic and inclusive content to ensure that all parents, especially Black parents, feel emboldened to receive the care and support they need to thrive during and after

In partnership with the National Medical Association, The Bump launched its Black Maternal Health Hub in 2021 to provide resources, advice and insights for expecting Black parents. The hub features educational and first-person content aimed at helping raise awareness of the maternal mortality crisis and empowering Black audiences.

The Bump vodcast series Reclaiming Your Power expanded last week with the launch of



Over his 32-year police career in Dallas, Terrance Hopkins has seen tremendous changes in the profession. For rookie Black officers in a predominantly white and conservative field, he said, the prevailing feeling used to be that you were lucky to be allowed on the force.

Now, it is not unusual to see veteran Black officers in top leadership roles. But the issues that plague the profession's reputation in Black communities excessive uses of lethal force, racial profiling and routine brutality from officers — have not become relics of the past under diverse leadership. That reality has been laid bare by the beating death of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee, and the incustody restraint death of Irvo Otieno that involved Virginia sheriff's deputies.

Part of the problem is that too many Black police leaders "walk on eggshells" about addressing bad policing and racism in the force, said Hopkins, the outspoken president of the Black Police Association of Dallas who serves as a tactical special events planner for the city's department.

"You're still in a conservative, white male-dominated profession and these guys still have to buy into you. If they don't buy job," he said.

Very few, if any, Black police chiefs believe their mere presence subverts systemic racism Associated Press. in the profession. But as the



Bryant retired as Atlanta's police chief in June 2022.

ment professionals leading major police departments increases, so do the opportunities to show that diversity on the force into you, they're calling for your can foster better relationships, make policing fairer, and save more Black lives, current and former police leaders told The

"Sometimes it does seem like

number of Black law enforce- an unfair burden that, just because (a chief) comes in who is African American, decades of mistrust are just going to melt away," said Brenda Goss Andrews, president of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and a former deputy chief of the Detroit Police Department.

"You're not going to be able to

solve that quickly and, in some cases, if at all," she said. "But the key thing is that you have to take the time to talk to the community and see what's going on."

This weekend, Black police chiefs, commissioners, sheriffs and commanders from across the country will gather in De-

(See BLACK CHIEFS, P. 2)



SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 2023

Shooting At Alabama Birthday Party Kills 4 People, Wounds 28

DADEVILLE, Ala. (AP) — Alabama law enforcement officers Sunday were imploring people to come forward with information about a shooting that killed four people and injured 28 others during a teenager's

Among those killed was a high school senior who planned to play college football and was celebrating his sister's 16th birthday. The shooting erupted Saturday night at a dance studio in downtown Dadeville.

During two news conferences Sunday, Sgt. Jeremy Burkett of the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency did not take questions. He did not say if a suspect was in custody or if investigators knew about any motivation. He did not provide the names of those killed.

'We've got to have information from the community," Burkett said during a Sunday evening news conference.

Philstavious "Phil" Dowdell, a Dadeville High School senior who had committed to Jacksonville State University, was celebrating at his sister Alexis' party before he was shot to death, his grandmother Annette Allen told the Montgomery Advertiser.

"He was a very, very humble child. Never messed with anybody. Always had a smile on his face," Allen told the newspaper, calling it "a million-dollar smile."

Dowdell's mother was among those hurt in the shooting.

"Everybody's grieving," Allen said. Burkett said the shooting occurred about 10:30 p.m. Saturday. "There

were four lives tragically lost in this incident," he said.

The shootings rocked the city of 3,200 residents, which is about 57 miles northeast of Montgomery, Alabama.

Keenan Cooper, the DJ at the party, told WBMA-TV that the party was stopped briefly when attendees heard someone had a gun. He said people with guns were asked to leave, but no one left. Cooper said when the shooting began an hour later, some people took shelter under a table where he was standing, and others ran out.

Pastor Jason Whetstone, who leads the Christian Faith Fellowship, said the granddaughter of one of his church members was shot in the foot and underwent surgery Sunday.

"All of our hearts are hurting right now. We're just trying to pull together to find strength and comfort," Whetstone said before an interfaith vigil in the parking lot of First Baptist Church.

'We are a loving community," he said. "We're pulling together in every aspect to comfort each and every one of these children, the teachers, all of the community.'

Dadeville's compact downtown is centered around a courthouse square with one- and two-story brick buildings. The town's busiest commercial district is a few blocks north of the square, off a bustling fourlane highway that runs between Birmingham and Auburn. Dadeville is close to Lake Martin, a popular recreational area. Investigators on Sunday continued filing in and out of the Mahogany

Masterpiece dance studio, denoted by a banner hanging on the outside of a one-story brick building just off the square. Less than a block away, the American and Alabama flags were lowered to half staff outside the Tallapoosa County Courthouse.

Dadeville Mayor Frank Goodman said he was in bed asleep when a council member called him just before 11 p.m. Saturday. He said he went to Lake Martin Community Hospital in Dadeville, where some of the people who had been shot were taken.

"It was chaotic," Goodman said. "There were people running around. They were crying and screaming. There were police cars everywhere, there were ambulances everywhere. People were trying to find out about their loved ones. That was a scene, where we never had anything like this happen in our city before."

Historic Black Church Gets Land Returned From NHL Franchise

By Stacy M. Brown

In Pittsburgh's Hill District, the historic Black Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church will return to its former

NNPA

More than 60 years ago, the church was forced to relinquish its sanctuary to an urban renewal project that destroyed the core of an African American neighborhood.

The church was compensated for a fraction of its value, according to the church.

Now, the church has reached an agreement with the Pittsburgh Penguins, the NHL team education and civil rights. that owns the development rights to the site adjacent to its current facility.

According to a report by The Grio, the Penguins have consented to allowing the church to use a 1.5-acre plot of land that the church plans to use for housing and other revenuegenerating development.

Kevin Acklin, president of Penguins, stated that the organization is "recognizing our role here as a steward" of the property and its history.

Prior to 1967, the Penguins played in a former community arena, and now they play in a newer arena nearby. According to historians, the

Hill District was a center of Black culture in the 20th century, renowned for its jazz clubs and other cultural landmarks depicted in many of acclaimed playwright August Wilson's

In addition, Bethel AME played an important role in that community.

It was founded in 1808 and is regarded as Pittsburgh's oldest Black church. From its inception, it was involved in infant

It opened a large brick church with rounded arches and a prominent tower in 1906 in the Lower Hill District, which was home to 3,000 members at its zenith.

In the 1950s, the Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority declared a large portion of Lower Hill to be derelict.

It oversaw the demolition of business operations for the approximately 1,300 structures on 95 acres, displacing more than 8,000 individuals, more than 400 businesses, and numerous places of worship.

that the predominantly white Catholic church was not, however. demolished.

Bethel's leaders battled the church's demolition unsuccessfully, ultimately receiving \$240,000 for a \$745,000 prop-The pastor of Bethel, Rev. Dale

Snyder, told The Grio, "This is a model for how we can heal the broken realities of America." The church intends to con-

struct housing, a daycare center, and other potential commercial developments on the property. The Rev. Prudence Harris,

associate pastor and lifelong Bethel member, stated that she was five years old when she and her parents witnessed the deconstruction of the previous sanctuary.

The agreement was reached after years of public requests and protests by the church.

It is a microcosm of a larger conflict over the legacy of the 1950s project, in which Black community leaders have long sought redress from Pittsburgh's political, business, and athletic elites.

The Penguins hope that the

Bethel congregants stated agreement and the extensive efforts to redevelop the site can serve as a model for other U.S. cities with similar urban renewal scars from the mid-20th

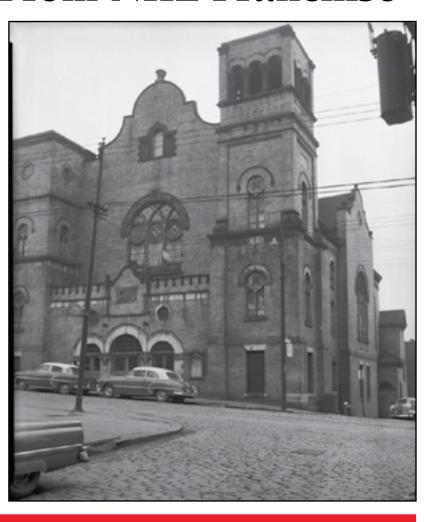
"I have never been a devotee of hockey.... AME Third District Bishop Errenous McLoud Jr. thanked the Penguins for turning him into a hockey fan during a news conference on the site Bethel is acquiring.

He stated that this agreement "could and should serve as a model for reparations world-

The accord is a component of broader efforts to collaborate with Hill District residents to restore the neighborhood's former connections to downtown.

All of the main parties, including the city, county, and two public authorities, agreed to include Hill District stakeholders in a plan in 2014.

Church leaders stated, "While the agreement is a step toward reparations for the historic Black church and the Hill District, there is still a long way to go in addressing the damage caused in the middle of the 20th century



Chicago Teenagers Disrupt Downtown

By Vi Nguyen and Matt Stefanski

NBC Chicago

Chicago police responded to massive crowds of teenagers Saturday night at Millennium Park, one day after a similar gathering took place at 31st Street Beach, prompting police to heighten their presence along the lake-

Video taken Saturday night showed a massive presence at the park, along with large groups of people in the area. A similar gathering took place Friday night near 31st Street Beach and eventually came to an end after a teenager was shot.

One witness, who asked not to be identified, said he saw a chaotic scene unfold.

"It's heartbreaking, kids fighting, chasing each other, some of them got guns," he said. "It's really heartbreaking when one of them actually gets hurt, and that's unfortunate, happened last

Hundreds of teenagers, possibly even thousands, gathered at the beach after seeing flyers posted on social media for a



"It was a lot of cops here, but they were still outnumbered," the witness added. "There were so many teenagers that showed up, and they tried to keep the peace and keep them under con-

The gathering ended after a 14-year-old boy was shot in the thigh just before 9 p.m. The gunshots sent hundreds of teens runing on multiple cars, standing

"We were actually on live and heard the gunshots, and then he just collapsed on the ground," the witness told NBC 5.

Cellphone video obtained by NBC 5 shows a vehicle, believed to be a Tesla, fully engulfed following the shooting.

"It was a car, they were standning and sparked panic across on cars, and one of the cars just to take us to save us."

kept driving in circles, which I believe that's the one that caught on fire, they set on fire," the witness said.

Police didn't release additional specifics on the incident, but did say it "continually monitors and adjusts resources as necessary so residents and visitors can safely enjoy the city, including our beaches and lakefront

"Last night, CPD monitored activity happening across the city and officers were in place to quickly respond to active incidents and large gatherings,' the statement added. "We will continue to have sufficient resources in place as we work to strengthen safety in every neighborhood."

Police say a squad car was also damaged, but no officers were iniured. Police did arrest one person Friday night, a 17-yearold boy, who has been accused of multiple gun crimes.

"What's its going to take? The community has to step up, parents have to step up, we can't keep blaming politicians and waiting on them," the witness said. "It starts with us, its going



MATERNAL HEALTH

Continued from page 1

Role of Wellness in Your Pregnancy Journey " and " Why Your Wellness Team is so Important." The series includes notable Black leaders working to make significant changes in support of Black maternal health

·Sanya Richards-Ross, Olympic runner, star of Bravo's Real Housewives of Atlanta and founder and co-owner of MommiNa-

•Mykal Steen, co-owner of MommiNation

•Hannah Bronfman, activist, angel investor, founder of HBFIT and on-camera personality

•Rachel Villanueva, MD, FACOG, immediate past president of the National Medical Association

•Temeka Zore, MD, OB-GYN and fertility specialist

•Latham Thomas, founder of Mama Glow Foundation + Love Delivered partner

Lisa Price, founder of Carol's Daughter and Love Delivered

"We are honored to be acknowledged for our work in advancing Black Maternal Health at the Mama Glow Foundation and to be a part of The Bump's Black Maternal Health Hub vodcast. We believe that childbirth should be an empowering, transcendent and joyful experience for all birthing people," said Latham Thomas. "It's not a privilege; it's our birthright.'

This year, The Bump has also committed to donate to the Mama Glow Foundation, a 501c3 non-profit organization committed to advancing reproductive justice and birth equity, through education, advocacy, research and the arts. The Bump will donate \$1 for every like, comment and share it receives during Black Maternal Health Week on its April 10th Instagram post about the digital re-

The Bump also teamed up with 4Kira4Moms to provide over \$25,000 in giveaways to the community from brand partners PROUDLY, Territory Foods and Be Rooted for the Super Sunday Diaper Giveaway Block Party in New Orleans in March. Families received donated diaper bags filled with various baby care products, gift cards, journals, baby food and diapers, while also receiving health and wellness screenings and vaccines from community partners. This event showcased the power of community and the collective responsibility to support families and served as an impactful extension of The Bump's Black Maternal Health Hub.

Black Chiefs Meet On —continued from page 1

troit for NOBLE's annual CEO well as the agency's report on patrol in 1979, after 33 years of symposium. Andrews described it as a typically "intimate setting" where attendees feel like "you're around family."

The agenda, spread across Friday and Saturday, includes panels on diversity, equity and inclusion; best practices for mental health responses in policing; and managing the response to mass shootings.

This will be the first national symposium since the Nichols case reignited a national reckoning over police use of force and renewed the scrutiny sparked by massive racial justice protests over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020. The gathering also takes place following the launch of a probe of police abuses in Memphis by

police discrimination in Louisville, Kentucky, from an investigation launched after the shooting death of Breonna Taylor in

The Memphis and Louisville departments are led by Black executives. And there are a number of major city police departments led by veteran Black law enforcement professionals: Commissioner Keechant Sewell in New York City; Chief William Scott in San Francisco; Chief Troy Finner in Houston; and Chief Elaine Bryant in Columbus, Ohio, among several others.

The CEO symposium is named for William Bracey, a former New York Police Department leader who co-founded NOBLE almost 47 years ago. Bracey was cradle of the Civil Rights Movethe U.S. Justice Department, as elevated to high-ranking chief of ment, the first Black officers be-

service in the NYPD. "I have had no problem with

being Black and being a police officer ..." Bracey said, according to a biography written by the organization's New York chapter. "The fact that I do come, in a sense, from two different worlds gives me additional experiences and insights that, hopefully, help me make the right decisions. Although modern-day polic-

ing in the U.S. has origins in the slave patrols used to control the enslaved population, Black men and women have served as law enforcement professionals since abolition. However, their earliest experiences were far from fair or equal. In Atlanta, the

gan serving in a segregated unit in 1948 and weren't integrated with white officers until 1969.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there were more than 708,000 full-time sworn officers serving in over 14,700 law enforcement agencies in 2020. The percentage of local police officers who were Black has remained the same at 12%, from 1997 to 2020.

Federal statistics show the percentage of Black police chiefs running local departments that serve more than 250,000 residents has increased over the last decade. In 2020, about 47% of major city chiefs were white, 38% were Black, and 13% were Hispanic. Four years earlier, 65% of major city chiefs were white and 19% were

Report Finds Democracy For Black Americans Is Under Attack

WASHINGTON (AP) - Ex- an uproar that spread well betreme views adopted by some local, state and federal political leaders who try to limit what hisseek to undermine how Black officials perform their jobs are among the top threats to democracy for Black Americans, the National Urban League says.

Marc Morial, the former New Orleans mayor who leads the civil nessee House to oust two Black tary and law enforcement. representatives for violating a legislative rule. The pair had participated in a gun control protest inside the chamber after the shooting that killed three students and three staff members at a Nashville school.

"We have censorship and Black history suppression, and now this," Morial said in an interview. "It's another piece of fruit of the same poisonous tree, the effort to suppress and contain.

Both Tennessee lawmakers were quickly reinstated by leaders in their districts and were back at work in the House after

vond the state.

The Urban League's annual State of Black America report tory can be taught in schools and released Saturday draws on data and surveys from a number of organizations, including the UCLA Law School, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League. The collective findings reveal an increase in recent years in hate crimes and efforts rights and urban advocacy orgato change classroom curriculums, nization, cited the most recent attempts to make voting more difexample: the vote this month by ficult and extremist views being the Republican-controlled Ten- normalized in politics, the mili-

One of the most prominent areas examined is so-called critical race theory. Scholars developed it as an academic framework during the 1970s and 1980s in response to what they viewed as a lack of racial progress following the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. The theory centers on the idea that racism is systemic in the nation's institutions and that they function to maintain the dominance of white people in society.

Director Taifha Alexander said the Forward Tracking Project, part of the UCLA Law School, began in response to the backlash



that followed the protests of the George Floyd killing in 2020 and an executive order that year from then-President Donald Trump restricting diversity training.

The project's website shows that 209 local, state and federal government entities have introduced more than 670 bills, resolutions, executive orders, opinion letters, statements and other measures against critical race theory since September 2020.

Anti-critical race theory is "a living organism in and of itself. It's always evolving. There are always new targets of attack," Alexander said.

of some of those laws, which are having a chilling effect on teaching certain aspects of the country's racial conflicts, will lead to major gaps in understanding history and social justice.

"This anti-CRT campaign is going to frustrate our ability to reach our full potential as a multiracial democracy" because future leaders will be missing information they could use to tackle problems, Alexander said.

She said one example is the rewriting of Florida elementary school material about civil rights figure Rosa Parks and her refusal to give up her seat to a white She said the expanded scope rider on a Montgomery, Alabama, of legislative committee this Black cities to the states.

bus in 1955 — an incident that sparked the bus boycott there. Mention of race was omitted entirely in one revision, a change first reported by The New York Florida has been the epicenter

of many of the steps, including opposing AP African American studies, but it's not alone.

"The things that have been happening in Florida have been replicated, or governors in similarly situated states have claimed they will do the same thing," Alexander said.

In Alabama, a proposal to ban "divisive" concepts passed out

past week. Last year, the administration of Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, rescinded a series of policies, memos and other resources related to diversity, equity and inclusion that it characterized as "discriminatory and divisive concepts" in the state's public education system.

Oklahoma public school teachers are prohibited from teaching certain concepts of race and racism under a bill Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt signed into law in

On Thursday, the Llano County Commissioners Court in Texas held a special meeting to consider shutting down the entire public library system rather than follow a federal judge's order to return a slate of books to the shelves on topics ranging from teenage sexuality to bigotry.

After listening to public comments in favor and against the shutdown, the commissioners decided to remove the item from the agenda.

"We will suppress your books. We will suppress the conversation about race and racism, and we will suppress your history, your AP course." Morial said. "It is singular in its effort to suppress

Other issues in his group's report address extremism in the military and law enforcement, energy and climate change, and how current attitudes can affect public policy. Predominantly white legislatures in Missouri and Mississippi have proposals that would shift certain government authority from some majority

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Goodguys Heads To NC To Celebrate Classic Cars

FORT WORTH, TEXAS-Goodguys Rod & Custom Association continues their 40th season by heading to Raleigh, North Carolina, for the 8th Griot's Garage North Carolina Nationals! The huge event takes April 21-23 at the beautiful North Carolina Fairgrounds and packs it full with horsepower, chrome and gleaming paint on muscle cars, vintage hot rods and classic trucks that you get to see and hear up close and personal!

There will be a lot of cars and trucks competing for a Finalist award to qualify for the Goodguys Top 12 of the year including Muscle Car, Truck of the Year, Custom Rod and more, plus Goolsby Customs will be Choice rides of the weekend. The event is open to 1998 and older vehicles on Friday and Saturday,



selecting the Top 10 Builders made or powered vehicles are free games, arts and crafts as welcome.

The family friendly event is so

well as a Model Car Make and Take where the kids get a free much more than a car show, as model car to build. When the but come Sunday, all American Goodguys has a Kids Zone with kids are done building, be sure

to head over to the Nitro Thunderfest to hear and feel the brute strength of vintage dragsters firing up and revving their supercharged engines.

There's also a Swap Meet, Cars 4 Sale Corral and Vendor/Manufacturers midway where you can see and learn about the latest new hot rod and muscle car parts available. There is also live music, an indoor show area and come Sunday, a parade of over 60 award winning cars you don't want to miss. Be sure to stick around on Sat-

urday night to watch an actionpacked Demolition Derby! Drivers beat, bounce and run into each on a slippery red clay surface to see who will the last car running (extra ticket required). The Griot's Garage North Carolina Nationals always delivers a fun weekend and gathering of cool cars, cool people and good times.

Business & Finance

New Push On US-Run Free Electronic Tax-Filing System For All

that time of year when throngs of taxpayers are buckling down to file their income tax returns before Tuesday's filing deadline. Many often pay to use software from private companies such as Intuit and H&R Block.

Almost one-quarter of Americans wait until the last minute to file their taxes.

There could be a new, free option in future years. The IRS has been tasked with looking into how to create a governmentoperated electronic free-file tax return system for all. But that doesn't sit well with the big taxprep companies.

The idea has been batted around and hotly debated for a long time. Congress now has directed the IRS to report in on how such a system might work.

The order came as part of the \$80 billion infusion of money for the tax agency over the next 10 years under the Democrats' flagship climate and health care measure, known as the Inflation Reduction Act, that President Joe Biden signed last summer. It gave the IRS nine months and \$15 million to report in on how it might implement such a program and how much it would cost.

Next month, the IRS will release the first in a series of reports looking into how it might

The possibility of an electronic free-file system operated by Washington is being celebrated by some taxpayer advocates who for years have said that would

WASHINGTON (AP) - It's skepticism about the IRS taking on the dual roles of both tax collector and tax preparer, arguing that the new service could create a power imbalance between taxpayers and the government.

Robert Marvin, an IRS spokesperson, said in an email that a key goal of the study is to "look for ways to make filing taxes as easy as possible.'

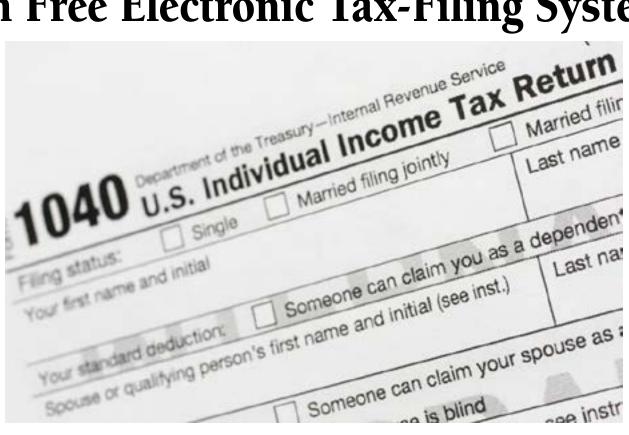
"It's important that Americans have choices that work best for them when preparing their taxes, whether it's by using a tax professional, tax software or free options," he said.

But big tax preparation companies have millions of dollars to lose if the program comes to fruition. Last year, more than 60 million taxpayers were serviced between Intuit, the parent company of TurboTax, and H&R Block.

Tens of millions of dollars have been spent trying to influence policymakers on the issue, and lobbying data shows that the big tax companies in particular have spent heavily.

An analysis shows that Intuit, H&R Block, and other private companies and advocacy groups for large tax preparation businesses, as well as proponents in favor of electronic free file, have reported spending \$39.3 million since 2006 to lobby on "free-file" and other matters. Federal law doesn't require domestic lobbyists to itemize expenses by specific issue, so the sums are not limited to free-file.

reflect good governance and well since 2006 on lobbying, H&R continue unapologetically advoserve taxpayers. Critics voice Block about \$9.6 million and the cating for American taxpayers



conservative Americans for Tax and against a direct-to-IRS e-file income taxpayers remains in ef-Reform roughly \$3 million.

Derrick Plummer, a spokesman for Intuit, said taxpayers can already file their taxes for free and there are online freefile programs available to some people. Individuals of all income levels can submit their returns for free via the mail.

A "direct-to-IRS e-file system is a solution in search of a problem, and that solution will unnecessarily cost taxpayers billions Intuit has spent \$25.6 million of dollars," he said. "We will system because it's a bad idea."

Starting in 2006, an agreement between the IRS and some commercial tax preparation companies, known as the Free File Alliance, prevented the IRS from creating its own free tax return filing system. In exchange, tax preparation companies agreed to provide free services to taxpayers making \$73,000 or less.

The provision that barred the IRS from exploring a free-file system expired in 2019, but the Free File Alliance agreement to from Republicans who say she

Ariel Jurow-Kleiman, a tax law professor at Loyola Law School, and the New America think tank have been selected by the IRS to conduct the congressionally mandated study for the agency. Jurow-Kleiman said their mandate is "evaluating the feasibility, approach, schedule, cost, organizational design, and IRS capacity to deliver a possible direct e-file system.'

But she has faced pushback

that an independent third party assess what it would take to deliver a direct file program.

Rep. Jason Smith, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, sent a letter to the IRS in March questioning Jurow-Kleiman's ability to be an independent reviewer, saying her work indicates "a clear preference for an expansive government-run system.'

Smith, R-Mo., said the selection of Jurow-Kleiman and New America shows that "the Administration has already predetermined that a governmentdirected e-file system should exist regardless of what might be found in a truly nonpartisan, independent, third-party review.'

Jurow-Kleiman said the GOP pushback to her selection was based on an unpublished draft of an article about tax compliance costs and that none of her writings have "addressed the questions that we are assessing in the feasibility study.' Molly Martin, director of strat-

egy at New America, referred requests for comment to the IRS, saying the organization "is still working on its report."

David Williams, at the rightleaning, nonprofit Taxpayers Protection Alliance, says the "government preparing taxes is problematic.

"The taxpayer is looking for the biggest refund possible, but for the IRS that's not their job to look for the biggest refund for filers," he said. "We're concerned about that conflict of interest, but also really the ability of the IRS

States Confront Medical Debt That's Bankrupting Millions

DENVER (AP) - Cindy Powers was driven into bankruptcy by 19 life-saving abdominal operations. Medical debt started stacking up for Lindsey Vance after she crashed her skateboard and had to get nine stitches in her chin. And for Misty Castaneda, open heart surgery for a disease she'd had since birth saddled her with \$200,000 in bills.

These are three of an estimated 100 million Americans who have amassed nearly \$200 billion in collective medical debt almost the size of Greece's economy — according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Now lawmakers in at least a ments.

dozen states and the U.S. Contreatment or slashing grocery parency in the costs of care.



ations: forgoing needed care for would lower interest rates, keep prohibit debt collection during fear of added debt, taking a sec- medical debt from tanking credit an appeals process. ond mortgage to pay for cancer scores or require greater trans-

approved a measure Wednesday Some of the bills would create that would lower the maximum gress have pushed legislation to medical debt relief programs interest rate for medical debt to curtail the financial burden that's or protect personal property 3%, require greater transpar-pushed many into untenable situ- from collections, while others ency in costs of treatment and

If it became law, Colorado would join Arizona in having one In Colorado, House lawmakers of the lowest medical debt inter-

est rates in the country. North Carolina lawmakers have also started mulling a 5% interest But there are opponents. Colo-

rado Republican state Sen. Janice Rich said she worried that the proposal could "constrain hospitals' debt collecting ability and hurt their cash flow. For patients, medical debt

has become a leading cause of personal bankruptcy, with an estimated \$88 billion of that debt in collections nationwide, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Roughly 530,000 people reported falling into bankruptcy annually due partly to medical bills and time Journal of Public Health.

Powers' family ended up owing \$250,000 for the 19 life-saving abdominal surgeries. They declared bankruptcy in 2009, then the bank foreclosed on their

"Only recently have we begun to pick up the pieces," said James Powers, Cindy's husband, during his February testimony in favor of Colorado's bill.

In Pennsylvania and Arizona, lawmakers are considering medical debt relief programs that would use state funds to help eradicate debt for residents. A New Jersey proposal would use Rescue Plan Act to achieve the

Bills in Florida and Massachusetts would protect some personal property — such as a car that is needed for work - from medical debt collections and force providers to be more transparent about costs. Florida's legislation received unanimous approval in House and Senate committees on its way to votes in both cham-

In Colorado, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Massachusetts and the U.S. Congress lawmakers are contemplating bills that would bar medical debt from being included on consumer reports, thereby protecting debtors' credit scores. Castaneda, who was born with

away from work, according to a a congenital heart defect, found spokesperson for the Colorado 2019 study from the American herself \$200,000 in debt when Hospital Association said the orshe was 23 and had to have surgery. The debt tanked her credit score and, she said, forced her to rely on her emotionally abusive husband's credit.

For over a decade Castaneda wanted out of the relationship, but everything they owned was in her husband's name, making it nearly impossible to break away. She finally divorced her husband

"I'm trying to play catch-up for the last 20 years," said Castaneda, 45, a hairstylist from Grand Junction on Colorado's Western

Medical debt isn't a strong infederal funds from the American dicator of people's credit-worthiness, said Isabel Cruz, policy director at the Colorado Consumer

While buying a car beyond your means or overspending on vacation can partly be chalked up to poor decision making, medical debt often comes from short, acute-care treatments that are unexpected — leaving patients with hefty bills that exceed their

For both Colorado bills — to limit interest rates and remove medical debt from consumer reports — a spokesperson for Democratic Gov. Jared Polis said the governor will "review these policies with a lens towards saving people money on health care." While neither bill garnered

stiff political opposition, a ganization is working with sponsors to amend the interest rate bill "to align the legislation with the multitude of existing protec-

The association did not provide further details. To Vance, protecting her credit

score early could have had a major impact. Vance's medical debt began at age 19 from the skateboard crash, and then was compounded when she broke her arm soon after. Now 39, she has never been able to qualify for a credit card or car loan. Her inlaws cosigned for her Colorado

"My credit identity was medical debt," she said, "and that set the tone for my life.

US Will Not Prosecute Suspect In US Tourist Death In Mexico

will not federally prosecute the person suspected of killing a Charlotte-area woman vacationnounced Wednesday.

Federal prosecutors say they have presented the findings of their investigation to the family of Shanquella Robinson, who was seen being beaten in a viral video last fall at a resort development in San Jose del Cabo. As the it raised suspicions that Robinson may have been killed by her travel companions.

Attorneys with the U.S. Department of Justice said in a face charges in Mexico. news release Wednesday that the

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — not prove "beyond a reasonable" which have not been released U.S. officials in North Carolina" doubt" that a federal crime was publicly, revealed inconsistencommitted, the release said.

An autopsy was conducted in North Carolina by the Mecklening in Mexico last year, the burg County medical examiner's U.S. Department of Justice anoffice. Local prosecutors in the state

of Baja California Sur filed charges late last year against another U.S. woman — whom they would not name — suspected of killing Robinson on Oct. 29. They issued an arrest warrant for the suspect, who had already video circulated on social media, left Mexico with other travel companions after Robinson was found dead in a rented villa. Mexican federal prosecutors are trying to get her extradited to

Sue-Ann Robinson, the family's available evidence and autopsy attorney, said at a news confer- review and examine any new results do not support a federal ence Wednesday in Charlotte information that becomes availprosecution. Investigators could that the U.S. autopsy results, able.

cies with a previous autopsy conducted in Mexico, which had labeled the cause of death a severe spinal cord or neck injury.

She criticized federal officials for the speed at which they conducted their investigation, saying people on social media should not have had to "create the movement behind the case."

"United States citizens cannot go to Mexico, commit a crime that we all saw on video and then come back to America and say, 'We're on base. We're safe. We're not going to be charged with a crime,' " she said. "That cannot be the message that U.S. authorities want to send.'

Federal officials say they will

5th Annual Moguls In The Making HBCU Student Pitch Competition Digital financial services company Ally Financial and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), the largest organization exclusively representing Historically Black Colleges

and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), have opened registration for the fifth annual Moguls in the Making entrepreneur pitch competition, Sept. 7 - 10 in Charlotte, NC.

Sixty students will vie for the opportunity to learn vital business skills, while competing for over \$185,000 in scholarships, paid internships, laptops and other prizes.

Registration is open until April 24. Students can learn more at www.ally.com/moguls.

Moguls in the Making was developed in 2019 to provide HBCU students with careerlaunching business experience, financial education, and networking access to executives and industry leaders, while also giving Ally a new path for reaching diverse talent. Since its launch four years ago, Ally has hired 41 of the participants



as interns and 14 as full-time part of Ally's commitment to employees, working on teams across the company, from IT, finance and marketing to product design and development.

promote economic mobility by preparing talented diverse students to become future entrepreneurs and leaders in their Moguls in the Making is a communities.

Police Continue To Probe Fatal Shooting By N.C. State Agent APEX, N.C. (AP) — Police in They "ran out of the store and professionals, police said. She has North Carolina are continuing to were encountered by an SBI agent not been identified or formally investigate the fatal shooting of a in the parking lot," police said.

teenager in Apex by an agent from the State Bureau of Investigation, the city's police said in a statement Wednesday.

The shooting occurred early Tuesday afternoon in the parking lot of a sporting goods store, Academy Sports, following a shoplifting incident that involved the teen and an unidentified female, police

"That encounter resulted in a shooting in which the male subject was shot by the SBI agent. A firearm was recovered at scene next to the male subject on the ground."

Dayve Sanchez, 18, died at a hospital after the shooting, police said. The SBI agent has been identified as Denzel Ward, 29.

remained in the care of medical should not be gone."

charged with any crimes. A friend of Sanchez's family, Joyce Bloodsworth, told ABC11

that his family wants more information about his death. "Dayve is loved. He's a kid. He was only 18 years old," Bloodsworth said. "He had his whole

life to live, and we just want answers because we love and care The female was not shot but about him very, very much and he