

# The Weekly Press

SERVING BAKER, CENTRAL, AND ZACHARY

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16-22, 2021

A PEOPLE'S PUBLICATION

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SUPERDOME RENOVATION PLAN

## Gov. Edwards rejects House committee's decision on COVID-19 vaccine for students

*"I understand that any issue around COVID-19, especially those that involve our children, can be divisive, I ask that you and your colleagues work with me to get more people in Louisiana vaccinated."*

BATON ROUGE, La. — Governor John Bel Edwards has rejected a decision made by the House Committee on Health and Welfare to not require Louisiana students to be vaccinated against COVID-19, meaning the vaccination will be added to the school immunization schedule.



John Bel Edwards

The move was announced Tuesday, Dec. 14.

The governor's office says all current opt-out provisions for parents will remain in place, meaning no child will be forced to get vaccinated if their parents object to it in writing.

"I understand that any issue around COVID-19, especially those that involve our children, can be divisive, I ask that you and your colleagues work with me to get more people in Louisiana vaccinated. It is worth noting that while many of the diseases on the public health immunization schedule were once both rampant and deadly, they are no longer serious risks for school age children in Louisiana. This is true because almost everyone was vaccinated against these diseases, many as a condition for attending elementary school. One can only imagine where we would be as a state if the same overheated rhetoric from last week's meeting was applied

See STUDENTS on page 2

## Cowboys RT La'el Collins

gives Christmas gift to himself by giving back to local kids



Dallas City Council member Tennell Atkins poses for a photo with Dallas Cowboys player La'el Collins and his family at Singing Hills Recreation Center in Dallas, Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021. Collins gave \$250 Visa gift cards to 80 families in need in Dallas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (Elias Valverde II / Staff Photographer)

Collins hosted a bowling fundraiser and led some choice kids from area Boys & Girls Clubs on a shopping spree.

Collins was about 10 when the thought first came.

The Cowboys right tackle had experienced generosity in Baton Rouge, La. Neighbors helped neighbors. He recalled a program allowing him and other chosen students to enter a school auditorium full of donated items, including bicycles, and pick items for Christmas.

Running back Warrick

ton NFL Man of the Year when Collins was 11, held football camps in the region. Collins heard Dunn stress the importance of giving.

"It always just stuck with me," Collins said Tuesday after leading 20 kids on a \$200 shopping spree at a department store. "I always said, if I ever got into a position to do something and give back, I wanted to keep that going. This is special. This is my Christmas gift to myself."

Collins' week began Sunday with a fourth-quarter ejection when fighting in defense of teammate Dak Prescott. It continued Monday and Tuesday with a bowling fundraiser and series of community appearances. The in-person holiday

a Cowboys player has guided since the pandemic began.

Collins said he hopes the three days show people "who I am and what I am about."

With about 10 minutes left in the Cowboys' 27-20 win, Washington defensive end William Bradley-King pushed Prescott into the sideline after the quarterback threw a pass. The hit was not late, but Collins didn't like the look of it.

He sprinted about 15 yards to meet Bradley-King with a push to the head area and multiple punches. Running back Ezekiel Elliott engaged, too. In the days ahead, Collins' actions seem certain to draw a five-

See COLLINS on page 2

## Mayor-President Broome announces Martin Luther King Jr. holiday celebration



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

BATON ROUGE, La. - Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome announces the launch of MLK Holiday BR — an annual extended series of initiatives, programs, and service projects that honors the life and legacy of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The celebration is set to begin on Wednesday, January 12 and continue through the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday on Monday, January 17.

"In past years, various organizations have produced individual events and service projects to honor the late civil rights leader, but in 2022 my administration is collaborating with our core partners and a steering committee to unify government, organizations, and residents," said Mayor Broome. "We are creating the foundation of year-round community conversation, engagement, and service in Baton Rouge."

We aim to advance the Baton

Rouge community in three key areas: literacy, youth empowerment, and equity and justice through partnership community organizations such as: the NAACP; BREC; EBR Schools; The Walls Project; NBR Now; EBR Parish Library; Big Buddy; Healthy BR; the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge; the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council; 100 Black Men; and the Baton Rouge Alliance for Students.

"This year's theme "Walking In Legacy" recognizes and celebrates Baton Rouge's past and present work for social justice, while

See MLK HOLIDAY on page 2

## Former Minneapolis Cop Derek Chauvin Pleads Guilty to Violating George Floyd's Civil Rights

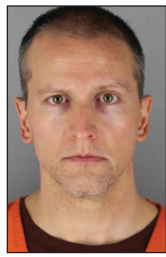
BY STACY M. BROWN  
NNPA Newswire Senior  
National Correspondent

Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer who killed George Floyd, would rather spend 25 years in federal prison than 15 in a state penitentiary.

The disgraced cop who infamously knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes pleaded guilty on Wednesday, De-

ember 15, to federal charges of violating the late Floyd's civil rights.

Federal prosecutors reached a deal with Chauvin, who agreed to serve 25 years in federal prison.



Derek Chauvin

The sentence will run concurrently with the 22-year sentence Chauvin received after being convicted on state charges of murder. Under the state sentence, Chauvin could have qualified for parole after 15 years.

However, there's no parole for the federal sentence, effectively meaning that the 45-year-old Chauvin choose the longer sentence to avoid state prison.

Since his conviction earlier

this year, Chauvin had remained in solitary confinement.

It's believed Chauvin chose to plead guilty because federal prisons are viewed as safer, and he most likely would avoid contact with anyone he previously arrested.

Asked by the judge on Wednesday how he wanted to plead, Chauvin replied, "At this time, guilty, your honor."

In entering the guilty plea on

the federal charge, Chauvin admitted he violated Floyd's constitutional rights of being free from unreasonable seizures — precisely excessive force.

Three other former Minneapolis officers, Thomas Lane, Alexander Kueng, and Tou Thao, also face federal violations of Floyd's civil rights. The three men expect to stand trial in January.

OTHER STORIES ONLINE



### WEATHER



MON. 12/20  
Showers  
High 57°.



TUE. 12/21  
Sunny  
High 58°.



WED. 12/22  
Mostly Sunny  
High 60°.



THUR. 12/23  
Partly Sunny  
High 61°.

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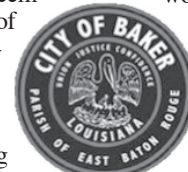


# LOCAL & STATE

## CITY OF BAKER, LOUISIANA

### Exciting Educational Opportunities Now Available Through City of Baker Workforce Development!

Beginning on December 1, 2021, the City of Baker Workforce Development division, led by Ms. Reatha Wright, announced the kick-off of on-line learning through the Workforce Development Division. This partnership, which is offering free classes to any individual, is with City of Baker Workforce Development, IBM, Baton Rouge Community College Foundation, and Baton Rouge Community College.



working while taking courses. Additionally, you can apply new knowledge and skills on the job immediately.

The IBM SkillsBuild platform was designed specifically to "upskill, reskill, and prepare the workforce for the future of work, close the digital skills gap...ensure access and equity for learners at all stages and on all paths of life and of work, create opportunity for entrepreneurs and small business owners to "level up" their skills for success and project success". The initial collaboration between NACCE (National Association for Community College) and IBM to develop the program began in 2021 and the collaboration with BRCCF, BRCC and the City of Baker soon followed. The City of Baker Workforce Development expresses gratitude to BRCC Chancellor, Dr. Willie Smith, Vice Chancellor, Philip Smith and BRCC IBM SkillsBuild Program Manager, Tammy Brown for their assistance and guidance when establishing this new endeavor within this existing partnership.

Whether you are looking to enhance your professional skills, improve productivity, develop self-discipline, improve your job readiness, expand your business knowledge, or earn Information Technology badges in areas such as Agile, AI, Data and Analytics or Digital Marketing there are thousands of courses available. SkillsBuild offers free, accredited learning content from IBM where end users will be able to obtain accredited badges, certifying learning credentials so that potential employers can trust the candidate's education quality. Explore the course catalog to find the job role or learning pathways where badges and certifications are offered.

If you are looking for a low/no cost option to further your education and improve your skillset the flexibility of online coursework is highly recommended. With the ability to study anywhere, online education allows the student to complete courses of study at home, a coffee shop, or a library. Classes may be completed at any time and on any day which gives you the advantage of working in the environment that best suits you on the schedule you set. In addition to the flexibility there are tangible career benefits, such as being able to continue

Accessing the material is easy, and all that is required is registration at the City of Baker website. The link to register is found under "Explore Our City" - "Workforce Development" - "IBM SkillsBuild Platform Access Application" (link: Workforce Development SkillsBuild Platform Access Application - City of Baker (cityofbak-erla.com)). Should you have any questions, please contact City of Baker Workforce Development at 225.615.4174 where you will receive assistance regarding inquiries related to accessing the great courses which are free of charge.

### EBR School System plans to give incoming 9th graders more access to college credits and workforce experience starting next year

BATON ROUGE, La. — Hannah Amoroso is excited the East Baton Rouge School System is implementing more educational resources for her 8th grade daughter when she enters high school next year. However, her daughter is worried about the workload and upper level courses that will come with the Pathway to Bright Futures initiative.

"When my daughter was listening to the school board meeting, she had a genuine anxiety and her response was, 'I don't even know if I am ready for high school.' You know, she is an 8th grader, so that's a big transition," explained Amoroso.

Amoroso is like many other parents who are concerned about the superintendent's proposal to implement dual enrollment classes for all incoming 9th graders next year.

"Right now, students will walk into the 9th grade, they will have there's a program course of study that they will have. In that program course of study, you will see students have access to be able to start taking higher level



college courses. We have a residency program we're talking about with internships for kids. We are matching that also with business industry," said EBR Superintendent Sito Narcisse.

Pathways to Bright Futures will give 9th grade students the option to take college level classes through Baton Rouge Community College. However, college is not the next immediate step, students who plan to start working right away can gain workforce experience in areas like transportation, construction, or technology.

"73% of employers say they are not able to find qualified talent that they need today in our community. The other big challenge we face as a community that has historically not given everyone in our community access to the benefits of our economy," explained Adam Knapp, who is the president and CEO of BRAC.

Glen Oaks High School was the first school to try out the dual enrollment program with their current 9th graders, taking college courses like cultural geography and French I. 97% of the students passed the program.

"What we get to put back into the community from Glen Oaks now has a little bit of shift in that they are coming out with an opportunity, an associate's degree, college credits that they probably never would have before," said Sunguna Mayweather, who is the academic coordinator at Glen Oaks High School.

#### MLK from page 1

preparing for the future of African American progress, right here in the capital city," said Mayor Broome. "This collaboration will create an on-going united celebration for the entire parish, setting aside an extended time to honor Dr. King's legacy of leadership, collaboration, progress, and service."

## Louisiana state school board delays vote on new social studies standards



The Louisiana Board of Secondary and Elementary Education (BESE) met Dec. 14. (JC Canicosa/Louisiana Illuminator)

BY: JC CANICOSA  
The Louisiana Illuminator

The Louisiana Department of Education and state school board on Tuesday pushed back their deadline for approving the revised social studies standards for K-12 schools for a second time. The board will vote on the proposed standards in March instead of January.

State Superintendent Cade Brumley told the board that he wanted to push back the final approval deadline because of the sheer number of public comments the education department received on the latest version of the proposed standards.

From Sept. 30 to Nov. 30, 423 Louisiana residents left about 1,800 comments about the social

studies draft guidelines. A chief concern among the comments was a fear that critical race theory would be taught in K-12 schools.

The approval deadline was first pushed back in October when BESE extended the public comment period on the standards from Oct. 31 to Nov. 30. The extension gave Louisiana residents two months instead of just one to weigh in on the proposed social studies guidelines.

When asked if there were any specific concerns raised within the public comments that made Brumley want to take more time editing the standards, Matt Johnson, a spokesperson for the education department, said the superintendent's decision was more about the large number of comments.

"He wants to give it their due

diligence and consider all the different comments," Johnson said.

Brumley and state education officials will likely revise the standards based on the public feedback, Johnson said.

At an October BESE meeting, Brumley said there were parts of the standards where he had "some concerns," but didn't specify what those concerns were.

#### COLLINS from page 1

figure fine from the NFL, although Collins said that Prescott told him he'll pay whatever amount the league levies.

"He was like, 'I got you,' but I ain't worried about that," Collins said. "It's bigger than that."

Collins worked with agent Deryk Gilmore, of Day 1 Sports Entertainment and Management, and other organizers to coordinate a series of community events.

He first hosted a bowling event fundraiser Monday evening at Bowlero in Addicks. Elliott and defensive tackle Neville Gallimore were among the teammates in attendance. Organizers said that proceeds were directed to support 100 families before the holidays.

On Tuesday, Collins presented or pledged \$250 Visa gift cards to 40 families in Dallas and 40 in Baton Rouge. He first engaged 20 children from Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas locations during a shopping spree, which rewarded them for school performance and conduct.

The group spent nearly two hours inside an Academy Sports + Outdoors store in Garland. Collins frequented Boys and Girls Club in Baton Rouge as a kid.

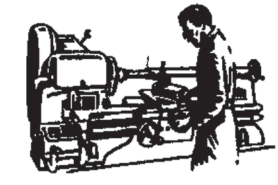
Items in shopping bags included clothes, shoes, Nerf guns and scooters.

"They'll remember it forever because I know I remember when I was as a kid," Collins said.

#### STUDENTS from page 1

to Polio or Measles. The development of the COVID-19 vaccines in time to help us put this pandemic behind us also requires us to do everything we can to add COVID-19 to the list of diseases that no longer pose a serious threat," Gov. Edwards wrote to committee chair Representative Larry Bagley.

### READER INFORMATION



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The office is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday and located at 4910 Monticello Blvd. Baton Rouge, LA 70814

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**NATIONAL NEWS**

**Pfizer confirms COVID pill's results, potency versus omicron**



This undated image provided by Pfizer in November 2021 shows the company's COVID-19 pills. On Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, Pfizer said that its experimental COVID-19 pill is effective against the omicron variant and maintained its promising early performance against the virus in final testing.

WASHINGTON — Pfizer said Tuesday that its experimental pill to treat COVID-19 appears effective against the omicron variant.

The company also said full results of its 2,250-person study confirmed the pill's promising early results against the virus: The drug reduced combined hospitalizations and deaths by about 89% among high-risk adults when taken shortly after initial COVID-19 symptoms.

Separate laboratory testing shows the drug retains its potency against the omicron variant, the company announced, as many experts had predicted. Pfizer tested the antiviral drug against a man-made version of a key protein that omicron uses to reproduce itself.

The updates come as COVID-19 cases, deaths and hospitalization are all rising again and the U.S. topped 800,000 pandemic deaths. The latest surge, driven by the delta variant, is accelerating due to colder weather and more indoor gatherings, even as health officials brace for the impact of the emerging omicron mutant.

The Food and Drug Administration is expected to soon rule on whether to authorize Pfizer's pill and a competing pill from Merck, which was submitted to regulators several weeks earlier. If granted, the pills would be the first COVID-19 treatments that Americans could pick up at a pharmacy and take at home.

President Joe Biden called Pfizer's drug "another potentially

powerful tool in our fight against the virus," in a statement Tuesday.

The U.S. government has agreed to purchase enough of Pfizer's drug to treat 10 million people. But company executives have indicated that initial supplies will be limited, with only enough to treat tens of thousands of people before the end of the year. By March Pfizer hopes to ramp up production to provide millions of courses of treatment.

Both companies initially studied their drugs in unvaccinated adults who face the gravest risks from COVID-19, due to older age or health problems, such as asthma or obesity.

Pfizer is also studying its pill in lower-risk adults — including a subset who are vaccinated — but reported mixed data for that group on Tuesday.

In interim results, Pfizer said its drug failed to meet its main study goal: sustained relief from COVID-19 for four days during or after treatment, as reported by patients. But the drug did achieve a second goal by reducing hospitalizations by about 70% among that group, which included otherwise healthy unvaccinated adults and vaccinated adults with one or more health issues. Less than 1% of patients who got the drug were hospitalized, compared with 2.4% of patients who got a dummy pill.

**Medicaid Now Certifies Kids for Free Lunch in 8 More States**



Credit: USDA / Lance Cheung.

BATON ROUGE, La. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has added eight states to the 19 where students receiving Medicaid coverage will be automatically added to the program offering free or reduced-price school lunches.

Alabama, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, and South Carolina are now part of a demonstration program started in fall 2012, a news release said Tuesday.

"Providing reliable access to nutritious meals has never been more important as Louisiana continues to recover from the effects of recent hurricanes, floods and the pandemic," said John Dupre, state director of child nutrition programs for the

Louisiana Department of Education.

USDA said Tuesday's action expands demonstration projects that have certified more than 1 million students for free meals and nearly 260,000 for reduced-price meals since the 2012-2013 school year.

"Direct certification works to

decrease errors in school meal program administration and ensures children in need aren't mistakenly left behind," said USDA Food and Nutrition Service southwest regional administrator Bill Ludwig.

The 27 states now involved represent about 75% of students

nationwide, the agency said.

Direct certification makes it easier for children from low-income households to receive free and reduced-price school meals.

Historically, most students who

See **KIDS** on page 5



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# RELIGION

## Contagious Joy

By Charles Stanley



Dr. Charles Stanley

Jesus calls us to be His "witnesses." When some Christians hear this word, they worry that they need exceptional skill or charisma in order to share the good news with others. Yet to witness is not to merely speak of the "plan of salvation" to someone. The word literally means to see, hear, or know by personal presence and perception; to testify; bear witness to; give or afford evidence of. When John wrote that he was sharing what he had experienced first-hand, he was saying, "I am full of joy because of the experience of knowing Jesus, and I want to invite you to share in that joy!"

When you're in love with someone, you are excited about the relationship and time spent together. Likewise, when you're in love with Jesus, you can't keep to yourself the joy that comes from knowing Him—it just spills over, bearing witness and strengthening other believers. In fact, as you give testimony of who God is and how He's working in your life, it makes no difference whether you speak quietly or with great exuberance: in their spirit, Christians will pick up on the deep, genuine gladness in your heart that goes beyond natural happiness. And people who don't yet know the Lord will find themselves hungering for the relationship you have. In that way, they will be drawn

See **JOY** on page 5

## 'Kingdom Business': Yolanda Adams & Serayah To Lead Cast Of BET+ Gospel Drama Series



Yolanda Adams and Serayah star as gospel music rivals in "Kingdom Business" on BET+.

BET+ has cast Yolanda Adams and Serayah as leads for its upcoming "Kingdom Business" series, which promises to highlight the sacred and scandalous aspects of the gospel music industry.

Adams stars as Denita Jordan, the reigning "Queen of Gospel" — reflecting a title held by the award-winning veteran artist in real life, while actress/model/singer Serayah portrays Rbel, "a talented up-and-coming gospel star with a troubled past who threatens Denita's crown," according to a press release.

Seemingly a cross between "Greenleaf" and "Empire," the

"Kingdom Business" series centers on an in-house music label run by Adams' character (Jordan) — who also happens to be a first lady. In addition to protecting her musical status, Jordan "is determined to guard her family and its many secrets at all costs." However, generations clash when Serayah's star starts to rise and her former life as an exotic dancer, presumably, threatens to upend her newfound status as the future sound of gospel.

"Kingdom Business" was created as a music-driven project, so performances by the leads are to be expected, as are special guest appearances. So far, the guest list

includes: Tamar Braxton, La'Miya Good, Aspen Kennedy, Kiandra Richardson, Kajuana Shuford Marie, and Sam Malone.

The eight-episode series also features familiar favorites, including Michael Jai White ("Black Dynamite") as power producer Julius "Caesar" Jones and Michael Beach ("ER," "Soul Food") as Denita's husband, Bishop Calvin Jordan. In one of his rare performances off the stage, Chaundra A. Hall-Broomfield ("Hamilton") stars as the Jordans' heir apparent, Taj.

Fans eager to watch the faith

See **BUSINESS** on page 5

## Health



SPOTLIGHT ON SUPPLEMENTS: VITAMIN D3 and K2

## Superb Cardiovascular, Bone Support and Immune Support

In my wellness practice, in sunny Louisiana, the most common vitamin deficiency I see is low D3. How could that be in a state that boasts year-round sporting and outdoors activities, where we live on the river and can walk a wooded trail with our eyes close — so familiar with our earth that it is a natural extension of our homes.

Vitamin D deficiency is our most common health challenge globally. The best way to get boost your Vitamin D levels is through consistent sun exposure. Research shows that even sunlight through your eyes can be just, if not more, beneficial than sun light on your skin.

Sun exposure does not mean extended time in the sun, but reasonable and sensible consistent exposure 2 to 3 times a week. Easy intentional exposures are simple to get — spending 30 minutes eating your lunch in a sunny area, playing ball or jump rope with your kids our spouse in the sun, taking a 20–30-minute sun-nap on your patio or porch.

All the great research on Vitamin D shows the benefits on bone health, mood enhancement, disease prevention including dental decay, optimizing hormones and cancer prevention.

Vitamins D and K work together to promote:

- proper calcium metabolism
- free-flowing blood circulation
- bone formation and bone strength
- a robust immune system

As a Holistic Wellness Practitioner and Health Strategist, I support the use of a D3 and K2 combination

and specifically use and recommend the Premier Research Labs Plant-Source Vitamin D3 with Plant Source Vitamin K2.

For years we have known that vitamin D is very important in helping to maintain healthy bones in addition to supporting our immune system. But now, extraordinary scientific research has revealed that D3 and K2 operate in synergy to promote bone mineralization and regulate calcium deposits in vascular tissue. Our vascular tissues are our blood

Dr. Gayle Young

See **SUPPORT** on page 5



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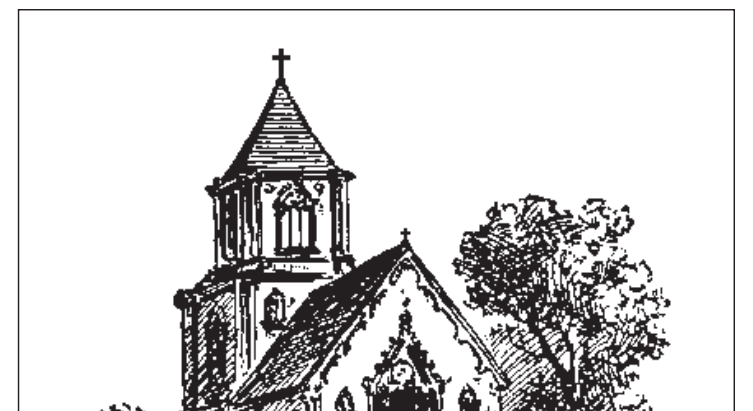
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Contemporary Worship ..... 2nd & 5th Sunday ..... 8:00 a.m.  
(And any Sunday that falls on a Holiday)  
Bible Study ..... Wednesday, Men's Mid-Day Study ..... 12:00 p.m.  
Disciple Bible Study ..... Wednesday ..... 5:30 p.m.  
Prayer Ministry ..... Tuesday ..... 6:00 p.m.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL Every Sunday at 9:30 A.M.  
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Dr. Donald Ruth, Pastor

Worship Times:  
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Sunday Worship Experience: 11:00 AM  
Uplift Training: Thursdays 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

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Websites: www.newhopebr.com

Rev. Leo Cyrus Sr., Pastor  
CHURCH SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning Worship ..... 10:45 AM  
Lord's Supper ..... 3rd Sundays  
Sunday School ..... 9:30 AM  
Prayer Service ..... Wed. @ 6:00 PM  
Bible Study ..... Wed. @ 7:00 PM

Mission Statement: New Hope Baptist Church is a family of baptized believers who worship the Lord our God in spirit and in truth, teach the saved to reach the lost and minister to the needs of others, while encouraging one another through acts of love and living in obedience to Gods Word

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# BUSINESS

## Edwards, lawmakers reach deal on Superdome renovation plan

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Gov. John Bel Edwards' administration and Louisiana's legislative leaders appear to have struck a deal to use \$27 million in federal pandemic aid to help pay for a portion of the renovations to the New Orleans Superdome, two months after lawmakers stalled a prior financing proposal.

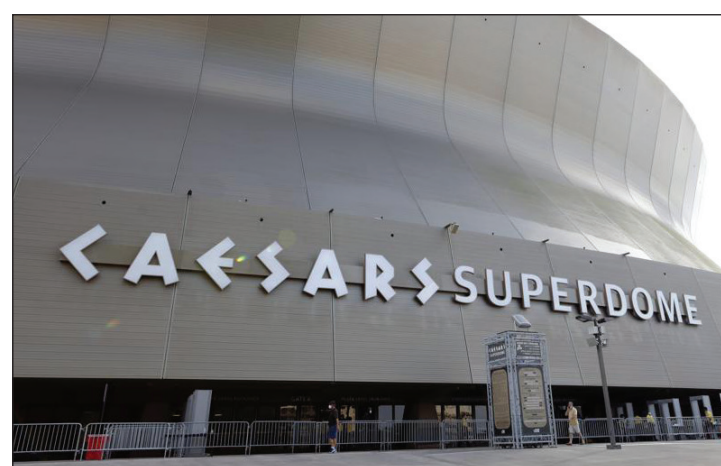
The Edwards administration describes a state contribution to the Superdome upgrades as critical to reaching an agreement with the Saints that keeps the NFL team in the state for decades.

After behind-the-scenes negotiations, the federal funding plan — along with a companion plan to let the Superdome manager pay off a debt to the state years early — go before two panels for approval Thursday. The Bond Commission and the joint House and Senate budget committee have to back the arrangement for the proposal to work.

That appears likely to happen after Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne, Senate President Page Cortez and House Speaker Clay Schexnayder said they have agreed on the outlines of the financing plan.

"I am comfortable with it. I think members will be comfortable with it as well. I think we're in good shape," said Schexnayder, a Gonzales Republican.

Details of the arrangement were outlined to The Associated Press and described in a memo from the Superdome oversight board, the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District, provided by Dardenne's office.



Gov. John Bel Edwards' administration and Louisiana's legislative leaders appear to have struck a deal to use \$27 million in federal pandemic aid to help pay for a portion of the renovations to the Superdome. The federal money and a companion plan to let the Superdome manager pay off a state debt early go before two panels for approval Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021.

The new arrangement would have the state putting up \$54 million of the \$450 million in stadium improvements: \$27 million already authorized through the state construction budget and \$27 million from the federal coronavirus relief aid. That's down from previous proposals that would have the state contributing \$90 million to the Superdome renovations.

"We have what I believe is going to be an acceptable agreement to everybody," said Dardenne, the Democratic governor's chief budget adviser.

The reworked Superdome improvement plan would keep the Saints at the original plan of putting up \$150 million while the share from

the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District would increase to \$246 million.

And the state's share could drop even lower than the \$54 million. Cortez said the \$27 million in federal pandemic assistance would be returned to the state if hotel/motel tax dollars allocated to the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District rebound to certain levels by 2023.

"We want to be frugal in how much we put into this, and we want the stadium agreement to be a fairer deal for the state," said Cortez, a Lafayette Republican. "It's gotten to be a better partnership."

The state's current lease with the

NFL team expires in 2025, though Saints owner Gayle Benson has pledged she intends to keep the club in New Orleans long-term.

The \$450 million in upgrades to the nearly 50-year-old iconic stadium in downtown New Orleans — with expanded club and suite levels, new concession stands, viewing decks and other improvements — was part of a plan announced by Edwards more than two years ago aimed at keeping the Saints in New Orleans through 2055.

The stadium renovations began in 2020 and are expected to wrap up before the Super Bowl scheduled to be held in the Superdome in February 2025. Dardenne said it's critical to reach a deal on the state's share of the financing by the end of the year so the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District can sign a contract for the next phases of the construction work.

### SUPPORTS from page 4

vessels. Vascular calcification (VC) occurs most often in the aorta, aortic valve and coronary artery and seen most often in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD), diabetes and vascular disease and is an independent risk factor for cardiovascular events, especially in patients with chronic kidney disease. And vascular calcification is closely associated with mortality from cardiovascular disease in the aged population. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8105793/>

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### JOY from page 4

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### KIDS from page 3

receive such meals have applied for the program. Families participating in a few other programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, also get the free or

lower-cost meals.

"Adding Medicaid to the list of benefit programs that can 'directly certify' a student to receive free or reduced-price meals is a win-win for students, families, and school officials. This means less paperwork for families and fewer school meal applications for school districts to process and verify," the news release said.

### BUSINESS from page 4

and fame-centered drama unfold will have to wait until next year, as "Kingdom Business" is currently filming in Atlanta. If early details are accurate, the premiere episode will be titled "One Moment From

Glory."

Casting news for "Kingdom Business" comes just months after the release of "Favorite Son," another gospel music project by BET+. That movie starred Jonathan McReynolds and Rotimi as the gospel singing sons of an overbearing megachurch pastor.

Executive producers for the "Kingdom Business" include Holly Carter, DeVon Franklin, Kirk Franklin, and Michael Van Dyck. Award-winning writers Kerry Lenhart and John J. Sakmar, known for the "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" series and "Medicine Ball," share writing credits for the BET+ series.

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