

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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Mayor Broome Announces Return of Summer of Hope Initiative in BR



Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome

Baton Rouge, LA – Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome today announced the return of the Summer of Hope initiative, a community-led violence reduction campaign that aims to restore hope to families and make neighborhoods safer. The initiative will run 15 weeks during the summer months when young people are out of school and violence typically increases.

"Last year, our Summer of Hope initiative helped reduce homicides by 23% over a 12-week period," said Mayor-President Broome. "This year, we are expanding the initiative to 15 weeks and adding new programs and events. We are committed to working with our community partners to create a safer and more hopeful future for all Baton Rouge residents."

The Summer of Hope initiative will focus on four key areas: Street outreach: This will include grassroots community engagement activities such as door-to-door canvassing, neighborhood walks, and resource events.

Joy and hope events: These events will promote joy, creativity, and fun in neighborhoods that experience high levels of violence.

Dialogues, conversations, and community connections: These will be courageous community discussions that challenge our thinking around the issue of public safety and build proactive solutions.

Programs and initiatives: These will focus on providing personal and professional development opportunities for youth through employment, literacy, and exposure to a variety of experiences. Additionally, we will focus on neighborhood revitalization and organizing efforts.

In addition to the Summer of Hope initiative, the Mayor's Youth Workforce Experience will provide youth and young people with summer jobs and professional development. The program will accept 500 youth this year and will provide a number of resources, including:

- Job training

See HOPE, on page 3

Louisiana Senate guts bill aiding women who killed alleged abusers



Legislation Sen. Regina Barrow, D-Baton Rouge, sponsored to help incarcerated women who killed their alleged abusers was gutted by the Louisiana Senate on Tuesday (May 16, 2023). (Photo by Greg LaRose/Louisiana Illuminator)

Controversial decision deals a blow to efforts for justice and support of abuse survivors

BY: JULIE O'DONOGHUE Louisiana Illuminator

The Louisiana Senate gutted legislation Tuesday aimed at giving women serving prison sentences for killing their alleged abusers a chance at release and then voted in favor of an altered version of the bill. Advocates for domestic violence

survivors now say the measure won't do much to help the incarcerated women it was intended to assist.

Louisiana prosecutors aggressively lobbied for changes to Senate Bill 215 that two women senators, Regina Barrow, D-Baton Rouge, and Beth Mizell, R-Franklinton, sponsored.

"This is not a get out of jail card," Barrow told lawmakers Tuesday before the legislation was altered against her wishes. "There's a lot that would have to transpire for an individual to get [released from prison under the legislation]."

By changing the bill's language, senators avoided having to take an awkward vote on a proposal that could be construed as soft on crime in an election year, but that is also supported by sexual assault and domestic violence survivors.

The bill is now headed to

the Louisiana House for consideration, but it's unclear whether Barrow and other supporters will want to move forward with the legislation in its current form. The senator may try to find a House member who can put the measure back into a format that she favors.

"It doesn't provide any retroactive relief [for incarcerated women] whatsoever," said Stanislav Moroz, a law professor who represents incarcerated women through Tulane Univer-

See BILL, on page 3

New Law Expunges Misdemeanor Possession Charges in Louisiana

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana is set to implement a new law to expunge misdemeanor possession charges, offering relief to individuals burdened by past offenses. The legislation, known as HB286, passed unanimously in the state legislature, signaling a broad consensus on the need for criminal justice reform.

Rep. Delisha Boyd, a Democrat from New Orleans, sponsored the bill to address the negative impact of previous marijuana possession charges on employment opportunities. Under the new law, individuals with a history of misdemeanor possession will have their records cleared, allowing them to pursue various careers without the stigma of past convictions.

Louisiana has been progressively adopting a more lenient approach to marijuana, with a notable milestone achieved in 2021 when the governor signed a bill decriminalizing possession of up to 14 grams of the substance. However, the full legalization of marijuana has yet to materialize, prompting lawmakers to take action to mitigate the consequences of prior possession charges.

Regarding the law's potential benefits, Rep. Boyd highlighted the opportunities it would create for affected individuals. "They'll now have the ability to go into the workforce and get licensing to be a barber, a hairdresser, to be a realtor even," she explained.

See LAW, on page 2

Baker School District Presents Ambitious Plan for Teacher Salary Increases

"Teachers are like all other work employees," said Brown. "They have bills that must be paid. To ensure that, they have to make a living wage. In Baker, they are not doing that."

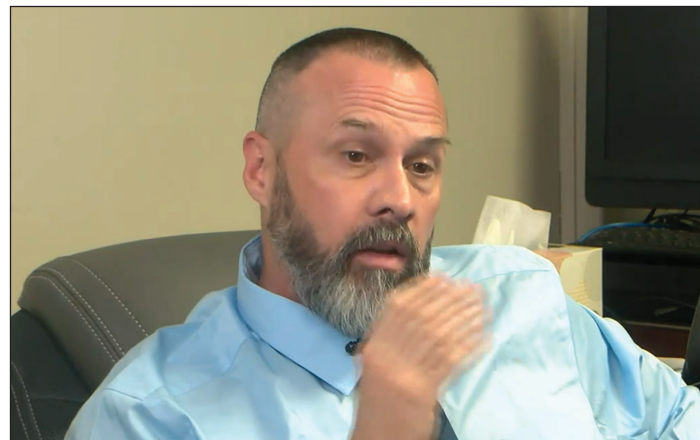
By BR Weekly Press Staff

BAKER, La. - Teachers in one school district could get a big raise, but the district would have to close a school. It would be an \$11,000 pay raise, moving Baker from one of the lowest starting pay to one of the highest.

There is no denying that schools in Baker need a serious boost. The overall performance of the district's schools has left the community needing profound changes.

"Ultimately, if you are going to turn academics around, it will happen at the classroom level," said acting Superintendent J.T. Stroder.

He proposes a plan to keep his best teachers and not lose them to neighboring districts.



"Ultimately, if you are going to turn academics around, it will happen at the classroom level," said acting Superintendent J.T. Stroder.

"The students in Baker deserve consistency in the classroom. A big part is two-fold. One is retention. We want to keep our people.

Two, we want more than a handful of applicants," explained Stroder. That retention means competitive pay. The starting salary for

teachers in Baker is about \$41,000. Stroder is proposing an \$11,000 pay raise. That would increase starting pay to about \$52,000 for new teachers.

"Currently, we are 11 out of 12 with teacher pay. This would move us into second place," added Stroder.

Angela Brown, the president of the East Baton Rouge Federation of Teachers and School Employees, says the raise would bring their pay to the southern regional average.

"Teachers are like all other work employees," said Brown. "They have bills that must be paid. To ensure that, they have to make a living wage. In Baker, they are not doing that."

See SCHOOLS, on page 2

WEATHER



MON. 05/22
Mostly Cloudy
High 91°.



WED. 05/24
Partly Cloudy
High 86°.



TUE. 05/23
Mostly Cloudy
High 87°.



THUR. 05/25
Mostly Cloudy
High 89°.

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LOCAL & STATE

City of Baker, Louisiana, Achieves Clean Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2022

BAKER, La. — The City of Baker proudly announced today that it has received an unmodified opinion for its Fiscal Year 2022 audit, signaling a high level of assurance in the accuracy and adherence to accounting rules and regulations regarding the preparation of financial information and statements. This achievement marks the fifth consecutive year in which the city has obtained an unmodified opinion, solidifying the effectiveness of its financial processes and commitment to fiscal responsibility.

The audit, performed by Bruno and Tervalon, a Jackson-based firm, thoroughly examined the city's financial activities from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. During the regularly scheduled meeting on March 28, 2022, Mr. Akanji, representing Bruno & Tervalon, LLP, provided the Baker City Council with a comprehensive overview of the results outlined in the City of Baker's Annual Financial Report for 2022.

The unmodified opinion confirms that the financial statements were fairly and completely presented, accurately depicting the city's financial position. Notably, the audit revealed that 44% of the governmental funds were allocated to public safety, encompassing expenses associated with the city's fire and police departments. Additionally, public works expenditures experienced a 3% increase, rising from 22% in 2021 to 25% in 2022. The public works department's responsibilities encompass repairing local roadways, maintaining side-

walks, ensuring proper drainage, and responding to weather-related emergencies. Moreover, general government expenses saw a 2% reduction, declining from 17% to 15%. This category covers the purchase of goods and services, including employee compensation, to promote the welfare, safety, and general well-being of Baker's residents. Other expenses included economic/recreation at 4%, debt service - capital leases at 2%, and capital outlay at 10%.

The significance of the annual audit lies in its ability to showcase transparency in financial reporting, which fosters trust and confidence among investors, the public, and potential creditors. Financial statements play a crucial role in assessing an organization's creditworthiness, and an unqualified audit opinion serves as a testament to the city's financial integrity. Furthermore, the audit enables the city to continue receiving federal, state, and local grant funding for capital projects and expenses, maximizing the benefits for its citizens.

When asked about the audit results, Mayor Waites expressed satisfaction, stating, "I am pleased with the outcome of this audit, as it underscores our commitment to maintaining fiscal responsibility while enhancing the quality of life for our residents. We approach this matter with great seriousness, ensuring that Baker residents understand our dedication to being responsible custodians of taxpayer dollars."

SCHOOL from page 1

But Stroder proposes reducing the number of classroom teachers from 77 to about 58 to get there.

"We are trying to absorb as many positions as possible through retirement and attrition," noted Stroder.

The move would increase the student/teacher ratio from 12 to one to 16 to one. Brown said

that should not be an issue.

"In terms of state regulations, that is low. Most teachers would welcome that," she pointed out.

The plan also includes consolidating all students from four to three campuses.

"Typically, there is a ratio district can operate at that balances their budget," said Stroder.

The school board is set to meet on June 6 to consider the proposal and its budget for the next school year.

LAW from page 1

Initially, Rep. Boyd had proposed expunging all records related to possession of 14 grams or less. However, after consulting with the district attorney's office and the Sheriff's Association, it became apparent that a more targeted approach was necessary. As a result, the law will focus on expunging misdemeanor convictions of marijuana possession prior to a specific legal change called the Glover change, excluding cases involving significant quantities.

The current expungement process in Louisiana carries a hefty price tag of nearly \$600. HB286 seeks to alleviate this financial burden by reducing the cost by 50% for marijuana possession charges. While Rep.

Boyd acknowledged the desire for a fee-free process, she highlighted the streamlining of the application and the reduction of fees as significant improvements.

The unanimous support for the bill reflects a rare consensus among lawmakers. Moving forward, the challenge lies in determining the final details of the expungement process. Officials have emphasized the goal of tailoring the law to benefit individuals who have only one simple possession charge on their record.

With the passage of HB286, Louisiana is taking a step toward rectifying the consequences of past marijuana possession charges. The law's implementation will relieve countless individuals seeking to rebuild their lives and pursue meaningful opportunities without the burden of a criminal record.

LNG lobbyists ghost wrote Louisiana officials' letters supporting gas storage project



Despite Louisiana's vulnerability to climate change and warnings from international scientists that new fossil fuel development must stop in order to avoid worsening climate disasters, elected officials in Louisiana have continued to use the weight of their offices to aid fossil fuel firms in developing projects in the state.

BY: SARA SNEATH

In an effort to gain federal approval for a natural gas storage project in south Louisiana, Sempra LNG lobbyists crafted letters for Louisiana elected officials to send to federal regulators in support of the project.

Last fall, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) greenlit the Hackberry gas storage project, which involves converting underground domes constructed in the 1970s to mine for salt into storage space for up to 25.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas. Sempra LNG has been trying to build the

project in Cameron Parish since 2006, when the company planned to store gas in the caverns from its liquefied natural gas (LNG) import facility. Horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing later created a surplus in U.S. natural gas, which is primarily composed of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

The oil and gas industry searched for a market for the fossil fuel, using it as a main ingredient in synthetic fertilizers, amping up plastic production, and, beginning in 2016, exporting it overseas. In 2018, Sempra notified FERC that the company hadn't gone through with the gas storage project because

of unfavorable market conditions and requested to reapply for approval if market conditions improved. The company refiled in January 2021 as liquefied natural gas exports grew.

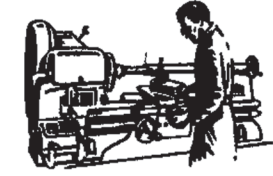
That same year Sempra lobbyists reached out to Louisiana Sen. Mike Reese and Rep. Les Farnum for help in the last few days of the federal public commenting period on the project. Coordination between Sempra lobbyists and the elected officials was discovered in emails obtained through record requests by Documented, an investigative watchdog group, and reviewed by DeSmog.

Despite Louisiana's vulnerability to climate change and warnings from international scientists that new fossil fuel development must stop in order to avoid worsening climate disasters, elected officials in Louisiana have continued to use the weight of their offices to aid fossil fuel firms in developing projects in the state. In September 2021, Jim Nickel — with the Baton Rouge-based lobbying firm Courson Nickel — emailed Rep. Farnum with a request. Sempra is among the companies that the lobbying firm actively represents, according to the Louisiana Ethics Administration Program.

"We are looking to get some comments in to the FERC in support of the Hackberry Storage Project," Nickel wrote to Rep. Farnum on Friday, Sept. 24, 2021. "They are due this Sunday — September 26. Sorry for the last minute request."

Nickel added that he would provide a draft letter for Farnum to send to FERC. Gay Courson, also with Courson Nickel, sent a similar email to Sen. Mike Reese the same day. The next day the senator wrote back, "Below is evidence of my submittal," with a digital receipt of submission from

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 Montecello Blvd. Baton Rouge, LA 70814

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Proposal Advances to Protect Employees' Medical Marijuana Use

Louisiana House Labor Committee approves bill safeguarding workers' access to unemployment benefits

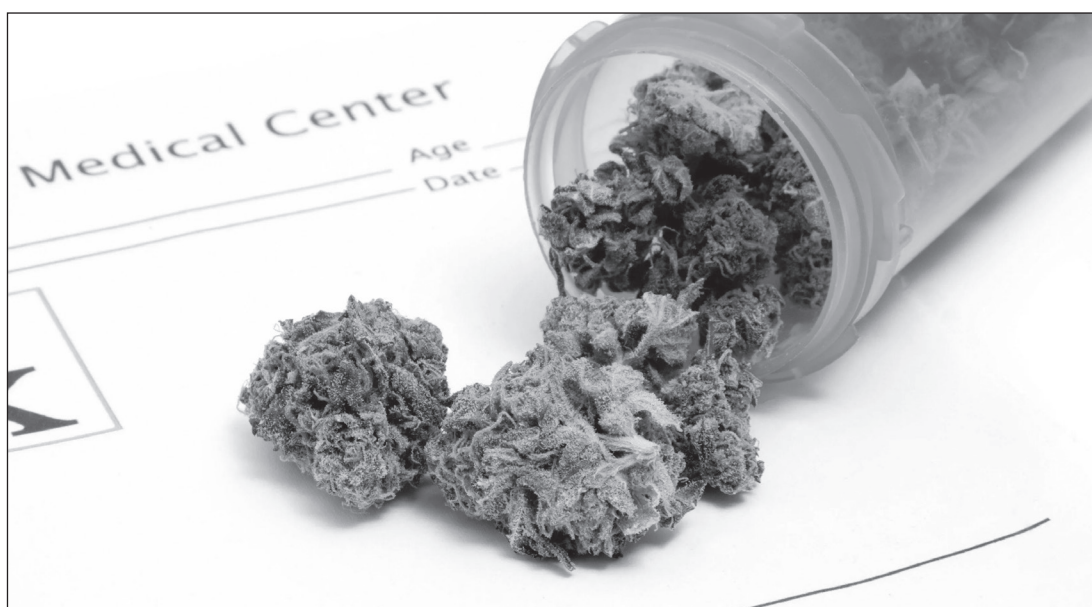
The House Labor Committee made progress on Thursday as they advanced a bill aimed at safeguarding employees who use medical marijuana, ensuring they are not disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits. Representative Mandie Landry, a Democrat from New Orleans, sponsored House Bill 351, which narrowly passed the committee with a 6-5 vote. Several committee members expressed their support for the bill based on Landry's commitment to finding a compromise with the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI).

Landry introduced the bill in response to the lack of consumer protections in the state, despite the legalization of medical marijuana and the regulation of growers and sellers. She highlighted the problematic situation where Louisiana residents purchase legal medical marijuana but subsequently lose their jobs, making it difficult for

them to afford the product. Landry remarked, "We have a very strange circle here with the government not being very good at selling marijuana."

During the bill presentation, Landry was joined by Representative Joe Marino, an Independent from Gretna and the chair of the state's Medical Marijuana Commission. Marino convinced Landry not to defer the bill voluntarily, and together they pledged to work on it before it undergoes a vote on the House floor.

In committee, the bill was amended to remove provisions that would have offered protection for worker's compensation claims. Despite these changes, LABI expressed concerns about the language in the bill. Wayne Fontana, a member of LABI, stated to the committee, "The language in the bill says a qualifying medical marijuana patient who receives a recommendation shall not be disqualified for unemploy-



Representative Mandie Landry advocates for the advancement of House Bill 351, which seeks to safeguard employees who use medical marijuana from losing their unemployment benefits, during the House Labor Committee session.

ment benefits. So if somebody is impaired, gets fired as a result of hurting themselves or others, then they still would be able to get unemployment benefits."

Landry dismissed these concerns as misleading, clarifying that she did not intend to pass a law allowing employees to be under the influence of marijuana while

at work. Representative Larry Frieman, a Republican from Abita Springs and a workers' compensation attorney, also opposed the

bill, acknowledging the issue faced by medical marijuana users in the workplace but admitting that he did not have a solution. Frieman stated, "It's gonna take a lot of bringing the experts to the table from labor lawyers and business and everyone else to figure out how this is gonna work."

This bill builds upon Landry's previous efforts to protect the labor rights of medical cannabis users. In 2022, she sponsored a proposal to prevent state employees from being fired due to medical marijuana use and to prohibit discrimination against prospective employees based on their legal medical marijuana usage.

Furthermore, Landry established a task force last year to study medical marijuana use and provide recommendations for protecting workers. While the committee approved a set of recommendations, most of them faced opposition from LABI's representative on the study committee.

Louisiana House Passes Bill for Easier Voter Registration of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

The Louisiana House of Representatives approved House Bill 396 on Thursday, aiming to simplify the voter registration process for formerly incarcerated individuals. Sponsored by State Representative Sam Jenkins, the bipartisan bill passed with a 63-34 vote. It mandates the creation of a user-friendly application form by the Louisiana Secretary of State to reinstate voter registration for this group.

Contrary to popular belief, Louisiana's state constitution does not permanently strip voting rights from convicted felons. The constitution only suspends voting



rights during imprisonment, probation, or parole, as interpreted by the Louisiana Supreme Court. The state legislature extended the suspension to include the five years following release. Convicted felons can register or re-register to vote

after this period without requiring a pardon or expungement.

Despite existing provisions, misconceptions about voting rights persist among the public and election officials. During a committee hearing, Jenkins highlighted the need to simplify the process, which had become convoluted. Former prisoners testified about confusion and barriers they faced when trying to register.

Gregory Finney's case exemplified the challenges. The Secretary of State's Office claimed his voter registration was suspended for a previous conviction, despite him never having registered before.

Jenkins proposed a reinstatement form to streamline the process and differentiate between those with suspended registrations and first-time registrants.

The bill also clarifies that applicants can submit their documents through mail, fax, or approved electronic means, resolving confusion regarding in-person submissions.

Next, the bill moves to the Louisiana Senate for consideration. If passed, it would improve voter registration for formerly incarcerated individuals, promoting inclusivity and democratic participation.

HOPE from page 1

- Mental health services
- Substance abuse treatment
- Education and tutoring
- Nutritious food
- Mentoring

The Mayor's Youth Workforce Experience and the Summer of Hope initiative are part of Mayor-President Broome's commitment to making Baton Rouge a safer and more hopeful community for all residents. Notifications of Acceptance for

MYWE will be emailed and mailed by Friday.

In the coming weeks, an event calendar for Summer of Hope will be announced with updates on an almost weekly basis. Event information will be shared with local media and

posted on the social media pages for Mayor Broome and Safe Hopeful Healthy BR.

Those interested in partnering, sponsoring or volunteering for Summer of Hope events should visit summerofhopebr.com or contact shhbr@brla.gov.

BILL from page 1

city's Women's Prison Project.

Domestic violence survivor advocates estimate more than 30 women are incarcerated in Louisiana for killing or hurting a person who subjected them to domestic violence, sexual assault or human trafficking. Some women are also behind bars for crimes they committed while under the coercion of an abuser, they said.

The advocates had hoped to create an avenue for the prison sentences of abuse survivors to be reevaluated.

The country's understanding of domestic violence has shifted over the past three decades, but women convicted of killing their abuser years ago don't have many opportunities to have their cases reconsidered. In Louisiana, people convicted of murder serve life sentences without the opportunity of

parole, meaning many older cases have never been reexamined.

The bill's supporters are running up against a political sentiment in which legislators have looked to extend prison sentences, not shorten them. Gov. John Bel Edwards has also never said whether he supports the proposal. The governor has released a handful of incarcerated women convicted of killing their abusers through clemency, but it wasn't clear whether he thinks the legislation was necessary.

The Louisiana District Attorneys Association put a lot of pressure on lawmakers in recent days to change the bill. They argued the original proposal was too broad and might lead to the release of serial killers and people on death row. As previously written, the bill would allow a serial killer to be potentially released on a defense of childhood abuse, they said.

Barrow attempted to address the prosecutors' concerns by add-

ing an amendment that said a person could only use the proposed defense if the alleged abuser had committed violence against her in the two months before their killing. This was meant to address the possibility of a serial killer using childhood abuse as an excuse for an adult killing spree.

But Barrow's amendment wasn't enough. Sen. Franklin Foil, R-Baton Rouge, forced Barrow to adopt essentially an entirely new bill, with language that would no longer help incarcerated women who are currently behind bars. Foil said the new language removed the district attorneys' opposition to the legislation.

District attorneys might have been faced with more work had the legislation passed in its previous form. They likely would have had to put together arguments to fight the release of women who qualified for a second look at their case under the older version of the legislation. Local prosecutors also have a

record of trying to block the release of incarcerated women who argue they were wrongfully imprisoned for killing their abusers.

Former Orleans Parish District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro opposed the release of Catina Curley, even after the Louisiana State Supreme Court threw out her conviction.

Curley was sentenced to life in prison for killing her abusive husband, but the Supreme Court found her attorney erred in not presenting expert testimony on domestic violence during her trial. At a new trial, she was acquitted.

Jefferson Parish District Attorney Paul Connick opposed the release of Beatrice Taylor, a woman the governor let out of prison through clemency two years ago. Taylor was serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole for killing her abusive boyfriend. The morning of his death, Taylor said he had broken her foot and threatened to murder her.

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RELIGION

Lawrence Hancock Releases Highly Awaited 9th Album: "Waiting For You"



Emptying the cupboards, Urban Christian Artist Lawrence Hancock serves another dose of vocals that evokes and compels the heart on his 9th album, *Waiting For You*, on Symphonic Distribution.

"Hearing great music with a great message inspires the listener. There's something magical about the creativity when those things intersect. Lawrence mastered this element in this album. The audience is in store for pure ear candy."

The Stellar Award Nominated singer/composer/producer held back nothing in the pursuit of capturing his relationship with God in this follow-up to the celebrated *Don't Stop Caring* album. *Waiting For You* features 14 songs taking listeners on a cosmic ride to a place of eternal perspective, leaving everything behind. The repeat button will be engaged.

See **HANCOCK**, on page 5

These Old Bones of Mine

DR. JAMES L. SNYDER

I had a frightening experience the other day. I know I must be getting old because things that never frightened me before frighten me. I also see things I never saw before.

Going into the bathroom one morning, I looked in the mirror, and my grandfather looked back at me. I almost passed out. With great haste, I left the bathroom, rushed to the living room, and sat down to think a little bit. What just happened?

I hadn't thought of my grandfather for a long time, and now here I am, looking at myself in the mirror and seeing my grandfather. Oh boy. How did he get in my mirror?

I knew my grandfather was old, at least from my perspective when I knew him. One thing I remember about him was how much he complained about his bones. You could hear his knees crack whenever he would get up from a chair. I never could understand that.

Not until recently did I discover that this was not a ploy; rather, he had aching and creaking bones.

It seems that I have inherited his creaking bones. Now I know what he was going through back then, and it wasn't a ploy.

I have no idea how many bones I have in my body, but I am discovering new bones that are starting to creak daily. I didn't know I had so many bones.

After thinking about my



grandfather and his creaking bones, I went back into the bathroom to chat with him, but instead of him being in the mirror, there I was. I am my grandfather!

If it were just creaking bones, I wouldn't be too concerned. But looking in the mirror this morning caused me to see that old age is really ugly. I have more wrinkles than I can count on my face. Where do those wrinkles come from?

I should start counting my wrinkles every morning to ensure I have the same amount from the day before. Of course, there must be some good to these wrinkles, or I wouldn't have so many.

I think I have become the standard for old age with my

musical bones and flourishing wrinkles. I sure could use some advice from my grandfather about this situation.

I went to The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and told her I thought I needed to go to a body shop to see if I could get a new body. "Do you have any recommendations?"

She looked at me up and down and then said, "Just remember, it'll cost you an arm and a leg." And then she laughed as though it was funny.

I wasn't laughing on the inside.

Later that day, I checked my Bible for verses dealing with

See **OLD BONES**, on page 5

Value Your Own Anointing

BY IVORY PAYNE

In a society obsessed with comparison and the pursuit of external validation, it is crucial to delve into the depths of our being and truly understand the immeasurable value of our own anointing. As believers seeking guidance from the scriptures, we find wisdom and inspiration in 1 Corinthians 12:4: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them."



Ivory D. Payne

Within the intricate tapestry of humanity, God has lovingly woven a unique anointing into the fabric of each individual's life. Just as a master artist employs a diverse palette to create a masterpiece, the Creator has bestowed upon us a myriad of spiritual gifts, talents, and callings. These gifts, given by the same Spirit, are not meant to be disregarded or compared but embraced and celebrated.

Valuing our own anointing begins with acknowledging the divine intention behind our uniqueness. God, in His infinite wisdom, designed us with a purpose in mind—a purpose that can only be fulfilled by fully embracing and utilizing the gifts we have been granted. Each gift, no matter how small it may seem, has the power to impact lives, bring about transformation, and glorify God's name.

When we recognize and honor our own anointing, we are freed from the shackles of comparison and envy. We learn to appreciate the beauty and rich-

ness of diversity within the body of Christ. Rather than diminishing ourselves by longing for someone else's anointing, we foster an atmosphere of unity, respect, and mutual appreciation.

Valuing our own anointing also requires us to cultivate a spirit of stewardship. We are entrusted with these gifts, and it is our responsibility to nurture them, develop them, and utilize them to their fullest potential. By investing time, effort, and resources into honing our gifts, we become effective instruments of God's grace and love in the world.

Furthermore, when we value our own anointing, we inspire others to do the same. By embracing our uniqueness, we encourage others to embrace their own and embark on their own transformative journeys. We become part of a community that celebrates and uplifts one another, recognizing that each anointing is a precious contribution to the collective mission of spreading God's love and truth.

In conclusion, valuing our own anointing is an act of faith and self-acceptance. It is a recognition that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that our unique gifts have a profound purpose in God's divine plan. Let us treasure the anointing placed upon us, nurture it with humility and gratitude, and use it to bring light, hope, and healing to a world in need. Remember, there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them, and it is in valuing our own anointing that we embrace our true identity and become vessels of God's abundant blessings.

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BUSINESS

Baton Rouge Casinos Experience Declining April Revenue



Baton Rouge casinos face declining April revenue as industry challenges persist.

BATON ROUGE, La. — All casinos in Baton Rouge reported a month of losses in April, according to the Louisiana Gaming Control Board's latest figures released on May 15. Revenue from the state's riverboat casinos and Harrah's New Orleans reached \$200.7 million during the month, marking an 8% decline compared to the \$218.8 million recorded in April 2022.

Additionally, the board reported that sports betting revenue for April amounted to \$22.9 million, with a handle of \$217.7 million. Online sports betting contributed \$21.6 million in revenue from a handle of \$190 million. Sports betting at physical casin-

os generated \$1.8 million from a handle of \$19.7 million.

Analyst Joseph Greff of J.P. Morgan mentioned in a note that April's calendar was unfavorable for the industry, as it had nine weekend days in 2023, compared to ten in 2022. However, the calendar for May was considered neutral, with both years having eight weekend days.

Among the Louisiana districts, Lake Charles properties emerged as the top revenue generators in April, bringing in \$76.7 million. Although this represented a slight increase of 0.7% compared to the previous year, L'Auberge Casino Resort Lake Charles led the way with

revenue of \$27.1 million, closely followed by Golden Nugget Lake Charles with \$26.1 million. Delta Downs Racetrack Casino Hotel contributed \$14.8 million, while Horseshoe Lake Charles (formerly Isle of Capri Lake Charles) reported \$8.7 million in revenue.

In the Shreveport/Bossier district, properties experienced a decline in revenue, amounting to \$50.3 million, marking a year-over-year decrease of 10.3%. Margaritaville Resort Casino contributed \$20.3 million, Horseshoe Bossier City reported \$11.9 million, and Bally's Shreveport Casino & Hotel totaled \$9.3 million.

New Orleans district properties recorded revenue of \$45.3 million in April, representing a significant year-over-year de-

crease of 19.5%. Harrah's New Orleans led the properties in the region with revenue of \$21.3 million, followed by Boomtown Casino & Hotel with \$10.2 million. Treasure Chest Casino generated \$7.3 million during the month.

Baton Rouge district casinos generated \$21.9 million in revenue for the month, indicating a year-over-year decrease of 5.9%. L'Auberge Casino Hotel led the district with \$16.3 million, while Hollywood Casino Baton Rouge brought in \$4.5 million and the Belle of Baton Rouge Casino Hotel generated \$1.1 million.

Finally, Evangeline Downs Racetrack & Casino in St. Landry Parish reported revenue of \$6.5 million, which represented a decrease of 7.4% from March 2022.

OLD BONES from page 4

bones, but I had never thought of these verses before.

Psalms 51:8, "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."
Psalms 34:20, "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

I am a proponent of joy, but I never thought of bones

being associated with joy. As I get older, I am discovering just how important my bones are. From now on, whenever one of my bones creaks, I will rejoice to know that God keeps all my bones.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamesnsnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamesnsnyderministries.com.

HANCOCK from page 4

When asked, Where does the music keep coming from? Lawrence answers, "I really don't know! I start composing the music and growing from a very simple place into these songs that capture me. I'm blown

away when it's done." When you get to your favorite platform, make sure you follow and subscribe, as Lawrence wants to connect!

This album will be commemorated with a limited supply of the industry's first LP Style Digital Download Card to guide the listening experience.

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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF MARICOPA JUVENILE DIVISION CASE NO. JS21560
NOTICE OF HEARING ON PETITION FOR TERMINATION PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP
In the Matter of:
ELIZABETH MONK DOB: July 22, 2009
Person under 18 years of age.

TO: Fadia Erica ElMohamed aka Fadia Monk
Petitioners, Brandon Vincent Monk and Jessica LeeAnn Monk, having filed with this Court a verified Petition to Terminate Parent-Child Relationship between Elizabeth Monk and her Natural Mother, Fadia Erica ElMohamed aka Fadia Monk.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a hearing on the Petition to Terminate Parent-Child Relationship is scheduled for the 22nd day of June, 2023, at the hour of 9:15 o'clock, a.m. (Arizona time), before the Honorable Pamela Gates in the Maricopa County Superior Court, Juvenile Division at the Old Court House located at: 125 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85003, for the purpose of determining whether any parent named herein is contesting the allegations in the Petition for Termination.

The hearing will be virtual. You may contact the division at 602-506-6391. You may use the following link https://tinyurl.com/jbzmc-ju17 to connect to the hearing or call in at the time of the hearing to 917-781-4590 and use Conference ID: 447-368-555#. You have a right to appear as a party in this proceeding. The failure of a parent to appear at the initial hearing, the pretrial conference, the status conference or the termination adjudication hearing without good cause may result in an adjudication terminating the parent-child relationship of that parent.

Failure to appear at a hearing may result in a finding that the parent has waived legal rights, including the right to trial by a jury, and is deemed to have admitted the allegations in the motion or petition for termination. The parent shall be advised that the hearings may go forward in the absence of the parent and may result in the termination of parental rights based upon the record and evidence presented.

In the event a named parent appears and enters a contest to the allegations, a trial will be scheduled for a later date. If a named parent does not contest the allegations, then that parent's rights shall be terminated on the above date and time.

The above-named individual may obtain a copy of the Notice of Hearing and Petition to Terminate Parent-Child Relationship by submitting a written request to: **Kristy B. Blackwell**, Attorney at Law, 3920 S. Alma School Rd., Ste. 5, Chandler, AZ 85248. A request for reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities must be made to the Court by parties at least three (3) working days in advance of a scheduled court proceeding.

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Systems Services, Inc seeks an Odoo Developer in Baton Rouge, LA

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Apply: <https://www.ssbtr.com/jobs/detail/odoo-software-developer-5>

2023 NAACP Freedom Fund Gala Celebrates Juneteenth and Resumes Annual Tradition

"Join us for the NAACP Baton Rouge Branch Freedom Fund Scholarship Gala: Celebrating Freedom and Honoring Community Leaders at the Juneteenth-inspired Event!"

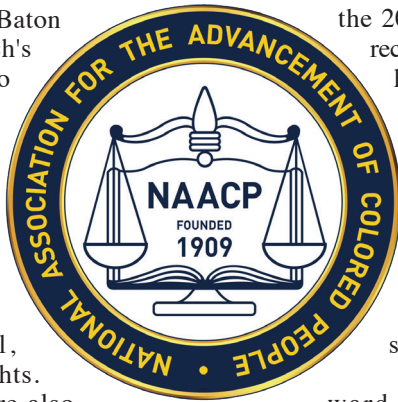
The NAACP Baton Rouge Branch Freedom Fund Scholarship Gala will be held on June 17th, 2023. We are seeking sponsors and would love to have you as a sponsor for such a great event. The available sponsorship and partnering opportunities are available and attached for your convenience.

This year, we have decided to start a new tradition in celebrating our annual Freedom Fund Gala alongside the celebration of freedom with the Juneteenth Holiday! This gala will feature a keynote speaker, live band, and DJ. It is the chapter's annual premiere fundraiser, and tickets will be \$100 each, with a projected attendance of 500 guests. It will be held at the Crown Plaza Executive Center Ballroom at 4728 Constitution Ave, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

The funds raised will help

the NAACP Baton Rouge Branch's mission to continue fostering a more robust and healthier community related to civic, economic, educational, and civil rights. The funds are also used to award four scholarships to East Baton Rouge Parish students.

This celebratory event will highlight the NAACP branch's historical importance. It will honor five outstanding community leaders in four categories: the Dr. Ernest Johnson Civil Service Award, the Trailblazer Award, Amazing Woman Award, and the Aspiring Youth Award. Also,



the 2023 scholarship recipients will share how they will benefit from the NAACP Scholarship and the entrance essay that all scholarship candidates submit for award consideration.

We move forward with the momentum of our theme: Free At Last, yet The Work Continues! This evening will begin as guests are welcome on the red carpet. The doors will open at 6:30 p.m., and the ballroom will open at 7:00 p.m. The program will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m. with dinner and conclude with live entertainment.

The NAACP Baton Rouge Branch is a nonpartisan 501(C)4

organization that encourages the informed and active participation of the citizens in the government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. We request your support of the Freedom Fund Gala, our mission, and our events by partnering or choosing a sponsorship level.

For additional information, don't hesitate to contact the NAACP Baton Rouge Branch Freedom Fund Gala Chairpersons Evette Moore and Y'Mine McClanahan, also our Second Vice President, at brnaacpfreedomfundgala@gmail.com.

To purchase tickets or for further information, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/baton-rouge-branch-naacp-presents-juneteenth-freedom-fund-gala-registration-596114744247>



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Mayor Darnell Waits Invites Community to Prayer Breakfast with Congressman Troy Carter

Baker, Louisiana - Mayor Darnell Waits, a beacon of leadership and unity in Baker, Louisiana, is delighted to announce the highly anticipated Mayor's Prayer Breakfast, set to take place on Friday, June 30, 2023, at the Baker Municipal Center. This transformative event, organized by the Mayor's Office, promises an unforgettable morning of prayer, reflection, and community engagement.



Mayor Darnell Waits



Congressman Troy A. Carter

Titled "Embracing Hope, Uniting Hearts: Mayor's Prayer Breakfast 2023," this year's edition is poised to uplift and inspire attendees. Beginning promptly at 6:30 am, the event welcomes all members of the Baker community to gather in the spirit of camaraderie at the esteemed Baker Municipal Center, located at 3325 Groom Road.

Renowned Guest Speaker Congressman Troy A. Carter, a highly respected figure recognized for his unwavering dedication to service, will grace the event with his remarkable insights and inspirational words. Representative Carter's exceptional oratory skills and profound message will leave a lasting impact on all those present, encouraging them to embrace hope and unite their hearts in the face of challenges.

Mayor Darnell Waits extends his heartfelt appreciation to the residents of Baker for their steadfast support and invites them to join him in this remarkable opportunity to strengthen the bonds that make Baker a thriving community. The Mayor's Prayer Breakfast is a powerful reminder of the significance of faith, compassion, and resilience, especially in these unprecedented times.

Tickets for the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast are available for purchase. To purchase tickets, call City Hall at (225) 778-0300 or visit the official city website at <https://cityofbakerla.com/>. Early registration is strongly advised to secure a place at this transformative event.

Join Mayor Darnell Waits, esteemed Guest Speaker Representative Troy Carter, and fellow community members at the Baker Municipal Center on June 30, 2023, at 6:30 am. This event promises an extraordinary opportunity to unite, find solace in prayer, and connect as one robust and resilient community.

NAACP BATON ROUGE BRANCH PRESENTS

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