

# The Weekly Press

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THURSDAY, MAY 6-12, 2021

A PEOPLE'S PUBLICATION

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Happy Mother's Day

## Gov. Edwards Signs Executive Order Creating the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls Task Force

As the nation recognizes May 5, 2021 as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day, Gov. John Bel Edwards has signed a proclamation declaring the same in Louisiana as well as an executive order creating the Governor's Task Force on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. It will proactively address the myriad causes of MMIWG and recommend solutions that can be implemented to protect Indigenous women and girls. Indigenous women suffer murder rates ten-times the national average, one in three will be raped in their lifetimes, and some 84 percent will be the victims of violence. This task force seeks to raise public awareness about the ongoing crisis of violence against Indigenous women.

"We must remember that each victim is much more than a



Gov. John Bel Edwards

See **TASK FORCE**, on page 2

## Rep. Jones pushes to extend early voting

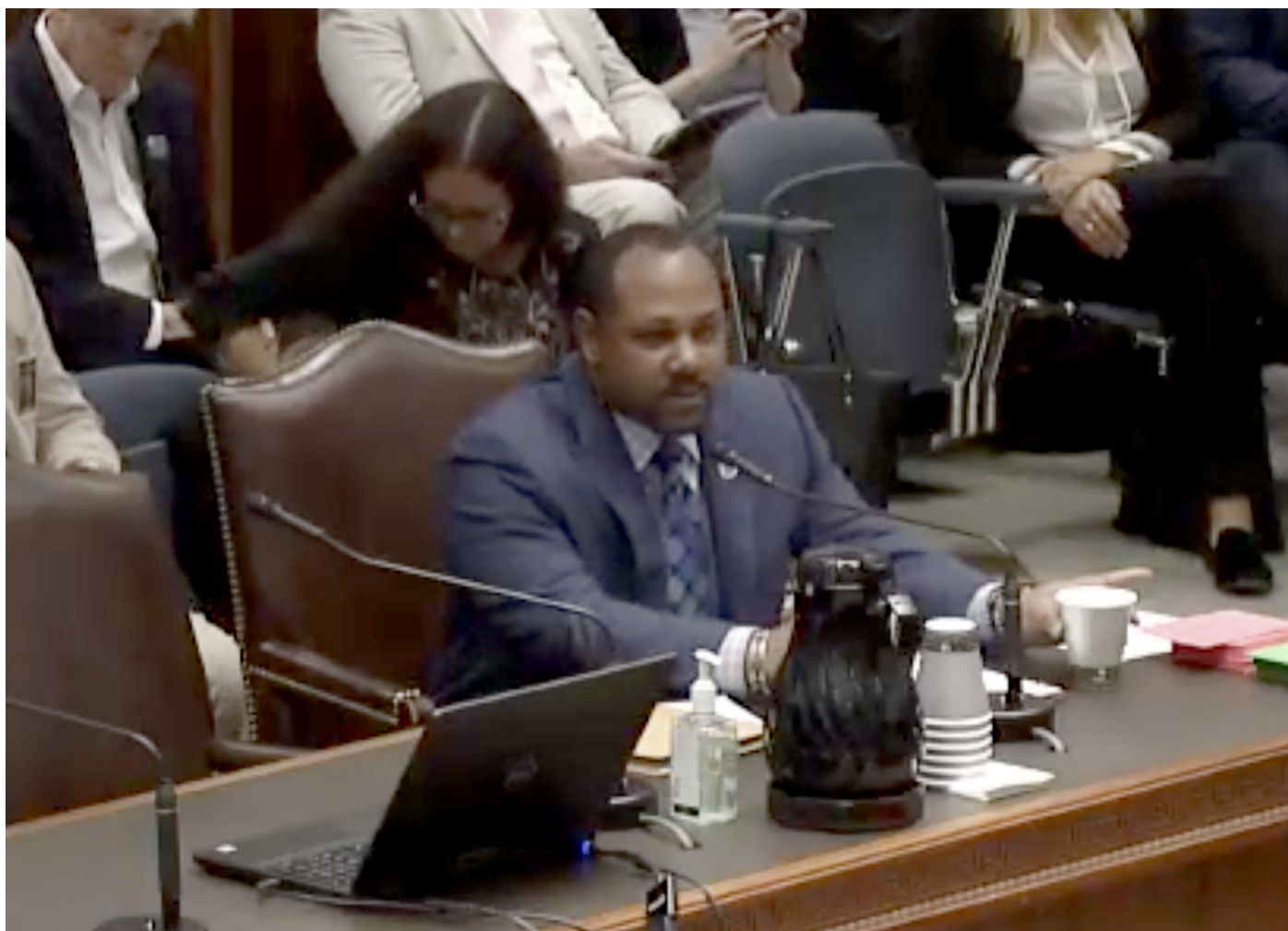


Photo Caption: Rep. Frederick Jones, D-Monroe, testified about his bill to extend early voting in presidential elections. Photo by: Sydney McGovern/LSU Manship School News Service

By Sydney McGovern  
LSU Manship School News Service

BATON ROUGE, La. — A bill to extend early voting from seven to 10 days during presidential elections was approved unanimously by a House committee Wednesday, March 5.

Rep. Frederick Jones, D-Monroe, offered his bill after the record voter turnout in the 2020 presidential election. Louisiana saw over 2.1 million people vote in November, and 986,000 of them voted early in-person.

The bill originally extended early voting for every election, but after financial concerns from the registrars of voters, Jones limited the bill to presidential elections. The extension of early voting comes with a price tag of \$400,000 to the state, including pay for poll workers.

Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin noted that while early voting provides a great convenience to voters, extending this period for every election would come with challenges for his office and the registrars.

Limiting the bill to presidential elec-

tions also allows for more time to adjust election timelines.

"By making it a specific election and only for that election, it doesn't give us the heartburn that any further expansion would," Ardoin said. "For any consideration of future expansion, we will need more time between elections, and we will have to pull back the calendar earlier in the year."

John Couvillon, founder of JMC Analytics and Polling, spoke in favor of the bill,

See **EARLY VOTING**, on page 3

## Louisiana closed primary fight ends without legislative vote

BATON ROUGE, La. — A Senate Republican leader Wednesday scrapped efforts to redesign Louisiana's primary elections in the legislative session, amid sharp disagreements among GOP officials about whether to make changes or leave the state's "jungle primary" system intact.



Sen. Sharon Hewitt



Sen. Patrick McMath, R-Covington

Slidell Sen. Sharon Hewitt proposed a return to closed party primaries for congressional elections because of concerns that Louisiana's open primary often has the state electing members of Congress later than the rest of the country.

But the idea divided leaders in her own party, with GOP statewide elected officials and Republicans in the state's congressional delegation at odds over the idea. The feud raised questions about whether the bill could pass, and Hewitt said she would continue studying the issue.

"My intention is not to run the bill this session," Hewitt told the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee, which she chairs.

Of closed primaries, she said: "I don't think that we're really at that place yet in our state."

In Louisiana's current open primary system, all candidates regardless of party run against each other for elected office. If no one candidate tops 50% in that primary, the top two vote-getters advance to a head-to-head runoff. That system has been in place since 1975, with

See **FIGHT**, on page 2

## President Biden push efforts to pass Voter Access, Election Integrity Bill

By Stacy M. Brown,  
NNPA Newswire Senior  
National Correspondent

President Joe Biden plans to continue speaking with senators this week about passing H.R. 1, a bill that addresses voter access, election integrity and security, campaign finance, and ethics for the three government branches.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that the President is very aware of the voter suppression laws pushed in Republican-led state legislatures around the country.

When asked if the White House should consider reprioritizing voting rights over infrastructure, Psaki said the administration is closely working with senators.

"We are very deeply engaged in working with members of the Senate and their teams on how this can move forward," Psaki said of H.R. 1, or the "For the People Act of 2021," which passed the House last month.

"I wouldn't say one is over the other," Psaki remarked.

In Republican-led statehouses in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Arizona, lawmakers have offered up new laws that would make it difficult for people to vote — particularly



In addition to H.R. 1, President Biden has urged federal lawmakers to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

individuals of color.

In Arizona, Republican lawmakers have introduced 24 bills that would suppress or even exclude people from voting. "Everybody shouldn't be voting," Arizona Rep. John Kavanagh remarked as he explained the proposed suppression laws in the Grand Canyon State.

Kavanaugh repeated false claims of widespread voter fraud.

"Democrats value as many people as possible voting," he remarked. "They are willing to risk fraud. Quantity is important,

See **BILL**, on page 5

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## Attorney, political commentator Bakari Sellers to address Spring 2021 graduates

Acclaimed attorney, political commentator and author Bakari Sellers will deliver the commencement address to more than 550 students who will graduate from Southern University and A&M College on Friday, May 14. The ticketed ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. in A.W. Mumford Stadium. Southern continues to adhere to state and local COVID-19 mandates for colleges and universities. This includes mandatory face coverings while on campus.

Bakari Sellers was born into an activist family. His father, civil rights leader Cleveland Sellers, instilled core values in him to continue in the tireless commitment to service.

In 2005, Sellers earned a bachelor's degree in African-American Studies from Morehouse College. He continued his education at the University of South Carolina School of Law in 2008, earning a juris doctor. He currently practices law with the Strom Law Firm LLC in Columbia,



Acclaimed attorney, political commentator and author Bakari Sellers

South Carolina, where he heads the firm's Strategic Communication and Public Affairs team and has recently added Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consulting to the list of services offered.

Sellers made history in the 2006 South Carolina state legislature at the age of 22 as the youngest African-American elected official in the nation. His political career did not stop there. In 2014, he was the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor in South Carolina. Sellers has also worked for United States Congressman James Clyburn and former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin.

Sellers' accomplishments do not go unnoticed within the Democratic Party. In 2008, he served on President Barack Obama's South Carolina steering committee. His ability to "reach across the aisle to get things done" has led to numerous achievements, including being named TIME Magazine's 40 Under 40; "The Root 100"

list of the nation's most influential African-Americans in 2015; and HBCU Top 30 Under 30 in July 2014.

Sellers has served as a featured speaker at various political events, universities, and national trade organizations across the country, such as the 2008 and 2016 Democratic National Convention.

Sellers recently released "My Vanishing Country: A Memoir," a New York Times Best Seller. The book has been described as part memoir, part historical and cultural analysis illustrating the lives of America's forgotten Black working-class men and women. He has also expanded his audience with the "Bakari Sellers Podcast," a twice-a-week show that is part of The Ringer Podcast Network. Episodes feature a variety of topics, including politics, race, sports, media and more.

Sellers is married to Dr. Ellen Rucker-Sellers and father to twins Sadie and Stokely.

### WEATHER

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <b>MON. 05/10</b><br>Thunderstorms<br>High 83°.  |
|  | <b>TUE. 04/11</b><br>Thunderstorms<br>High 84.   |
|  | <b>WED. 04/12</b><br>Thunderstorms<br>High 79°.  |
|  | <b>THUR. 04/13</b><br>Partly Cloudy<br>High 77°. |

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# STATE & LOCAL

## Louisiana lawmaker scraps bill to decriminalize prostitution

BATON ROUGE, La. — Facing opposition from her colleagues, a New Orleans lawmaker Tuesday shelved her proposal to decriminalize prostitution across the state, ending the debate for the legislative session.

The House criminal justice committee was poised to reject Rep. Mandie Landry's bill to repeal about a dozen prostitution-related offenses, so Landry voluntarily scrapped the measure before the vote.

Across a three-hour hearing, supporters said the state should not be meddling in the sexual activities of adults who engage in their behavior by choice and the change would reduce unnecessary incarceration. But opponents raised moral objections and said the legislation could lead to increased human trafficking.

Landry said trafficking and forcing people to do something against their will would remain a crime under her bill.

"That is not what this is about. This is about consensual behavior," she said.

Current and former sex workers were among those who testified for the proposal, saying they were discriminated against because of their chosen occupation. They said the stigma surrounding prostitution makes it difficult for sex workers to report crimes, access health services and find housing. They said policing of prostitution often targets people of color and the LGBTQ community.

"That labor has been heavily policed, policed for nothing more than trying to put food on the table," said Lakeesha Harris, who described herself as a former second-generation sex worker representing Women

With A Vision, an organization advocating for the bill.

Melissa Flourmoy, with the organization Louisiana Progress, said the treatment of prostitution is laced with hypocrisy. She said too often the women involved in sex work are penalized for the activity, while the men who pay for sex don't face similar sanctions.

"The men are rarely punished, arrested or publicly humiliated," she said.

People with religious organizations and anti-trafficking organizations opposed the legislation. They said it was impossible to separate sex work from human trafficking, questioned whether women willingly chose sex work as an occupation and said the bill would send a dangerous message to children. They argued decriminalizing prostitution would encourage sex work to grow.

"How can this be a little girl's dream?" said Diane Amos, executive director of Free Nola, an anti-trafficking organization.

Patrina Mosley, with the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, said most of the women doing sex work are being exploited and abused. She said decriminalizing prostitution would increase trafficking and violent crime.

"With all due respect, can any of you tell the difference between sex work and sex trafficking?" said Natasha Guynes, a former sex worker and founder of the Washington-based nonprofit HER Resiliency Center who objected to the legislation.

Associations representing district attorneys and sheriffs also opposed the bill.

## La. House backs removing permit mandate for concealed carry

BATON ROUGE, La. — The Louisiana House voted Wednesday to scrap the need for a permit to carry a concealed handgun in the state, joining the Senate in backing the idea.

The chambers need to agree on a final version of one of the two bills before it can reach the governor's desk. Once there, Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards has indicated he will veto the measure.

But that hasn't slowed the effort pushed by Republicans.

Lawmakers in the House voted 73-28 for the measure by Rep. Bryan Fontenot, a Republi-

can from Thibodaux, with some Democrats joining GOP lawmakers in passing the bill.

The proposal would allow anyone 21 years or older in Louisiana — if the person isn't barred from having a firearm — to carry a concealed handgun without needing a permit. Gun owners wanting concealed carry would no longer have to take hours of training on gun safety, get a background check and pay a fee to the Louisiana State Police.

Earlier in the session, senators voted 27-11 for a similar proposal by Sen. Jay Morris, a Monroe Republican.

## FIGHT from page 1

the exception of a three-year span for congressional elections.

In closed primaries, candidates from each political party run against each other and the top vote-getter from each party advances to a general election. They are seen as favoring more ideologically driven candidates over moderates.

Even though Hewitt sought to limit her closed primary bill to congressional elections, the proposal was seen as a possible stepping stone to wider closed primaries for other types of elec-

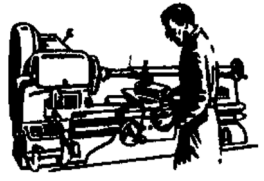
tions, and that intensified the disagreements among Republicans weighing their political futures.

Attorney General Jeff Landry, a conservative Republican eyeing a bid for governor in 2023, supports closed primaries for congressional, statewide and legislative races.

But Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser, a moderate Republican also considering a run for governor, has actively lobbied against the bill, showing up at a recent meeting of the state GOP's governing body to criticize closed primaries. He argued that changing the system would shrink voter participa-

See FIGHT, on page 3

### READER INFORMATION



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## Water Access Bill Passes House Education Committee

*American Heart Association thanks lawmakers for moving water Access Bill Forward*

BATON ROUGE, La., -- The Louisiana House Education Committee passed a bill that would require newly constructed public school buildings and those undergoing major renovations to be equipped with water bottle filling stations. House Bill 132, sponsored by Representative Vincent J. Pierre (D-Lafayette), passed favorably as amended and now heads to the full

House for further consideration.

The American Heart Association says the policy would help improve access to free, clean drinking water in schools. In addition to supporting healthy bodies, water positively impacts children's cognitive performance, particularly their short-term memory. Water bottle filling stations in schools can nearly triple how much water students drink at lunch time.

"Long before the pandemic, systemic challenges have contributed to disparities that impede some people from living long, healthy lives," says Ashley Hebert, Louisiana government relations director for the American Heart Association. "COVID-19 has highlighted the inequities many Louisianans face

on a daily basis. All children, no matter where they live or what grade they are in, deserve to go to a school that provides clean drinking water at no cost. We hope lawmakers can help make carrying water bottles the new normal in public schools and thank Rep. Pierre and members of the House Education committee for moving this legislation forward."

According to the American Heart Association, the cost of a water refill station compared to a water fountain is nominal in the process of construction and can save dollars over time.

To learn more about the water access policy and get involved, visit <https://act.yourethecure.org/fVURxph>

## Louisiana lawmakers plan \$1,000 pay raises for K-12 teachers

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana lawmakers intend to give K-12 public school teachers a \$1,000 pay raise next year, more than double the amount proposed by Gov. John Bel Edwards, the leader of the Senate Education Committee said Thursday.

Sen. Cleo Fields, a Baton Rouge Democrat, said legislative leaders plan to include that salary hike in next year's budget, along with a \$500 increase for support staff such as cafeteria workers and bus drivers. Louisiana remains well behind the Southern average for its education salaries.

Fields said the agreement was



reached with Senate President Page Cortez and House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, along with the heads of the House and Senate budget committees, all Republicans. Edwards had proposed \$400 teacher

raises and \$200 for support workers, though the Democratic governor had said he hoped that could be increased if more money became available.

The smaller raises "are insufficient," Fields said in a meeting of the Senate Education Committee.

Fields didn't identify how the state will pay for the larger pay raises, which would more than double the \$40 million price tag for the governor's proposed increases.

## TASK FORCE from page 1

number but a loved one, whose family and friends are searching for answers," said Gov. Edwards. "There is a need for urgent action in order to combat this tragedy. Louisiana has a rich Indigenous heritage with four federally recognized Indian tribes and 11 state recognized tribes. I am grateful that this issue has been brought to the forefront. Louisiana is committed to partnering with federal, state, interstate, and intertribal efforts to address the injustice and violence done to indigenous women residing within our nation and our state."

"This is such a serious issue, and I'm grateful to Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana Chairman David Sickey and others leaders who have been working tirelessly to bring attention to this injustice," said First Lady Donna Edwards. "We are committed to doing all we can to help fight this heartbreaking crime."

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## Louisiana Senate agrees to ban discrimination on hairstyles

BATON ROUGE, La. — The Louisiana Senate unanimously voted to make it illegal for employers to discriminate against someone because of their hairstyle, a measure striking at tactics that have targeted Black people who wear their hair naturally.

Senate Bill 61, by Sen. Troy Carter, a New Orleans Democrat recently elected to a congressional seat, would expand Louisiana's existing anti-discrimination law, which bars employers from discriminatory practices based on a worker's race, religion, sex or national origin.

The legislation would spell out that prohibited discrimination on the basis of race includes hair texture and hairstyles such as braids, twists and natural hair.

The Senate's 36-0 vote Monday sent the measure to the House for debate. If passed there, it would take effect Aug. 1. Several other states have passed similar legislation.

## Bike to School Day Bike Parade!

BATON ROUGE, La.—May is Bike Month, and we are pumped to pedal this Friday in celebration of Bike to School Day! On Friday, May 7th students from Buchanan Elementary and University Terrace at Polk will be celebrating and riding their bikes to school the right way! The Safety Place, Front Yard Bikes, EBR Sheriff's Office, and ICARE will be hosting a Bike Parade to increase safety awareness for young bikers. The event will allow students to bike together and enjoy valuable health and safety messages, while promoting safe biking to school!

School staff, parents, com-

See JUMP, on page 5

## SU Ag Center and the USDA to host a Debt Relief Webinar for Small Farmers

BATON ROUGE, La. — The Southern University Ag Center has partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to host a debt relief webinar for small and minority farms at 10 a.m. on May 13, 2021.

"The Southern University Ag Center, by way of our Co-operative Extension Program, is honored to partner with the USDA Farm Services Agency to host the USDA Debt Relief Webinar," said Dr. Orlando McMeans, Chancellor-Dean of the Southern University Ag Center and the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Science. "The purpose of this webinar is to provide information to socially disadvantaged and minority farmers and ranchers regarding the USDA's debt relief program, which is part of the recently passed American Rescue Plan. As an 1890 Land-Grant University it is our mission mandate to provide such educational op-

portunities to underserved and limited resource populations," added Dr. McMeans.

The virtual event will feature presentations by Dwayne Goldman, Ph.D., USDA Senior Advisor for Racial Equity to the Secretary of Agriculture and Zach Ducheneaux, Administrator of the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Goldman was appointed to his current position on March 1, 2021. Before joining the USDA, he served as the Executive Director of the National Black Grower Council (NBGC), an organization that advocates for the improvement of the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of Black row crop farmers. Goldman is a farmer in southeast Arkansas and has more than 30 years of experience in the agricultural sector. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Arkansas and his Ph.D. from Iowa State University, all in agronomy.

Ducheneaux was appointed to his current post on February 22, 2021. Before his appointment, Ducheneaux was the Executive Director of the Intertribal Agriculture Council, which is the largest and longest-standing Native American agriculture organization in the United States representing 80,000 Native American producers. His career has focused on educating individuals on the social challenges facing Native Americans and reservations. He runs his family's ranch on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota with his brothers and serves on the board of directors for Project H3LP!, a non-profit organization that benefits Ducheneaux's local community by providing life lessons and therapy through horsemanship.

The webinar is free but registration is required. To register visit, <https://bit.ly/3aPfov>.

### EARLY VOTING from page 1

saying that since early voting was introduced in Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it has succeeded fantastically.

"Before early voting was introduced, you basically had 97% of the electorate voting on election day, so you were shoe-horning nearly 2 million voters into one day's worth of voting," Couvillon said.

"Given the fact that we expanded early voting, the proverbial, 'If you build it, they will come' certainly happened last year," he added.

The first presidential election in which early voting was used in Louisiana was in 2008 with 15% of Louisianans participating. That number significantly increased in each presidential election since, to 18% of all voters in 2012 and 26% in 2016.

Early in-person voting expanded to 14 days in the November election because of the temporary emergency voting plan under the COVID-19 pandemic, and a record 46% of Louisianans chose to vote early.

That early-voting period has since returned to the normal 7 days, but with a permanent extension of early voting, legislators hope to maintain a high turnout.

Compared to other states, Louisiana stands relatively in the middle of early voting availability. Some states like Alabama and Mississippi don't offer early voting. In Wyoming, Michigan and New Jersey, residents can begin voting as early as 45 days before election day.

Rep. Jeremy S. LaCombe, D-Livonia, said he is a proponent of early voting but recognizes problems with limited

early voting locations in his rural parish. Pointe Coupee Parish includes nearly 600 square miles but houses only one early polling location in New Roads.

"There are plenty of parishes where the only location is the seat, it's in the courthouse, and for some folks, it's very, very difficult to get 40, 50, 60 miles," said LaCombe. "You just don't see them early voting."

LaCombe hopes that the secretary of state can provide for more early voting polling locations in rural parishes along with the expansion of days.

"The ultimate goal of everything that we do when it comes to elections is to get more people to the polls to go vote, so if we're shifting those people from election day to early voting, that's a matter of convenience," said Rep. Les Farnum, R-Sulphur.

## City of Baker School District has new superintendent

BAKER, La. - Dr. De'Ette Perry has been named the new superintendent of the City of Baker School District.

She was appointed interim superintendent after Dr. Herman

Brister retired.

The board will still need to work out a contract and a term of employment with Perry.

She is a graduate of Baker High School

## House agrees to expand Louisiana's medical marijuana program

BATON ROUGE, La. — Patients in Louisiana's medical marijuana program would be able to smoke raw cannabis, rather than rely on the more processed forms of marijuana currently available, if the Senate agrees to a bill that easily won House passage Monday.

The House voted 73-26 with little debate for the expansion proposal from Houma Rep. Tanner Magee, the House's second-ranking Republican.

Louisiana's dispensaries sell medical marijuana in liquids, topical applications, inhalers and edible

gummies. But they are barred from offering raw marijuana in smokable form. Magee's bill would legalize that as well for medicinal purposes, starting in January.

The raw, smokable marijuana plant is cheaper to produce and sell because it involves less processing.

A separate bill that already has won House passage would apply the state's 4.45% sales tax to smokable medical marijuana products, with the tax revenue earmarked to transportation projects. That legislation awaits debate in the Senate.

### FIGHT from page 2

tion, confuse and frustrate voters and lead to more partisanship.

Republican U.S. Sen. Bill Cas-

sidy said a shift to closed primaries "seems like a stupid idea."

The proposal from Hewitt, also a potential gubernatorial candidate, stemmed in part from a push by Republican U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise.




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#### PITCH, HIT + RUN COMPETITION

Forest Community Park  
May 1 | 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

#### KAYAK CAMPING

Chicot State Park  
May 1 | 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

#### RECTIME

Lovett Road Park  
May 14 | 5:30-8:30 p.m.

#### OPEN HOUSE JR. SINGLES TOURNAMENT

Capital One Tennis Center  
at BREC's City-Brooks  
Community Park  
May 14 | 4-8 p.m.

#### FLASHLIGHT NIGHT

Bluebonnet Swamp  
Nature Center  
May 14 | 5-9 p.m.

#### MAY SPOTLIGHT EVENT:

KIDS TO PARKS DAY  
Various Locations  
May 15  
brec.org/spotlightevents

#### PETS + PADDLE

Milford Wampold  
Memorial Park  
May 15 | 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

#### NATURE PIONEERS

Palomino Dr. Park  
May 15 | 9:30-11:30 a.m.

#### INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY

Highland Road  
Park Observatory  
May 15 | 3-11 p.m.

#### E-SPORTS TOURNAMENT:

ROCKET LEAGUE  
Forest Community Park  
May 15 | noon

#### ADAPTIVE SUNSHINE

SOCIAL: PROM  
Virtual  
May 21 | 6-8 p.m.

#### NATURE NIGHT HIKE

Hooper Road Park  
May 21 | 7-9 p.m.

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#### SWAMP BIRTHDAY

Bluebonnet Swamp  
Nature Center  
May 22 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

#### JR. HOME RUN DERBY

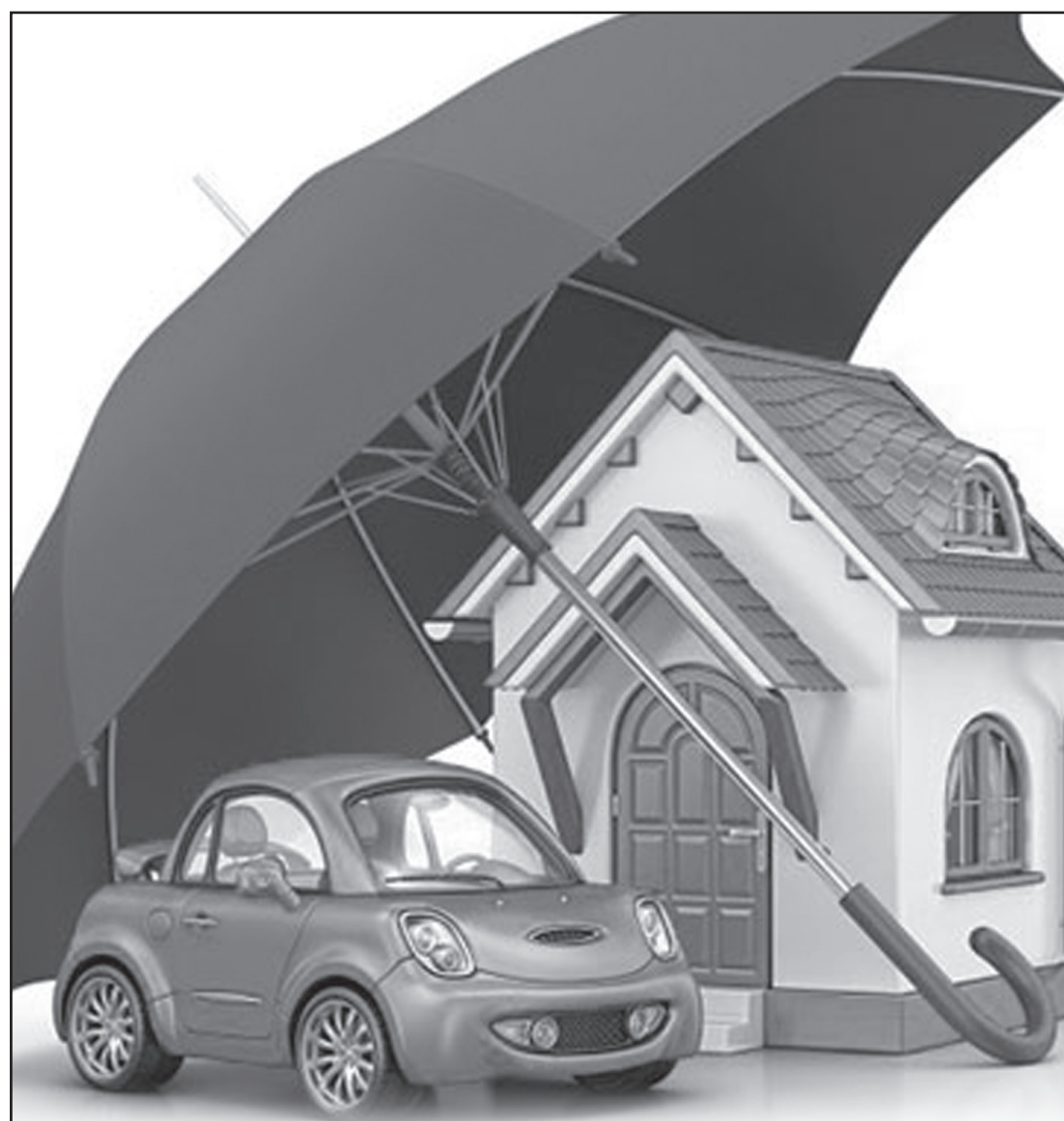
Forest Community Park  
May 29 | 10 a.m.-4 p.m.



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# RELIGION

## Caring Enough to Connect

*The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness... The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother... walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. — 1 John 2:9-11*

By DR. TONY EVANS

Those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior form a community of believers. This community of faith is to be known for the care and concern it shows to its members.



Dr. Tony Evans

"If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

The commitment of the Christian faith is twofold. First, it is vertical—our commitment to God. It is also horizontal—our commitment to each other. God says that we cannot claim to be close to Him if we are



not close to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

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We also connect to God today by connecting with others through the body of believers, His church.

Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, founder and president of The Urban Alternative and author of over 100 books, booklets and Bible studies. The first African American to earn a doctorate of theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, he has been named one of the 12 Most Effective Preachers in the English-Speaking World by

Baylor University. Dr. Evans holds the honor of writing and publishing the first full-Bible commentary and study Bible by an African American. His radio broadcast, The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans, can be heard on over 1,400 radio outlets daily and in more than 130 countries. Dr. Evans' sermons are also streamed and downloaded over 20,000,000 times annually.

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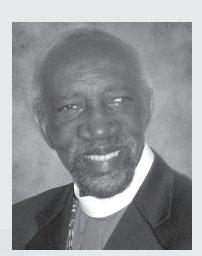
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| Sunday School .....          | 9:30 AM        |
| Prayer Service .....         | Wed. @ 6:00 PM |
| Bible Study .....            | Wed- @ 7:00 PM |

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

## Enjoy free live music with Ed Perkins Jazz Group at the main library

We know you've been looking for a chance to get out and enjoy some live music, one of south Louisiana's favorite pastimes! Everyone is invited to the Outdoor Plaza of the Main Library at Goodwood, 7711 Goodwood Blvd., for a FREE Live Jazz Concert at noon Tuesday, May 18, featuring the Ed Perkins Jazz Group, in affiliation with the Jazz Foundation of America. Blankets and lawn chairs are welcome.

Ed Perkins is a celebrated jazz singer, musician, and a native New Orleanian. For more than 50 years, he has performed both locally and abroad, collaborating with celebrated musicians including Alvin Batiste and Wes "Warm Daddy" Anderson. Perkins has performed at Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City, and many festivals and events across the country. A



regular at the Zulu Lundi Gras Festival in New Orleans, Perkins has participated in several Jazz & Heritage Festivals over the years. For more information about the Ed Perkins Jazz Group, visit the website at [www.edperkinsjazz.com](http://www.edperkinsjazz.com).

## Bill from page 1

but we have to look at the quality of votes, as well."

H.R. 1 expands voter registration — like automatic and same-day registration — and voting access — such as vote-by-mail and early voting.

It also limits removing voters from voter rolls.

The bill requires states to establish independent redistricting commissions to carry out congressional redistricting.

The text of the legislation sets forth provisions related to election security, including sharing intelligence information with state election officials, supporting states in securing their election systems, developing a national strategy to protect U.S. democratic institutions, establishing in the legislative branch the National Commission to Protect United States Democratic Institutions, and other provisions to improve the cybersecurity of election systems.

The For The People Act of 2021 addresses campaign finance, including expanding the prohibition on foreign nationals' campaign spending.

It requires additional disclosure of campaign-related fundraising and spending, requiring additional disclaimers regarding certain political advertising, and establishing an alternative campaign funding system for certain federal offices.

It also addresses ethics in

## JUMP from page 3

munity partners, local law enforcement and city official representatives will be joining us for our Bike to School Day Bike Parade, escorting students to their respective schools at 7:15 AM. We will meet at the Dr. Leo S.

all three branches of government, including requiring a code of conduct for Supreme Court Justices, prohibiting Members of the House from serving on the board of a for-profit entity, and establishing additional conflict-of-interest and ethics provisions for federal employees and the White House.

The bill requires the President, the Vice President, and specific candidates for those offices to disclose ten years of tax returns.

In addition to H.R. 1, President Biden has urged federal lawmakers to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

The legislation named after the late Congressman would restore critical provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act — specifically where states and counties with a history of discrimination were forced to receive federal approval to enact new voting laws.

"Voting rights and ensuring people have access to voting — that is easier, not harder — is a core priority for the President," Psaki exclaimed.

"That's why his team is so engaged in this process.

"And, of course, investing in infrastructure; ensuring that we can create good, clean energy, union jobs is also a priority. You have to walk and chew gum as President of the United States, and certainly he believes both are imperative and important."

Butler Community Center — 950 E. Washington St., Baton Rouge, LA 70802. Before rolling out, we will review traffic safety rules/hand signals and provide helmets and bike lights to those in need. Participants will also receive a snack and bottle of water. Grab your bike (helmet) or walking shoes, and come stroll into safety for our kids!

# BUSINESS

## 225 Holistic Fitness and Wellness Ribbon Cutting with Baker Chamber of Commerce



Left to Right: Councilman Robert Young, LaTonya Rounds, Councilwoman Brenda G. Johnson. Photo by: Willie Williams



Left to Right: Baker Firefighter Jaylin Thomas Sr., Johnay Hall, Anthil Collins, Councilman Robert Young, Councilwoman Brenda G. Johnson, Belinda Williams, Evelyn Parker, LaTonya Rounds (Owner), Michel Woods, Tierney Bernnett, Mechelle Marchand-Brumfield, Cynthia Grimes, Baker Firefighter Landon Sutton. Photo by: Willie Williams



LaTonya Rounds (Owner of 225 Holistic Fitness and Wellness) Photo by: Willie Williams

BAKER, La. — On April 29, 2021, International Day Dance, 225 Holistic Fitness and Wellness was officially commemorated in the Baker Chamber of Commerce.

Members of the Chamber and supporters were ready to work-out as LaTonya Rounds set up her music and instructed everyone for the 30 minute Zumba workout.

The day was hot and humid but a good time was had by all as everyone worked their muscles and laughed alongside each other as they tried to mimic Ms. Rounds' moves.

LaTonya Rounds offers virtual dance classes on Monday at 7 PM and Tuesday-Thursday at 5:30 PM. Her rates are \$6/class and \$40/month, more information can be found at her website <https://225holisticfitnessandwellness.com/>. If you still have questions, feel free to contact her by phone at 225-314-7917 or email her at [info@225holisticfitnessandwellness.com](mailto:info@225holisticfitnessandwellness.com).

When asked what got her into teaching Zumba, she said,

"I joined a gym because I was overweight. I saw an opening for

a Zumba class and signed up. I went faithfully and followed the instructor with fervor. When my classmates saw how I was moving and working, they thought I was an instructor.

After hearing that several times, I decided to become a Zumba instructor. I decided that I wanted to address the wholeness of fitness because you can't work your muscles without working on stress

management, your sleep schedule or eating properly. I hope to be the voice for the people so that they can change their lifestyles and to help reverse and rid them of chronic diseases.

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# HEALTH

## Baton Rouge Publisher addresses COVID-19 experience in recent interview

By MATTHEW BENNETT  
LSU Manship School  
News Service

“It’s the flu to the twelfth power,” remarked Ivory Payne, a Baton Rouge publisher who is urging Black Louisianans to get COVID-19 vaccines.

“I couldn’t breathe,” Payne said, describing his own experience with the virus in early February. “I think the shortness of breath was the worst thing. It was a terrible experience.”

After his doctors told him to go home and quarantine for 14 days, Payne, 60, found that his fight against the respiratory illness had just begun. He said that after a difficult two weeks in isolation, his condition only got worse.

Payne described a litany of troubling COVID-19 symptoms, including not being able to smell or taste, body aches that prevented him from lifting everyday items and nausea. He spent three distressed weeks in the hospital, where he was forced to consider his chances of survival.

Payne is doing better now, but still has some fatigue as he cautiously returns to work as publisher of the BR Weekly Press, a newspaper for the Black community. His takeaway from his experience is the importance of vaccinations.

He wishes he had been eligible for a vaccine before he was hit by the virus, and he wants to urge Black residents to trust in the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

“I believe the African-American community has been hit the hardest, because of poor health-care,” Payne said. “And just lack of education about the vaccine and



Ivory Payne, publisher of BR Weekly Newspaper and owner of 247Praise Radio.com, is urging Black residents in Louisiana to get a COVID-19 vaccine.



Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, is a senior research fellow working with the Vaccine Research Center strategists in NIAID’s Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory and has become a central figure in covid vaccine science.



Tasha Clark-Amar, chief executive of the Council on Aging in East Baton Rouge Parish.



Dr. Courtney Phillips, Secretary of Louisiana’s Department of Health

safe and responsible,” according to an independent study appearing in the scientific journal “Advances in Therapy.”

Even though some doctors and nurses have expressed concerns about the COVID vaccines, Gregory Benton, an emergency medicine physician in Covington, is adamant about their safety, particularly the ones made by Pfizer and Moderna, which are made using a new messenger RNA technique.

Instead of using a dead or imitated sample of COVID-19 itself, Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use synthetic mRNA, which instructs cells in the body to make specific spike proteins that trigger an immune response. This immune response results in antibodies that are suited to fight a natural COVID-19 infection.

“All in all, it’s an extremely safe way for your body to react to something,” Benton said. “When people aren’t taking it, they just don’t understand. There’s so much misinformation about the vaccines. People think you’re going to get sick from it, or you’re going to get the virus. It’s all just crazy talk.”

Federal authorities briefly suspended use of a Johnson & Johnson vaccine that works in a different way after a few reports of blood clotting but have since resumed its use.

Dr. Courtney Phillips, the state health secretary, believes that in looking at racial breakdowns for vaccination numbers, it’s important to see the whole picture.



**WHAT’S YOUR OPINION? COMMENT BY EMAIL**

What do you think about the trucker’s strike? E-mail your comments to [brweeklypress@yahoo.com](mailto:brweeklypress@yahoo.com).

the illness itself.”

As of April 26, Blacks accounted for 28 percent of COVID-19 vaccinations in Louisiana, while making up 32 percent of the population, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Whites accounted for 61 percent of vaccinations, while representing 62 percent of the population.

Notably, Black residents make

up an alarming 39 percent of deaths due to COVID-19 in the state.

The Louisiana Department of Health released demographic breakdowns in early April showing that only 14 percent of Central Louisiana residents were then fully vaccinated. Blacks in the region made up only 27 percent of those vaccinated, while whites made up more than 60 percent of that total.

The report noted that vaccination numbers for African Americans and other ethnic groups were behind in other health regions throughout the state as well.

A poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in late March found that 26 percent of white American adults, 24 percent of Black Americans adults and 22 percent of Hispanic American adults said they would probably not

or definitely not get the vaccine. The statistic for Black Americans is down from a startling 65 percent in January.

Even with this improvement nationally, Payne would like to see Black leaders in Louisiana continue to get the word out to take the vaccine. He has been impressed by support for the vaccine from Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Broome, state Health Secretary Courtney Phillips and state Sen. Regina Barrow, D-Baton Rouge.

Payne said Black leaders need to continue urging people via TV and social media to take the vaccines.

“The African American church has got to be a key component in educating a lot of people,” he added. “The schools, I believe, are going to be important, too.”

Tasha Clark-Amar, chief executive of the Council on Aging in East Baton Rouge Parish, had a similar sentiment in convincing

the older Black population to get vaccinated early on. She recalled sending out articles and news releases about Kizzmekia Corbett, an African American immunologist who helped develop the Moderna vaccine.

“Sometimes it’s good to see ‘us,’” Clark-Amar said. “Everyone has to be speaking the same message. It has to be in the same vein.”

“The Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male” is the most common historical malpractice referenced to point out why there is mistrust between the Black community and the medical field. The study occurred in 1932 and has “since been proven to be full of corruption and malpractice,” according to the Centers for Disease Control.

While some anecdotal evidence points to instances of misuse of medical authority, “modern medical practices and transparency point to COVID vaccines being



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