

The Weekly Press

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Merry Christmas and A Joyious New Year

Terri Ricks named permanent secretary for Children and Family Services

BY: GREG LAROSE
Louisiana Illuminator

Gov. John Bel Edwards has elevated acting Department of Children and Family Service Secretary Terri Ricks to a permanent role, his office announced Wednesday. Ricks has been holding the position since Marketa Walters stepped down last month.



Terri Ricks

Ricks becomes the figurehead for an agency that is under close watch following a series of deaths this year involving children whose households had been reported to authorities. Legislators have held multiple hearings with DCFS officials to seek accountability and reform.

In the same statement on Ricks' appointment, the governor announced Amanda Brunson was named DCFS assistant secretary.

"No doubt there are many challenges facing child welfare agencies, including here in Louisiana," Edwards said in the statement, "but I am impressed by the way Terri has taken her years of knowledge and put it into leading the department and finding solutions. Amanda likewise will be a vital asset as we work to give Louisiana's children the services they deserve."

Before her interim leadership role, Ricks served as DCFS deputy secretary since 2016. She was previously the undersecretary of the department from 2004 to 2008 when it was known as the Department for Social Services. In the interim, Ricks was the head of human resources for Baton Rouge Community College and general counsel for the Louisiana Housing Corp.

Brunson joined DCFS last year as its special projects officer in the Child Welfare division. Prior to that she was the governor's director of Women's Policy since 2019. Brunson also spent 16 years with Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana.

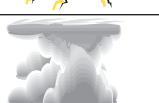
WEATHER



MON. 12/12
Partly Cloudy
High 74°.



TUE. 12/13
Thunderstorms
High 78°.



WED. 12/14
Thunderstorms
High 69°.



THUR. 12/15
Mostly Sunny
High 61°.

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Freeze warning across Louisiana



In this Dec. 8, 2017 photo, snow blankets Interstate 12 near Hammond, La., during a rare freeze event. Louisiana is again bracing for a rare hard freeze beginning Friday, Dec. 23, 2022. (Photo credit: Wes Muller/Louisiana Illuminator)

Weather Service urges residents to prepare

BY: WESLEY MULLER
Louisiana Illuminator

Louisiana is bracing for an Arctic blast expected to freeze most of the state early Friday morning, plunging temperatures into the low teens through Christmas Eve.

The National Weather Service and state officials are urging residents across the state to complete cold-weather preparations no later than Thursday. The threatening weather comes just one week after tornadoes tore through Louisiana, killing three people and damaging areas in Jefferson, St. Bernard, Caddo and other parishes.

Most of the state will experience a hard freeze after midnight Thursday as a frigid Arctic air mass envelops the northern Gulf Coast into the weekend. Temperatures in the teens with "dangerously cold wind chills" in the single digits are likely Friday morning, according to the NWS station in New Orleans.

Areas north of Lake Pontchartrain from Slidell to Baton Rouge could see temperatures as low as



Gov. John Bel Edwards issued a statement Tuesday, urging all residents across the state to prepare for the freeze by insulating pipes and checking on neighbors and relatives.

11 to 13 degrees, and New Orleans will see lows around 20 degrees.

Mid-day Friday temperatures are forecast to inch up but may not break above freezing and will plummet

again Friday night with lows in the teens and dangerous wind chills in the single digits. Highs may break above freezing Saturday afternoon.

NWS stations in Shreveport, Lake Charles and Jackson, Mississippi, have issued similar freeze warnings for those areas.

Portions of north Louisiana along or north of Interstate 20 could stay below freezing for up to 60 hours starting Thursday night.

Southwest Louisiana could see hazardous temperatures through the Christmas holiday weekend with prolonged hard freeze conditions and lows in the single digits possible.

In Mississippi, low temperatures will range from the single digits in the north to the teens along the coast.

The freeze warnings will remain in effect until 6 a.m. Sunday for most areas. The cold temperatures could burst outdoor pipes, kill crops and vegetation and cause hypothermia in humans and animals, the NWS warned.

Gov. John Bel Edwards issued a statement Tuesday, urging all residents across the state to prepare for the freeze by insulating pipes and checking on neighbors and relatives.

"I urge every Louisianan to

See **FREEZE**, on page 2

Mayor's Office of Homeland Security, Emergency Preparedness

BATON ROUGE, La – The National Weather Service in New Orleans is forecasting an arctic air mass to move through the Baton Rouge area Thursday evening through Saturday bringing bitterly cold temperatures. Currently, the coldest night is forecasted to be Friday night. Lows could reach the teens for some areas, with wind chill values in the single digits to near zero possible. Although it will be bitterly cold, the NWS is forecasting dry weather for our area over the holiday weekend.



Mayor Sharon Weston Broome

Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome and The Mayor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (MOHSEP) are closely monitoring the latest weather forecasts. Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome advises residents to have their winter weather preparations in place: "Remember to include your family, pets, pipes, and plants in your plans. These colder temperatures will increase the use of gas appliances; if these appliances are not working properly it could lead to carbon monoxide (CO) production. Test your CO and smoke detectors to ensure they are in proper working condition. Plan to stay indoors for holiday weekend activities."

Residents are urged to use the following Red Stick Ready winter weather tips when preparing for the upcoming cold temperatures:

Red Stick Ready Winter Weather Tips:

- Be aware of the symptoms of hypothermia and seek medical attention.

See **MAYOR**, on page 6

House Committee Details the Charges Referred to DOJ Against Donald Trump

Chaired by Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Mississippi) and vice chair Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyoming), the committee released a 161-page summary that focused on Trump's involvement in the effort to overturn his 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden.

BY STACY M. BROWN
NNPA Newswire
Senior National Correspondent

Donald Trump, who holds the ignominious distinction of being the only twice-impeached U.S. president, has become the first commander-in-chief to have criminal charges referred against him.

The dubious achievement occurred on Monday, Dec. 19, when the House Select Committee investigating the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol formally requested that the U.S. Department of Justice charge Trump with inciting, assisting, or engaging in insurrection against the United States and "giving aid or comfort" to an insurrection.



A mob of pro-Trump supporters tried to stop Congress from voting to certify the Electoral College votes on Jan. 6, 2020, declaring Joe Biden winner of the presidential election. (Photo by Alex Kent)

Chaired by Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Mississippi) and vice chair Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyoming), the committee released a 161-page summary that focused on

Trump's involvement in the effort to overturn his 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden.

The committee concluded that Trump's efforts "makes him respon-

sible for the violence that unfolded, and unfit to hold office."

The panel then laid out a criminal case for the Justice Department, including a cache of evidence.



Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the Democratic chairman of the House Homeland Security committee, accused Donald Trump in a federal lawsuit on Tuesday of inciting the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Photo courtesy Bennie Thompson

Based upon the assembled evidence, the committee has reached a series of specific findings, including the following 17 powerful conclusions against Trump:

- Beginning election night and continuing through January 6th and thereafter, Trump purposely disseminated false allegations of

See **COMMITTEE**, on page 3



LOCAL & STATE

Over 100 families Blessed With Free Clothing for the Holidays

Parenting Wisely, a program of Mirror of Grace Outreach Hosted Christmas Giveaway



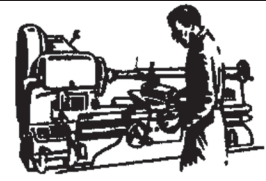
Dr. Patricia Norwood and a few of the children from the giveaway pose with the Grinch.

BATON ROUGE, La. —, On Tuesday, December 20, 2022 families from the Baton Rouge area braved the cold and the rain. Founder of Mirror of Grace Dr. Patricia Harrel Norwood, had never experienced rain on event day. “We usually host this event outdoors,” Norwood stated. How-

ever, this year, with a quick shift in plans and help from a host of volunteers. The event was moved indoors in time for the families. The giveaway, a Parenting Wisely event, provided new clothing and

See **HOLIDAYS**, on page 6

READER INFORMATION



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Edwards intends to ask legislators for rape, incest exceptions to Louisiana’s abortion ban



Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards gives his annual end-of-year press conference at the Governor’s Mansion (Piper Hutchinson/Louisiana Illuminator)

BY: PIPER HUTCHINSON
 Louisiana Illuminator

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards announced at his annual end of year press conference Monday that he will ask legislators to add exceptions for rape and incest to Louisiana’s abortion ban.

Edwards said that while there have been some hiccups, when people were denied abortion access in Louisiana when they probably shouldn’t have, the post-Roe transition has been relatively smooth.

“I continue to believe that we should have an exception for rape and incest,” Edwards said. “So that’s something that we’ll ask the legislature to put in place in statute when the session starts in April.”

Edwards has previously signed abortion restrictions into law that did not have exceptions for rape or

incest. The governor also confirmed he does not believe a special session is necessary to fund the state’s incentive program to lure more insurers to the state. Instead, the money can be easily appropriated at the start of the regular session, he said.

At Thursday’s meeting of the Revenue Estimating Committee, Insurance Commissioner Jim Donelon asked for a special session to be convened, but neither lawmakers nor the governor have expressed support.

“Obviously this is a crisis situation,” Edwards said. “We’re gonna have to do something and we look forward to working with him, but I don’t see a special session to do this.”

Edwards also raised concerns with state Rep. Richard Nelson’s, R-Mandeville, plan to eliminate the state income tax.

“The challenge I have is immediately people talk about getting

rid of the income tax but they’re not talking about the funding necessary to replace it,” Edwards said.

Nelson has suggested the state eliminate many of its industrial tax exemptions to help make up for the lost income tax.

“I don’t believe that that’s going to happen this year because I don’t see a balanced approach to it,” Edwards said.

The governor also said he intends to appear before a legislative committee investigating an alleged State Police cover-up in the May 2019 death of Black motorist Ronald Greene at the hands of white law enforcement officers if requested. Four state troopers and a Union Parish sheriff’s deputy were indicted Thursday in connection to Greene’s death. Edwards was scheduled to appear before the committee last month but had a scheduling conflict.

FREEZE from page 1

prepare for the approaching Arctic outbreak and be ready to protect the four P’s — people, pets, plants, and pipes,” Edwards said. “Be sure to cover or insulate all exposed pipes and prepare for the possibility of cutting off your main water supply if you have a problem. And as always, please check on your friends, neighbors or family members that may struggle with these weather conditions. For information on warming stations or assistance in creating a severe weather plan, visit www.getgameplan.org.”

The winter storm will grip most of the country. The NWS has issued warnings for a large swath of the lower 48 from the Canadian border to the Gulf Coast. Blizzard conditions are expected

from the Central Plains to the Great Lakes, strong winds and dangerous coastal flooding are possible in New England, while freezing rain and heavy snowfall could impact the Mid-Atlantic region.

Wind chill values could reach minus 70 degrees throughout parts of the central High Plains, and widespread wind chills below zero are forecast to extend as far south as Texas and parts of the Deep South through the end of the week.

“Cold of this magnitude could lead to frostbite on exposed skin within minutes, as well as hypothermia and death if exposure is prolonged,” the NWS said in its warning. “Livestock interests will also be severely impacted and dangers could be exacerbated if power outages occur.”

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 and the Happiest of
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A PEOPLE’S PUBLICATION

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Ocean State Job Lot Sends Tractor Trailer of Coats, Blankets, Toys to Louisiana Cajun Navy in Baton Rouge



A worker from the Louisiana Cajun Navy helps unload boxes off from the Ocean State Job Lot truck.

OSJL's philanthropic partner's warehouse hit hard by recent tornado; delivery will help replace lost items, including Christmas gifts for children in need

A tornado affected the warehouse of Ocean State Job Lot (OSJL) philanthropic partner, the Louisiana Cajun Navy (LCN), where the organization was stor-

ing a variety of products to support tornadoes and hurricane victims, including Christmas gifts for children in need. Many areas are experiencing unseasonably cold weather in the state of Louisiana, down to freezing temperatures, which makes communities particularly vulnerable.

LCN's mission is "to help the

people who can't get help, not only in the wake of disaster, but in everyday life." The organization is operated by kindhearted volunteers who "rescue, relieve and rebuild" when the community needs help. OSJL previously partnered with LCN volunteers to distribute much-needed supplies during the aftermath of Hurricane Ian.

Now, OSJL is stepping up to provide aid to the LCN by sending a tractor-trailer truck filled with warm blankets, winter coats, toys and dolls to Baton Rouge, Louisiana on Monday, December 19. The truck arrived in Louisiana on Wednesday, December 21, so the LCN can distribute the items to those in need prior to Christmas.

Louisiana Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin, State Representative Daryl Deshotel to Pursue Legislation to Ban TikTok on State Devices



BATON ROUGE, La. — Today, Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin and District 28 State Representative Daryl Deshotel announced that they would pursue legislation in 2023 to ban TikTok on all state-owned devices.

"TikTok is a clear and present danger to our national security and election integrity," Representative Deshotel said. "TikTok is a Chinese company with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party. The last thing we need to do is give them access to the data on our state devices. We have seen first-hand that foreign agents will go to any length necessary to gather important intelligence on the United States using social media applications and sophisticated data collection. This is a commonsense piece of legislation."

"I am grateful to be teaming up with Representative Deshotel after his announcement that he would pre-file a bill to ban the Chinese-owned TikTok on state-issued devices. TikTok is a threat to our citizens' personal data and has no business on any device owned by the State of Louisiana," Ardoin said. "Representative Deshotel and I believe we should be doing everything we can to protect our constituents' personally identifiable information. This bill will help do just that."

Earlier this week, Secretary Ardoin announced that he was banning TikTok on Department of State-owned devices and wrote to Governor John Bel Edwards urging him to issue a ban on all state-owned devices.

COMMITTEE from page 1

fraud related to the 2020 Presidential election to aid his effort to overturn the election and for purposes of soliciting contributions. "These false claims provoked his supporters to violence on January 6th," the committee determined.

• Knowing that he and his supporters had lost dozens of election lawsuits, and despite his own senior advisors refuting his election fraud claims and urging him to concede his election loss, Trump refused to accept the lawful result of the 2020 election. Rather than honor his constitutional obligation to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed," President Trump instead plotted to overturn the election outcome.

• Despite knowing that such an action would be illegal, and that no State had or would submit an altered electoral slate, Trump corruptly pressured Vice President Mike Pence to refuse to count electoral votes during Congress's joint session on January 6th.

• Trump sought to corrupt the U.S. Department of Justice by attempting to enlist Department officials to make purposely false statements and thereby aid his effort to overturn the Presidential election. After that effort failed, Trump offered the position of Acting Attorney General to Jeff Clark knowing that Clark intended to disseminate false information aimed at overturning the election.

• Without any evidentiary basis and contrary to State and Federal law, Trump unlawfully pressured State officials and legislators to change the results of the election in their States.

• Trump oversaw an effort to obtain and transmit false electoral certificates to Congress and the National Archives.

• Trump pressured Members of Congress to object to valid slates of electors from several States.

• Trump purposely verified false information filed in Federal court.

• Based on false allegations that the election was stolen, Trump summoned tens of thousands of supporters to Washington for January 6th. Although these supporters

were angry and some were armed, Trump instructed them to march to the Capitol on January 6th to "take back" their country.

• Knowing that a violent attack on the Capitol was underway and knowing that his words would incite further violence, Trump purposely sent a social media message publicly condemning Vice President Pence at 2:24 p.m. on January 6th.

• Knowing that violence was underway at the Capitol, and despite his duty to ensure that the laws are faithfully executed, Trump refused repeated requests over a multiple hour period that he instruct his violent supporters to disperse and leave the Capitol, and instead watched the violent attack unfold on television. This failure to act perpetuated the violence at the Capitol and obstructed Congress's proceeding to count electoral votes.

• Each of these actions by Trump was taken in support of a multi-part conspiracy to overturn the lawful results of the 2020 Presidential election.

• The intelligence community and law enforcement agencies did successfully detect the planning for potential violence on January 6th, including planning specifically by the Proud Boys and Oath Keeper militia groups who ultimately led the attack on the Capitol. As January 6th approached, the intelligence specifically identified the potential for violence at the U.S. Capitol. This intelligence was shared within the executive branch, including with the Secret Service and the President's National Security Council.

• Intelligence gathered in advance of January 6th did not support a conclusion that Antifa or other left-wing groups would likely engage in a violent counterdemonstration, or attack Trump supporters on January 6th. Indeed, intelligence from January 5th indicated that some left-wing groups were instructing their members to "stay at home" and not attend on January 6th. Ultimately, none of these groups was involved to any material extent with the attack on the Capitol on January 6th.

• Neither the intelligence com-

munity nor law enforcement obtained intelligence in advance of January 6th on the full extent of the ongoing planning by President Trump, John Eastman, Rudolph Giuliani and their associates to overturn the certified election results. Such agencies apparently did not (and potentially could not) anticipate the provocative President Trump would offer the crowd in his Ellipse speech, that President Trump would "spontaneously" instruct the crowd to march to the Capitol, that President Trump would exacerbate the violent riot by sending his 2:24 p.m. tweet condemning Vice President Pence, or the full scale of the violence and lawlessness that would ensue. Nor did law enforcement anticipate that President Trump would refuse to direct his supporters to leave the Capitol once violence began. No intelligence community advance analysis predicted exactly how President Trump would behave; no such analysis recognized the full scale and extent of the threat to the Capitol on January 6th.

• Hundreds of Capitol and DC Metropolitan police officers performed their duties bravely on January 6th, and America owes those individual immense gratitude for their courage in the defense of Congress and our Constitution. Without their bravery, January 6th would have been far worse. Although certain members of the Capitol Police leadership regarded their approach to January 6th as "all hands-on deck," the Capitol Police leadership did not have sufficient assets in place to address the violent and lawless crowd.

• Capitol Police leadership did not anticipate the scale of the violence that would ensue after President Trump instructed tens of thousands of his supporters in the Ellipse crowd to march to the Capitol, and then tweeted at 2:24 p.m. Although Chief Steven Sund raised the idea of National Guard support, the Capitol Police Board did not request Guard assistance prior to January 6th. The Metropolitan Police took an even more proactive approach to January 6th, and deployed roughly 800

officers, including responding to the emergency calls for help at the Capitol. Rioters still managed to break their line in certain locations, when the crowd surged forward in the immediate aftermath of Trump's 2:24 p.m. tweet. The Department of Justice readied a group of Federal agents at Quantico and in the District of Columbia, anticipating that January 6th could become violent, and then deployed those agents once it became clear that police at the Capitol were overwhelmed. Agents from the Department of Homeland Security

See COMMITTEE, on page 6



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RELIGION

Receiving the Spirit of Christmas

Written by Creflo A. Dollar

I want to show you how to have a "Mary" Christmas - as in the Virgin Mary. I am not trying to exalt Mary above Jesus or claim that she is a deity. That would be unscriptural. Rather, I want to show you how to connect to the same supernatural power that Mary connected to.

The prophet Isaiah foretold that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son Whose name would be called "Immanuel" or "God with us" (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:20-23).



Creflo Dollar

Can you imagine what Mary had to deal with? When the angel Gabriel informed her that she would give birth to the Savior of the world, I'm sure she had to fight off doubt and fear. I'm sure she wondered, "What will people think?"

Mary had to be strong no matter what others said. She heard from God and chose to trust Him. Conception took place resulting in a supernatural birth that still goes against human reasoning.

According to His Word

The key to Mary's supernatural conception was that she received God's Word. She said, "For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment" (Luke 1:37 AMP). God specializes in doing supernatural things that seem impossible (Matt. 19:26; 1 Cor. 1:27).

In Luke 1:38, we see that Mary received the spiritual truth of God's Word by saying, "...Behold the



handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word..." In essence, she was saying, "Lord, I'm Your servant. Use me to fulfill Your will for my life and the world. I believe I receive Your Word and that settles it!"

That's the attitude you should have. If what God speaks to your heart or through His Word contradicts your reasoning, don't debate with it. Receive it by faith as Mary did, and allow the power of God to work in your life. When you receive the spiritual truth of the Word, you receive the true spirit of Christmas; you receive the life that Christ Jesus came to give you (John 10:10).

When it seems like you're sinking deeper into debt, or when your body is under attack, receive the truth of God's Word. It says that you have been redeemed from the curse of poverty, sickness and spiritual death (Gal. 3:13).

The facts may show that you're broke and sick; however, that's not

the truth. God's Word is truth (John 17:17). You are what it says you are. You can have what it says you can have. And you can do what it says you can do!

Receiving the truth of God's Word is vital. First Thessalonians 2:13 in The Amplified Bible says,

When you received the message of God...you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it].

The Only Way To Victory

Like Mary, you must make God's Word the final authority in your life. Conduct your finances, health, marriage and the raising of your children by the Word. That's the only way you're going to experience His supernatural power.

The Word of God is "seed" (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23) and it

produces a harvest. Just as it only takes one sperm out of millions to cause conception to take place in a woman's womb, it only takes one word from God to be implanted in your spirit to cause conception. One word from God will change your entire life!

Perhaps there are things that you have been praying about for quite some time, but have not seen any results. Don't give up, cave in or quit! Don't abort by confessing that the Word isn't working or that you don't deserve the goodness of God.

Righteous people don't talk that way. They speak faith and patiently await the birth (manifestation) of God's Word in their lives.

The Word of God has a due season of manifestation (Titus 1:3; 1 Peter 5:6), so wait patiently for it. Due season always comes! This holiday season is a good time to receive God's goodness!

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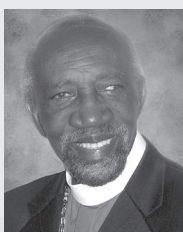


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Worship Times:

CrossWalk Classes: Sundays 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM
Sunday Worship Experience: 11:00 AM
Uplift Training: Thursdays 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM



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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

Pave Your Road To Financial Independence With a Ticket To Work Service Provider

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This law mandates equal opportunities for people with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the public. In observing this legal milestone, we recognize that employment is a key step toward financial independence. Having a job and earning a paycheck can put you in a better position to make financial decisions to build your future. Social Security's Ticket to Work (Ticket) Program provides free employment services and supports to disability beneficiaries ages 18 through 64. In addition to services that promote personal savings, improve money management and budgeting, many Ticket Program service providers offer benefits counseling to help you understand how working will affect your benefits.

They can advise you on your eligibility for other state and local programs and offer information about how work affects those programs. Social Security also offers Work Incentives that may make it possible to explore work and still receive some or all of your benefits and Medicare or Medicaid coverage.

The road to financial independence typically starts with making a budget, which helps you to keep track of your money, prioritize spending and set financial goals. Ticket Program service providers can offer financial counseling or connect you with another organization that can help.

Once you have a job, good savings habits are key to becoming financially independent. If your disability began before age 26, you may be eligible to contribute to an ABE Account, a tax-advantaged account that can fund disability-related expenses.

For more information about the Ticket Program, call the Help Line at 1-866-968-7842 or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET. You can also visit choosework.ssa.gov and use the self-service Find Help tool to locate approved providers.

Unemployment fraud schemes detailed in new Legislative Auditor reports

BY: GREG LAROSE
Louisiana Illuminator

New reports the Louisiana Legislative Auditor released Monday detail fraud schemes that swindled more than \$320,000 in unemployment payments in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The head of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, which oversees the state's unemployment system, says the reports are not new investigatory revelations but the result of its cooperation with auditors to identify how scammers were able to pilfer money.

One report explained how 49 separate claims were made to siphon more than \$151,000 in pandemic unemployment benefits. Most of the claimants' names and Social Security numbers did not correspond to a Louisiana driver's license or identification card, and the majority of these claimants reported no wage income.

LWC records show the claimants used the same or similar mailing addresses. They also used the same internet protocol (IP) addresses to change their names, contact information and bank account details.

Auditors found 43 of LWC claimants' accounts were accessed within minutes of each other from the same IP address the original claimant used to direct \$53,099 in benefits to at least two bank accounts held by family members. A total of 25 claimants received benefits totaling \$79,891 on debit cards used to withdraw cash at the same locations and times when the original claimant used a debit card to withdraw cash.

According to Legislative Auditor Mike Waguespack, copies of the report have been provided to district attorneys in East Baton Rouge, Jefferson and Orleans parishes for the consideration of criminal charges that include fraud and identity theft.

A separate report explained how a claimant obtained \$87,380 in unemployment benefits on behalf of 10 people other than himself. Six of the recipients were in Louisiana, and the other four were from outside the state.

Seven of the 10 claimants'



(Wesley Muller/Louisiana Illuminator)

LWC accounts were accessed from the same IP address the original claimant used. The mailing addresses for the seven accounts were changed to the original claimant's mailing address before they were sent debit cards. Records show the seven debit cards were used to withdraw cash at the same locations and times that the original claimant obtained cash.

One of the out-of-state claimants told the auditor her identity had been stolen and that she had contacted the Louisiana Workforce Commission after receiving an income tax form for the benefits she received. Another out-of-state claimant said he was indeed unemployed but had applied for and received benefits from Massachusetts, the state where he lives. His identity was used although he had never worked in or been to Louisiana.

A third report focused on a woman who fraudulently obtained pandemic unemployment benefits totaling \$81,786 on behalf of 10

claimants. The auditor reached four claimants who said they did not know their identity had been stolen. A fifth claimant had died several years ago.

In each of her written responses to the Legislative Auditor's reports, LWC Secretary Ava Cates says the recommendations for her department the auditor includes in each one "closely resemble a mere recitation of our current processes." She added that her staff was in "routine contact" with the Legislative Auditor's team to discuss hold times at LWC's call center, claim payment delays and suspected fraud.

The fraud attempts cited in the reports were made shortly after the pandemic unemployment assistant program was launched in 2020, and none of the claimants in question would have qualified for regular state unemployment assistance, she said.

MAYOR from page 1

tion immediately if you notice any signs and the person's temperature is below 95° F.

- In adults, warning signs of hypothermia include shivering, exhaustion or feeling very tired, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness.

- In babies, signs include bright red, cold skin, and very low energy.

- Check on elderly friends and neighbors often to make sure their homes are heated properly.

- Prepare your home to keep out the cold air with insulation, caulking and weather stripping.

- Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups.

- Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication.

- If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, be extremely careful. Follow the

manufacturer's instructions and remember these safety tips:

- Keep heat sources, like space heaters, at least 3 feet away from drapes, furniture, or bedding. Never cover your space heater.

- Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater.

- If your space heater has a damaged electrical cord or produces sparks, do not use it.

- Dress in layers to keep yourself warm.

- Bring your pets inside when possible.

- Protect, cover, or wrap your pipes.

- Protect your plants as necessary.

For further information follow "Red Stick Ready" on Facebook and Twitter @RedStickReady and download the Red Stick Ready mobile application - free on Apple and Android devices by searching "Red Stick Ready".

COMMITTEE from page 3

were also deployed to assist.

President Trump had authority and responsibility to direct deployment of the National Guard in the District of Columbia, but never gave any order to deploy the National Guard on January 6th or on any other day. Nor did he instruct any Federal law enforcement agency to assist. Because the authority to deploy the National Guard had been delegated to the Department of Defense, the Secretary of Defense could, and ultimately did deploy the Guard.

Although evidence identifies a likely miscommunication between members of the civilian leadership in the Department of Defense impacting the timing of deployment, the Committee has found no evidence that the Department of Defense intentionally delayed deployment of the National Guard. The Select Committee recognizes that some at the Department had genuine concerns, counseling caution, that President Trump might

give a

"An insurrection is a rebellion against the authority of the United States," said Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-Maryland).

"It is a grave federal offense anchored in the Constitution. ... Anyone who incites others to engage in rebelling, assists them in doing so or gives aid and comfort to those engaged in insurrection is guilty of a federal crime."

Raskin continued:

"The Committee believes that more than sufficient evidence exists for a criminal referral of former President Trump for assisting or aiding and comforting those at the Capitol who engaged in a violent attack on the United States," Raskin continued.

"The Committee has developed significant evidence that President Trump intended to disrupt the peaceful transition of power."

HOLIDAYS from page 2

household items for families in need for the holidays.

This event was sponsored by Walmart, Louisiana Home Care, LLC., Capital Area Human Services, Fox Pest Control and the supporters and volunteers of Mirror of Grace.

The Parenting Wisely program provides parents with a wide

variety of free child-rearing strategies and skills. Parents need only to commit to attending all classes. Those who have attended this program have found this experience extremely enlightening and rewarding. The course certificate of completion also fulfills all court mandated parenting class requirements. Classes are held at the Eden Park Library. January classes are 1/10, 1/17 and 1/24. Register on-

See **HOLIDAYS**, on page 7

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HOLIDAYS from page 6

line at www.mirrorofgrace.org.

About Mirror of Grace

A local non-profit in Baton Rouge since 2010, with the motto of "working to educate and develop self-sufficiency," Mirror of Grace is committed to implementing educational programs that provide awareness, opportunities, behavior development, financial and personal growth. MOG also assists troubled youth and their families with developing positive life skills and experiences so that they may pursue productive and rewarding lives. Mirror of Grace may be reached at 225-300-4528, info@mirrorofgrace.org or via website at www.mirrorofgrace.org



The Baker Chamber of Commerce hosted annual Holiday Party



Baker Mayor Darnell Waites and BR Weekly Press and Leaders Publications CEO and Publisher Ivory Payne



Baker Chamber of Commerce annual Holiday Party Chamber members and attendees.



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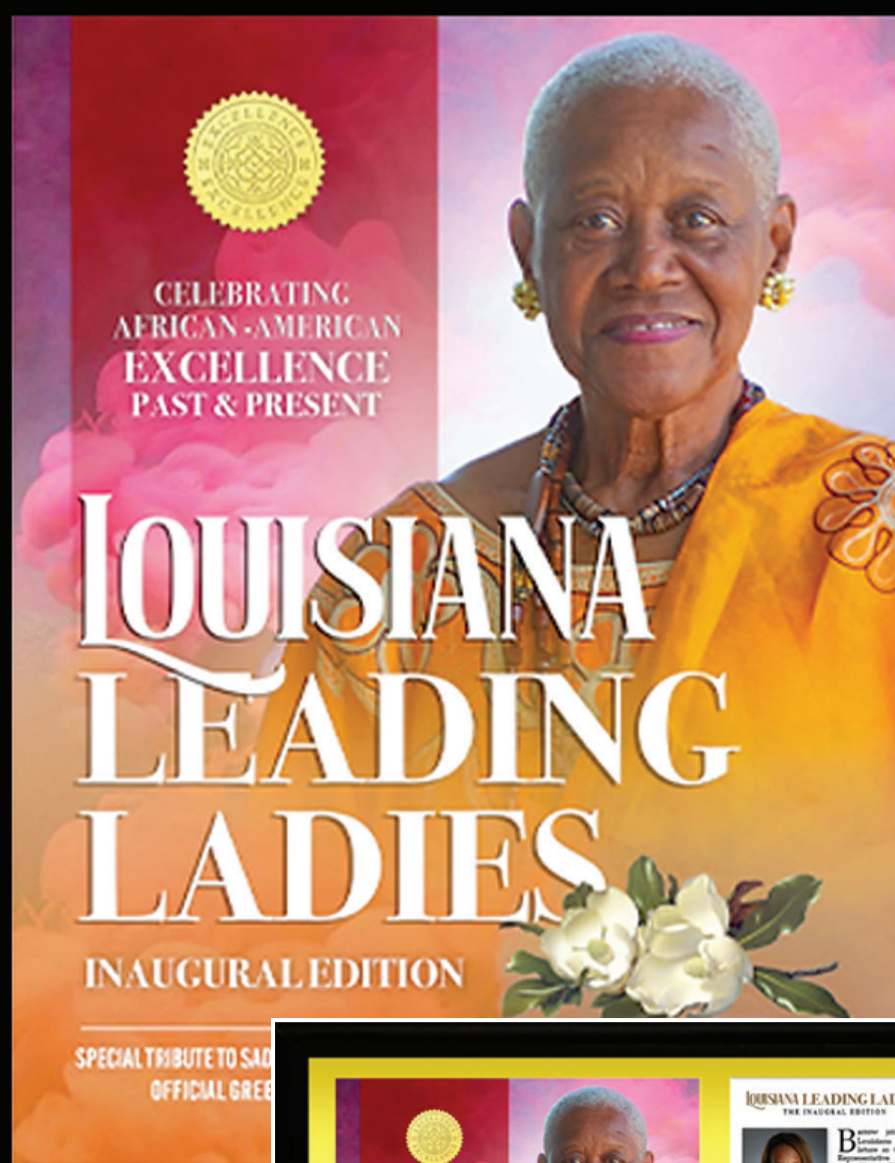
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SPORTS

U.S. House Committee Says Washington Commanders, NFL, Permitted and Participated in Troubling Conduct for more than Two Decades

BY STACY M. BROWN
*NNPA Newswire Senior
 National Correspondent*

A toxic work culture harmed dozens of Washington Commanders football team employees for over two decades.

And team owner, Daniel Snyder, permitted and participated in the troubling conduct, a U.S. House Oversight Committee said in a scathing report released on Thursday.

The Committee's report, titled "Conduct Detrimental: How the NFL and the Washington Commanders Covered Up Decades of Sexual Misconduct," determined that Snyder and the National Football League worked to suppress evidence in the investigation into the team.

Further, both Snyder and the NFL tried to cover up sexual harassment claims made against the owner and the team.

They said Snyder, 58, went to extraordinary lengths to stall investigations into him and his team.

"Over 12 months, the Committee conducted interviews and depositions, held a roundtable with former employees who experienced sexual harassment and assault while working for the Commanders, and convened a hearing at which NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell testified," investigators wrote in the report.

The Committee also released interim findings and referred information about potential financial improprieties to federal and state law enforcement agencies, which



The Committee's report, titled "Conduct Detrimental: How the NFL and the Washington Commanders Covered Up Decades of Sexual Misconduct," determined that Snyder and the National Football League worked to suppress evidence in the investigation into the team.

reportedly led to additional investigations by the NFL, state attorneys general, and the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia.

The Committee's investigation also informed legislation introduced by Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) and supported by the NFL Commissioner to prevent future workplace misconduct across the country.

"Despite making public pledges to cooperate with the Committee's investigation, the NFL and the Commanders did not fully comply with the Committee's requests for documents and information," investigators declared.

"The League, working closely with the Commanders through a previously undisclosed common interest

agreement, refused to produce more than 40,000 responsive documents, including the findings of the Wilkinson investigation and materials from Ms. Wilkinson's files."

Wilkinson is attorney Beth Wilkinson, who Snyder first hired to investigate the team's workplace environment. The NFL later took over the investigation.

House committee investigators said Snyder owned the team during the two decades when workplace misconduct "was rampant in the organization."

Snyder "obstructed the Committee's inquiry," investigators concluded.

They said Snyder refused to appear and testify at a public hearing and then sought to avoid service of a subpoena while abroad on a yacht.

Ultimately, investigators said he sat for a private deposition but failed to provide complete testimony.

"Throughout the deposition, he claimed more than 100 times that he could not recall the answers to the Committee's questions, including basic inquiries about his role as a team owner and multiple allegations of misconduct," they wrote. "Snyder also gave misleading testimony about his efforts to interfere with the Wilkinson investigation."

Neither Snyder nor the NFL offered comment.

The team currently is up for sale with Jay-Z, Byron Allen, and former star Robert Griffin III, reportedly interested in purchasing the Commanders.

"Today's report reflects the damning findings of the Committee's year-long investigation and shows how one of the most powerful organizations in America, the NFL, mishandled pervasive sexual harassment and misconduct at the Washington Commanders," Mahoney said.

"Our report tells the story of a team rife with sexual harassment and misconduct, a billionaire owner intent on deflecting blame, and an influential organization that chose to cover this up rather than seek accountability and stand up for employees.

"To powerful industries across the country, this report should serve as a wake-up call that the time of covering up misconduct to protect powerful executives is over."

The Four Power HBCU Conferences (CIAA, MEAC, SIAC, SWAC) Collective Work and Responsibility Continues

The Commissioners representing the four (4) NCAA Historically Black Athletic Conferences (HBCUs), Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA), Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) and Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC), have agreed to partner in more collaborative ways to strengthen the value of our HBCU conferences and to protect and amplify the HBCU brand. The Commissioners acknowledge the differences in division, size, and makeup, but value that our conferences are the same in our foundation and mission to serve and advance students and athletes at HBCUs.

The power of each of our brands and institutions mobilize Black culture, tourism, and communities. In 2017, the United Negro College Fund documented in a collective economic impact report that HBCUs are contributing \$14.8 billion in economic impact. Collectively, in our membership footprint from north to south, the four Power conferences institutions economic value ranges from 22 million to 1.5 billion in our HBCU communities. We agree that we are here to advance the mission of our institutions as members of the NCAA and to support the center of what brings us all together, Black College Sports!

Over the past three years, the four conferences have met and worked together collaboratively to identify immediate and future opportunities that align with our conference strategies. This includes our partnership with the NFL, Black College Hall of Fame, the NCAA office of Inclusion, championships and selective events that support our mission and student-athletes in higher education.

Additionally, both the Commissioners of the CIAA and SIAC attended and supported their col-

leagues at the MEAC/SWAC Challenge and the Celebration Bowls. These events have inspired SIAC Commissioner Holloman and CIAA Commissioner McWilliams-Parker to discuss future Division II HBCU initiatives to enhance pre- and post-season scheduling and competition and programming. Leadership of the CIAA and the SIAC Board of Directors met in the summer and agreed that we must identify opportunities to advance our brand and institutions collectively.

The Commissioners of the Four (4) Power HBCU Conferences will continue to meet monthly with a focused agenda to share ideas, advocate in spaces that impact our conferences and institutions, develop new opportunities, and expand current programming, and mostly to engage all four conference members and leadership where applicable. We have already shared in the experience of inviting our members to our individual events and programs to support mental health, leadership, career development and more.

For the 2022 Women Leaders in College Sports, the four commissioners sponsored and acknowledged Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston, president at Norfolk State University and appointed ex-officio member of the NCAA Board of Governors, as a Title IX50 Trailblazer representing the 4 Power HBCU Conferences. We agree that we have a collective work and responsibility in this season to use our platform, passion, and presence to advocate and support the mission of our HBCU institutions and student-athletes in higher education.



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