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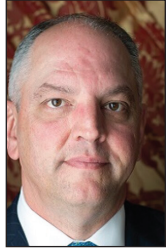
THURSDAY, MARCH 17-23, 2022

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Gov. Edwards Not Renewing COVID Public Health Emergency Order

As Louisiana and the nation continue making strides in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the significant drop in cases and hospitalizations and the wide availability of safe and effective vaccines, for the first time in 24 months, Gov. John Bel Edwards will not renew his COVID public health emergency order when it expires this week.



Gov. John Bel Edwards

"On March 11, 2020 I signed a public health emergency for COVID-19. And while it changed to reflect the ebb and flow of the pandemic, it has remained in effect ever since. This Wednesday, the order expires, and after 24 months, I will not be renewing it," Gov. Edwards said.

Gov. Edwards and his public health advisors will continue to monitor the situation.

See ORDER, on page 3

Black voters, NAACP sue over Louisiana Senate and House maps

Plaintiffs argue state lawmakers are legally required to create more majority-Black districts



The Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee reviews a state Senate redistricting map Feb. 2, 2022. (Greg LaRose/Louisiana Illuminator)

"Despite comprising nearly one-third of Louisiana's voting age population, Black voters have long been denied an equal opportunity to elect their preferred candidates," the lawsuit states

BY: JULIE O'DONOGHUE Louisiana Illuminator

Four Black residents and two civil rights organizations filed a lawsuit Monday in an effort to block new political maps for the Louisiana House and Senate from taking effect.

The plaintiffs allege the Louisiana Legislature's new maps, which are supposed to be used in the 2023 election cycle, don't include enough majority-Black districts and violate the federal Voting Rights Act.

They are asking the court to throw out the approved maps and to set a "reasonable deadline" for state government to come up with new ones. If the state misses that deadline, plaintiffs have asked the court to adopt maps that include three more majority-Black Senate seats and six to nine more majority-Black House seats than found on the current maps.

"Despite comprising nearly one-third of Louisiana's voting age population, Black voters have long been denied an equal opportunity to elect their preferred candidates,"

the lawsuit states.

Plaintiffs include Dorothy Nairne of Assumption Parish, Jarrett Lofton of Caddo Parish, Cleo Earnest, Alice Washington of East Baton Rouge Parish, the Louisiana State Conference of NAACP and Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute.

Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin, the state's top election official, is the lone defendant in the case.

The American Civil Liberties

See MAPS, on page 3

Mayor Broome Announces Free Affordable Housing Developer Informational Meeting

BATON ROUGE, La. — Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome announced today the Office of Community Development's Developer Informational Meeting. The meeting is set for Monday, March 21st with two sessions available. The morning session will take place at the Goodwood Library in the Main Meeting Room from 7:30 AM-9:30 AM. The evening session will take place at the River Center Library in the 4th Floor Large Meeting Room from 5:30 PM-7:30 PM.



Mayor Sharon Weston Broome

This meeting is free and open to the public and is designed to provide guidance to EBR Parish developers about funding streams that are available to support affordable housing development. Attendees can expect to engage in conversations around the EBR Parish Housing Needs Assessment, future funding sources from City-Parish and State agencies, the Affordable Housing Grant requirements and processes, and private funding.

Attendees should register at brla.gov/communitydevelopment

Cheniere's Louisiana, Texas LNG plants OK'd for more exports

The U.S. Department of Energy has given a liquefied natural gas exporter operating in Louisiana and Texas permission for additional sales to every country entirely in Europe as they seek to move away from Russian oil and gas because of that country's war on Ukraine.

As Europe works to phase out its reliance on Russian energy, "the world needs every molecule it can get" from other sources, said Dustin Meyer, the American Petroleum Institute's vice president for natural gas markets.

Cheniere Energy Inc. said its Sabine Pass facility in Louisiana and its Corpus Christi plant in Texas have been improved and are making more gas than covered by previous export permits. Wednesday's orders "will allow for additional operational flexibility for us and our customers during this pivotal time and for decades to come," it said in a statement released by a public relations firm.

U.S. companies are already exporting at or near their maximum capacity and Wednesday's orders mean "every operating U.S. LNG export project has approval from DOE to export its full capacity to any country where not prohibited by U.S. law or policy," the energy department said in a news release.

It said Cheniere's plants may now export the equivalent of 0.72 billion cubic feet (20.4 million cubic meters) per day of natural gas as LNG to any country with which the U.S. does not have a free trade agreement— including, it noted, all of Europe.

That works out to about 5.5 metric tons (6 tons) a year, and U.S.

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Louisiana's Shalanda Young advances toward Senate confirmation as Biden's budget director



Shalanda Young, a Louisiana native, received approval from the U.S. Senate March 15, 2022, to serve as director of the White House Office of Management and Budget. (Screenshot, CSPAN)

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT Louisiana Illuminator

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate gave President Joe Biden's budget director nominee a first nod of approval Monday night, voting to advance her to a final confirmation vote later this week.

The 53-31 vote gives Louisiana native Shalanda Young bipartisan support to become director of the Office of Management and

Budget, a Cabinet-level agency that releases the president's annual budget request, oversees federal agencies' performance and releases statements of administration policy.

Young, a longtime House Democratic Appropriations Committee staffer who worked her way up the ranks to become staff director in 2017, was confirmed to the deputy OMB director role last year. She has been working as acting

budget director ever since.

"If confirmed, Shalanda Young would make history as the very first Black woman confirmed by the Senate to lead the OMB — another glass ceiling shattered by another member of the president's historic Cabinet," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Monday.

Among the Republicans voting to advance Young's nomination Monday evening were Missouri

Sen. Roy Blunt, Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, Maine Sen. Susan Collins, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven and Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski.

As part of this confirmation process, Young testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Commit-

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LAST WEEKS STORIES

- "Girl Scout on the Go" Mobile Shop Begins Service in Southeast Louisiana
La. lawmaker proposes plan to crack down on abortion pills
Sen. Barrow to host District 15 Community Meeting
McDonald's, Coke, Starbucks Join Others Exiting Russia
FDA warns against use of certain unauthorized COVID antigen tests

WEATHER

Table with weather forecasts for Mon 03/21, Tue 03/22, Wed 3/23, and Thur 03/24.

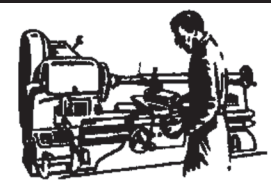
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LOCAL & STATE

READER INFORMATION



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 The Baton Rouge Weekly Press strives to be fair and accurate. The newspaper corrects any significant errors of fact brought to the attention of the editor. If you think an error has been made, call 225-775-200

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Audit gives Louisiana good marks on election integrity



Conservative attorneys have filed lawsuits claiming states and local election officials don't do enough to maintain their voter rolls, weakening the integrity of elections. (Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images)

A review of Louisiana's election processes and procedures found that state officials follow practices to ensure the integrity of outcomes when voters head to the polls. The Louisiana Legislative Auditor also provided some recommendations to the Louisiana Department of State on how it can further strengthen its election protocols in a report it released Monday.

The audit covered five main areas: the accuracy of the state's voter registration list; whether absentee mail ballots were completed accurately; pre-election testing of voting machines; post-election verification of results; and how election complaints are handled.

The state verifies its voting list with state and national data as called for under state and federal law. The Legislative Auditor analyzed the list as of Aug. 18, 2021, and found all records had complete information in the first and last name fields. Only 192 out of 3.03 million records – or 0.0063% – did not include the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number or their driver's license number as federal law requires. These voters might have submitted alternative proof of ID such as a utility bill,

which federal law allows. The audit also found just 27 records on the voter registration list were duplicates, just 0.0009% of the total. State elections staff told auditors their records confirmed none of the 27 duplicates voted twice in any election, and that the 27 duplicate registrations were resolved.

The Louisiana Department of State fielded 501 election complaints between fiscal years 2017 and 2021, according to the audit. The largest share, 31%, involved campaign practices, which covers allegations ranging from improper placement of campaign signs to vote buying and voter intimidation. More than a quarter of complaints were about alleged fraud, such as voters who attempt to cast ballots or register to vote somewhere other than the parish or precinct where they live.

Out of the 501 complaints, the state's Elections Compliance Unit forwarded 19 to authorities once they collected evidence that indicated criminal violations, the audit report said. At least four individuals involved with three of the complaints were prosecuted and convicted.

Among the recommendations from the Legislative Auditor was for elections officials to audit absentee ballots, which has become

See **AUDIT**, on page 5

State Wants to Put Unclaimed Money Into Residents' Hands

BATON ROUGE, La. — The state of Louisiana currently has \$900 million waiting to be claimed by its residents.

Kathleen Lobell runs the State's Unclaimed Property division, and she is trying to get that money back into the hands of Louisianans.

"Some of the amounts in our system are quite large. We payout six-figure claims all the time. We've had claims over a million dollars. We also pay out a lot of small amounts," Lobell said Monday.

Unclaimed property can be anything from forgotten bank accounts, utility deposit refunds,

wages, and life insurance money.

The process to claim the funds is easy. Just go to <https://lacashclaim.org/>

That is why State Treasurer John Schroder wants people to check.

"We encourage people to go check this. There's a lot of money in the Baton Rouge Region. It's the second-highest in the whole state," Schroder told WBRZ-TV in an interview.

Last fiscal year, the state paid around \$71 million back. Lobell recommends that residents check the website once a year. She says you may be surprised at what you find.

Louisiana state representative says amendment in the works for controversial bill

The controversial bill, proposed by Rep. Lance Harris, would require certain instructional materials and activities to be posted online for parents. Harris said he is in the process of amending the bill to remove language relating to lesson plans and certain responsibilities for teachers.



Rep. Lance Harris

Retired teacher Emma Shepard describes the bill as "a nightmare" for people still working in the classroom

"The intention is to give parents transparency as to what their children are being exposed to and taught in the public school system," Harris continued.

Retired teacher Emma Shepard describes the bill as "a nightmare" for people still working in the classroom.

"It's kind of frightening," Shepard said. "I also wonder what the purpose of this type of bill might be, because all of the policies and procedures are already posted everywhere."

Currently, parents have access to the curriculum on the Louisiana Believes website.

"What this bill will require the districts and the states LDOE and the schools to do is to make this informational readily accessible online to the parents so that they can have access to these materials and know whether they are having children exposed to academics or activism or whatever," Harris said.

When asked what he meant by "academics or activism," Harris said, "Academics being

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exports run about 11.5 metric tons (12.7 tons) a year, Meyer said.

Four applications from other facilities have been pending for more than a year, said Marty Durbin, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute. They "should also be approved expeditiously," he said in a statement.



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tee as well as the Budget Committee last month.

The panels later voted 8-6 and 15-6, respectively, to send her nomination to the Senate floor, though many of the GOP senators on the panels voted against her.

Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, the top Republican on the Homeland panel, voted for Young during the committee markup. But he expressed frustration at the time that

OMB wasn't producing documents regarding the Biden administration's COVID-19 response and a national security issue.

"I think it's troubling. I think it's a White House not being responsive to legitimate congressional requests or transparency," Portman said on Feb. 9.

Monday's procedural Senate vote showed a similar level of support to the one the Senate took last March, when lawmakers voted 63-37 to confirm her to the deputy director role.

If confirmed, Young would become Biden's first OMB director, 14 months into his presidency.

Biden originally nominated Neera Tanden for the OMB director position, but she withdrew her nomination after it became clear she wouldn't get the votes needed in the Senate amid GOP opposition and concerns from several Democratic lawmakers over past statements and policy positions.

Tanden is now White House staff secretary.

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Louisiana gas prices jump 51 cents in a week, near \$4 mark: All-time record high in sight



The average gas price in Louisiana jumped 51 cents last week, nearing the \$4 mark, something folks haven't seen in about 14 years.

"There are few words to describe the unprecedented rise in gasoline prices over the last week, with massive spikes coast to coast in both gasoline and diesel prices, as oil prices jump to their highest since 2008," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

Over the past week, Louisiana's average price rose 51 cents per gallon, bringing the price tag up to \$3.86 per gallon. This number is about 70 cents higher than last month and roughly \$1.50 more than last year.

Gas prices have been on the rise since Russia began its invasion into Ukraine on Feb. 24, less than two weeks ago. With the war abroad, the United States, including Louisiana, felt impacts on the economy, most notably through gas prices. Louisiana experienced its highest gas prices since 2014.

Nationwide, gas prices are following a similar trend. Since last week, the U.S. average gas price increased 46.5 cents. The average price of \$4.06 per gallon is nearly 61 cents more than last month and \$1.29 more than 2021.

"Forget the \$4 per gallon mark, the nation will soon set new all-time record highs and we could push closer to a national average of \$4.50 per gallon," De

Hann said. "California could be heading for \$5.50 per gallon with more stations charging \$6 and beyond."

According to AAA, the highest recorded average price in Louisiana was \$4.012 for regular unleaded and \$4.766 for diesel, both recorded on July 17, 2008.

In Baton Rouge and New Orleans, gas is averaging at \$3.88 per gallon. Each city saw about a 50-cent increase from last week's prices.

The average gas prices in Louisiana metro areas:

- \$3.76 in Alexandria
- \$3.88 in Baton Rouge
- \$3.83 in Hammond
- \$3.63 in Houma
- \$3.81 in Lafayette
- \$3.74 in Lake Charles
- \$3.68 in Monroe
- \$3.88 in New Orleans
- \$3.83 in Shreveport

"We've never been in this situation before with this level of uncertainty," De Haan said. "As we lose a major global producer under the weight of deserving bipartisan sanctions for invading a sovereign country, the cost is high. Americans will be feeling the pain of the rise in prices for quite some time with little good news foreseen."

USBC Announces Featured Speakers for Upcoming Women's History Month Luncheon



Natalie Madeira-Cofield



Nicole Cober Johnson Esq

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. (USBC) is pleased to announce the featured speakers for its upcoming Women's History Month Luncheon on Thursday, March 24th, 2022 in Washington, DC in partnership with AT&T.



The theme of the Annual Women's History Month Luncheon will be "Redefining Empowerment" and will feature two dynamic women of power, Natalie Madeira-Cofield, SBA Assistant Administrator for the Office of Women's Business Ownership and Nicole Cober Johnson Esq., Principal Managing Partner of Cober Johnson and Romney and Founder of the BOW Collective.

Both Natalie Madeira-Cofield and Nicole Cober Johnson Esq have a rich history of championing women entrepreneurs and women in leadership by providing executive coaching, access to capital, business strategies and business development.

USBC couldn't be more excited for our upcoming event, powered by longtime corporate partners AT&T on March 24th in Washington, DC. This event will celebrate women entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds who have made significant contributions in business and their communities.

"USBC is being intentional about challenging the status quo by curating a conversation about women's entrepreneurship. We will honor the achievements of women who've broken through glass ceilings and challenged traditional definitions of success, while also examining the many factors that prevent Black women from achieving their entrepreneurial dreams," says USBC President & CEO, Ron Busby.

The event will showcase the "Giants of Women's Entrepreneurship" and unpack how we can redefine what it means to intentionally

empower women at every stage of their journey. National radio and television personality Taylor Thomas will emcee USBC's Women of Power Luncheon, featuring fireside conversations moderated by Jotaka Eaddy, founder and CEO of Full Circle Strategies, LLC and USBC EVP, Talisha Bekavac.

The hybrid event will host 80 special invited in-person guests in addition to being broadcasted for virtual attendees. The event is expected to draw a hybrid audience of more than 300 business owners, influencers, entrepreneurs, corporate executives and community leaders from across the country. Attendees will hear from founders, investors and community leaders who are setting new standards for the industry, discover how to get more involved with female founder initiatives and network with other like-minded individuals.

For more details about this amazing event, check out the event page at <https://www.usbc.org>

Black female owned Chortazo Art Gallery hosts Ribbon Cutting in Baton Rouge



Celeste Payne



BATON ROUGE, La — In a world where chaos and conflict abound, it's essential to infuse creativity in all that we do as an escape from the tension and confusion that we may experience.

On March 23, 2022, Celeste Payne, a local artist, best-selling author, and arts educator will host a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Chortazo Art Gallery located at 12330 Florida Blvd, Suite 17 in Baton Rouge in the Longbow Shopping Center. This event will be held during Women's Empowerment Week.

Located in the heart of Baton Rouge, LA, the Chortazo Art Gallery was designed to showcase the art of local area artists. It is a place where the arts meet empowerment through personal and professional development through empowerment workshops, classes and events centered around creativity.

Weekly, Chortazo hosts after-school and evening art classes. Chortazo also hosts paint parties and empowerment events like workshops and hosts featured artists in the community.

To learn more about the products and devices visit <http://www.chortazoarts.com> or Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/chortazoarts/>

Established in 2020, Chortazo was founded by artist, certified educator, best-selling author and Therapeutic art life Coach, Celeste Payne. Since her childhood, she has been artistic and creative. She named the gallery after the greek word Chortazo, which means being "full." This reflects Celeste's continual desire to share her fullness of creative ideas for the community of people, students and businesses that enjoy her art and artistic style, and the arts in general.

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Union and NAACP are providing plaintiffs' attorneys. They filed the lawsuit in Baton Rouge with the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana.

The Louisiana Legislature approved the new political maps for their own chambers in February. Gov. John Bel Edwards disapproves of those plans — he thought they should contain more majority-Black districts — but declined to veto them. They became law March 9.

The new maps maintain the status quo of majority-Black districts in the Senate and House, though Louisiana's Black population has grown since the state's last redistricting session took place. Eleven of 39 Senate districts and 29 of 105 House districts were majority-Black seats when they were drawn 10 years ago and remain so in the Legislature's approved plans.

The plaintiffs contend the state is legally obligated to do more. They are pushing for maps with 14 majority-Black Senate districts and 35 to 39 majority-Black House seats. White voters, who comprise 58% of the voting population, would control election outcomes for more than 70% of the seats in the Louisiana Senate and House under the maps approved by the Legislature, the lawsuit said.

Legislative leaders said they hadn't had a chance to read through the lawsuit yet and didn't want to comment on it until they had done so.

The plaintiffs have set out to prove that elections in Louisiana are racially polarized, a key standard they need to meet to win a voting rights challenge. Black voters overwhelmingly vote for candidates who often don't win elections in majority-white districts, they said.

In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs outlined the racial breakdown of the recent Louisiana treasurer and secretary of state elections to prove their point. In both elections, more than 95% of Black residents who voted backed Black candidates who ended up losing.

They also pointed to previous rounds of political redistricting when the federal government forced Louisiana to redraw its political lines because of concerns over minority representation. In 1981 and 1991, Louisiana had to make adjustments to add majority-Black districts to the Legislature to satisfy federal laws. In 1969 and 1994, they had to do the same for judicial seats, according to the lawsuit.

The plaintiffs said additional majority-Black districts could be

added this year by "unpacking" existing majority-Black districts where the percentage of Black voters is so high that it could be lowered significantly without threatening the districts' majority-Black status.

A new majority-Black seat in Jefferson Parish could be drawn by shifting some Black voters from Senate District 5, represented by Black Democrat Karen Carter Peterson, into Senate District 8, represented by white Republican Patrick Connick.

Another majority-Black district could be added in the Shreveport area by shifting Black voters out of Senate District 39, represented by Black Democrat Greg Tarver, and into Senate District 37, represented by white Republican Barrow Peacock.

In the Baton Rouge area, some Black voters could be moved out of Senate Districts 14 and 15, represented by Black Democrats Regina Barrow and Cleo Fields, and into Senate District 17, represented by white Republican Rick Ward, to make another majority-Black seat.

On the House side, the plaintiffs said an extra majority-Black House seat could be added in the Lake Charles area by shifting some

Bill from page 2

reading, writing, arithmetic, stem. Activism may be a theory, maybe an opinion, philosophy."

KSLA then asked if the conversations around Critical Race

Black voters out of House District 34, held by Black Democrat Wilford Carter, and into House District 38, held by white Republican Rhonda Butler.

The plaintiffs also proposed keeping majority-Black District 23, held by Black Democrat Kenny Cox, in Northwest Louisiana. In the House map approved by the Legislature, that district was moved to New Orleans.

Instead, the plaintiffs would convert District 5 in Shreveport, held by white Republican Alan Seabaugh, into a new majority-Black district in New Orleans. It would also shift around the Black population in Shreveport to create another minority House district in Caddo Parish.

In Baton Rouge, the plaintiffs proposed moving some Black voters out of House Districts 29, 61 and 63 — held by Black Democrats Edmond Jordan, C. Denise Marcelle, Barbara Carpenter — to create more majority-Black districts. The

theory had any part in the inspiration for the bill.

"This doesn't specifically go after critical race theory," he said. "I would say the inspiration for the bill is parents requesting it. Two, is all the school districts in

the news...and three, everything went virtual because of the pandemic. I think it's more related to that."

Shepard said there is not much room for "activism" in the classroom. "You can't interject your own opinions," she said.

Harris said parents should know what textbooks would be used during the school year. If anything changes, the school board needs to update the website by Jan. 15.

Black population in House District 101, which is vacant, could also be lowered.

Those additional Black voters could be placed into Baton Rouge area House Districts 60, 65, 68 and 69 — represented by white Democrat Chad Brown and white Republicans Barry Ivey, Scott McKnight and Paula Davis — to create new majority-Black seats.

Black lawmakers floated more modest proposals than the ones presented by the plaintiffs during Louisiana's political redistricting in February. Sen. Ed Price, D-Gonzales, wanted to add two additional majority-Black seats to the Senate. Reps. Sam Jenkins and Cedric Glover, both from Shreveport, proposed adding an extra majority-Black seat in the House through several proposals. Their plans were scuttled by the Republican majority.

ORDER from page 1

itor the situation with COVID and provide the public with updates and guidance as is necessary to manage public health in Louisiana's communities and also to keep hospitals from being overwhelmed. Should additional needs arise or the situation change, the Governor could revisit his emergency order in the future.

According to new community risk models from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most of Louisiana's parishes have a low risk for COVID spread.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have continued to follow the science and the data to guide our response," said State Health Officer Dr. Joseph Kanter. "Thankfully, we are in a much better position than we have been. At the same time, it is not lost on us that today marks the second anniversary of our first COVID-19 death in Louisiana. In just 24 months, nearly 17,000 Louisianians have lost their lives. This pandemic is certainly not over, and our collective work remains unfinished, but I do believe better days are ahead. The COVID-19 vaccines have saved countless lives — and they, therapeutics and a deeper under-

standing of this virus strengthen us."

"I'm so proud of what the men and women of the Louisiana National Guard have accomplished during this unprecedented time of need," said Maj. Gen. Keith Waddell, adjutant general of the Louisiana National Guard. "I am also grateful for the relationships and partnerships we have built with local officials from all 64 parishes, other state agencies, and our federal partners. Together, we succeeded in responding to COVID-19 with innovative tactics, techniques, and procedures which has benefitted our citizens and visitors to our state. I want the citizens of Louisiana to know that the Louisiana National Guard will continue to Protect What Matters."

Currently, all epidemiological data points to a decline in COVID-like illness, new COVID cases and hospitalizations. According to CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels, the majority of parishes are currently classified as low. Two years into the COVID pandemic, Louisiana has many more tools to control the spread of the coronavirus in its communities, including safe and effective vaccines, booster doses, antiviral drugs, monoclonal antibody treatments, at-home tests, and high-quality face masks.

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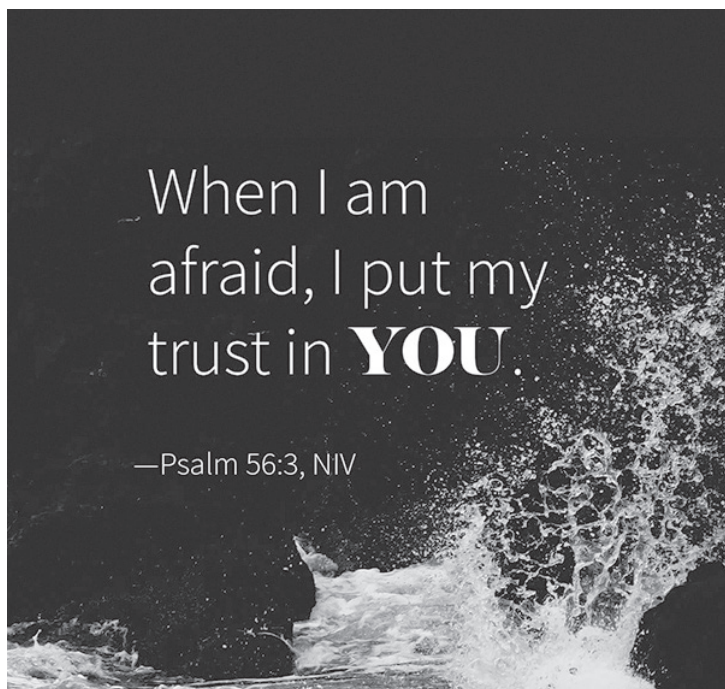
Have you ever gone out of your way to take extensive precautions to avoid a potentially dangerous situation? Many of us have, so that we could feel safe and secure. The problem is that not only can this be time-consuming, there always seems to be some detail we may have forgotten, thereby causing us more worry and anxiety. We'll always have that issue when we rely on ourselves for our own safety, but trusting God for our protection gives us peace of mind.



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Trusting God isn't just a simple cliché, but a conscious decision. In a world where most people have taken matters into their own hands concerning their safety and security, deciding to put our faith in Him takes courage. God promises to protect those who trust Him; He has never failed to keep His promise, and He never will. "God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19, NIV).

There's nothing wrong with using common sense to ensure our safety. God blessed us with intelligence and sound judgment for a good reason. However, He didn't leave us alone with our physical senses with the expectation that those are all we need to keep us safe. He wants to be with us in everything we do and everywhere we go; therefore, the safest place to be is in His presence. "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want... Yea, though I walk through



When I am afraid, I put my trust in **YOU**.

—Psalm 56:3, NIV

the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:1, 4).

We need to be mindful of what we pay attention to; it affects how we think, and ultimately what we do. Getting swept up in the turbulence around us can instill fear in us. Listening to the news reports can rattle some people so badly that they're convinced they'll die an early death; some people live in fear of it every day. Putting the matter in God's hands gives us total protection and deliverance from trouble, both seen and unseen.

No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone... "Because he

has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation" (Psalm 91:10-12, 14-16, NKJV).

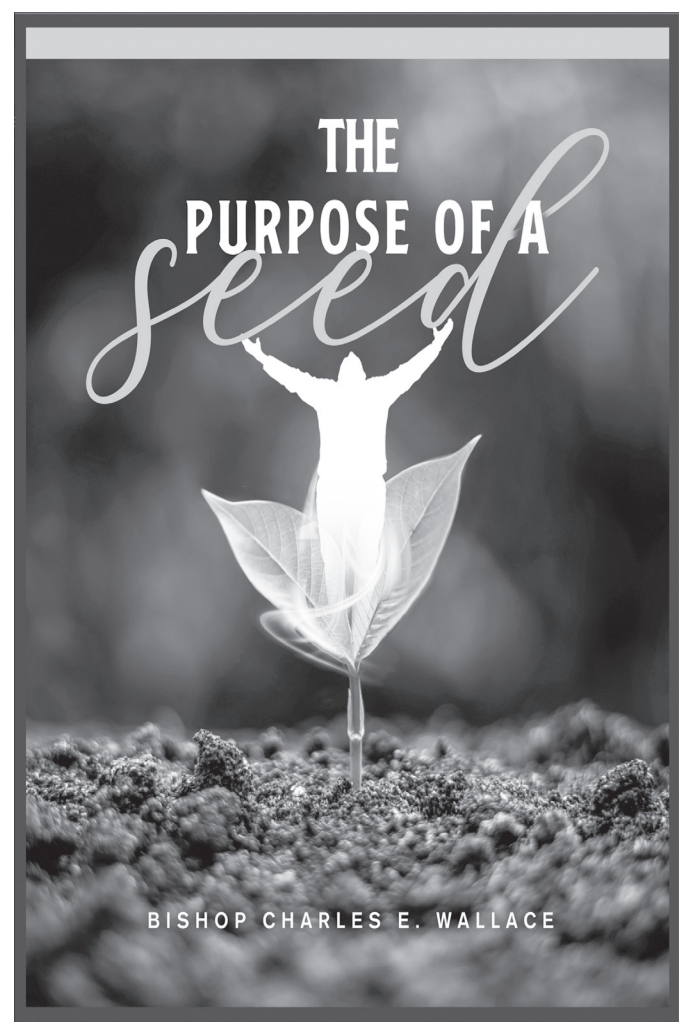
Paying attention to God's promises of protection keeps us calm and confident. When fear grips the world, knowing that He'll always be nearby keeps us grounded and firmly established in His peace. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil" (2 Thessalonians 3:3). He'll never let us down or leave us when we need Him. Being able to count on Him to keep us safe from harm, regardless of what's going on around us, is better than any alarm system we could ever have.

BR Pastor Releases New Book: The Purpose of a Seed

Bishop Charles Wallace comes from humble beginnings. He often refers to himself as a bot from the park, referring to the area of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, named Eden Park, where he was reared. He attributes his success to the grace of God in his life.

He has been married to his wife, Gladys, for forty-nine years. They have been blessed with three beautiful daughters, two sons-in-law, grandsons, Solomon and Samuel, who are the light of their lives.

Bishop Wallace is the Senior Pastor of Oasis Christian Church. Oasis is a church that loves God, hates sin, and is always willing to give. The Purpose of a Seed was inspired by the Holy Spirit. When read and applied, this book will be life-changing.



This book will inform you step by step on how a seed produces the harvest within. The seed is God's way of reproducing. All of nature understands the concept. So, get ready to be informed and inspired for productivity for the Kingdom of God.



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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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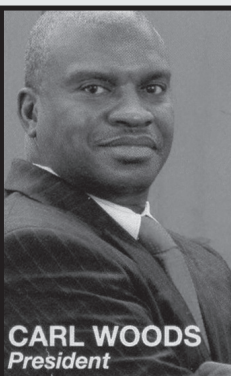
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BUSINESS

Brothers Empowered to Teach is a Solution to Lack of Black Male Teachers



New Orleans education leader Larry Irvin Jr. offers a new and fresh take on the importance of teacher diversity while also igniting a global conversation around how Black male teachers are recruited, trained and perceived as educators in his new TED Talk. Now LIVE.

BY STAFF WRITER

New Orleans, LA - A newly released study reveals that there is a 30% drop in aspiring teachers in Louisiana. Further alarming is the lack of diversity in the K-12 classroom -- 23.5% of teachers in Louisiana are Black and of that number only 5% are Black men.

The findings, compiled by the 17-member Teacher Recruitment, Recovery and Retention Task Force, were presented during a joint meeting of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state Board of Regents. The panel said one goal for both BESE and the Board of Regents should be more diversity in the classroom.

Brothers Empowered to Teach is a solution.

Starting as an idea in 2012, BE2T is an organization recruiting and training Black men to become teachers in Louisiana while working to return the prestige and honor to the profession. Through innovative programming, mentorship and paid fellowships, BE2T is increasing the number of Black male teachers in United States public

schools -- starting with Louisiana. Research shows that just 1 Black male teacher in 3rd, 4th or 5th grade for young Black men substantially decreases his chances of dropping out of high school by 40%.

This is the message of BE2T Co-founder and CEO, Larry Irvin Jr.'s TED Talk: A program to empower Black teachers in the US. Released last month, Irvin's talk is at nearly 800,000 views.

"We are in such a pivotal moment in education, and I hope this talk further ignites the discourse around teacher training, development, and demographics. My own personal leadership journey is parallel to the struggles of Black men in education. Most times our value assessment starts from a deficit, and we work upward from there," said Irvin, a rising education thought leader and 2021 TED Fellow.

Irvin has been holding a series of conversation on the subject via Instagram LIVE. So far, he has talked with Jamar McKneely, CEO of InspireNola network and acclaimed educator, researcher and author, Lisa Delpit, Ph.D.

Andre Perry, senior Fellow at

The Brookings Institution, said: "As a former school network leader, professor and researcher within a college of education in New Orleans, I know too well the value of Black teachers, particularly male educators. For years, researchers such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Pedro Noguera, Lisa Delpit, Adrienne Dixon, Christopher Emdin, and James A. Banks -- all people of color -- validated the need for Black teachers in New Orleans schools through their studies on teachers of color."

The scholarship serves as the foundation for inquiries like one by Stanford University researcher Thomas Dee who, the year before Katrina, found that Black students of both sexes who had a Black teacher scored 3 to 6 percentile points higher on standardized tests in reading than those who did not. Dee found a similar increase in the math scores of Black students taught by a Black teacher. However, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the city realized a significant decline in Black teachers, throttling academic growth. I saw up close how Brothers Empowered to Teach developed interest and talent, nurturing a pool of male

teachers that would not have existed otherwise. BE2T provided candidates with technical, cultural and professional supports to maximize outcomes for students and themselves. I fully support BE2T efforts of getting more Black men in the classroom."

About Corporate Community Connections, Inc.

Since 1997, Corporate Community Connections, Inc. (CCCI) has created connections between corporations and underserved communities to accomplish the mutual benefits of increased access to diverse markets and expanded community resources. From large, expanding health care systems growing into urban areas to large financial services companies desiring to diversify their employees, Corporate Community Connections, Inc., has been able to connect organizations to solutions and create sustainable strategies that become embedded into the institutions.

For more information, visit www.corpcominc.com.

AUDIT from page 2

an increasingly popular option for voters in recent years. Other states, including Georgia and Maryland,

require absentee audits.

Currently, Louisiana only recounts absentee ballots when they could make the difference in the outcome of an election. The Department of State agreed with this and other recommendations from auditors but said more time

and manpower would be needed to conduct an audit of any paper ballots between a primary and general election.

The audit report comes as state officials and lawmakers evaluate Louisiana's options for new voting machines. The current direct-

recording electronic machines have been in use since the early 2000s and are likely to be replaced with a technology that provides a paper trail that can be audited.

Find the complete report from the Legislative Auditor here.

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