

# The Weekly Press

SERVING BAKER, CENTRAL, AND ZACHARY

THURSDAY, MARCH 11-17, 2021

A PEOPLE'S PUBLICATION

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STATE/LOCAL PG 2

LAWMAKER WANTS TO DO AWAY WITH CONCEALED CARRY PERMITS

STATE/LOCAL PG 3

MAYOR BROOME ANNOUNCES RENTAL ASSISTANCE

**Early voting has begun March 6 for the March 20 election**



BATON ROUGE, La. — Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin is reminding voters that early voting begins Saturday, March 6, and continues through Saturday, March 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, excluding Sunday, March 7. Citizens who want to vote early may do so in person at the parish Registrar of Voters Office or at other designated locations.

There are 20 parishes in which there will be both multi-parish races (such as United States Representative) and local races/propositions: Ascension, Avoyelles, Bossier, Caddo, DeSoto, East Baton Rouge, Grant, Jefferson, LaSalle, Lincoln, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Red River, Richland, Sabine, St. Charles, St. Landry, Washington, Webster, and Winn. 23 parishes will vote only on multi-parish races (such as U.S. Representative): Assumption, Bienville, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Franklin, Iberville, Jackson, Madison, Orleans, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Helena, St. James, St. John, Tan-

See **VOTING**, on page 3

**WEATHER**

	<b>MON. 02/15</b> Thunderstorms High 82°.
	<b>TUE. 02/16</b> Partly Cloudy High 81°.
	<b>WED. 02/17</b> Thunderstorms High 81°.
	<b>THUR. 02/18</b> Showers High 78°.

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## Congress adopts \$1.9 trillion stimulus

WASHINGTON - The bill, which President Biden is expected to sign on Friday, sends direct payments to many Americans, expands a child tax credit and extends a \$300 weekly unemployment supplement. The Senate confirmed Merrick B. Garland as attorney general and Marcia Fudge as secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Congress gave final approval on Wednesday to President Biden's sweeping, nearly \$1.9 trillion stimulus package, as Democrats acted over unified Republican opposition to push through an emergency pandemic aid plan that included a vast expansion of the country's social safety net.

By a vote of 220 to 211, the House passed the measure and cleared it for Mr. Biden's signature, cementing one of the largest injections of federal aid since the Great Depression. Mr. Biden is expected to sign the bill Friday. All but one Democrat, Representative Jared Golden of Maine, voted in favor.

It would provide another round of direct payments for many Americans, an extension of federal jobless benefits and billions of dollars to distribute coronavirus vaccines and provide relief for schools, states, tribal governments and small businesses struggling during the pandemic.

The vote was the culmination of a swift push by Mr. Biden and



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, (D-Calif.) meets with reporters before the House votes to pass a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package, during a news conference at the Capitol in Washington, Friday, Feb. 26, 2021.

Democrats, newly in control of both chambers of Congress and the White House, to address the toll of the pandemic and begin putting in place their broader economic agenda. It includes a

set of measures that is estimated to slash poverty by a third this year and potentially cut child poverty in half, including expansions of tax credits, food aid and rental and mortgage assistance.

"With the stroke of a pen, President Biden is going to lift millions and millions of children out of poverty in this country."

See **STIMULUS**, on page 2

## What's inside the \$1.9T COVID-19 bill passed by Congress

WASHINGTON — The House approved a sweeping pandemic relief package over Republican opposition on Wednesday, sending it to President Joe Biden to be signed into law. The milestone political victory would provide \$1,400 checks for most Americans and direct billions of dollars to schools, state and local governments, and businesses.

Democrats said their "American Rescue Plan" would help the country defeat the virus and nurse the economy back to health. Republicans criticized the \$1.9 trillion package as more expensive than necessary and they complain it inflates the national debt and sends money to projects not directly tied to the pandemic. The measure follows five earlier virus bills totaling about \$4 trillion that Congress has enacted since last spring.

A look at some highlights of the legislation:

**AID TO THE UNEMPLOYED**

Expanded unemployment benefits from the federal government would be extended through Sept. 6 at \$300 a week. That's on top of what beneficiaries are getting through their state unemployment insurance program. The first \$10,200 of jobless benefits accrued in 2020 would be non-taxable for households with incomes under \$150,000.

Additionally, the measure provides a 100% subsidy of COBRA health insurance premiums to ensure that laid-off workers can remain on their employer health plans at no cost through the end of September.

**MORE CHECKS**

The legislation provides a direct payment of \$1,400 for a single taxpayer, or \$2,800 for a married couple that files jointly, plus \$1,400 per dependent. Individuals earning up to \$75,000 would get the full amount, as would married couples with incomes up to \$150,000.

The size of the check would shrink for those making slightly more, with a hard cut-off at \$80,000 for individuals and \$160,000 for

See **INSIDE**, on page 3

## Vernon Jordan, ex-Clinton adviser and civil rights activist, dead at 85

Washington — Vernon Jordan, a civil rights leader and close adviser to former President Bill Clinton, died Monday evening. He was 85.

A cause of death was not immediately released.

Jordan died peacefully at his home surrounded by his wife and family, Jordan's niece Ann Walker confirmed to CNN.

According to Walker, Jordan had his favorite dinner and dessert -- chocolate chip ice cream -- before he went to bed.

"It was just the way he would have wanted it," Walker told CNN.

The former president of the National Urban League rose to prominence as a civil rights activist with close connections in all corners of American politics, though he was closest with Democrats, including presidents from Lyndon Johnson to Barack Obama. He also worked with Republican Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. In a statement provided to



President Bill Clinton, Vernon Jordan 2000 Presidents Cup - October Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Gainesville, Virginia, U.S. PGA TOUR

CNN on Tuesday by Clinton's office, the 42nd President remembered his late friend as someone who "brought his big brain and strong heart to everything and ev-

erybody he touched" and "who made them better."

"He was never too busy to give good advice and encouragement to young people. And

See **JORDAN**, on page 3

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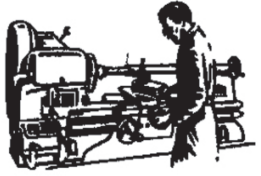
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**VOTERS GUIDE 04/24/2021**



# STATE & LOCAL

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**Correction Policy**  
 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 225-775-2002

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## ExxonMobil Encourages Girls to Consider Careers in Engineering



More than 16,000 students across the U.S. have participated in ExxonMobil's Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day events since the program's inception in 2003.

**ExxonMobil employees provide virtual and hands on experiences for 130 students from 13 schools in the Baton Rouge area**

BATON ROUGE – ExxonMobil employee volunteers today welcomed 130 middle-school girls from 13 schools in both East and West Baton Rouge Parish for Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day, a program designed to inspire female students to consider careers

in engineering. “We’re pleased to continue this annual event during a school year of significant challenges which has required students to be resilient and build their problem-solving skills,” said ExxonMobil Baton Rouge Plastics Plant Manager Angela Zeringue. “As we see our world take on a global pandemic, our scientists, health professionals, technicians and engineers are developing solutions to meet the world’s needs and these girls will be among those helping us overcome challenges of the future.”

A panel of ExxonMobil employees will virtually answer

the participants’ questions while volunteers at each school will lead students through a hands-on, interactive experiment. Students will learn how creativity and ingenuity can be used in the classroom, and how knowledge of science, technology, engineering and math subjects can lead to rewarding engineering careers.

More than 16,000 students across the U.S. have participated in ExxonMobil’s Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day events since the program’s inception in 2003.

According to the Society of Women Engineers, women account for only 13 percent of the engineering practice, which are typically high-paying and high-demand jobs.

ExxonMobil employs scientists and engineers around the world, working collaboratively with other companies and academic institutions to bring energy to market, develop new energy technologies, improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

## Lawmaker wants to do away with concealed carry permits in La.



“It’s legal in 18 other states right now and two more are in the process of legalizing it so we’re hoping to be number 19 or 20, wherever we fall in there, but Arkansas and Mississippi already have constitutional carry and it’s working good.”

BATON ROUGE, La. - In Louisiana, if you don’t have a felony and you’re over the age of 21, you can take a concealed carry course and pay for a concealed carry permit. But one Louisiana representative says there’s a better way to exercise that right.

“In Louisiana right now, open carry is legal without a permit and this just mimics that so you can conceal carry without a permit,” said state Rep. Danny McCormick.

McCormick said replacing the current law with what is called a constitutional carry law is what many other states have already done and that it’s time for Louisiana to get on board.

“It’s legal in 18 other states right now and two more are in the process of legalizing it so we’re hoping to be number 19 or 20, wherever we fall in there, but Arkansas and Mississippi already have constitutional carry and it’s working good,” McCormick added.

He says that while he was out campaigning and knocking on the doors people kept asking him to make constitutional carry a thing in Louisiana.

“I mean, people are ready to go on the offense with their Second Amendment rights. They’re tired of being on defense and, as we always say, ‘There’s no but in the Second Amendment.’ You know,

people say, ‘I’m pro-Second Amendment but ...’ There’s no but in the Second Amendment, so we’re going back to the original intent,” McCormick explained.

“I think that it is a great idea for our state,” said Louisiana Firearms owner Joshua Davis.

Davis also said concealed carry permits aren’t meant to keep people safer but just another way for the government to take your money.

“I think that people should get behind this bill because anytime you try to monetize our rights, it’s never a good thing and I believe a concealed carry permit is nothing more than a tax on our right,” Davis noted.

But for every pro, there’s always a con.

“If there is no course that’s required and everyone can just legally conceal carry their gun, I think a con would be if those laws about where you can and can’t conceal carry aren’t taught, I think you’re going to see more arrests with people conceal carrying and they’ll argue in court, ‘Oh, I didn’t know I couldn’t conceal carry in the mall,’” Davis added.

And McCormick thinks his bill has a good chance.

“I think it has an excellent chance. I think it’s above 75%,” McCormick estimated.

## Stimulus from page 1

Representative Rosa DeLauro, Democrat of Connecticut, said, “It is time to make a bold investment in the health and security of the American people — a watershed moment.”

While Republicans argued the plan, whose final cost was estimated at \$1.856 trillion, was bloated and unaffordable, polls indicate that it has widespread support, with 70 percent of Americans favoring the package, according to a Pew Research Center poll released Wednesday.

“House Democrats have abandoned any pretense of unity,” said

Representative Kevin McCarthy, Republican of California and the minority leader. “This isn’t a rescue bill, it isn’t a relief bill. It’s a laundry list of left-wing priorities that predate the pandemic.”

Mr. Biden and congressional Democrats planned an elaborate effort to promote it throughout the country, racing to claim credit for the coronavirus aid and a set of provisions they hope to make permanent in the years to come, and to punish Republicans politically for failing to support any of it.




“This bill represents a historic, historic victory for the American people,” Mr. Biden said at the White House following the bill’s approval, thanking Speaker Nancy Pelosi and

the House.

Final passage came less than two months after Mr. Biden took office and about a year after cities and states across the country began to shutter to stem the spread of the coronavirus.


The measure will provide \$350 billion for state, local and tribal governments and \$10 billion for critical state infrastructure projects; \$14 billion for the distribution of a vaccine, and \$130 billion to primary and secondary schools. The bill also includes \$30 billion for transit agencies, \$45 billion in rental, utility and mortgage assistance, and billions more for small businesses and live

See JUMP, on page 3

# THIS MONTH

[ MARCH ]




### FLASHLIGHT EGG HUNT

Highland Road Community Park  
 March 5 | 6-8 p.m.

Zachary Community Park  
 March 12 | 6-8 p.m.

**LEPRECHAUN GAME NIGHT** 5:30-7 p.m.  
 Plank Road Park March 8

Anna T. Jordan Community Park +  
 Milton J. Womack Park March 12

Antioch Blvd. Park + Greenwood  
 Community Park March 15

Highland Road Community Park +  
 Lovett Road Park + Hooper Road Park  
 March 17

### SATURDAY MORNING STUDIOS:

**NO PAINTBRUSHES ALLOWED!**

Milton J. Womack Park  
 March 13 | 10:30 a.m.-noon

### SPRING YOUTH TENNIS SMASH

Independence Community Park

Tennis Center  
 March 13 | 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION BEGINS

MARCH 20 [brec.org/summercamp](http://brec.org/summercamp)

### REVIVE YOUR MIND HIKE

Frenchtown Road Conservation Area  
 March 13 | 9-11 a.m.

### URBAN NATURE HIKE

North Sherwood Forest  
 Community Park  
 March 16 | 5:30-7 p.m.

### COMITE RIVER RUN

Comite River Park  
 March 20 | 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

### E-SPORTS TOURNAMENT: MARIO KART 8

Milton J. Womack Park  
 March 20 | noon

### ART UNWIND: FLASH BACK!

Milton J. Womack Park  
 March 26 | 6:30-8 p.m.

### EGG-STRAVAGANZA DRIVE THRU EGG HUNT +

MOVIE IN THE PARK

Airline Highway Park  
 March 27 | 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

For a full list of events and any COVID-related changes, visit our website.




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## Mayor Broome announces Emergency Rental Assistance Program

BATON ROUGE, La. - East Baton Rouge Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome announced her office is launching the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to help provide financial relief to landlords and renters who have been impacted during the pandemic.

The program currently has 29-million dollars in aid, which must be spent by Dec. 31, 2021. Landlords are encouraged to provide an assessment of late rental payments and apply for assistance. Those who are approved may be eligible to receive past due rent dating back to April 1, 2020, from tenants who are unable to pay due to COVID-19. EARP will disperse funds directly to the landlord, not the tenant.

Renters facing financial hardships because of the pandemic are also encouraged to apply for assistance. An "eligible household" must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant cost, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19.

- Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

- Has a household income at or below 80% area median income (AMI).

- Eligible households may receive up to 12 months of the assistance of overdue rent payments, plus an additional 3 months for future rent payments, up to a maximum of \$15,000 per household.

Landlord and Renters can apply for the aide starting Sat. March 13. A call center will also be available for individuals who are unable to apply online. Click here to apply.

## Jump from page 2

performance venues.

It would provide another round direct payments to American taxpayers, sending checks of up to \$1,400 to individuals making \$80,000 or less, single parents earning \$120,000 or less and couples with household income of no more than \$160,000.

Federal unemployment payments of \$300 per week would be extended through Sept. 6, and up to \$10,200 of jobless aid from last year would be tax-free for households with incomes below \$150,000. It would also provide a benefit of \$300 per child for those age 5 and younger — and \$250 per child ages 6 to 17, increasing the value of the so-called child tax credit.

The legislation also contains a substantial, though temporary, expansion of health care subsidies that could slash monthly insurance payments for those purchasing coverage under the Affordable Care Act. And for six months, it would fully cover COBRA health care costs for people who have lost a job or had their hours cut and who buy coverage from their former employer.

## Birdfoot Festival Announces Spring 2021 Virtual Season in Celebration of 10th Anniversary

NEWORLEANS, La — The Birdfoot Festival, New Orleans' international chamber music festival, marks its 10th anniversary with a virtual season dedicated to its signature program Birdfoot Backstage. Kicking off Sunday, March 14, 2021, the Sunday series features an exceptional cast of ensembles, each including one or more Birdfoot artists. Each interactive event includes a short performance followed by a deep dive into the music. Whether you are a chamber music connoisseur or a complete newbie, you are invited to join these musicians behind the scenes for a lively exploration of music and the creative process.

With the safety of its artists, staff and audiences in mind, Birdfoot adjusted its format while continuing to offer a musical ode to creativity, resilience, and to the place where the Backstage series was born, where so much art was first imagined: the kitchen table, backstage of backstages.

Birdfoot Backstage Performances are free (suggested donation: \$15-25) if viewed on Birdfoot Festival's YouTube channel. Registration is required to participate actively in the live event and discussion with the artists via Zoom. Tickets are limited to facilitate discussion. Questions

# Birdfoot Festival

and comments will be addressed through the "Chat" function.

First up on Sunday, March 14, 2021 is Philadelphia's renowned Jasper String Quartet in an event that delves into the essential role of rhythm in music by Antonin Dvorak and Florence Price. Events take place on Sundays at 2:30 PM.

### BIRDFOOT FESTIVAL SPRING 2021 VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

- March 14, 2021 Rhythm: Dvorak & Price (Jasper String Quartet)

- March 28, 2021 Texture: Katherine Balch (Argus Quartet)

- April 11, 2021 Voices: Mozart & Haydn (Jenna Sherry and Guests)

- April 25, 2021 Time: Lili Boulanger (Linos Piano Trio)

- May 16, 2021 Gratitude: Beethoven (Borromeo String

Quartet)

- May 23, 2021 Memory: Brahms (Jenna Sherry, violin, Shuann Chai, piano, Teunis van der Swart, natural horn)

- June 6, 2021 Artists TBA

In some cases, Backstage events are presented in partnership with online performances by each ensemble. Details about the paired online performance will be available at [www.birdfootfestival.org](http://www.birdfootfestival.org). For example, the March 14 Backstage event with the Jasper String Quartet will feature excerpts from their upcoming virtual concert entitled Spark Joy, March 18, 2021. More information: [www.jasperchamberconcerts.com/202021-season](http://www.jasperchamberconcerts.com/202021-season).

For more information, full Schedule and tickets for the March 14, 2021 event available through the website: <https://birdfootfestival.org/>

## Jordan from page 1

for the Voter Education Project before he became president of the National Urban League. In 1980, he survived an assassination attempt on his life.

"Today, the world lost an influential figure in the fight for civil rights and American politics, Vernon Jordan. An icon to the world and a lifelong friend to the NAACP, his contribution to moving our society toward justice is unparalleled," NAACP President Derrick Johnson said in a statement Tuesday. "In 2001, Jordan received the NAACP's Spingarn Medal for a lifetime of social justice activism. His exemplary life will shine as a guiding light for all that seek truth and justice for all people."

Jordan's closest political friendship was with Bill and Hillary Clinton, advising the then-Arkansas governor during his 1992 presidential campaign and acting as an outside adviser to his friend. He remained close to the Clintons for the next decades, endorsing both of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaigns.

Jordan first met Clinton during a trip to Little Rock, Arkansas, when he was leading the Urban League and Clinton was Arkansas attorney general, and the two formed a friendship that spanned decades and withstood rocky times.

"We have formed a bond that is indescribable," Clinton said at a

2019 event hosted by the Clinton Foundation.

Clinton tapped Jordan, who left the Urban League after 10 years to practice law in DC, to serve as chairman of his 1992 presidential transition team. The position propelled Jordan into becoming a Washington power broker as he acted as a close confidant to Clinton, advising him on several hirings, golfing frequently with the President and sharing Christmas Eves together.

In the late '90s, Jordan's friendship with Clinton found him entangled in then-independent counsel Kenneth Starr's investigation, which uncovered the affair Clinton had with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky while in office. Jordan had helped Lewinsky job hunt at the request of Clinton's personal secretary and had recommended an attorney who briefly represented Lewinsky. Jordan testified several times before the grand jury.

Jordan also had an illustrious career in the corporate world, serving on the board of directors for several major American corporations.

DePauw University on Tuesday mourned the passing of Jordan, and its president, Lori S. White, said in a statement that the university "has lost a dear friend and the world has lost a determined leader."

"He spoke loudly — through words and deeds — as a civil rights activist and quietly as a trusted counsel to presidents," White said.

## Inside from page 1

married couples.

Most Americans will be getting the full amount. The median household income was \$68,703 in 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Biden said payments would start going out this month.

### MONEY FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The legislation would send \$350 billion to state and local governments and tribal governments for costs incurred up until the end of 2024. The bill also requires that small states get at least the amount they received under virus legislation that Congress passed last March.

Many communities have taken hits to their tax base during the pandemic, but the impact varies from state to state and from town to town. Critics say the funding is not appropriately targeted and is far more than necessary with billions of dollars allocated last spring to states and communities still unspent.

### AID TO SCHOOLS

The bill calls for about \$130 billion in additional help to schools for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The money would be used to reduce class sizes and modify classrooms to enhance social distancing, install ventilation systems and purchase personal protective equipment. The money could also be used to hire more nurses, counselors and janitors, and to provide summer school.

Spending for colleges and universities would be boosted by about \$40 billion, with the money used to defray an institution's pandemic-related expenses and to provide emergency aid to students to cover expenses such as food and housing and computer equipment.

There's also about \$39 billion for child care through an emergency fund to help child care providers pay for staffing, rent and supplies, and through a block grant program that subsidizes the cost of child care for low-income families.

### AID TO BUSINESSES

A new program for restaurants and bars hurt by the pan-

demic would receive \$28.6 billion. The grants provide up to \$10 million per company with a limit of \$5 million per physical location. The grants can be used to cover payroll, rent, utilities and other operational expenses.

The bill also provides \$7.25 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program, a tiny fraction of what was allocated in previous legislation. The bill also allows more non-profits to apply for loans that are designed to help borrowers meet their payroll and operating costs and can potentially be forgiven.



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## Voting from page 1

gipahoa, Tensas, Vernon, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, and West Feliciana. There are ten parishes in which there will only be local races and/or propositions: Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Jefferson Davis, Lafourche, Livingston, St. Mary, St. Tammany, and Vermilion. 11 parishes will have no elections: Acadia, Allen, Claiborne, Iberia, Lafayette, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, St. Bernard, St. Martin, Terrebonne, and Union.

Voters are encouraged to utilize Louisiana's award-winning, free smartphone app, GeauxVote Mobile, to locate their early voting

site, Election Day voting site, or view their sample ballot. GeauxBot, the virtual voter assistant, is also available to access pertinent election information such as registration deadlines, election dates, polling locations, and hours. GeauxBot is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by visiting [voterportal.sos.la.gov](http://voterportal.sos.la.gov) or by selecting Elections and Voting on [sos.la.gov](http://sos.la.gov).

In addition to a Louisiana driver's license, a Louisiana Special ID, or a generally recognized ID with picture and signature, voters may use a digital license via LA Wallet.

For more information, contact the Elections Division at 800.883.2805 or [elections@sos.la.gov](mailto:elections@sos.la.gov).

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# RELIGION

## Commissioned Inducted into the GMA Hall of Fame

Known for their poignant performance style, rich harmonies, and evangelistic zeal, Commissioned would be named one of the most successful and influential gospel groups of all time. Blending Gospel, Soul, R&B, and funk with a positive spiritual message.

The four-time Grammy and six-time Stellar award-nominated Commissioned, recorded twelve chart-topping albums over a period of 17 years. Their unwavering efforts led to the creation of unforgettable classics like "King of Glory", "Running Back To You", "Ordinary Just Won't Do", "Will You Be Ready", and the beat-thumping "Love Is the Way".

Though the group's countless gospel accomplishments speak for themselves, Commissioned paved the way, and inspired many well-known groups and artists including Boyz II Men, Jodeci, Jamie Foxx, Brian McKnight, Justin Bieber, and countless others.

The Gospel Music Association applauds Commissioned and is honored to induct them into the GMA Hall of Fame.

The GMA Honors & Hall of Fame Ceremony to take place Wednesday, May 12, 2021, in Nashville, TN

## The Cure for Materialism

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." 3 John 1:2

By DR. TONY EVANS

When Simon offered money to the disciples, Peter responded: "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!" (Acts 8:20). Materialism carries with it a heavy curse. It began when Adam and Eve wanted to satisfy their own appetites, and the whole world fell under the curse of sin. Materialism causes people to forget about God, and where God is not the focus, life will be pointless. Matthew 13:22 says: "The worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth

choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

The good news is that there is a cure for materialism. The cure is repentance. In Acts 8:22-23, the disciples told Simon: "Repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness



Dr. Tony Evans

and in the bondage of iniquity."

God doesn't want money to bind you or chain you down. Deuteronomy 8:18 says: "It is [God] who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant." His blessings are meant to free us up to do more for Him. Giving of our blessings means that people are saved, the gospel is preached, and the poor are helped. God never blesses us to keep it for ourselves; He blesses us to share that blessing with others. Our financial prosperity and our spiritual prosperity are intertwined; they go hand in hand.

## God's Choice Shaping Tools

Romans 12:1-5

God's kindness to us is demonstrated by the fact that He doesn't leave us in the condition we were in before coming to faith. How tragic it would be if we still thought, felt, and acted the same way we did before receiving Christ as our Savior. Throughout our lives, the Lord uses His choice tools to shape us into the image of His Son.

Prayer.

By talking to the Lord in open dialogue, we develop a relationship with Him. He becomes not just our Savior, but our friend, and as the intimacy grows, so will our passion to be



Dr. Charles Stanley

with Him. Setting aside time for prayer each day will become a delight, not a duty.

God's Word. You can't grow in your Christian life if you keep the Bible closed all week long. No one lives on one meal a week, yet many Christians try to get by with just a Sunday dinner of the Word served up by their pastor. How can we expect God's truth to do

See TOOLS, on page 6

## OWN To Premiere Easter Gospel Music Special "Our Own Easter" Hosted By Bebe Winans And Deborah Joy Winans

Oprah Winfrey Network announced today that "Our OWN Easter," a one-hour gospel music special celebrating the glory of the Resurrection will premiere on the network Tuesday, March 30 at 9 p.m. ET/PT following the critically-acclaimed drama series, "Queen Sugar."

"Our OWN Easter" from executive producer Dr. Holly Carter, Rikki Hughes and Relevé Entertainment, an All3Media America company, will showcase some of the most renowned gospel and R&B artists in music and entertainment as they commemorate Easter in their "OWN" unique way, blending sunrise service traditions with modern performances.

The spiritual celebration will be hosted by gospel royalty and GRAMMY Award winner BeBe Winans and his talented multi-hyphenated niece Deborah Joy Winans who starred as Charity Greenleaf in the hit OWN series "Greenleaf" for five seasons. It will feature powerful, uplift-

ing, and iconic performances by such artists as Fantasia, CeCe Winans, Kirk Franklin, Anthony Hamilton and The Hamiltons, Ledisi, Travis Greene, Osby Berry, Jonathan McReynolds, with appearances by Cedric the Entertainer, Michelle Williams and others. Viewers will also experience inspiring spoken word from prominent faith leaders Bishop J. Drew Sheard, Pastor William Murphy and Priscilla Shirer.

"Our OWN Easter" is the second special for OWN produced with Dr. Holly Carter and Relevé Entertainment. The first special, "Our OWN Christmas," hosted by Meagan Good and DeVon Franklin, premiered on OWN in December and was the #1 non-news cable telecast in the time period among African-American W18+, households and total viewers.

Holly Carter is the founder of Relevé Entertainment, which

See EASTER, on page 6

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Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. - Hebrews 10:25

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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 God's Word



# STRICKLY BUSINESS



Rinaldie Jacobs, Sr.

There's a running joke in the black community that when the white community gets a cold, we catch pneumonia. This point can be clearly illustrated in the current unemployment and labor market. Due to COVID-19 millions of Americans currently are collecting unemployment. This is a major problem for minority communities because they have been number one hit harder by the COVID 19 pandemic do too their position in low wage and low skill positions. The lack of affordable health care for many frontline workers put them at a severe disadvantage.

The Biden administration has stated that they will have a tremendous focus on disinvested and disadvantaged communities while rolling out the new vaccines for COVID 19. Many African Americans have preexisting conditions which makes them vulnerable to getting the COVID virus. Many frontline workers such as store stockers cashier's, restaurant workers, another service workers or a great risk of exposure to the general public. The workers responsible for keeping hospitals in nursing homes clean and operational are often minimum wage workers. Lately, some corporations are starting to see the value of these frontline workers. This could be in part because of the push from the Biden administration to raise the minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour.

Today Walmart the nation's leading retailer announced raises for all of their employees. Starting employees will make on an average of \$11.50 an hour. Others will be moved up to \$15.00 an hour for their daily work. While we cheer these increases to get to a living wage, the state of Louisiana is one of the few states which still has the \$7.00 an hour minimum wage has refused to change it. To be clear Louisiana is not the only Gulf South state with \$7.25 an hour, Texas Mississippi Alabama, in Georgia all have the same federal minimum wage. Arkansas leads the region with a \$9.25 an hour minimum wage followed by Florida at \$8.25 an hour. many of us see a gradual increase in the minimum wage coming out of the Biden administration in the next two to three years. The old arguments that raising the minimum wage will hurt small businesses is in part a fool's errand. If people, make more they tend to spend more particularly those in disinvested communities.

The long shadow of racial justice still hangs over policy as well as business operations. Another Great American icon McDonald's Corporation has announced that executive pay will be tied to its growth in diversity and inclusion. McDonald's said Thursday it is taking steps to increase the number of women and people from historically underrepresented groups in its senior leadership ranks. By 2025, the company aims to have at least 35% of its senior-director and higher leadership roles be held by people from minorities. The company also stated but it will be pursuing having more women in leadership positions throughout the company.

Politically we should always bear in mind the corporations often do what's in their bottom-line best interest. While the Senate did not convict former President Donald J Trump of insurrection based upon the impeachment docket presented to the Senate. Louisiana's senator David Cassidy voted with the majority of Democrats and nine other Republicans to convict president trump. Under the rules of the Senate 17 Republicans had to go along with the 50 Democrats to convict Mr. Trump. Needless to say, the Biden administration wants to put the matters of Trumpness in the rearview mirror of history. They will now focus on getting shots in arms and getting the economy back on its feet.

Here in Baton Rouge, we are seeing a number of programs seeking to help small businesses through grants as well as other assistance. The office of the Mayor President Sharon Weston Broom and the Urban League recently announced the following in a press release:

Micro-enterprises and small businesses are the backbone of East Baton Rouge Parish's economy providing countless services to the residents of EBR and the surrounding areas. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has significantly impacted many of the businesses that our community has come to depend on. To meet the short-term financial needs of microenterprises and small businesses, the Office of Mayor-President Sharon Weston-Broome is offering one-time, micro-grants of \$2,500 to eligible entities that have been impacted by Covid-19 through the Resilient Restart EBR: Small Business Micro-grants Program. You can find out more about these grants at [restartebr@urbanleaguela.org](mailto:restartebr@urbanleaguela.org).

Full disclosure, as a business consultant for the Southern University small business development center LSBDC, often we get announcements about great programs for small business owners. Another program being sponsored and promoted by the Urban League of Louisiana touts a grant that you can apply for. In their announcement it states the following : The National Community Reinvestment Coalition announces the launch of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) Small Business Growth & Recovery Fund grant program. The initiative offers a unique 360-degree solution awarding U.S.-based small businesses with up to \$20,000 each, which does not need to be repaid, accompanied with complementary virtual training and mentorship. The program seeks to help U.S. small businesses, focusing on those owned by people of color, women, and veterans as well as those in lower-income communities, find their footing in an acutely

See BUSINESS, on page 6

# BUSINESS

## BRCC receives vehicle donation from All Star Automotive Group for outreach and recruitment

BATON ROUGE, La – Chairman, President and CEO of All Star Automotive Group, Matt McKay recently donated a Chevrolet Volt to the Automotive Program at Baton Rouge Community College, through the BRCC Foundation. The car will be used by the BRCC Automotive faculty and staff members to enhance their outreach and recruitment efforts as they travel and visit high schools and meet with prospective students across the state and region.

"We are very grateful for the donation of the Chevrolet Volt from our friend and supporter Matt McKay and the All Star Automotive Group," said BRCC Chancellor Dr. Willie E. Smith. "We truly value our partnership and the support he continues to give to our students and the Automotive program. This donation will be a great use to our faculty and staff members as they continue to train future auto technicians."

McKay's ongoing relationship with the college fueled the vehicle donation to the BRCC Foundation.

The McKay Automotive Training Center at BRCC's Ardentale Site is named for McKay's father. The center trains men and women in the high-tech automotive technician field through rigorous



Pictured (l to r) BRCC Automotive Department Chair Van Guarino, BRCC Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Sarah Barlow, BRCC Program Manager Jayson Purdy, McKay, and BRCC Chancellor Willie E. Smith.

classroom work and modern laboratories with the latest equipment.

"We are pleased to support the BRCC Automotive Program and provide a vehicle that will be used to recruit even more stu-

dents for this great program," said McKay. "The faculty and staff are well equipped to prepare these future students and introduce them to the latest technology and equipment needed to fix the cars

of tomorrow."

For more information about the BRCC Automotive Program or to schedule a recruitment or outreach opportunity, visit [mybrcc.edu](http://mybrcc.edu) or call 1-866-217-9823.

## Baton Rouge to Participate Plastic Pollution Initiative

BATON ROUGE, La.– The Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI) announced this week Baton Rouge would be one of three locations for its Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative. In April, the initiative will empower citizens to collect data about plastic pollution in East Baton Rouge Parish that ultimately enters our waterways.

"Making Baton Rouge a cleaner community will take a whole community approach. MRCTI's Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative gives our citizens a powerful tool to help stop plastic pollution at its source," said Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome, MRCTI Co-Chair. "The data from this initiative will help inform the city-parish how to reduce plastic pollution before it enters our waterways."

A key component of the initiative is the Marine Debris Tracker app, which will allow citizens to document plastic pollution in East Baton Rouge Parish: [www.debristracker.org](http://www.debristracker.org). It is very important people using the app select the MRCTI list from the options when the app is downloaded. More information about the Mississippi River Plastic

Pollution Initiative can be found at [www.unep.org/mississippi](http://www.unep.org/mississippi).

The data collection efforts will focus on problem areas like LSU Burden Gardens where there has been a decades-old accumulation of plastic waste. The data will help Baton

Rouge identify the source of plastic waste as well as seek funding for the installation of debris-collection devices in our waterways that will reduce the amount of plastic waste flowing into locations like Burden Gardens.

Residents interested in engaging with and receiving updates about the initiative and other community revitalization efforts can sign up on the Neighborhood Engagement Hub at [www.safehopefulneighborhoods.com](http://www.safehopefulneighborhoods.com).

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# HEALTH

## Louisiana Greatly Expands COVID Vaccine Eligibility; See Who's Eligible

BATON ROUGE - State officials announced Louisiana has widened the eligibility pool for the COVID vaccination to people as young as 16 years old, so long as they have a pre-existing condition.

The new group includes those ages 16 to 64 who have a host of conditions that could increase their risk of more severe COVID-19 infections.

Those ages 16 and above will be eligible for the Pfizer vaccine and those who are 18 and above can get the Johnson & Johnson or Moderna vaccines, if they have one or more of the following conditions:

- moderate to severe asthma
- cerebrovascular disease
- hypertension or high blood pressure
- immunocompromised state from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids or use of other immune weakening medicines
- neurologic conditions, such as dementia
- liver disease
- cystic fibrosis
- overweight
- pulmonary fibrosis
- thalassemia
- type 1 diabetes mellitus

Anyone of age who works in a congregate shelter, such as a jail or group home, can also get the vaccine.

## 618 Vaccine Providers in all 64 Parishes will Receive COVID Vaccine this Week

The following information is from the Louisiana Department of Health:

BATON ROUGE, La. - Officials with the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) say 618 vaccine providers across the state will receive "very limited doses" of the COVID-19 vaccine.

This week, 618 vaccine providers across the state will receive very limited doses of COVID vaccine. These providers — including 258 chain pharmacies (including 123 Walgreens, 14 Sam's Club and 64 CVS locations from retail pharmacy program), 151 independent pharmacies, 67 hospitals, 41 public health providers, 27 urgent cares, 34 federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), 21 medical practices, 8 rural health clinics (RHCs) and 11 other healthcare providers — represent all nine public health regions and 64 parishes of the state.

LDH has published the list of participating providers, along with their locations and contact information, on its website: covidvaccine.la.gov. In addition to these providers, community vaccination events are taking place across the state and are also listed on LDH's website.

Future distribution is dependent on vaccine made available to the state, among other factors.

These vaccines will be available only for the following populations in Phase 1B, Tier 1:

- Persons 65 and older
- Dialysis providers and patients
- Ambulatory and outpatient providers and staff Behavioral health providers and staff Urgent care clinic providers and staff Commu9\*-nity care providers and staff Dental providers and staff Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) providers and staff
- Professional home care providers (including hospice workers) and home care recipients (including older and younger people with disabilities over the age of 16 who receive community or home-based care, as well as clients of home health agencies)
- Interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSPs) working in community



and clinic-based settings, and clients who are both deaf and blind

- Health-related support personnel (lab staff, mortuary staff who have contact with corpses, pharmacy staff)
- Schools of allied health students, residents and staff
- State and local essential COVID emergency response personnel
- Some elections staff of March and April elections
- Teachers and any other support staff working on site in K-12 or daycare
- All pregnant persons
- Individuals ages 55-64 with at least one of the conditions listed by the CDC as placing them at an "increased risk of severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19." Persons with the following qualifying underlying medical conditions are advised to complete the Louisiana COVID-19 Vaccine Attestation Form (English | Spanish | Vietnamese) to receive the vaccine (providers should have available if individuals are not able to print and complete in advance): Cancer Chronic kidney disease COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) Down syndrome Heart conditions including but not limited to heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30kg/m2 or higher but less than

40kg/m2) Severe obesity (BMI greater than 40kg/m2) Sickle cell disease Smoking Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Participating providers must make available vaccine available to anyone who is eligible. Failure to do so will inform future decisions about distribution.

Eligible residents must contact a participating provider and make an appointment with them. Patients who arrive without an appointment will not be vaccinated. LDH cannot make appointments for patients; only providers can.

### Second doses

Patients receiving Moderna or Pfizer vaccines will receive their second dose of the COVID vaccine at the same location they received their first dose. Second-dose appointments should be made during the administration of the first dose. If residents missed their second dose vaccination appointment they should immediately contact the provider of their first dose to schedule a new appointment. If you have received the Moderna vaccine, ideally your second shot should be given 28 days after your first one. If you get the Pfizer vaccine, the second dose should be given 21 days after the first. According to the CDC, you can safely receive the second dose up to 42 days and likely longer after the first dose if need be.

The recently authorized Johnson & Johnson vaccine is given in one dose, and like the other two vaccines is 100% effective at preventing hospitalization and death from COVID.

The Louisiana Department of Health is coordinating the COVID-19 vaccine distribution effort in Louisiana. As more vaccines become available from the CDC, more individuals and groups will be offered a vaccination. We want everyone to have the opportunity to get vaccinated against COVID. We are confident that COVID-19 vaccines will be a critical tool in ultimately ending the pandemic.

### Tools from page 4

its transforming work if we never let it into our minds and hearts?

The Church. Christ uses His body of believers as a place for transformation. That's where we rub against each other and have the rough edges of our character smoothed. It is a place of instruction, accountability, and encouragement.

Are you letting the Lord use His character-shaping tools in your life? Our culture has no shortage of worldly voices and pressures that fill minds and influence behavior. Only when we intentionally schedule time for God, His Word, and His people can Christ do His transforming work in our lives.

For more biblical teaching and resources from Dr. Charles Stanley, please visit [www.intouch.org](http://www.intouch.org).

### Easter from page 4

specializes in television/film production, talent partnerships, and brand development. The company consistently delivers high-quality, "break-through" family and faith-based programming that engages national audiences. Recently, Carter created and executive produced "The Clark Sisters: First Ladies of Gospel," the highest-rated original TV movie of 2020.

### Business from page 5

challenging economic landscape. The application period will remain open from February 17, 2021 until 11:59 PM EST on March 19th, 2021. This program is supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Email me at [fullcircledev@gmail.com](mailto:fullcircledev@gmail.com) and I will send you the email with a link to apply. Make 2021 your year that you use all of these great resources. Keeping it Strickly Business.



# SLEEVES UP

for Sunday dinners at grandma's again

Getting back to normal begins with getting the two-dose COVID-19 vaccine. It's understandable that you may have questions, and we're here to provide the facts. Facts like the vaccine has been thoroughly tested, that it's authorized by the FDA, and that it's the best way to protect yourself and family members from COVID. **To find out when and where you can go sleeves up and get the vaccine, visit our website or call 211.**



COVIDVACCINE.LA.GOV



211



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH