

The Weekly Press

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18 -24, 2021

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NEWS PG 2

BAKER HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CELEBRATES RED RIBBON WEEK

NEWS PG 6

CELEBRATION OF WOMEN SHOWCASED ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF WOMEN

LDH recommends boosters for all individuals 18 and older ahead of the holiday season

"We head into the holiday season it is critical that Louisianans get a booster shot as soon as they become eligible in order to protect themselves and their loved ones against the possibility of another surge,"



Gov. John Bel Edwards

In light of increasing cases in other parts of the country and the opportunity for families to increase their protection ahead of the holidays, LDH now recommends COVID-19 booster shots for all fully-vaccinated Louisianans ages 18 and older. A person is considered fully vaccinated if they have received two doses of the Pfizer (Comirnaty) or Moderna vaccine, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

"By working together, we have made significant progress in slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our state, which is why as we head into the holiday season it is critical that Louisianans get a booster shot as soon as they become eligible in order to protect themselves and their loved ones against the possibility of another surge," said Gov. John Bel Edwards. "The vaccines are widely available, safe and offer the most effective protection we have against this virus. We want everyone to spend time with their family and friends and to do so as safely as possible."

Effective immediately, the following individuals are now eligible and recommended to receive a booster dose:

- Anyone 18 and older who completed their two-dose Pfizer or Moderna vaccine series 6 or more months ago
- Anyone 18 and older who received their one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine two or more months ago

Eligible individuals may choose which vaccine they receive as a booster dose. Some people may have a preference for the vaccine type that they originally received and others may prefer to get a different booster. Federal guidelines currently allow for this type of mix and match dosing for boosters.

Available data right now show that all three of the COVID-19 vaccines approved or authorized in the United States continue to be highly effective in reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization

See **BOOSTERS** on page 5

OTHER STORIES ONLINE



WEATHER

MON. 11/22
Partly Cloudy
High 62°.

TUE. 11/23
Sunny
High 62°.

WED. 11/24
Partly Cloudy
High 71°.

THUR. 11/25
Showers
High 75°.

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PAIN AT THE PUMP

Biden calls for high gas price probe

Cost of gas skyrocketing, leading President Biden to spearhead investigations into possibly illegal activity



The prices for grades of gasoline are shown on a sign outside a Conoco station Friday, Nov. 5, 2021, in Denver.

"The bottom line is this: gasoline prices at the pump remain high, even though oil and gas companies' costs are declining. The Federal Trade Commission has authority to consider whether illegal conduct is costing families at the pump. I believe you should do so immediately," Biden wrote in a letter to FTC Chair Lina Khan."

President Joe Biden has called on the Federal Trade Commission to explore possible "illegal conduct" due to surging gas prices across the United States.

According to GasBuddy, the average cost for regular gas nationwide is about \$3.36 per gallon. Gas prices hovered around \$2.16 a gallon for regular gas this time last year.

"The bottom line is this: gasoline prices at the pump remain high, even though oil and gas companies' costs are declining. The Federal Trade Commission has authority to consider whether illegal conduct is costing families at the pump. I believe you should do so

immediately," Biden wrote in a letter to FTC Chair Lina Khan.

Biden's administration asked the Federal Trade Commission to watch the gasoline market for any clue of illegal activity earlier in the year. This led the FTC to increase their oversight on merging oil companies, resulting in fewer options for consumers.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration said the consumption of gas fell to 338 million gallons per day last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the administration, if this fluctuation in gas consumption

See **GAS** on page 5

How much higher will gas prices go for Louisiana drivers?

Louisiana drivers have been on a bit of a roller coaster as of late, at least as far as fuel prices go. The past several months have seen Louisiana's average price for a gallon of Regular gas climb from well below two dollars a gallon to quite a bit higher than three dollars a gallon. If there is some relief for motorists in the state, it's the fact that fuel prices in Louisiana are among some of the lowest in the nation.

Triple-A, the American Automobile Association is reporting that the national average for a gallon of regular fuel is now \$3.41. The statewide average for that same gallon of regular fuel in Louisiana will cost you \$3.16. Now, on closer review, we will find that the national price is down by a penny while the Louisiana average price is actually down by a couple of cents compared to last week.

Of course, all of this is related to the price of crude oil, at least that's what we are being told. Crude oil prices as of early this morning were about \$80 a barrel. That exact figure depended on which commodity you were pricing and at what moment you were pricing it. Oil prices fluctuate quite quickly on the open exchanges so, "about \$80 a barrel" is about as close as we can get to an actual price.

So, what do these higher prices mean for

See **DRIVERS** on page 3

DEMCO customers seeing higher energy bills

BATON ROUGE, La. - Elise Juergens lives with her husband and infant son.

"I don't think I could use that much electricity if I tried," Juergens said, adding they are normally conscious about their energy usage.

"We're very used to being conscious in the summers of making sure we don't turn it down too cold because we have seen what can happen. I mean you can have a \$200-\$250 electricity bill if you run your AC as cold as you want to in the summer so we're always careful but this was on another level," Juergens said.

Normally her DEMCO energy bill is below \$100, but her last bill jumped to just over \$500.

The Juergens are not the only ones. We asked our Facebook followers if they saw changes in their most recent DEMCO bill and more than 800 of you replied.

See **BILLS** on page 5

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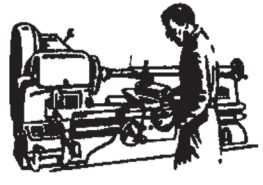
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The Baton Rouge Weekly Press strives to be fair and accurate. The newspaper corrects any significant errors of fact brought to the attention of the editor. If you think an error has been made, call 225-775-200

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Baker Heights elementary school celebrates Red Ribbon Week



BAKER, La. — Baker Heights elementary school celebrated Red Ribbon Week, which is a campaign dedicated to the prevention of alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and violence. Councilman Robert Young of District 4 introduced a proclamation that declared October 23-31, 2021 as Red Ribbon Week for the City of Baker on the behalf of Baker Heights elementary school. Teachers and students created banners and posted them all around the school grounds. Various businesses donated coupons in part to Red Ribbon Week like Raising Cane's, Smoothie King and Sonic and the red ribbon student of the day would receive one.

November 10th — Mayor Waites leads the East Baton Rouge Parish Metro Council in the Pledge of Allegiance in honor of Veterans Day. Mayor Waites, who served in the US Army for 27 years, was asked to give the pledge of allegiance at the EBRP Metro Council meeting of November 10th in honor of US Military Veterans in the greater East Baton Rouge

Metro area.

November 15th — November 16th the Baker Chamber of Commerce welcomed two new businesses to the city on Main Street. Members of the community came out as part of Hair Crown Beauty's grand opening on November 15th as members of the Baker Chamber of Commerce, Councilmembers and City of Baker staff prepared for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Daniel Park, the CEO and owner of Hair Crown Beauty and Mayor Waites both spoke about what this day meant for the City of Baker. "As a family-owned business with 9 stores within the state and over 30 years of serving as Louisiana's best and affordable beauty supply retailer, it is an honor to open the first Baker location. Hair Crown values itself on helping people look their best within the community," said Daniel Park. "It's always important to go back to where you first started. I can't thank Mr. Choi enough for taking over this shop-

See **BAKER** on page 3



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 U.S. Department of Health
 and Human Services.



TALK TO HIS DOCTOR ABOUT COVID VACCINES. BECAUSE HE'S IRREPLACEABLE.

COVID hospitalizations of young people have tripled since the start of summer. However, vaccines are highly effective in preventing hospitalizations and deaths, even from the Delta variant.

Find vaccines near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)

WE CAN DO THIS

A Celebration of Women showcased, spotlighted the successes and accomplishments of amazing women



Gisele Haralson event organizer

To celebrate women was the idea and concept of educator, author, radio personality, and producer Gisele Haralson. It was her desire to bring together women of all walks of life to celebrate each other. To uplift, inspire, and motivate. She envisioned the gathering of minds in regards to life, equality, and career.

A Celebration of Women showcased and spotlighted the successes and accomplishments of amazing women who go above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference in the lives of others. This event is normally hosted in the month of March during National Women month but due to the pandemic the event will be December 4, 2021 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Haralson believes women are more powerful when we empower each other.

Currently as a member of



Standing left to right, Victoria Greene, Peggy Sweeney McDonald, Gisele Haralson, Maxine Crump

Step Up Louisiana she serves on the Mayor Commission for equal pay for equal work for women. This work of empowering, celebrating and recognizing women for their accomplishments has become her life's mission. Improving the lives of women and children is where her passion lies. Haralson has had the

opportunity for the past six years to connect extraordinary women and knows firsthand the role that women play in our society as well as the tremendous impact they have on families, businesses, communities, and the overall well-being of mankind.

Many of the project that Ha-

ralson has taken on are those that advance women. She has published two books More Than Just Sex: It's the Art of the Chase, African American Women Defining Themselves, Black Men, Each other, Relationships and Secrets to Love and Happiness, as well as When Money Meets Seduction: Inspiring

Financial Lessons of Women Who Have Connected with Money and Power. She is currently producing a documentary film entitled Who Said You Can't: African American Women in Science and promoting her new book, The Risks and Rewards of Love- Is It Worth It?

COVID-19 has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and has presented an unprecedented challenge to public health, leading our health care systems to the brink. This year with the pandemic and all that we have endured in the past year and a half she feels that it is important that we recognize the work of our local hospitals and the brave men and women who risk their lives for us every day. Haralson will present

ent awards to Woman's Hospital, Our Lady of the Lake, Baton Rouge General Hospital-Mid City, Ochsner Health Center, and Baton Rouge General Hospital- Bluebonnet for their outstanding work and dedication to our community.

The urge to help others is something that she wants to instill in her son as well as an appreciation for the arts. Through her non-profit, Child Development Institute the goal is to provide a place where students and families can witness the spirit of giving, nurturing and encouraging others in their rise to greatness, regardless of their race, gender, disability or social economic status. Linking the Chains to Success is the mission of her work.

Center for Digital Government Names Baton Rouge a Top 10 Digital City for the Seventh Consecutive Year

BATON ROUGE, La. — The Center for Digital Government has named Baton Rouge a Top 10 Digital City, marking the seventh consecutive year Baton Rouge has ranked among the top digital cities in the U.S.

Baton Rouge ranked seventh among mid-sized cities in the 2021 Digital Cities Survey, joining other leading cities like Alexandria, Virginia; Bellevue, Washington; and Fort Collins, Colorado.

"This recognition validates all the hard work and advancements our City-Parish has made over the past several years to integrate technology and innovation into all we do in East Baton Rouge Parish," said Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome. "From public safety and human services to transportation and drainage projects, technology is a foundational part of our approach to delivering quality programs, services and investments that help build a strong quality of life for our residents and community."

Over the past year, the City-Parish has implemented numerous technology initiatives and systems to improve internal efficiencies and deliver more effective services to residents while continuing to navi-

gate the COVID-19 pandemic.

These initiatives include investing heavily in cybersecurity defenses, education, and infrastructure, as well as launching Open Budget BR, an interactive platform to promote transparency and engagement surrounding the City-Parish annual budget. Other digital initiatives involved gathering and monitoring data to inform the East Baton Rouge Parish stormwater master plan—one of the largest data collection and management efforts in City-Parish history—and establishing comprehensive IT infrastructure in real-time to support vaccination sites.

The City-Parish also imple-

mented a unified telecommunications system to improve staff connectivity and responsiveness to residents, which will generate millions in cost savings, and launched the Citizen Data Academy virtual training series to help residents use and leverage the City-Parish's open data resources.

Each year, the Center for Digital Government—a national research and advisory institute on IT policies and best practices in government—conducts the Digital Cities Survey to inform its digital city rankings. This comprehensive survey is distributed to all U.S. cities, towns, villages and consolidated city-county

governments.

The Center for Digital Government will recognize the City-Parish and all of the 2021 Digital City honorees at a virtual awards ceremony on Dec. 8. For more information, visit: <https://www.govtech.com/dc/digital-cities/digital-cities-survey-2021-winners-announced>.

DRIVERS from page 1

holiday drivers? Well, obviously that holiday trip will cost you a few more dollars in fuel than it cost last year. No, wait, you didn't go anywhere last year, so maybe you're still money ahead?

Regardless, forecasters with Triple-A do not anticipate any huge price swings as far as gas prices go between now and the end of the year.

That, of course, should all things geopolitical remain basically the same and stable. It doesn't take much to move the price of oil and when that price moves, we usually feel it.

Now, if you're looking for a little gas price good news. We did find several stations in the Lafayette area that had fuel prices listed at below \$3.00 a gallon. In the Lake Charles area, there are a few places with gas below \$3.00 too. So, if you look, you can save a few bucks.

BAKER from page 2

ping center and helping to start the growth we see today. This is a beautiful spot and I can't wait to see how far we can come as businesses and other opportunities make their way into our city," said Mayor Waites. Councilman Robert Young welcomed this new business to his district in his remarks.

On November 16th members

of the Baker Chamber of Commerce, Councilmembers and City of Baker attended the grand opening of Fast Pace Urgent Care Clinic. Mayor Waites spoke about the importance of medical clinics in the City of Baker and how they play a critical role in our community, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the strain it has placed on the hospital system. "We have seen the critical role accessible healthcare clinics

play in everyday medical needs. I am so pleased that Fast Pace has opened this clinic in Baker, adding yet another valuable medical resource for our community. We look forward to their partnership in our effort to provide the highest quality of life and place to our citizens." Councilwoman Rochelle Dunn welcomed this new business to her district at the event thanking them.

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RELIGION

Gospel Music Celebration How Sweet The Sound Returns After Nearly A Decade-Long Hiatus

Renowned gospel music competition How Sweet The Sound announced it will relaunch next summer, providing a critical stage for artists representing the best in gospel choir, solo and dance performance. The event, currently planned for June 4th, 2022, at Bon Secours Wellness Arena in Greenville, South Carolina, will mark a high-profile return for gospel music's renowned celebration.

How Sweet The Sound was originally established in 2007 and sponsored by Verizon. During its initial six-year run, the competition awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars to promising artists, making it a critical destination and a springboard for successful careers. Now under the new ownership of Gentle Giant Music Ministries, How Sweet The Sound will continue to welcome a diverse array of up-and-coming gospel performers competing for cash prizes and recognition.

Gentle Giant Music Ministries CEO Nathanael Brown, an award-winning choral director and



L to R: Nathanael Brown, Gentle Giant Music, CEO and Donald Lawrence, How Sweet The Sound, Host

saxophonist, said How Sweet The Sound's absence left a void that was calling to be filled. His own experience with the event propelled his passion for reinvigorating it. Brown's group swept the 2013 How Sweet The Sound regional competition, taking first place and advancing to the finale in the year before going on hiatus.

"What a sweet sound to be bringing back How Sweet The Sound," Brown said. "Not only

See **GOSPEL** on page 5

And all who believed were healed

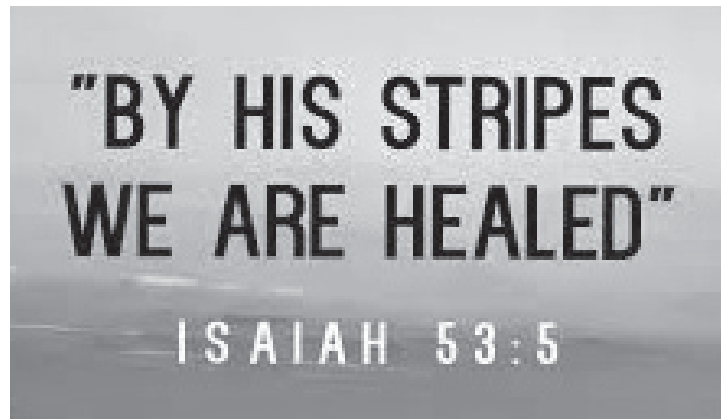
By Creflo Dollar

Have you ever wondered why some people bounce back from illnesses, while others stay sick or even get worse? The answer lies not on the physical level, but on the spiritual level. Healing may be aided by medicines and physicians, but the true source of good health is God, Himself. Sickness and disease aren't His will; believing in these positions us to receive the good health He wants us to have.

Religion has given us some warped ideas about healing. We may think that maybe God sent illness as a curse to punish us, or that we can't get healed because of sin in our lives. That may have been true before Jesus came when people lived under the Law of Moses, but we're no longer under the old covenant curse. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by



Creflo Dollar



whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus has made healing available to anyone who believes in it strongly enough to accept it for themselves.

During His ministry, Jesus was able to heal entire villages when the people had faith in Him. "... And great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all" (Matthew 12:15). He healed not just their bodies, but also their minds. "And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of

Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases: And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all" (Luke 6:17-19). Sinlessness was not a prerequisite for healing, only belief. This still holds true for us today; it's a mistake to think we can't get healed because of some sin we committed.

Faith in God's willingness and ability to heal us is crucial. We limit His effectiveness in our lives when we let doubt get in the way. The

people rejected Jesus when He came to Nazareth, and their stubbornness stood in the way of their miracle. "Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58, NKJV). God is well able to work through doctors, but it's important to remember who is ultimately behind our healing.

Belief in divine healing, however, doesn't cancel out the need for acts of faith. Grace has certainly made healing available, but it takes faith to lay hold of this healing for ourselves. It's a mistake to think that doing whatever is necessary is simply a work of self-effort; faith and grace are closely related. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:17, 18).

Believers are the apple of God's eye; He doesn't want His beloved children to be sick. Our trust that He really does want us to be healthy and whole connects us to His healing power. It's time to cast off religious thinking and fully believe what He says to us in this area.

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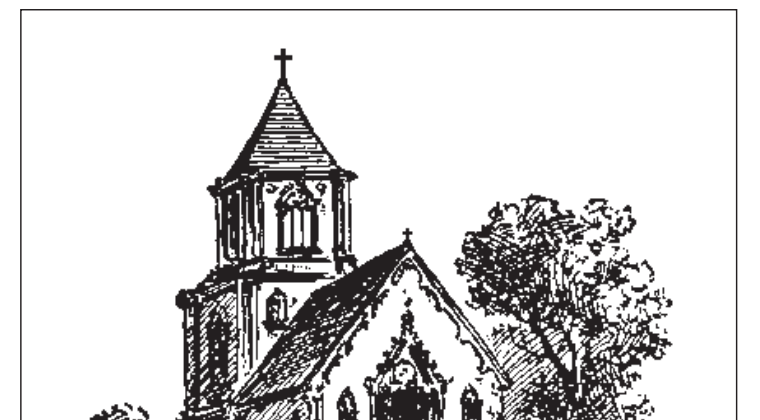
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BUSINESS

'Blackest Black Friday Ever' planned in Stonecrest

The marketplace is named after the business district in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that was the site of a racist massacre a century ago. Philanthropist and businessman Leicester "Bill" Allen, the project's owner and developer, said the market is designed to help Black and minority entrepreneurs flourish.

Matt Hampton, Allen's spokesman, told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that more than 10,000 people attended the market's soft opening during Halloween weekend. A grand opening, dubbed the "Blackest Black Friday Ever" is planned for the weekend after Thanksgiving, and Hampton said the market will expand its days of operation due to the concept's initial success.

"The substance of the 'blackest Black Friday Ever' is to challenge the country to see how many Black businesses we can take into the black (make profitable) on Black Friday," Hampton said.

The market, located at 8109 Mall Parkway, is currently open on Fridays and weekends from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Given the large turnout so far, Hampton said they're expanding business hours after Black Friday. Normal hours will become Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The 125,000-square foot retail space is 70% leased to businesses, and it has space for up to 118 vendors. Jasmin Shontay Long, owner of The Style Muse Boutique, said the market's opening day was the best day for business she's ever had. Her women's clothing store brought in five figures.

"A \$10,000 day for me is out of this world," she said. "It was an



New Black Wall Street Market looks to keep momentum going after 10,000 attend opening

amazing, amazing day."

Long, who is from Dallas, Ga., revamped her business this past summer. After securing a space within the market, she was able to quit her day job to fully pursue being an entrepreneur. She also hired three employees to help operate her store, which she described as a retail clothing store with a lounge-type setting.

Jean Kimpson, owner of The Business Store, was born and raised in south DeKalb County, and she said she jumped at the opportunity to participate in this market concept. Her store offers business services and classes to striving entrepreneurs, and she sometimes works with Hampton to offer business advice to the other small businesses in the market.

"You can feel the whole at-

mosphere within the New Black Wall Street Market," Kimpson said. "This is something special, this is something that will cultivate businesses for years and years."

Hampton said 5,000 people came to the market this past weekend, so he's hoping that momentum will continue throughout November and into the holiday season. He said the market still needs logistical improvements, including getting every participating business online for e-commerce orders and finishing the market's food suites — some businesses are currently selling their wares via pop-up tents until the suites are finished.

Hampton said business owners continue to apply for the remaining open spaces.

"The job we're doing now is pretty much turning down more

people than we're accepting at this point. We have the ability to fill it up, but we're trying to keep a good balance (of products)," he said. He added that they currently have a waitlist for businesses offering women's clothing, urban clothing, body butters, lotions and candles, since they already have vendors offering those products.

The market joins SeaQuest at Stonecrest, a land and sea aquarium in The Mall at Stonecrest, as new attractions to come to the city, which is roughly 20 miles east of Atlanta. City leaders, residents and business owners said they hope both attractions help attract tourists to Stonecrest.

"I believe that the best is truly yet to come," Kimpson said.

BOOSTERS from page 1

and death. Vaccination remains the best way to protect yourself, reduce the spread of the virus and help prevent new variants from emerging.

Boosters are added protection against COVID. The top priority remains many more of us getting our first shot, because that is how we ultimately put this pandemic behind us. The Louisiana Department of

Health strongly recommends that everyone who is eligible get their first shot of the COVID vaccine if they have not done so already.

Those who have questions about whether a COVID-19 vaccine booster is right for them are encouraged to speak with a medical professional. For additional help, individuals can call Louisiana's COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline at 1-855-453-0774, call 211 or go to covidvaccine.la.gov.

BILLS from page 1

One person said their bill estimates were wrong for months and said she wanted to pay her bills each month, not get stuck with months of overages all at once.

One person said her retail tenants' bills went from \$300 up to \$1,500. Another user said her bill has been double the usual

amount for the last four months.

A representative from DEMCO said the increases can be blamed on higher fuel costs.

"The cost of fuel to generate power at the wholesale supplier level is high and it has been for about four months now and that cost is a shared expense, DEMCO is a cooperative and so we distribute power and we purchase power and that expense is paid by our members," Anne Hawes said.

GAS from page 1

was accounted for, the difference would be nearly \$614 million.

"The unexplained large gap between the price of unfinished gasoline and the average price at the pump is well above the pre-pandemic average," Biden wrote.

"Meanwhile, the largest oil and gas companies in America are generating significant profits off higher energy prices. I do not accept hard working Americans are paying more for gas because of anti-competitive or otherwise potentially illegal conduct. I therefore ask the commission to further examine what is happening with oil

and gas markets, and that you bring all the commission's tools to bear if you uncover any wrongdoing."

The probe initiated by Biden ignited the American Petroleum Institute, which placed the blame on Biden, citing bad administration policy decisions.

"This is a distraction from the fundamental market shift that is

taking place and the ill-advised government decisions that are exacerbating this challenging situation," said Frank Macchiarola. "Demand has returned as the economy comes back and is outpacing supply."

The launched probe by Biden will not result in immediate lower gas prices.

GOSPEL from page 4

will it give a big stage to individual and collaborating artists, but it will also help raise awareness about an undervalued, uniquely American artform. This is a particularly auspicious moment to be reinvigorating this brand. When you spread the gospel, you're spreading good news

— the word of God. Living during these challenging times, we can all use more hope and inspiration."

Hosting and performing at the event will be distinguished songwriter/producer/composer Donald Lawrence, one of gospel music's biggest influencers. His numerous honors include over 30 Stellar Awards, four Dove Awards and a Grammy. He also led the beloved Tri-City Singers, widely acclaimed

as one of the world's best choirs.

"I am thrilled to be returning to the How Sweet The Sound stage," said Lawrence, who served as the face of the event during its earlier run. "We plan to make this a 'big tent' event, attracting religious and non-religious consumers. That's the thing about gospel: It's really universal, helping shape artforms from hip hop, to jazz, to blues. The new How Sweet The Sound will

embrace this diversity, lifting up participants from all walks of life."

How Sweet The Sound registration is open through December 31, 2021. There is no cost to register; participants must be 18 years of age or older. Event tickets are available at Ticketmaster or Bon Secours Wellness Arena. Click here for sponsorship opportunities.

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PASTORAL SEARCH

The First Little Rock Missionary Baptist Church is now accepting applications for pastor to preach, teach and serve as administrator. The ideal must be licensed and ordained in a Baptist Church. Send resume to Pastoral Search Committee, 312 S. 17th St. Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802 or emailflrmc1909@gmail.com Deadline is November 30.



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