

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

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\$1



The Commercial Review/Bailey Cline

Bruns named citizen of year

WPGW's Weaver will also be honored

Several Fort Recovery locals will be honored for their accomplishments next month.

One Portland resident will also take home an award for his work in the community.

Fort Recovery Chamber of Commerce announced its 2024 award winners and nominees Monday.

Maria Bruns, a leading member of Fort Recovery Merchants Association, was named as the 2024 Citizen of the Year. Bruns' community involvement includes organizing the annual tree lighting event at Krenning Park that kicked off Christmas Open House in Fort Recovery the last four years. Bruns, co-owner of Cedar & Mane Beauty Collective, decorated Fort Recovery Historical Society's window display and other storefront displays. She co-chaired Fort Recovery Merchant's Association's stand at tractor pulls and Win on the Wash Super Raffle.

See **Honored** page 2

Kremlin says U.S. is set to release prisoner

Bloomberg News
Tribune News Service

The Kremlin said it expects a Russian imprisoned in the U.S. to be freed under the deal with President Donald Trump that saw American school teacher Marc Fogel released by Russia.

The prisoner will be "returned to Russia in the coming days," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters Wednesday. He declined to name the man, saying he would be identified once he was in Russia.

The exchange of Fogel and the Russian citizen were steps toward "building up that very mutual trust" between Washington and Moscow "which is now at its lowest point," Peskov said.

Fogel was detained in Moscow in 2021 and sentenced to 14 years in prison after being convicted of drug smuggling for attempting to enter the country with medical marijuana. He was freed as Trump is intensifying his efforts to broker an end to Russia's nearly three-year-long war in Ukraine.

The U.S. president told reporters the terms of Fogel's release were "very fair," and that he appreciated the Russian decision.

"It could be a big, important part of getting the war over with Ukraine," Trump said, without elaborating.



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Winter tunes

Jay School Junior-Senior High School and Fort Recovery Local Schools both held their winter band concert Sunday afternoon. Pictured above, fifth grader Victoria Bruns watches director Reid Knuth while playing her flute. Bruns and her fellow band members played selections from "Essential Elements for Band, Book 1." At left, Ango Kato plays the tenor saxophone during the Jay County junior high and high school combined bands' performance of the theme from "Mission Impossible."

Senate pulls back on Braun cuts

By WHITNEY DOWNARD
Indiana Capital Chronicle
indianacapitalchronicle.com

Senate Republicans on Tuesday backed away from the most significant parts of Gov. Mike Braun's property tax cut proposal.

Instead, their version of relief includes tightening requirements for schools to advance certain referendums, limiting how much property tax levies can grow and introducing a credit for first-time homebuyers.

The cost to units of government would be just shy of \$300 million in the first year, according to the author.

Three Democrats voted against the measure, citing the lack of relief for renters and the uncertain impacts on schools. It moved out of the committee on a 10-3 vote.

An amendment struck large portions of Gov. Mike Braun's property tax relief proposal, including the annual 3% cap on the



Indiana Capital Chronicle/Whitney Downard

Sen. Travis Holdman (R-Markle), who represents Jay County, introduces the Senate Republican plan for property tax relief on Tuesday. A modified version of Senate Bill 1 passed through the Senate Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee.

growth of property tax bills. Senior citizens, families with children and low-income Hoosiers had growth capped at 2% under Braun's plan. It also removed

increased deductions for homeowners. Overall, Braun's plan would have resulted in an immediate 21% reduction in the average homeowner tax bill.

Under the new Senate proposal, taxpayers would see \$1.4 billion in savings over the next three years. Braun's plan would have saved \$1.1 billion in its first year and \$1.6 billion in its third year.

Sen. Travis Holdman, who authored Senate Bill 1, introduced the amended version in committee on Tuesday. Pulling back on Braun's plan lessened the hit on local units of government, which rely on property taxes to pay for services like law enforcement, parks, libraries and fire safety.

"We have worked consistently with the governor's office to get this to a good spot," Holdman said. "We just think there's a fine line that we have to walk to make sure that we are careful to be responsible to local government and, at the same time, provide some tax relief."

In a statement, Braun's office said the plan took "steps in the right direction" but said he would continue to work with legislators on the administrative priority.

"The Governor will carefully review the changes to his plan and looks forward to working with the House and Senate to strengthen the amended bill to include broad based and immediate property tax cuts for Hoosier homeowners who have been hit the hardest by skyrocketing home value inflation."

The wide-ranging amendment introduced to the bill restricts school referendums to general election ballots in even-numbered years. Schools also can't introduce such questions in back-to-back years, though there are exceptions for funding teacher salaries or school safety measures.

See **Cuts** page 2

Deaths

Harvey Thornton Jr., 96, Portland
Timmie Bell, 60, Portland
Nellie West, 101, Portland
Ronald Cook, 67, Montpelier
Details on page 2.

Weather

The temperature in Jay County hovered between 28 and 34 degrees Tuesday. Tonight's low will be 10. Expect mostly sunny skies Friday with a high in the lower 30s. There is a chance of rain and snow on Friday night.
See page 2 for an extended outlook.

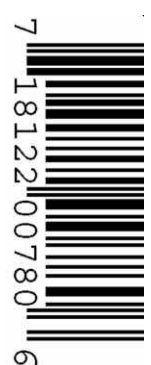
In review

Portland Fire Department's annual chili lunch is scheduled for 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 16. Lunch is free, with free-will donations accepted for the annual firefighters' banquet and local charities. The fire department is located at 1616 N. Franklin St., Portland.

Coming up

Friday — Preview of the JCHS wrestling team at the semi-state tournament.

Saturday — Details from the Jay County boys basketball game against Heritage.



Help to develop a love of reading

Austin Daily Herald (Minnesota)
Tribune News Service

February is I Love to Read Month, and as promoters of the written word, we applaud the people and organizations throughout the community who encourage children and adults to read.

Research shows that reading skills are not only important to a child's success in school, but also to their success later in life at work and in society.

The statistics about reading are sobering.

Guest Editorial

According to the National Institute for Literacy, the National Center for Adult Literacy, The Literacy Company and the U.S. Census Bureau, currently 45 million Americans cannot read above a fifth-grade

level. Equally as sobering, 85% of juvenile offenders have problems reading, and three out of five people in American prisons can't read.

Want your child to live a life away from crime that can land them in prison? It appears a love of reading can be a start to that prevention.

If reading is not already a part of your family's lifestyle, consider these tips:

—Start with turning off the TV.

—Take a simple 15 or 20 min-

utes a day, and sit down and read together. Reading not only expands vocabulary and knowledge but can also open the door to imagination. It can be a great way to bond with your child.

—When you're not reading together, let your child see that you enjoy reading on your own — whether it be a newspaper, magazine or book. Though we may all be busy, we must make it a priority. Let your child see that reading is fun and enjoyable. More than likely, if they see that mom or dad likes to

read, then maybe they will try it out, too.

—Take advantage of all of the local resources available at area schools and at the Albert Lea Public Library. The teachers in the Albert Lea school district and the librarians at the public library are wonderful examples of how to make reading fun.

The focus on reading continues into March with the National Education Association's Read Across America on March 2.



Tax cuts won't bring growth to Indiana

By MICHAEL J. HICKS

Hoosier lawmakers face difficult choices over Medicaid, affecting several million citizens who either receive Medicaid or participate in the Healthy Indiana Plan. These choices also affect health care availability across the state, as well as the viability of providers in rural Indiana. These choices will require trade-offs.

The math is startling. In 2010, when the Affordable Care Act was passed, Indiana spent 0.57% of our total state GDP on Medicaid, and 969,000 Hoosiers were enrolled. Last year, we spent 1.13% of our GDP on Medicaid and enrolled 1.96 million Hoosiers. For every one new job created in Indiana since 2010, we've had more than two new people enroll in Medicaid.

The GOP will blame the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) for this costly spike in enrollment, and they'd be partially right. Keep in mind that former Gov. Mike Pence accepted the Obamacare Medicaid expansion, which accounted for more than 600,000 of the roughly 1 million new recipients since 2010.

However, there's more to our long-term Medicaid problems than the ACA or state-level ACA expansions.

Hoosier workers are getting relatively poorer. In 2000, our factory workers earned the

Michael J. Hicks



national average salary for their work. Overall, Hoosier workers earned about 93% of the national wage. The current Hoosier factory worker now makes about 89 cents for every dollar earned by factory workers nationwide and the average Hoosier worker earns less than 84 cents for every dollar earned nationwide.

The plain and ineluctable fact is that Indiana's economy has spent 25 years falling further behind the rest of the U.S. As a state that is primarily creating lower-wage jobs, we inevitably have a growing share of our working-age population eligible for Medicaid.

So, with or without the ACA — which has zero chance of being overturned — Indiana should expect continued growth in the share of poorer residents eligible for Medicaid.

But what is causing this, and is there a way to fix it?

In the modern economy, over the last half-century or so, nearly all business and job growth has come to places with an abundance of highly educated workers. Since 1992, 80% of

all the net job growth has gone to people with bachelor's degrees or higher. However, Indiana has only six counties with educational attainment above the national average, and we send less than half of each age cohort to college.

I write often about this issue, but am not sure most folks, including many making fiscal and economic policy decisions, really understand what has happened or how lasting the effects will be. We are decades away from a turnaround.

In the early 2000s, U.S. manufacturing lost a sizable number of jobs. Most were lost to automation, but some were lost to trade. Economists have long known that better-educated workers, primarily those with some post-secondary education, are more likely to bounce back from a job loss.

Education, and the ability to learn throughout a working life, is important for long-term economic success. Indiana has the highest share of jobs at risk of automation, and an astonishing undersupply of workers who can transition easily to new jobs.

Again, the data are startling. For every factory job Indiana's lost since the start of the Great Recession, we've created 14.4 new jobs in other sectors. That sounds good, but nationwide, the number is 24.3 new jobs created for every lost factory job.

Indiana simply does not have

enough of the types of workers we need to thrive in the American economy of the 21st century. That's how we got where we are today, and the future is decidedly more challenging than the past.

Since 2010's ACA passage, Medicaid spending as a share of our GDP rose by 97%.

We've chosen a different path for education. Since 2010, state spending on K-12 education as a share of GDP declined by more than 21% and state spending on higher education declined by almost 30%.

Those cuts weren't just in terms of our state's economy. In inflation-adjusted terms, Indiana spends less per student today than we did in 2010. We've also de-emphasized post-secondary education, and for a brief time, actively adopted curriculum choices that pushed kids as young as 12 away from the college track.

The legislature has wisely reversed some of these errors. Perhaps a more flexible high school diploma, the elimination of some regulatory burden and an expanded 21st Century Scholars program will help.

The problem is, to match the national educational attainment average, we need 275,000 more adults with college degrees. If we boost college attendance rates by 20%, to about 73%, and all those kids graduated, we could catch up

in about 25 years. But it'll take a 12% increase just to keep from falling further behind.

We are rapidly falling behind.

All that extra money we are spending on Medicaid is not being spent on education. It is true that Indiana has been slashing taxes pretty steadily for more than a decade and is proposing more long-term tax cuts. It is also true that there are many unpleasant outcomes associated with cutting Medicaid. We'll have a sicker population, with higher infant mortality and the closure of some rural health care providers.

Public policy is about weighing choices, and those choices are often unpleasant. Indiana can choose to continue spending more tax dollars to mitigate the effects of poverty (Medicaid) or spend more money to prevent poverty (education). Or, we can continue to cut taxes and spend less on both; or raise taxes and spend more on one or the other, or both.

Only one of these choices will result in less poverty and more economic growth. It isn't tax cuts.

Hicks is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University. Email him at mhicks@bsu.edu.

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—Thomas Jefferson

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SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly



THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bill Keane



'Grandma likes me best 'cause I remind her of Daddy when he was little.'

Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

Gazing into the future

South dealer. East-West vulnerable. NORTH: A Q 6, 9 2, J 7 3, A 9 8 7 4. WEST: 10 9 7 4, Q 10 6 5, A 10 9 2, 10. EAST: J 5, J 8 3, K Q 8 6 4, Q J 3. SOUTH: K 8 3 2, A K 7 4, 5, K 6 5 2.

South went wrong. He should not have gotten himself in a position where, if the trumps were divided 3-1, the opponent with the third trump could cash it upon gaining the lead and thereby deprive him of a critical ruff. Instead, declarer should have cashed the club king at trick two and then led his singleton diamond.

The bidding: South 1♣, West Pass, North 3♣, East Pass. Opening lead — ten of spades.

Bridge is at times a precarious game. One minute you're flying high, confident of success, and a moment later you find yourself crashing in flames. That's what happened to declarer in this deal, though in fact he had no one but himself to blame for getting shot down.

Let's say East takes the diamond and returns a trump. Declarer wins with dummy's ace, disclosing the 3-1 break in the process. He then ruffs a diamond, leads a spade to the ace and ruffs dummy's last diamond with his last trump. His only remaining loser is a trump trick, and the contract is home.

Tomorrow: Bidding quiz.

Peanuts



Rose is Rose



Agnes



Hi and Lois



Between Friends



Blondie



Snuffy Smith



Beetle Bailey



CRYPTOQUIP

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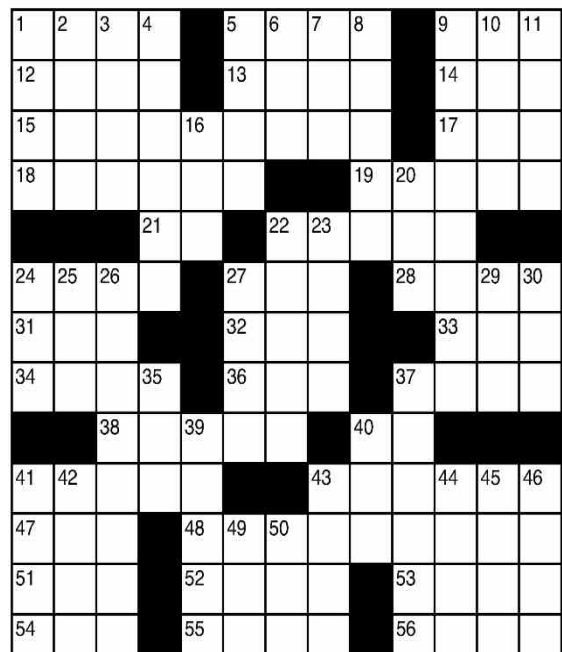
YWPRMFOY? M HMKAFO-P. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN YOU SPILL WHISKEY OR TEQUILA AND A POOCH IS LAPPING IT UP, THAT DOG IS A LIQUOR LICKER. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals H

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS: 1 Off-white, 5 'Star Trek II' villain, 9 Yoga pad, 12 Lopsided win, 13 — the Great (kid-lit detective), 14 Yucatan "Bravo!", 15 Lead singer of Matchbox Twenty, 17 Present location?, 18 Most devious, 19 Den fixture, 21 ICU worker, 22 No-frills, 24 Big cheese, 27 Warm-up run, 28 Kitten calls, 31 — Jima, 32 Noshed, 33 Slangy denial, 34 Arrears, 36 Roast VIPs. DOWN: 16 QVC, 20 Energy, 22 Foul up, 23 Ice and Bronze, 24 Auction action, 25 Have bills, 26 Pitiful tale, 27 Magazine for docs, 29 Pallid, 30 That ship, 35 Pitch, 37 Lincoln Center's David — Hall, 39 Indian prince, 40 U.K. fliers, 41 Sci-fi vehicles, 42 LummoX, 43 "Gee whiz!", 44 Greek salad cheese, 45 Part of Q.E.D., 46 Swift jets, 49 — pro nobis, 50 "Dynamite" band.

Solution time: 24 mins.

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Sports

Snow 16th in regional

Patriot senior finished diving career with fourth straight regional appearance

By RAY COONEY

The Commercial Review

FISHERS — Maddy Snow was relaxed.

Having looked at sectional scores, she knew the meet was likely to be her last.

So she approached it with an air of calm, leaving her sectional stress behind.

Snow, a Jay County High School senior, closed her career Tuesday night by finishing 16th out of 20 competitors in the regional diving meet at Hamilton Southeastern.

"I had a lot more fun here today, even though my dives weren't better," said Snow, comparing her regional effort to the sectional meet just three days earlier. "I think it was just a little bit of pressure off. It was just go out with a bang and do the best I could."

She was a four-time regional qualifier, with her best finish at 13th place during her sophomore season and best score at 221.2 in 2024.

"It's bittersweet," she added. "It's something that's been a part of my life for the last seven years. So it's something that I'm sad to see go, but I think it's a good end."

Snow scored 207.2 points through eight dives, leaving her just over 23 points short of the total needed to make the top 12 and continue into the final three dives. (Delta's Ava West was the last diver to make the cut at 230.65.) She finished ahead of Kennadie Liegl (204.85) of Carroll, Haley Terrell (200.15) of Concordia, Eden McRoberts (196.2) of McCutcheon and Emerson Meredith (187.25) of Norwell.

Noblesville's Eryn McMahon fought off Helena Gibson of Carmel 410.05-406.15 for the regional title. Campbell Lively Mason of Hamilton Heights also cleared 400 points with 401.95 for third place.

See **Snow** page 7



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Maddy Snow of Jay County High School reaches toward the water Tuesday on her inward dive in the pike position during the regional meet at Hamilton Southeastern. The dive was the last of her career as she finished in 16th place.

Tribe claims its first sectional

DAYTON, Ohio — The Indians couldn't take down the Tigers to claim the sole rights to the Midwest Athletic Conference title.

One week later, they topped the Tigers and 24 other teams to secure a spot at the district and their first sectional title.

The Fort Recovery High School girls bowling team kept just enough distance from MAC-rival Versailles and Graham Local to claim their first OHSAA Division II Southwest Sectional title on Tuesday at Rollhouse Dayton.

The Indians wracked up 3,813 pins to claim their first sectional title in girls bowling. Graham Local finished as the runner-up with 3,724, while VHS only managed third place with 3,693 pins.

The top 12 teams and individuals not on advancing teams move on to the district tournament on Feb. 19 at Beaver-Vu Lanes in Beavercreek, Ohio. Ansonia was the final team to make the cut with a team total of 2,899. The other teams to earn district berths were Urbana, Greenon, Northwestern, Kenton Ridge, Benjamin Logan, Fort Loramie, West Liberty-Salem and South-eastern Local.

FRHS freshman Lilah Thien put together the strongest day for the Indians in the individual games. She finished with a 597 series to earn second place behind Graham Local's Kailey Dowty. Thien started off strong with a 221-pin game before taking a slight dip to 175 and bouncing back for a 201.

Two more Indians rolled 220s, as Emily Lauber put up the team high of 227 in her final game and Deanna Brown shot a 225 to open the day. Lauber finished with a 578 series for eighth place, while Brown's 563 left her 10th on the leaderboard.

See **Tribe** page 7

Saints hire Kellen Moore to be coach

By JEFF NEIBURG

The Philadelphia Inquirer
Tribune News Service

PHILADELPHIA — For the third consecutive season, the Eagles will be looking for a new offensive coordinator.

Kellen Moore, as expected, is off to New Orleans. The Saints officially announced Moore as their next head coach Tuesday afternoon, a few hours after NFL Network reported that Moore's deal with the team was done.

The Saints have been dialed in on making Moore their next head coach for the last few weeks. According to NFL Network, Saints general manager Mickey Loomis was telling candidates on Jan. 31 that the team — while a final decision had not been made — was planning to continue discussions after the Super Bowl with Moore.

Moore is also expected to bring Eagles quarterbacks coach Doug Nussmeier with him to New Orleans.

The Eagles hired Moore last offseason as they looked for an outsider with a different scheme than Nick Sirianni's, which the head coach admitted after last season's collapse had gotten "stale."

Moore just helped lead Eagles to Super Bowl LIX victory over Kansas City as offensive coordinator

The offense looked different this season, but mostly because the Eagles figured out that their best path forward was to hand the ball to Saquon Barkley behind the best offensive line in the NFL. While Jalen Hurts was asked to throw a lot less, he did have his best completion percentage (68.7%) and highest quarterback rating (103.7) of his five-season NFL career.

See **Saints** page 7

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