

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

www.thecr.com

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Council OKs a change to vote centers

Process will include a study committee, public comment

By BAILEY CLINE

The Commercial Review

Vote centers are used in more than 70% of Indiana counties.

Jay County may soon join that majority.

Jay County Council approved a resolution Wednesday designating the county as a vote center county. The decision hinges on commissioners' approval Monday as well as a lengthy implementation process that includes forming a study committee, drafting a plan and seeking public comment.

Jay County clerk Missy Elliott explained Jay County Election Board has been looking into using vote centers instead of polling places for each precinct.

According to the Indiana Secretary of State's Office website, vote centers are an alternative to traditional precinct-based voting in which voters are assigned a voting location in their area. Vote centers allow registered voters to cast a ballot at any county location on Election Day.

Indiana began allowing counties the option to use vote centers in 2011. Approximately 65 counties use them, including most of the surrounding counties, Elliott noted.

"The obvious positives are we can save money by having less locations and less poll workers," she said. "Let's be honest — poll workers are hard to find, and (it's) getting harder every day."

Elliott noted that the election board decided to move forward with the change now because it's an off-year for elections. She pointed out Jay County upgraded its polling equipment in recent years, meaning there would be no added cost.

More registered voters have been casting their ballots early as opposed to on Election Day in recent years, continued Elliott.

"This last election, we did have some people ask if they could go anywhere in the county to vote because there's been so much talk about vote centers," she said.

Responding to a question from council member Bryan Alexander, Elliott noted in the 2024 general election, 4,073 voters used in-person early voting, 269 voters sent in their ballots by mail or travel board and 3,874 voters cast their ballots on Election Day.

The first step to begin using vote centers requires council and commissioners to pass a resolution declaring Jay County to be a vote center county.

See Centers page 2



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Out for a trot

A driver works out her horse Thursday morning along the snowy track in front of the grandstand at Jay County Fairgrounds. No more snow is in the forecast, but lows will be in the teens tonight and Saturday night.

Infrastructure \$ could go to new AWOS

By RAY COONEY

The Commercial Review

The airport will use some of its federal infrastructure bill funding to expand its apron.

What's left over could be used to install a new weather station.

Portland Board of Aviation heard information about the weather station during its brief meeting Wednesday.

Airport manager Hal Tavzel told the board in December that it is time to consider installing a new automated weather observing system (AWOS). He explained at that time that such systems typically have a life of about 15 years. The current system

at Portland Municipal Airport is 23 years old.

Jason Clearwaters of engineering firm Butler, Fairman & Seufert said Wednesday that the airport will have funds left over from its infrastructure bill allotment this year after using some of that money to pay for a portion of the apron expansion project. He estimated there would be

\$44,000 left from this year's allocation. That, combined with an estimated \$137,000 allocation in 2026 and the required state and local matching funds would make about \$200,000 available for another project at the airport.

Clearwaters reported that two recent automated weather observing system replacements his firm has

been involved in have had price tags of \$181,000 and \$225,000. He told board members Faron Parr, Clyde Bray and Caleb Lutes, absent John Ferguson, that the system should be considered for addition to the airport's capital improvement plan when it is updated later this year.

The apron expansion is project is scheduled for

late this summer. Related to that project, the board approved an FAA grant payment request totaling \$10,509.04.

Clearwaters added that he is in the process of putting together a Federal Aviation Administration grant application for the design of a runway pavement project. Applications are due in late April.

Board members also gave official approval for the purchase of new runway end lights at a cost of \$15,380 from Ludwig Contracting of Brookville. (They had previously approved such a purchase, but had set a limit of \$15,000.)

See AWOS page 2

Funds will be available following airport apron expansion project

Republican senators kill election proposals

By LESLIE BONILLA MUNIZ

Indiana Capital Chronicle
indianacapitalchronicle.com

Republican senators killed two flashy election proposals and significantly scaled back a third after letting the trio languish on the chamber's daily calendar for more than two weeks.

Legislation slashing early in-person voting days and closing primary elections to unaffiliated voters garnered mixed committee testimony in early February before moving to the Senate for consideration. But both died quietly on Wednesday when their authors declined to call them down before a key deadline.

Numerous amendments had been filed on both of the bills.

Hoosier voters can currently cast ballots in person for 28 days

Legislation would have reduced early in-person voting

ahead of elections. Sen. Gary Byrne's Senate Bill 284 would've cut that timeframe to two weeks.

Spokespeople told the Capital Chronicle that the bill "didn't have enough support" to move forward and that Byrne, R-Byrneville, "is not going to pursue it any further this session."

See Proposals page 2



Tribune News Service/Kansas City Star/Emily Curiel

Dressed for the cold

Brycandis Clardy, bundled up in a thick scarf and a bright red coat, stands for a portrait as heavy snow falls on Tuesday in Kansas City.

Deaths

Mary Denney, Ridgeville
Details on page 2.

98,

Weather

Jay County had a high temperature of 20 degrees Wednesday. The low was 13.

Tonight's low will be 11. Expect mostly sunny skies Saturday with a high of 30.

See page 2 for an extended outlook.

In review

Jay County Solid Waste Management District will have recycling trailers available today. Trailers will be open from 9 a.m. to noon in the shopping center at 220 Lincoln St., Portland, and Dunkirk City Park.

Coming up

Saturday — Results from the JCHS boys basketball game at Norwell.

Tuesday — Coverage of Monday's Jay County Commissioners meeting.

Wednesday — Details from Monday's Dunkirk City Council meeting.



Family refuses to help relative

DEAR ABBY: Eight years ago, my wife's nephew needed a car. His parents had poor credit at that time. I took him to a car dealer, where he found a car, and I didn't hesitate to cosign the loan. He paid the loan off on time.

I am now in financial difficulty, and one possibility for me would be to refinance my car loan. When I suggested the nephew could cosign for me, there was an instant and emphatic "NO!" from his parents. Abby, this nephew is an adult and can make his own financial decisions. I feel like I've been stabbed in the heart. Was I wrong to suggest that idea? — REFUSED IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR REFUSED: Considering that you had cosigned on a car loan to help this nephew, I can understand why you thought he would return the favor. That your wife's family stepped in and nixed it is peculiar. Since your nephew is now an adult, he should have been the one who told you he wasn't comfortable cosigning with you. I don't blame you for feeling hurt.

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DEAR ABBY: I've been married a long time. My in-laws have been a problem during my entire marriage. I've had serious health issues and a lot of surgeries over the past 10 years. My cancer came back, and I had to have colon surgery just to name one.

Most recently, I had hand surgery. When my in-laws found out, they couldn't stop laughing at me. When one of them saw me again, she laughed and asked, "Any more planned?" I didn't answer; I just walked away. I want to cut them out of my life. My husband is not supportive.

Dear Abby



Am I wrong? — RECOVERING IN INDIANA

DEAR RECOVERING: Your in-laws have a sarcastic sense of humor and no empathy. I can't blame you for wanting to protect yourself, especially since your husband is unwilling to protect you from his family's hurtful reaction. Avoiding people who hurt you is healthy, and you would not be wrong to do it. If you want to take a step back, do so.

DEAR ABBY: I was recently let go from my job at a Christian school. It was heartbreaking, and I'm still crying because of it. The problem is, we attend the church the Christian school is associated with. I'm struggling with going back to church. I don't think I can bring myself to walk through those doors again. I know if I see the school administrators at church, I will cry. I'm not sure how to stop the sadness. How can I move past this? — CAN'T MOVE ON IN IDAHO

DEAR CAN'T MOVE: Were you told why you were being terminated from your job? I'm sorry you didn't share it. Your reason for not wanting to return to that church is understandable. You don't have to see those administrators again. Contact the school online or by phone and ask for a letter of recommendation to help you find a job elsewhere. Then move past this by joining another congregation.

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DEAR ABBY: I have been married to a wonderful, intelligent and kind man for many years. We recently retired and are beginning to enjoy our retirement years together. Over the years, we have worked through some tough chapters, but we still share a wonderful bond and respect for each other.

The problem? We drink too much. While I would like to take breaks together or focus instead on healthy activities, my husband adamantly denies he has a problem. He feels I should abstain when I feel like it but, basically, do it by myself, as he has no interest in forgoing alcohol — ever. Nor will I ever be able to drag him into any form of therapy or counseling. His father was a renowned therapist but a horrible father. My husband is wary of therapy in any form. I'm just not sure how to move forward. — MODERATION IN THE WEST

DEAR MODERATION: Here's how. Go online and scope out some of the Al-Anon meetings in your area. (I am sure you will find quite a few.) Attend some of those meetings and meet the members who are also involved with alcohol-dependent partners. When you do, you will realize that you are not alone. Denial is part of the problem with people who have an addiction problem. Because things are not likely to change, you may have to learn to accept your husband as he is and find others who will join you in healthy activities.

DEAR ABBY: I'm fortunate that most of my neighbors are kind and considerate. We've all enjoyed sharing each other's celebrations. However, there's one

family among the five households that we've never managed to connect with on a personal level. Despite our efforts, such as giving gifts and food, they have always been unresponsive. While there's no animosity, there is also no rapport.

Recently, an issue has arisen that's becoming increasingly troublesome. Their garage is so packed with belongings that they park their car outside. Unfortunately, the car has an extremely sensitive alarm system that goes off multiple times during the night. I have witnessed it being triggered by their cat jumping on the car. The alarm sounds for 15 to 20 seconds, and it's loud enough to interrupt sleep, which has been an ongoing problem for the last six months.

I consider myself a generally easygoing person, but this is frustrating. What's the most respectful way to address this issue with the family, given that we've had limited interaction with them? — SLEEPY IN BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

DEAR SLEEPY: Write the couple a note and explain that for the last six months their car alarm has been waking you up. Point out that the cause may be their cat jumping on the vehicle in the wee hours of the morning, and ask if the alarm can be set to be less sensitive or if their furry family member can be kept inside.

They won't know there is a problem if you don't communicate that there is one. (I wonder how the rest of the neighbors feel about this?) If the disturbance continues, you will have to report it as a nuisance to the homeowners association, if there is one, or to the police as a last resort. You have my sympathy.

Escape the story

Jay County Public Library will be hosting escape rooms next week.

Based on the children's book, "How to Eat a Book," the program intended for children grades kindergarten through sixth grade will be hosted in the Community Room from 3:50 to 6:50 p.m. Thursday. Two escape rooms will be available, one for kindergarteners through third graders and the other for fourth graders through sixth graders. Fifty-five minute time slots are available, with six children to a group. Snacks and prizes will be available for escapists at the end. Space is limited, and registration is required.

Taking Note

Other activities going on this month include:

- Financial Foundations: Prevent Identity Theft — Learn to spot the signs of identity theft and prevent it.
- Adult Puzzle Competition — Teams will complete a 300-piece puzzle in a timed race from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday. Registration is required.

Comstock photos

There's a new photo exhibit on display at Arts Place. Photographs by Jackie Comstock are available to view now through March 28 at Jay County Campus of Arts Place in Portland. The free exhibit, located in the Weaver Community Gallery, is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays.

Community Calendar

Notices will appear in Community Calendar as space is available. To submit an item, email news@thecr.com.

- Today**
- DUNKIRK HISTORICAL SOCIETY** — Is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the first and third Friday of each month in the former W.E. Gaunt Jewelry building, 113 S. Main St., Dunkirk.
- PAST RECOVERY SERVICES** — Peer Addiction Support Team recovery support group meets at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. each Friday at the Jay County Drug Prevention Coalition office at 100 N. Meridian St., Portland. To learn more information, please call (260) 251-3259.
- CINCINNATUS LEAGUE** — Will hold its next meeting at noon Friday, Feb. 21, at Harmony Cafe in Portland.
- Saturday**
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** — Will meet at 10 a.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland. For more information, call (260) 251-3336 or (260) 729-7000.
- Sunday**
- A BETTER LIFE - BRIANNA'S HOPE** — A faith-based recovery group for all kinds of addictions, will meet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. each Sunday at Fellowship Baptist Church, 289 S. 200 West, Portland. Come early for a meal. For more information, call (260) 766-2006.
- Monday**
- PORTLAND BREAKFAST OPTIMISTS** — Will meet at 7 a.m. for breakfast at Richards Restaurant.
- PING PONG** — Will be played from 9 a.m. to noon each Monday at Jay Community Center.

- EUCHRE** — Will be played starting at 1 p.m. each Monday at West Jay Community Center, 125 Hoover St., Dunkirk.
- TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY (TOPS)** — Will meet for weigh-in at 4:30 p.m., with the meeting at 5 p.m., at Trinity United Methodist Church, 323 S. Meridian St., Portland. New members welcome. For more information, call (260) 726-5924.
- PREGNANCY CARE CENTER** — Free pregnancy testing with ongoing support during and after pregnancy. The center is located at 216 S. Meridian St., Portland. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (260) 726-8636. Walk-ins accepted.
- BREAD OF LIFE COMMUNITY FAMILY MEAL** — Will be served from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Asbury United Methodist Church, 204 E. Arch St. in Portland. Everyone is welcome.
- PORTLAND EVENING OPTIMIST CLUB** — Will meet at 6 p.m. the second and fourth Monday of each month at Richards Restaurant.
- NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS** — Will meet at 6:30 p.m. each Monday at A Second Chance At Life Ministries, 228 S. Meridian St. in Portland. For more information, call Brenda Eads at (260) 726-9625 or Dave Keen at (260) 251-8792.

- CONNECTIONS RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP** — A group for anyone with a substance use disorder that helps individuals find connections as they develop long-term recovery meets at noon each Tuesday in the IU Health Jay Outpatient Behavioral Health Center, Entrance C, 510 W. Votaw St., Portland.
- BRYANT COMMUNITY CENTER EUCHRE** — Will be played at 1 p.m. each Tuesday. The public is welcome.
- JAY COUNTY CANCER SUPPORT GROUP** — Will meet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in conference room C at Indiana University Health Jay Hospital. Open discussion for cancer patients, survivors, family members or anyone interested in helping with the group. For more information, contact Linda Metzger at (260) 726-1844.
- A BETTER LIFE - BRIANNA'S HOPE** — A faith-based recovery group for substance abuse. Meal starts at 6 p.m. and the meeting is from 6:30 to 8 p.m. every Tuesday at the Nazarene Fellowship Building across from the Nazarene church, 249 E. Center St., Dunkirk. For more information, call Amanda Price at (765) 283-2107.
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** — Will meet at 7 p.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland. For more information, call (567) 279-8352 or (260) 729-7000.
- Tuesday**
- JAY COUNTY PASTORS AND CHAPLAINS** — Meet at 8 a.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Richard's Restaurant.
- COMPASSIONATE**
- Wednesday**
- WEDNESDAY MORNING BREAKFAST CLUB** — Will meet at 8 a.m. in the east room of Richards Restaurant. All women are invited to attend.

- PING PONG** — Will be played from 11 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays at West Jay Community Center.
- PORTLAND ROTARY CLUB** — Will meet at noon each Wednesday in the cafe at John Jay Center for Learning, 101 S. Meridian St., Portland.
- EUCHRE CLUB** — Will meet at 2 p.m. the fourth Wednesday of each month at Chalet Village Health and Rehabilitation in the North Lounge.

Births

Shetler

Esther S.E., a daughter, was born Jan. 30 to Stephen F. and Elizabeth S.C. Shetler.

She weighed 7 pounds and 1/2 ounces.

Her grandparents are Jacob M. and Freida M. Shetler and Christie S. and Elizabeth C. Schwartz.

Her great-grandmother is Esther U. Schwartz.

Sudoku

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| 8 | 6 | 9 | | 2 | | | | |
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| 2 | 8 | | 3 | 7 | | 5 | | |
| | | 7 | 6 | | | | | |
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| | 2 | | | | | | | 8 |
| 1 | | | | 3 | | | | 7 |

Level: Advanced

Thursday's Solution

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| 4 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| 7 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 4 |
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| 2 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 8 |
| 1 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| 9 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| 3 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 6 |
| 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 1 |

The objective is to fill a nine-by-nine grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine three-by-three boxes (also called blocks or regions) contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time each.

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FINANCING AVAILABLE WITH APPROVED CREDIT

Complexity clouds growth picture

By MORTON J. MARCUS

Ask an economist “How is Indianapolis doing?” and you’ll get a whole bunch of questions in return.

“In what regard?”
“Over what period of time?”
“In comparison to where else?”
And this question as well: “Do you want to know about the economy or about the lives of the people?”

I might suggest, if you don’t want a torrent of data, use an old friend, Gross Domestic Product adjusted for inflation. That’s Real GDP from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The time period is a problem. Should we look just at the post-Covid period? And when did that start? Shall we go back to 2009 as we emerged from the 2008 banking crisis which shut down the

Eye on the Pie



flow of funds for housing? Or shall we go back further?

And the geographic question. The 10-county Indianapolis metro area in its Indiana context or just compared to the other 11 Indiana metro areas? Or, should we add in those three metro areas centered on Chicago, Cincinnati and Louisville that include one or more Hoosier counties.

However, as gluttons for stats, we might consider all 384 metropolitan U.S. metro areas. Naturally, objections might be made to

including more than the 10 metro areas that seem to be “natural” competitors to Indianapolis.

Here is a narrow answer: As a group, Indianapolis and 10 Midwestern metro areas of comparable size, grew in Real GDP by 1.8% from 2003 to 2023. Nationwide, metro areas had a 2.2% average annual growth rate. The slowest growing peer metros were Cleveland (0.8%, ranked 311 of 384) and Milwaukee (1%, ranked 281).

The fastest growth for these 20 years in this group of 11 areas was the Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin metro area in central Tennessee, growing by 3.8%, ranked 16th nationally. Indianapolis and its surrounding counties advanced by 2.1%, ranked 122nd. That gave Indianapolis third place among peers

in growth rate, just behind Columbus (Ohio) 2.2% rank 110th.

And there is Buffy Booster’s headline, “Indianapolis takes third place in Real GDP growth among competitive cities.”

Yes, but wait before going to press.

Many people are happier with rankings than with the percentage numbers themselves. Boosters love high rankings like 1, 2 or 3. Underdogs relish the lower rankings, like 49th out of 50.

Here’s an alternate headline from the same set of data: “Indianapolis second worst in GDP momentum among Midwestern metro areas.”

From 2003 to 2013, the Indianapolis metro area ranked 117th of 385 metro areas in its Real GDP growth rate, but slid to 145th

place in the next decade. This decline in relative position of 28 places was not a bad as Pittsburgh, which fell by 41 places in the national ranking. The strength among Indianapolis’ peers rested with Cincinnati, which rose by 121 places from 255th in 2003-13 to 134th in the 2013-’23 decade.

Many different headlines can be gleaned from the same data. Neither the Booster nor the Underdog is lying or misusing the data. It is, as we often hear, complex.

The headline writer’s job is to get eyes on the text.

No one wants to read, “Complexity clouds growth picture.”

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Marcus is an economist. Email him at mortonjmarcus@gmail.com.

Hoosiers should be encouraged to vote

Goshen News

Tribune News Service

In 2024, only 16% of registered voters voted in the primary, all 19,391 of us. That means that 103,751 registered voters did not participate. We were forced to consult a thesaurus to find a printable word to describe this meager voter turnout, and we settled on “shameful.”

In the general election, turnout was 56%, with 70,869 voters casting ballots. There are about 151,000 people over the age of 18 who live in Elkhart County; a moment of simple math says that only about 2/3 of age-eligible people are registered, less than half of the eligible people voted, and a disgraceful 13% of us decided who was on the ballot, i.e. voted in the primary election.

In the Nov. 7 Goshen News, Elkhart County First Deputy Clark Carol Smith was quoted as saying, “we did not have enough election workers at election central.” Now, we submit that the number of election workers, their (prompt) payment and voter participation are issues that need to be solved.

Yet our state legislature — those people that we elected to represent us — choose to consider bills that address issues where no actual problems exist. Senate Bill 10, co-sponsored by Blake Doriot, includes a provision that “proof of identification may not include a document issued by an educational institution.” In our view, students should be encouraged to vote, and the process of registration and verification of voter ID at the polls, whether by mail or in-person, should be simple, quick and painless.

An additional mistake, Senate Bill 287, would further politicize school boards, forcing school board candidates to choose a political party than run without any political affiliation, as is currently the case. School boards should not be political platforms; they should be composed of individuals whose agenda is to provide an outstanding public education to every student in our community, not to promulgate any political

Hoosier Editorial

We suggest that our legislators concentrate on issues that matter, solving real problems, rather than trying to run up political points for the next election.

viewpoint. The political process needs to be welcoming new candidates, not forcing party affiliation where it has no business.

It seems to us that these two bills will further discourage potential voters from voting, and potential candidates from running for office.

The Heritage Foundation, (yes, the authors of Project 2025) were able to find only 59 instances of voter fraud in all elections in Indiana from 1982 to 2024. Every case is significant, yet when put into perspective, the total of fraudulent votes is insignificant.

We suggest that our legislators concentrate on issues that matter, solving real problems, rather than trying to run up political points for the next election. They should focus on increasing voter participation and recruiting and training more poll workers.

Indiana is 41st among states in voter turnout. Our elected officials seem determined to drive us even further down this list. Are you happy with that? Let your legislator know you oppose these two bills. They need to hear your opinion.



What’s the best way to reveal a secret?

By TYLER COWEN

Bloomberg Opinion
Tribune News Service

House Republicans last week announced their “Task Force on the Declassification of Federal Secrets.” This follows an executive order issued last month by President Donald Trump ordering the release of records about the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King. The broad idea is to get the federal government to reveal all its information about these assassinations as well as topics like Jeffrey Epstein, the origins of COVID-19 and UAPs (formerly known as UFOs).

Rather than speculate about whether Trump and Congress will follow through, I would like to focus on the question of how this disclosure process should work.

The first and arguably most important question is who exactly has the authority to order the declassification and publication. Ideally, the head of the congressional task force should be a credible and independent person trusted by the bureaucracy and by the national security establishment. That person should be able to declassify documents without requiring approval from the president. On first glance, the current arrangement does not seem to allow that.

The risk is that Trump would hoard the most sensitive information and disclose selectively, to manipulate the news cycle or to distract attention from other events. It also could give him more political weapons to use against what he calls the “deep state.” The president himself is hardly a model of transparency, whether the questions concern his tax returns, his medical exams or the possession of

Tyler Cowen



classified documents after leaving office.

But again, the issue is governmental disclosure, and so far, Trump’s record is 0 for 1. Before assuming office, he suggested that the U.S. military knew more than it was letting on about the drones that had been sighted above New Jersey and other Northeastern states. Then, after Trump took office, his press secretary said only that they were “authorized” by the government “for research and various other reasons.” There has been no subsequent attempt to clarify matters. Personally, I am more confused than I was a month ago.

Perhaps there are good national security reasons for this silence. The point is that it is foolish to expect full and open disclosure from the president, no matter what his executive order says or what he has earlier promised.

One way to improve the process would be to appoint some independent auditors on a bipartisan basis, perhaps selected from Congress. Ex post, those auditors could judge whether disclosure, with transparent explanations, had actually occurred. They could grade the degree of disclosure, but they would not have the power to prevent it. Otherwise, there is a risk that — to choose an example not quite at random — evidence favoring the “two gunmen” hypothesis for JFK’s assassination is repressed, but conflicting evidence for the “lone gunman” hypothesis is suppressed. The auditors would issue a report

saying whether disclosure was unbalanced or unfair.

The Republican heading the task force, Rep. Anna Paulina Luna of Florida, is well suited for the job in the sense that she has had a strong interest in disclosure and transparency, and she is not building her career by courting establishment approval.

On the other hand, she is not the most credible spokesperson for the cause of disclosure. She has a partisan and contentious political history, recently introducing a bill to have Trump’s face carved into Mount Rushmore. The letter she sent soliciting information for disclosure slams President Joe Biden’s administration, hardly a move designed to build a consensus in favor of the process or its outcomes. The cause of transparency is best served when it is not partisan.

Another problem with the task force is that it is authorized for only six months. Bureaucracies are by nature slow-moving, and can be even more so when they wish to be. A six-month deadline creates incentives to wait things out. Trump could threaten to extend the mandate, and perhaps he will. But then the disclosure campaign would turn out to be just a bargaining chip, rather than a genuine attempt to bring the truth to light.

Mostly I favor this new policy, if only because so little progress has been made under the status quo. Above all else, I am a curious human being, and if handled properly, this task force could be revelatory. But there are also plenty of ways it could go wrong, so I am also curious to see how it all plays out.

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Cowen is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist, a professor of economics at George Mason University and host of the Marginal Revolution blog.

The Commercial Review



US PS 125820

HUGH N. RONALD (1911-1983), Publisher Emeritus
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RAY COONEY
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LOUISE RONALD
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TONIA HARDY
Business manager

BRIAN DODD
Production manager

VOLUME 151—NUMBER 212
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025

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The Commercial Review is published daily except Sundays, Mondays and four holidays (New Year’s Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas — holidays are observed on Tuesday when they fall on a Monday) by The Graphic Printing Co. Inc., 309 W. Main St., Portland, Indiana 47371. Periodical postage paid (USPS 125820) at Portland, Indiana. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Commercial Review, 309 W. Main St., P.O. Box 1049, Portland, Indiana 47371 or call (260) 726-8141.

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—Thomas Jefferson

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Agrifood opportunities

Purdue's DIAL Ventures report provides road map

By STEVE KOPPEL

Purdue Ag News

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — A new report issued by the Purdue Applied Research Institute's Digital Innovation in Agri-Food Systems Laboratory, the research arm of DIAL Ventures, offers multiple strategies to help the agrifood sector navigate climate change-related challenges throughout the agricultural value chain.

"The findings of the Climate-Smart Agrifood Opportunities report provide a road map for stakeholders across the agrifood sector to identify and act on opportunities for sustainability," said DIAL Ventures research manager Lourival Monaco, research assistant professor in agricultural economics. "By addressing the challenges collaboratively, the sector can build resilience and adapt to the evolving demands of a climate-smart future."

To improve climate resilience in agriculture, the report emphasizes the need to address increasing climate variability and its effects on food production.

"For example, the unpredictability of extreme weather events and shifting climate patterns create significant challenges for crop production and supply chains," Monaco said. "The development cycles for climate-resistant varieties often span years, which delays adaptation and increases vulnerability."

Another critical issue in this category requires a focus on specific climate challenges rather than generalized stress tolerance. "This approach would allow for more targeted solutions that



Purdue Agricultural Communications/Joshua Clark

Purdue University's Digital Innovation in Agri-Food Systems Laboratory, the research arm of DIAL Ventures, has issued a Climate-Smart Agrifood Opportunities report. The report provides a roadmap for helping the agrifood sector seize sustainability opportunities stemming from climate change-related challenges.

address unique regional and environmental conditions," he said.

The report also prioritizes the efficient use of natural resources such as water, soil and energy. Practices that improve resource efficiency while reducing greenhouse gas emissions are much needed. Examples include adopting precision agriculture technologies and integrating renewable energy.

"These strategies can simultaneously lower production costs and reduce environmental impact," Monaco said. "The need for enhanced, data-driven resource management is another recurring theme. Improved tools for monitoring and optimizing water and energy use are key to achieving both oper-

ational efficiency and environmental goals."

The report further stresses the importance of building a data-driven, decision-making culture across the agrifood value chain. Digital platforms and tools are essential for collecting, analyzing and applying data to enhance sustainability.

Real-time data on soil health, crop conditions and weather patterns can empower farms to make more informed decisions, optimize resource use and improve resilience. "This theme underscores the role of education and training in equipping stakeholders with the skills needed to adopt and implement data-driven practices effectively," Monaco said.

Policy alignment and

financial support are critical enablers of climate-smart agriculture, according to the report. For example, incentives could help reward sustainable practices and reduce barriers to their adoption.

Funding mechanisms such as grants, subsidies and public-private partnership are among the tools that could speed the transition to sustainability. Innovative financing models that include carbon credits and sustainability-linked loans could further align economic benefits with environmental goals.

Six segments of the agrifood value chain offer the following opportunities, according to the report:

•Agricultural input manufacturing — focusing on developing climate-

resilient seeds, sustainable fertilizers and renewable energy solutions

•Input distribution — advocating for moving distributors away from a product-centric to a comprehensive solution approach for crop resilience

•Agricultural production — highlighting how regenerative practices can improve soil health, sequester carbon and enhance biodiversity

•Processing and handling — examining opportunities in logistics, waste reduction and tracking sustainability metrics across supply chains

•Food manufacturing — encouraging innovation in sustainable product development to meet evolving consumer demands

•Support services and products — identifying the role of financial services, software platforms and advisory tools in driving systemic change

Purdue DIAL Ventures followed its usual venture studio model in reaching the report's findings. The model integrates research, collaboration and startup incubation for rapid testing of ideas and alignment with industry needs.

"The report serves as a foundation for continued research, development and innovation in climate-smart agriculture," Monaco said. For further details, the full report includes in-depth analysis and case studies to guide stakeholders in leveraging these opportunities.

Producer: Chickens need a flu vaccine

By JUSTIN P. HICKS

mlive.com

Tribune News Service

Michigan's biggest egg producer is advocating for the vaccination of egg-laying hens against the highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Herbruck's Poultry Ranch CEO Greg Herbruck has called on the federal government to take "urgent and critical" measures to address the H5N1 bird flu crisis by implementing an aggressive vaccination strategy.

"If we effectively address bird flu, customers will see relief at the grocery store," Herbruck wrote in a column published Feb. 13 by The Daily Mail, a British tabloid. "And Americans will no longer have to pay the price for this preventable disease."

Herbruck said he wrote the column, and did subsequent TV interviews, because he thought it important to offer a solution to the high egg prices and general devastation "from the front lines."

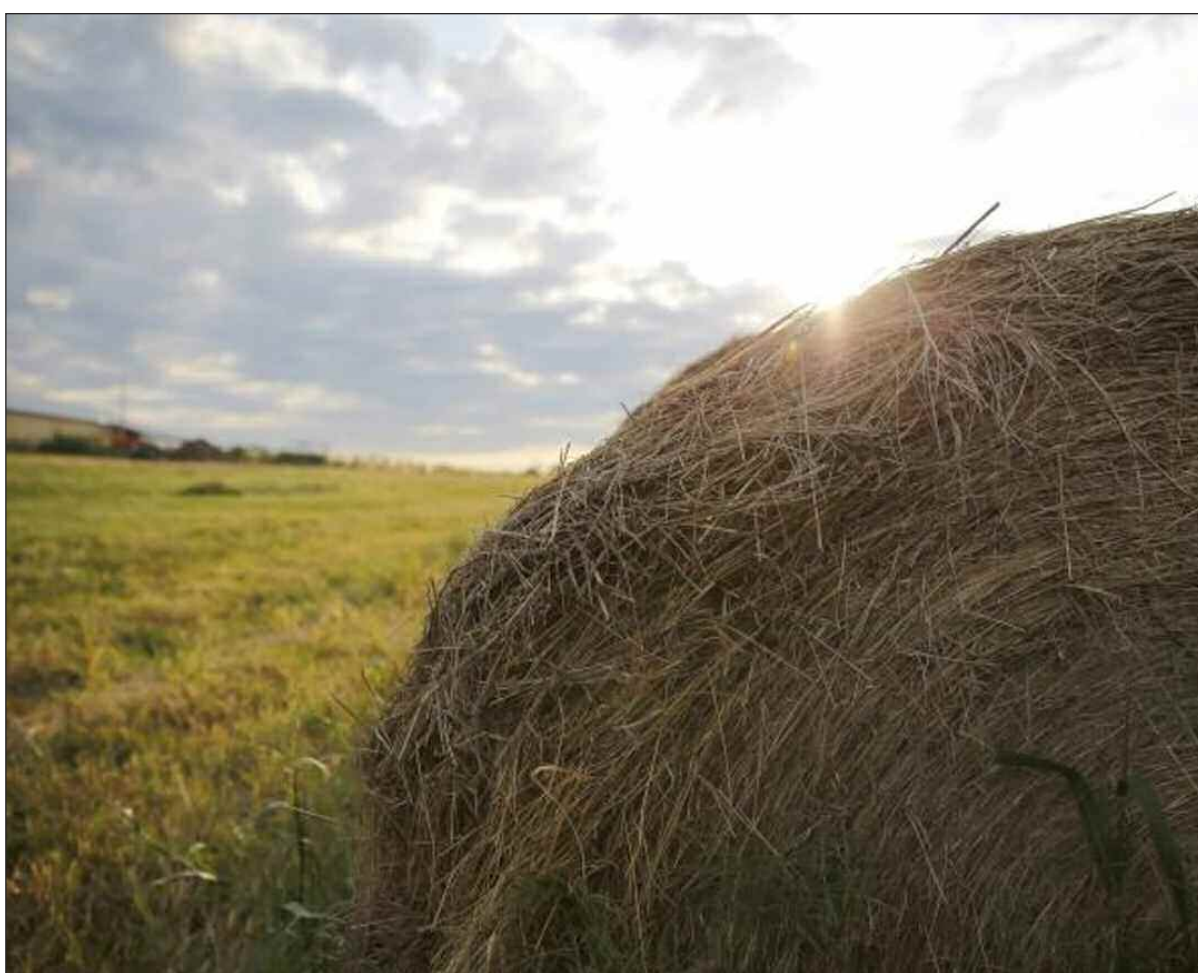
Unlike other countries like Mexico, Indonesia, China, Vietnam and Egypt, the U.S. doesn't vaccinate its egg-laying hens against the bird flu. Instead, its response of choice for an outbreak is eradication of the infected flock.

"As this virus has evolved, and we're heading into the fourth year of this outbreak, obviously the old tactics of stamping it out aren't working," said Herbruck. "Biosecurity will still be the centerpiece for controlling spread, but for this virus, we need a vaccine to help fight it and get back to normal."

The latest outbreak began in January 2022, and has since hit all 50 U.S. states, affecting more than 159 million birds. As the nation contends with the outbreak, egg prices have hit a record high.

Related: US eggs prices hit a record high, are likely to keep climbing

America has for decades vaccinated its poultry populations against a handful of illnesses including Newcastle disease and infectious bronchitis.



University of Missouri

Estimates can cause big errors

COLUMBIA, Mo. — Ask five farmers how much their hay bales weigh, and you'll probably get five different answers — none of which are backed up by a scale ticket.

"That's because most folks think they know their bale weights, but more often than not, they're guessing," says University of Missouri Extension state forage specialist and associate dean Rob Kallenbach. "And when you're buying hay by the bale instead of by the ton, those guesses can cost you real money."

Kallenbach says MU Extension specialists often ask people to estimate bale weights during events. "Time and time again, we see folks overestimate bale weights, sometimes by a couple hundred pounds," he says. "That can lead to errors of 15% to 20%, which is a pretty steep tax if you're buying. Worse yet, it can lead to thinking you've got enough hay for the winter when you really don't."

Many of those wrong guesses come from what Hamilton

Errors can range up to 15% to 20%

calls "neighbor talk." If one neighbor says his bales are 1,100 pounds, the next one assumes theirs must be about the same. "That's a risky way to do business," says Hamilton.

Newer balers tend to pack hay tighter than the old ones, and other factors — baler settings, forage species, how dry it was when it got rolled up and storage conditions — can change the final weight. "The reality is your hay bales might be shedding weight faster than a steer on Ozempic," says Kallenbach.

There's only one surefire way to know what hay weighs. Put it on a scale. However,

most buyers and sellers don't have a scale big or handy enough to weigh bales. Plus, few sellers allow the buyer to weigh the hay before buying. "So, you have to make an educated guess," says Hamilton.

Dennis Hancock, who directs the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center in Madison, Wis., developed a method to give an idea of what bales weigh based on their size and how tightly they're packed. "The tricky part is bale density — it varies a lot," says Kallenbach. "For instance, a loosely packed 5-by-5 bale would have about 880 pounds of feed; a tightly packed one has nearly 1,200 pounds." He gives a simple way to estimate bale density:

•Loose bales that depress and don't spring back. Probably 9 pounds of dry matter (DM) per cubic foot or less.

•A little firmer but still gives when you press it. Around 10 lbs. DM per cubic foot.

•Good and solid, but you can still dent it with a spike. About 11 lbs. DM per cubic foot.

•You can barely get the hay

Extension specialists at the University of Missouri caution that guessing on the weights of hay bales can be problematic. "Time and time again, we see folks overestimate bale weights, sometimes by a couple hundred pounds," said associate dean Rob Kallenbach. "That can lead to errors of 15% to 20%, which is a pretty steep tax if you're buying. Worse yet, it can lead to thinking you've got enough hay for the winter when you really don't."

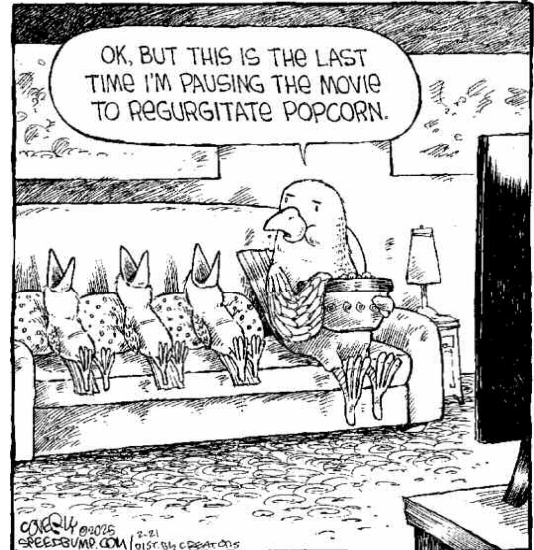
spike in. Likely 12 lbs. DM per cubic foot or more.

To know how many cubic feet are in a round hay bale, you need to know its volume. That takes a bit of math. First, divide the diameter (or height) in feet of the bale by two. Square that number. Then multiply that by 3.14 and then multiply that result by the bale width in feet. The result is the volume of the bale in cubic feet.

Loosely packed bales have a density of 9 pounds per cubic foot of hay, which equates to 880 pounds of dry feed. A tightly packed bale at 12 pounds/cubic foot would have almost 1,200 pounds of dry feed. Hancock's figures are rough estimates, but they're better than no estimate at all, says Hamilton.

"It's easy to misjudge bale weights, and those mistakes add up," says Kallenbach. "Whether you're buying hay or figuring out how much you've got stored for winter, a little math and a little common sense can go a long way toward making sure you don't come up short."

SPEED BUMP Dave Coverly



THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



Contract Bridge By Steve Becker

Bidding quiz

You are South, both sides vulnerable. The bidding has been: North East South West 1♣ 1♦ 1♥ 1♠ 2♣ Pass 2♦ Pass 3♣ Pass 3♥ Pass 3♠ Pass 4♦ Pass 4♥ Pass 4♠ Pass 5♣ Pass 5♦ Pass 5♥ Pass 5♠ Pass

Peanuts



Rose is Rose



Agnes



Hi and Lois



Between Friends



Blondie



Snuffy Smith



Beetle Bailey



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A S F H Z S R F A I D Y K Y D Q X Y J X T V D.

EA'L QDBE-FJYX.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT CAN YOU CALL A GROUP OF PEOPLE IF THEY ARE WATCHING A POTATO SACK RACE? SPEC-TATERS.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals V

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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4 Leave an impression?
8 Hardy cabbage
12 Greek vowel
13 Euro fraction
14 Mob scene
15 Auto buyers' needs, at times
17 Curved lines
18 Weasel's kin
19 Overly aggressive
20 Skater Ohno
22 A/C measures
24 Kick back
25 Gives for a while
29 Test for coll. seniors
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31 Tivo precursor
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Sports

Second trip secured

Tribe girls clinched their second state berth in as many years with runner-up

By **ANDREW BALKO**
The Commercial Review

BEAVERCREEK, Ohio — After bringing home some hardware from the sectional tournament, the Indians set themselves up to repeat the result with just the Baker games left to roll.

While the Tribe came up just short of the title, two of the Indians took home some individual accolades and the team will be moving on to the state meet for just the second time ever.

Fort Recovery High School's girls bowling team earned second place at the OHSAA Division II Southwest District tournament at Beaver-Vu Bowl on Wednesday to earn its second consecutive trip to the state finals.

The Indians held a 22 pin advantage over Midwest Athletic Conference rivals Versailles after the three individual games. The Tigers ended up taking home the district crown with 3,849 pins to Fort Recovery's 3,824, just a 25 pin difference. The runner-up finish clinched Fort Recovery its second ever berth to the state tournament and second consecutive trip.

"I think this team well deserves it," said FRHS coach Alison Rosegrant. "We've bowled well all year. I was excited to come in and see what we could do today and I think we crushed it. I'm super excited to go to state again and I think the girls are too."

The top four teams advanced to the state tournament held on Feb. 28 at H.P. Lanes in Columbus. Joining Versailles and Fort Recovery at state were Graham Local (3,748) and Urbana (3,592). Greenon missed the cut by 116 pins.

See **Second** page 7



The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

The Fort Recovery High School girls bowling team poses with the OHSAA Division II Southwest District runner-up trophy at Beaver-Vu Bowl on Wednesday after clinching their second trip to the state tournament. First row from left to right are Lilah Thien, Deanna Brown, Jady Weyerick and Maddie Weigel. Back row are Saidy DeRoo, Kayla Heitkamp, Emily Lauber and Ella Schoen.

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Can Dodgers' spending impact future CBA talks?

By **JACK HARRIS**

Los Angeles Times
Tribune News Service

PHOENIX — The last time Major League Baseball and the players association negotiated a collective bargaining agreement, the owners locked out the players before the 2022 season, a work stoppage that nearly resulted in the loss of regular-season games for the first time since 1995.

Now, with that CBA set to expire after the 2026 season, there are growing concerns that another, more destructive labor dispute could be on the horizon.

And though there will be many issues to tackle when negotiations start next year, the Dodgers' staggering spending spree over the last two offseasons could represent some of the most contentious potential sticking points.

Payroll disparities. Competitive imbalance. And, most of all, a long-simmering fight over the potential of a hard salary cap.

For decades, some owners have sought to institute a salary cap in MLB, the only of the four major North American leagues without one. The closest the league has come is its luxury tax structure, which taxes teams for surpassing certain payroll thresholds each season.

Introduced in the 2003 season, the luxury tax served as a de facto soft cap. Few teams dared surpass the threshold on a regular basis. The strengthening of tax penalties in the 2022 CBA — particularly for teams willing to blow well past thresholds — was designed to discourage any club from dominating the sport financially.

The Dodgers and their deep-pocketed Guggenheim ownership group, however, had other ideas.

After following up their \$1.4 billion offseason splurge in 2024 with another half-billion or so of guaranteed money this winter, the Dodgers' hefty spend-

ing has them poised to have an MLB-record luxury tax payroll of \$402 million, according to Cot's Baseball Contracts.

That is roughly \$75 million more than the next-highest payroll. It is well beyond the most punitive tax thresholds. And it's almost five times greater than teams at the other end of the spectrum, with the league-low \$86 million payrolls of the Chicago White Sox and Miami Marlins likely to cost less than the Dodgers' tax bill alone (projected to be about \$152 million).

Against that backdrop, one question has dominated the sport this winter: Is the Dodgers' spending bad for baseball?

On that point, at least, commissioner Rob Manfred and MLB Players' Association executive director Tony Clark agree.

"The Dodgers have gone out and done everything possible, always within the rules that currently exist, to put the best possible team on the field," Manfred said at Cactus League media day on Tuesday. "I think that's a great thing for the game. That type of competitive spirit is what people want to see."

Clark echoed those sentiments Wednesday, speaking to The Los Angeles Times shortly after his annual meeting with Dodgers players at Camelback Ranch.

"The bigger question is, teams that have resources — and they do, whether you're a small market, a mid-market or a large market — is why they don't seem to be as interested in signing players that can help them be the last team standing," he said.

Manfred didn't fault the Dodgers' spending the last two offseasons — when they added Shohei Ohtani, Yoshinobu Yamamoto, Tyler Glasnow and Blake Snell on nine-figure contracts — but he did talk at length about the concerns, he says he's heard from

fans and owners about the payroll disparities that have emerged as a result.

"It's clear we have fans in some markets that are concerned about the ability of the team in their market to compete with the financial resources of the Dodgers," Manfred said at a press conference at the Arizona Biltmore Resort. "I think that disparity, as it should be, is certainly at the top of my list of concerns about what's going on in the sport. When I say I can't be critical of the Dodgers, they are doing what the system wants. If I'm going to be critical of something, it's not going to be the Dodgers. It's going to be the system."

Manfred didn't say whether owners would push for a salary cap, noting it's too early to begin staking public positions. But many around the industry expect that issue to resurface next year. And if it does, an already complicated negotiation could become even more fraught.

"It's not new," Clark said of the potential fight over a salary cap, something the union is staunchly against. "The league has been professing doom and gloom for decades."

Clark looks at the Dodgers as an example more teams should follow, especially after an offseason in which the majority of clubs decreased their luxury tax payrolls, despite the league netting a record \$12.1 billion in revenue.

"We've always had a team, or teams, that have found themselves in the same conversation that Dodgers find themselves in here," Clark said. "But in an industry that's growing — and the reports about how much it's growing are tangible and coming from the league office — why do we have so many teams that aren't as interested in trying to improve their club as some others? That, to me, is the bigger question."

See **Spending** page 7