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July 16, 2021



RAPPIN'
Thomas Wyatt

Ain't No Love

A 17-year-old white male was shot and killed by police during a traffic stop in Arkansas.

Hunter Brittain, who was unarmed, had gotten out of his truck to place a bottle of anti-freeze behind a tire because he was unable to shift his truck into park; thereby trying to prevent his vehicle from rolling backwards into the squad car of the deputy behind him. Sheriff Deputy Michael Davis, who also is white, inexplicably shot Brittain three times; killing him.

Now, I say *inexplicably*, because officer Davis did not turn on his body camera. Furthermore, Davis was fired from the Sheriff Department. Not for killing Brittain, mind you; but for failing to turn on his bodycam. Moreover, Lonoke Sheriff John Staley said, "It is my decision, in review of this deputy's actions, it is determined, that he did not activate his camera in a timely way. This means there's no video of the actual shooting. You see the aftermath but no shooting. It is that failure that I terminated his employment as deputy."

So, Benjamin Crump is now giving interviews about the shooting, and the lack of facts thereof; while Al Sharpton gave Brittain's eulogy at the memorial service.

I feel for Brittain and his family. I'm sure they are going through hell right now.

However, my most pressing question is, where's the media? Where is the flood of national coverage for this young man's death?

If I've said it once, I've said it a quattuorvigintillion times: The main media does not care about BLM. They care about ratings. They exploit the death of blacks by police. Use it as a lightning rod to generate income. They revel in the chaos. I bet the first question their editors/producers asked when this went down was, "Is he Black?"

And when the answer was no, the follow-up response was, "Then find another story!"

Texas Does D.C.

BY **ABBY LIVINGSTON** AND **ALEXA URA** | THE TEXAS TRIBUNE



State Rep. Senfronia Thompson, D-Houston, speaks to the press after Democratic members of the Texas House of Representatives, who are boycotting a special session of the legislature to block Republican-backed voting restrictions, arrive at Dulles airport in Sterling, Virginia, Monday night. Credit: REUTERS/Evelyn Hockstein

(Washington, D.C.) - Shortly after landing in Washington D.C. in an effort to deny the Texas House a quorum to block a voting restrictions bill, House Democrats indicated they plan to remain out of state until the end of the special legislative session that ends Aug. 6.

Democrats' Monday departure from the state will bring the Legislature's work to a halt just days into a 30-day session that was called largely to advance GOP-backed legislation that would enact new restrictions on voting.

Asked by a reporter what the caucus planned to do if Gov. Greg Abbott called another special session for the next day, state Rep. Chris Turner, D-Grand Prairie, suggested that was the reason behind why they had decamped to the capital.

"That's our message to Congress," said Turner, the Fort Worth Democrat who chairs the House Democratic caucus. "We need them to act now."

At least 51 of the 67 Democratic members of the Texas House — the number needed to break quorum — fled the state on Monday, most of them boarding two chartered planes that landed in D.C. around 7 p.m. Central time.

Last month, a delegation of Democratic state representatives and senators traveled to the U.S. Capital to advocate for a federal bill.

This time the group was much larger — at least two buses full of members as of Tuesday night — and state Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer, D-San Antonio, referred to the expanded numbers as "reinforcements."

Since the news broke that Democrats were leaving the state, Republicans pounced to characterize them as abandoning their jobs.

"Texas Democrats' decision to break a quorum of the Texas Legislature and abandon the Texas State

Capitol inflicts harm on the very Texans who elected them to serve," Abbott said in a statement earlier in the day. "As they fly across the country on cushy private planes, they leave undone issues that can help their districts and our state."

Fellow Republicans from all over the state and the country joined in the criticism.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," said Turner. "We are doing our job. We were elected to represent our constituents and fight for our constituents' interests. We aren't going to sit in Austin in the house chamber and watch the Republican majority steamroll the voting rights of our constituents."

Democratic state Rep. Barbara Gervin-Hawkins of San Antonio said in an interview that she was "definitely" prepared to be out of the state for three weeks as well and packed light.

"It wasn't even about clothes, it was about let's do what we need to do to protect our right to vote," she said. "We can't go back to the days of old... think about our forefathers who died for us to have the opportunity to vote."

"What I did, I went into my clothes, and I got all those things that are washable," she added, when asked how she prepared for such an uncertain trip.

There was a sense Tuesday in this group that Abbott's threat to cut the salaries of legislative staffers could become reality.

"I told my staff to get ready for unemployment," said Gervin-Hawkins "OK? Think about it. If you are released from a job beyond your control, you qualify for unemployment."

"We hope that doesn't happen," she added.

State Rep. Joe Moody, D-El Paso, called the bill "toxic piece of legislation."

"We're here to fight," Moody said, referring to Congress. "We just hope we're not alone."



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INSIDE



To pay or not to pay; that is the question. See **ATHLETES** Page 2



Lee Merritt based campaign around voting rights battle. See **CIVIL** Page 4



Food and Drug Administration flag reports of Guillain-Barre syndrome. See **COVID** Page 6

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By John Harris Jr.
VILLAGER Sports
Columnist

(VILLAGER) - When the NCAA recently provided college athletes with the freedom to earn money from endorsements, monetizing social media accounts and generally selling the rights to their names, images and likenesses (NIL) to the highest bidder - effective immediately - it was met with a roar of approval.

At long last, college athletes, particularly Black athletes who have generated millions of dollars in revenue for the NCAA, finally have the opportunity to make money as matriculating students.

Since NCAA rules prevent schools from paying athletes directly, schools are directed to make sure that payments to athletes are not for their athletic achievements and to ensure that no payments are used as recruiting inducements.

On the surface, it looks like a wonderful idea. Already, some colleges athletes have signed marketing deals. Jackson State defensive end Antwan Owens,

New Marketing Deal A Mixed Bag For Athletes



Hercy Miller (left), Master P's Son, Signs \$2 million Endorsement Deal After NCAA Rule Change.
[Photo/lovebscott.com]

who is Black, signed the first reported NIL deal, partnering with a Black-owned hair care products company.

Truth be told, I'm not totally sold on the idea.

I'm overjoyed that athletes, particularly Black athletes, are getting the opportunity to make money. But everybody's not going to get paid. The ones that do make the real money will be those that look like they're pro material. Or come from well-to-do

families with strong financial backgrounds. Most of the marketing dollars are going to trickle down to a few players on every team.

The NIL is confusing to me.

I don't know what the rules are. Who's going to educate the kids about finances? I don't want to see college athletes get taken advantage of where they agree to something and sign a contract and now they're dealing with attorneys.

Who's helping the kids understand the paperwork they're signing? More than 50 percent of college basketball players are Black and nearly half of all college football players are Black. A large number of Black student-athletes are raised by single mothers who work and raise their families alone. Who will advise these athletes in financial matters if no one in the household truly understands how money

works?

Everybody wants college athletes to get paid, but more structure and guidelines are necessary.

Take any kid from a poor background and ask what they're going to do with their money when they get some. Some will buy cars and jewelry with their earnings. Some may say they're going to invest. But what will they invest in? And who's going to help them manage their money? How much of

their earnings will go to agents? What about paying taxes?

Remember, these are college kids we're talking about, some of them barely out of high school. A few of them may receive large sums of money, more money than they've ever seen before. It isn't enough to trust that they all will be smart and sensible with their money.

Some athletes, like Tennessee State freshman basketball player Hercy Miller who signed a \$2 million marketing deal with a tech company, will be just fine. Miller's father, Master P, is a former rapper, entertainer, entrepreneur and millionaire many times over. Hercy Miller is already financially secure because of who his father is. How many other Black college athletes can say the same?

That's where I think the problem is going to come from. A lot of kids don't have anybody to advise them or govern them unless that person has their hand out. Agents don't work for free. And who's to say that agent will provide the best advice?

Don't get me wrong. The NIL isn't a bad thing. It can do some good and put money in some needy athletes' pockets. But if you use it wrong, it could be. It could quench your thirst. Or it could drown you.

GOP leans into racial issues ahead of midterms

BY MIKE LILLIS AND SCOTT WONG | THE HILL

(THE HILL) - Critical race theory. Migrants at the border. Election fraud. A COVID-19 lab leak. Urban crime and calls to defund the police.

On its surface, the Republicans' nascent campaign strategy features a multipronged message attacking President Biden and Democrats on a host of dissimilar issues. At its center, however, lies the common theme of race, a thorny issue that has proved successful in animating the GOP base under the Trump administration.

It now stands at the core of GOP efforts to flip the House in next year's midterms.

Democrats are bracing for attacks while accusing Republicans of employing scare tactics at the expense of minorities.

"They're going to absolutely use that playbook from the 1980s and try to scare the mess out of their voters. And they're going to use Black and brown people as the foil. There's just no question about that," said Rep. Marc Veasey (D-Texas), a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. "It was success-



U.S. Rep. Lloyd Alton Doggett II (D-Texas, 35th congressional district)

ful for [former President] Trump, but it's always worked for them, before Trump."

Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas) sees a similar trend, saying that racially charged attacks have wormed their way into discussions on even the most unrelated topics.

"We can be having a debate about anything in Ways and Means relating to tax and they will bring in the border and immigration, and the invasion of children. It's all wrapped around fear and hate," said Doggett, a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee.

"They don't really want to deal with issues like infrastructure," he

added. "They want to continue talking about matters that involve race and scare people to the polls while blocking our voters from getting to the polls."

The issue of race is center stage in the debate over voting rights, which this week saw Democrats from the Texas legislature descend on Washington to prevent the passage of a restrictive GOP bill.

Republicans have defended those efforts, which are being duplicated in a host of other conservative-run states, as a precaution against election fraud. Democrats see a systematic effort to disenfranchise low-income voters, a group disproportionately

made up of minorities who tend to vote Democratic.

Republicans are also highlighting the surge of Hispanic migrants at the southern border, with warnings of a spike in crime and lost American jobs. Though the origins of the coronavirus remain unknown, they're accusing China of allowing the virus to leak from a lab in Wuhan — purposefully or not — sparking the pandemic that crippled the globe over the past 18 months.

And they're bashing Democrats for supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, framing the racial justice protests — which have occasionally erupted

into looting and violence — as a blanket attack on police and the rule of law.

Trump is leading the charge on all fronts. "You have to give the police back their authority," the former president told "Fox & Friends" on Monday.

His continued popularity has led state legislatures and lawmakers in Washington to carry his message on voting in particular.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), who believes he's on the cusp of becoming Speaker, has been hammering Biden and Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) on a slew of race-based issues — at press conferences, on

social media and in interviews.

In recent days, he has zeroed in on critical race theory, which he has called a "racist" policy and which recent polling shows is viewed more negatively among GOP voters the more politicians talk about it.

"The next election is going to be big, because all these things about defunding the police. All these Democrat policies that are now going in place, we're seeing the outcome: the wokeism, the open border, the inflation. Where we're going to have the biggest victory? School boards," McCarthy said during an appearance this week on BlazeTV's "The Rubin Report."



McCarthy (R-CALIF)

"Critical race theory goes against everything Martin Luther King has ever told us — don't judge us by the color of our skin — and now they're embracing it, right? They're going backwards," McCarthy added.

MOMS OF BLACK BOYS UNITED, INC. AND M.O.B.B. UNITED FOR SOCIAL CHANGE, INC. MARK FIVE YEARS IN THE FIGHT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND POLICING REFORM



Edited by Naomi Richard VILLAGER Entertainment Reporter

(M.O.B.B.) - Five years ago, on July 7, 2016, a concerned mother of two Black sons gave birth to twin organizations: Moms of Black Boys United, Inc. (M.O.B.B. United) and M.O.B.B. United for Social Change, Inc.

Depelsha Thomas McGruder founded these nonprofits in the wake of the brutal police killings of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and many others who came before them. Fed up, frustrated and filled with despair, she took to her computer to do something about it. A heart-felt social media post began a journey for McGruder and a dedicated cohort of moms that led to the formation of M.O.B.B. United; two organizations dedicated to influencing policies and perceptions that impact how Black boys and men are viewed and treated by law enforcement and other authority figures.

This year, moms of Black sons around the world exhaled at the same time as Hennepin County District Judge Peter Cahill sentenced former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin to 22.5 years in prison for the murder of son, brother, father, and friend, George Floyd.

"We shared a collective sigh of relief when we finally saw some semblance of justice and accountability," said McGruder, a former TV executive who started M.O.B.B. United as a Facebook support group. "But it would be naive and foolish for us to assume that accountability in one case will



Stacey Abrams and M.O.B.B. United Founder Depelsha McGruder in Washington DC.

lead to a permanent shift. Our work is far from done."

In a show of force, M.O.B.B. United members are advocating for the passage of policies and legislation that will increase accountability for law enforcement, including the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act (H.R. 1280). Honoring his life and all of the lives murdered by the hands of those meant to protect and serve requires vigilance.

"M.O.B.B. United is encouraging community members to contact their U.S. Senators and demand passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act," stressed McGruder, noting the National Academy of Sciences data point that Black men are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police. "Future generations are counting on us." M.O.B.B. United's key initiatives are designed to support moms working to change perceptions of Black boys and men, and bring an end to racial profiling and discrimination. Training and empowering moms to become effective advocates while raising their voices collectively nationwide is another principal area of focus.

There is strength in numbers. That's why this vocal online community of more than 170,000 is

rallying moms and allies across the nation to join in the organization's daily work toward equity and justice for Black boys and men. In recognition of its fifth anniversary milestone, M.O.B.B. United is launching its "Invite 5 Moms" campaign to encourage members and others to help increase frontline support, and expand the organization's impact.

"It's a critical moment for the organization as we complete our

fifth year and continue the fight of our lives," emphasized McGruder. "We won't stop until society sees our Black boys and men through the lens of humanity and with the dignity and respect they deserve."

To learn more about M.O.B.B. United's 5th "MOBBiversary" activities throughout the month of July, key priorities, ongoing initiatives and support its critical work, please visit us at www.mobblined.org.

Florida man planned to blame BLM for ex-girlfriend and her family's deaths

by Biba Adams | The GRIO

(GRIO) - A 51-year-old Florida man planned to have his 22-year-old ex-girlfriend, her sister and her brother-in-law killed and then pin the murders on Black Lives Matter protesters.

Daniel Slater of Palm Beach hired a hitman to carry out the crimes but was foiled when the individual turned out to be an undercover FBI agent.

According to The Washington Post, the plot conspired between May and June 2020 in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and while protests following the Minneapolis murder of George Floyd were taking place across the country.

Slater pleaded guilty this week to murder-for-hire in a deal that meant two other murder-for-hire and three drug charges

against him were dropped. He is expected to be sentenced to the maximum penalty for his crimes: 10 years in prison.

It was another woman's death that started an investigation into Slater. A 26-year-old woman who was acquainted with the man was found dead in Miami's Everglades National Park in February 2020. Court documents reveal that Slater wanted Brianna Slabaugh to kidnap and kill his ex-girlfriend, Brianna Kane, but Slabaugh died from an accidental drug overdose before completing the murders.

The investigation into her death led them to another person who knew of Slater's plot and cooperated with the FBI. Reportedly, Slater is a drug dealer who attempted to have Kane kidnapped and wanted her teeth knocked out, nose broken and acid to be thrown in her face, according to the report.

The informant drove with Slater to his ex-girlfriend's home, where he detailed the plot, down to the idea of spray painting "Black Lives Matter" on the house to pin the slayings on area activists.

"Slater pointed out a window in the home, explained how [the sister] and her [husband] sat in their living room at specific times, and told the [associate] to shoot the victims through the window during one of those times," according to the complaint.

According to CBS Tampa, Slater, currently in the Broward County Jail, is scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 16.

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U.S. Department of Education Announces Temporary Changes to the Federal Aid Verification Process for the 2021–22 Award Year



(U.S. Department of Education) - Today, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) announced temporary changes to the federal student aid verification process for the 2021–22 award year. The temporary changes will provide relief to millions of students and colleges facing challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department will focus aid verification on identity theft and fraud for the 2021–22 application cycle, significantly reducing other barriers that have prevented students most in need, from accessing critical financial aid funds. Today's action is part of the Department's broader efforts to provide relief to students and borrowers impacted by the pandemic, and address inequities made worse by COVID-19.

While the challenges students experience with verification extend beyond the pandemic, data from the National Student Clearinghouse show college undergraduate enrollment rates fell 4.9 percent in Spring 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. For students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, those declines were even steeper. These enrollment declines have also been sharpest at community colleges, which saw a 9.5 percent decrease in enrollment and are already significantly resource-constrained due to the economic impacts of the pandemic. Department research shows that targeting verification this aid

cycle, can help approximately 200,000 more students from low-income backgrounds and students of color enroll in college and continue on the path to a degree.

Verification is an administrative process by which the Department requires a subset of federal student aid applicants who are eligible for Pell Grants to submit additional documentation, such as transcripts of tax returns, to verify their income and other information reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. Non-Pell-eligible applicants are not selected for income verification. As a result, the verification process disproportionately burdens students from low-income backgrounds and students of color. The process can be extremely challenging for students, particularly because at least 20 percent of Pell-eligible applicants are exempt from tax filing due to their low-income levels. This prevents them from using the automated Data Retrieval Tool to easily import verified income data from the IRS onto their FAFSA form, and can impose difficulties in acquiring the necessary documentation to prove their income.

Typically, more than three million potential Pell Grant recipients are selected for verification each year. Unfortunately, due to the challenges they face in acquiring the required documentation, some students never complete verification, and thus do not receive the

financial aid they need to enroll. Targeting verification for the 2021–22 FAFSA cycle will make it easier for millions of students from low-income backgrounds to access federal financial aid. It will also alleviate some of the burden faced by financial aid administrators, allowing them to focus their time and resources on administering emergency relief funds, getting students into and through higher education, including by updating FAFSA information for students who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, and by helping students learn about and access emergency financial aid grants provided under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.

This temporary verification process accompanies the many tools and oversight measures the Department uses to monitor suspicious activity, mitigate fraud, and identify over- and under-awards of Pell Grant funds.

Today's announcement builds upon the Biden Administration's commitment to addressing inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and targeting resources and relief efforts toward the colleges and communities that need it most. Under the American Rescue Plan, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, the Department has provided \$76 billion in economic relief for students and colleges impacted by the pandemic.

Civil rights attorney Lee Merritt, a Democrat, Launches Campaign Against Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton



Attorney Lee Merritt testified last year during a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing to examine issues involving race and policing practices in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd. Credit: REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst/Pool

by Patck Svitek
Texas Tribune

Lee Merritt, the nationally known civil rights attorney, is officially running for Texas attorney general as a Democrat.

Merritt launched his campaign Tuesday morning with an emphasis on the voting rights battle that prompted state House Democrats to flee the state Monday.

"Texas Republicans have launched an all-out assault on voter rights and civil liberties," Merritt said in a statement, adding that incumbent Attorney General Ken Paxton and other GOP leaders are "blatantly attempting to turn back progress in the Lone Star State using the familiar tactics of voter suppression, divisive rhetoric and corporate money. This campaign is a response from the people of Texas," Merritt said.

Merritt said in March that he would run for attorney general but would make a formal announcement at a later

date.

Merritt, who lives in the Dallas area, is nationally recognized for his representation of families of Black people killed by police, including serving as co-counsel for George Floyd's family. Among the Texans he has advocated for are Botham Jean, the Dallas man shot dead by an off-duty cop in his apartment in 2018.

Merritt's campaign announcement will come on the heels of the House Democrats leaving Texas for Washington, D.C., in a bid to deny the quorum for the House to vote on Republicans' priority elections bill. The House is scheduled to convene at 10 a.m. for the first time since Democrats bolted from the state.

In addition to voting rights, Merritt's campaign said it would focus on "fixing Texas' failing power grid, reigning in soaring property taxes, ending mass incarceration and challenging gubernatorial overreach."

Merritt joins Joe Jaworski, a Galveston

lawyer and former mayor of the city, in the Democratic primary against Paxton. The incumbent has his own competitive primary, featuring challenges from Land Commissioner George P. Bush and Eva Guzman, a former justice on the Texas Supreme Court.

Paxton's race has drawn early and intense attention in part due to his legal troubles. He has been under securities fraud indictment since his first months in office in 2015 and more recently, under FBI investigation over claims he abused his office to help a wealthy donor. He has denied wrongdoing in both cases.

Merritt brought up Paxton's legal woes in his video launching his campaign, which also said Paxton has "betrayed his oath" and "pledged his allegiance to Donald Trump." Paxton has aligned himself closely with the former president, who has teased an endorsement in the Republican primary.

SHAPE Austin's FUTURE

(CITY OF AUSTIN) - Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) of Austin will hold the first of ten public input hearings on Thursday, July 15, 2021 at Austin City Hall.

Members of Austin's District 9 community and the public are invited to attend an in-person public meeting to hear from the ICRC and the work being done on the new City Council district maps.

The public will have an opportunity to provide comments and feedback on the redistricting process from 6-8 p.m., Thursday, July 15 at Austin City Hall Boards & Commission Room, 301 W. 2nd St. Austin, TX 78701. The 14 commissioners will take testimony from members of Austin's District 9 community on how they would like to see their city districts drawn.

The new districts will be in effect for the November 2022 election.

A current list of public input meetings: (Meetings will be added as space and times are decided.)

Thursday, July 22, 2021, 6-8 p.m., District 10 Community at Dell Jewish Community Center, 7300 Hart Lane, Austin, TX 78731.

Saturday, July 24, 2021, 11 a.m.- 1 p.m., District 7 Community at Northwest Recreation Center, 2913 Northland Dr., Austin, TX 78757.

Public input hearings are recorded and videos of the meetings will be available after the meetings here: <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/watch-atxn-live>. Past meetings and agendas can be viewed on the commission's website at www.austintexas.gov/cityclerk/boards_commissions/meetings/116_1.htm.

To join the meeting visit: <https://zoom.us/j/92300250133?pwd=Mkg1NXd5WG9QZGVCOU5Vlc0M0Jpdz09>

Login with these credentials: Meeting ID: 923 0025 0133 Passcode: 67uSPc

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City Manager Proposes Balanced Budget to Invest in Community While Minimizing Impact on Austin Taxpayers

(CITY OF AUSTIN) - The Austin City Manager’s Proposed Budget for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 would maintain high-quality services and invest in critical infrastructure while utilizing the smallest increase in tax and fees in the past five years.

Spencer Cronk, who presented his recommendations to City Council today, July 9, 2021, at Community First! Village Unity Hall in East Austin, said while this was “a time of unprecedented challenge in our community, across our country, and around the world,” the City was able to propose a budget that: Continues to deliver core services and programs at current levels.

Implements critical reforms that residents and Council have prioritized. Ensures minimal year-over-year impact on Austinites with tax and fee increases kept below 1% for the typical tax and rate payer. Achieves the Council’s policy of keeping the equivalent of 14% of annual General Fund requirements in reserve.

“The good news is that, economically, Austin, Texas has come through the many challenges of the past year in as good, or better shape, than any big city in America,” said Cronk.



Austin City Manager Spencer Cronk

“Our local economy is fundamentally strong and performed unexpectedly well during the COVID pandemic, with more positive impacts for our budget than we anticipated even a few months ago.”

The Proposed Budget is based on a combined tax and fee increase of only 0.85% for the typical Austin tax and rate payer – equivalent to just over \$3 per month. The last time a lower increase was adopted by Council was in 2015.

The City Manager said staff had worked hard to keep the combined tax and fee increase below 1% because, despite the rela-

tively good economic news overall, many Austinites still found themselves in financial difficulty as a result of the pandemic.

He acknowledged recent Council actions to increase the homestead exemption to 20% and to increase the exemption for seniors and disabled residents, which made “a huge difference” to Austinites under pressure. And he praised the many years of commitment – on the part of both Council and staff – to responsible money management, which enabled the City to enter the pandemic in a strong financial position with a healthy level of reserves.

Laying out the highlights of his proposals for City tax and spending for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2021, Cronk announced that this year’s proposed budget is based on total expenditures of \$4.5 billion – including \$1.2 billion for the General Fund. The Capital Budget includes \$1.3 billion in planned spending.

During his presentation, which was broadcast live and will be available to view again at ATXN.TV, Cronk identified several priorities:

Fostering a resilient city by prioritizing critical investments in programs that respond to the challenges of climate change, address ongoing

systemic stressors, and strengthen the City’s foundational infrastructure

Investing tens of millions of City dollars to address our shared commitment to end chronic homelessness in Austin – on top of Council’s substantial allocation of federal funds.

Continuing to reimagine public safety to ensure policing in Austin reflects the community’s core values.

Budget Highlights: \$79.0 million in voter-approved planned spending to reach key affordable housing goals.

\$65.2 million in continued funding for the City’s response to the homelessness crisis, with specific funding allocated for preventing homelessness, crisis response, housing stabilization, and public space management.

\$29.1 million to maintain and advance progress on Reimagining Public Safety.

\$27.7 million to construct new sidewalks and improve existing sidewalks citywide.

\$8.5 million in planned capital spending on the City’s Safe Routes to School program.

\$6.2 million to fund the 144th class and future classes of the reimagined Austin Police

Department Training Academy.

Impact on Taxpayers: The proposed property tax rate is 3.5% above the projected ‘no-new-revenue operations and maintenance tax rate’. The last time a lower increase was approved was in fiscal year 2004-2005. As a result of property tax exemptions approved recently by City Council, a typical homeowner can expect to see a reduction of about \$9 in the City’s portion of their annual property tax bill.

When combining tax, rates and fees, a typical tax and rate payer would pay an additional 0.85%, equivalent to \$37.98 per year or \$3.17 per month – the lowest increase since 2015-2016. This includes no change to Austin Energy and Austin Water rates and increases to the Transportation User Fees and Austin Resource Recovery charges.

The coming weeks will provide time for community input and budget work sessions. City Council will have the opportunity to review and initiate amendments to the Proposed Budget before final adoption, which is scheduled for August 11.

To learn more about the City’s Budget development process, and get involved, go to AustinTexas.Gov/Budget.

White House Releases Gun Reduction Strategy



by **Stacy M. Brown**
NNPA

(NNPA) - In June, President Biden unveiled a comprehensive strategy to combat gun violence. This strategy implements preventative measures that are proven to reduce violent crime and attacks the root causes – including by investing in effective community policing and addressing the flow of firearms used to commit crimes. Combined, the Administration’s comprehensive strategy will: Stem the flow of firearms used to commit violence, including by holding rogue firearms dealers accountable for violating federal laws; Support local law enforcement with federal tools and resources to help address summer violent crime; Invest in evidence-based community violence interventions; Expand summer programming, employment opportuni-

ties, and other services and supports for teenagers and young adults; and Help formerly incarcerated individuals successfully reenter their communities.

The core of the President’s plan is a partnership with cities and states, equipping local leaders with historic levels of federal funding and a range of tools to address the multifaceted challenge of gun violence. In particular, the strategy uses the American Rescue Plan’s \$350 billion in financial support and clear guidance to provide state, local, territorial, and tribal governments the money they need to put more police officers on the beat – including hiring above pre-pandemic levels in communities experiencing an increase in gun violence associated with the pandemic – as well as the other resources, training, and accountability they need to

engage in effective community policing.

Since the President’s plan was launched, leaders across the country have already responded by taking up or supporting the take-up of these American Rescue Plan dollars for violence prevention efforts. Already we’ve seen state and local governments utilize the funding they’ve received to put more cops on the beat, invest in community violence intervention programs, bolster community programs and economic opportunities, and acquire technology like gunshot detection systems that will help them better confront crime head-on.

In his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022, the President asked for \$300 million more for the COPS program to boost federal assistance for community policing, and he called for over \$750 million more for federal law enforcement agencies.

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Announces Most Extensive Airport Improvement Program in Central Texas History



(CITY OF AUSTIN) – Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) is upgrading the travel experience with the announcement of its launch of the most extensive improvement program in its history. Following significant COVID-19 impacts to air travel, AUS re-strategized its original expansion program to meet the needs of post-pandemic air travel. The Airport Expansion Development Program (AEDP) includes critical components of the 2040 Master Plan that meet the immediate needs of AUS passengers and airlines.

The airport is experiencing significant and consistent passenger growth since March 2021. According to the latest available data, summer 2021 air travel activity at AUS is on track to match or surpass 2019 air travel activity. As AUS continues to experience a rebound in passenger activity levels, the improvements will be scalable to meet a range of forecasted growth profiles and provide a foundation for future growth and development.

The below rendering reflects the Program’s elements, which will include: Optimization of the Barbara Jordan Terminal

Enabling airfield and utility work to include building a new Central Utility Plant and removing existing structures to prepare for construction activities

Preparing for a new Midfield Concourse with 10+ new gates and two new taxiways

The improvements will be funded through traditional airport development funding sources, such as airport cash reserves, current and future airport revenues, future revenue bond proceeds, and Federal Aviation Administration grants.

Contracting opportunities to support AUS improvements will be released late this summer, while opportunities for environmental review public participation will begin this fall. To learn more about the AEDP and to stay updated on these opportunities, visit AustinTexas.gov/AEDP.

2021 Fest Africa

by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon
THE VILLAGER

(VILLAGER) - Sunday, July 11, 2021, Fest Africa took place in the heart of Pflugerville, Texas. According to the organizers, "the event was held in Pflugerville, which has the highest African Diaspora and African American population, in a key geographic location."

At Fest Africa, the public had the opportunity to learn about African culture, listen to and dance to African musicians. Both the Tina Rix Band and Dj Eli were there playing some great music. The Tina Rix band played a set of six songs in which the public enjoyed. Attendee Bummi



Fest Africa 2021

mentioned, "My kids loved the Tina Rix band; they were amazing!" Secondly, DJ Eli played some classic African songs; the guests wore the dance floor out.

Finally, the organizers were pleased that the attendees enjoyed themselves. "We heard a lot of positive feedback from the crowd. Therefore we plan to another

Fest Africa in 2022," stated the organizers. As the 2021 Fest Africa closed, guests learned from and appreciated the growing African Diaspora culture.

American Dream Festival Annual Awards Show



American Dream Festival Association and Award Recipients. Photo by (Tsoke Chuch) Adjavon

by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon
THE VILLAGER

(VILLAGER) - From July 2 to July 4, 2021, Meci Biz Production USA Event Planner organized the American Dream Festival powered by a nonprofit organization, Smile Heart Foundation. The event kicked off with a donation to the homeless

population and African migrants in downtown Austin. In the midday, there was a golf tournament which followed with a business conference.

The business conference was an opportunity to showcase some African companies and learn from these owners. Some of the businesses present were BMG Tax Expert,

Hebrew Federal Credit Union, Franck Construction and Services, Solution Real Estate Texas, VIP QG Barber Shop & Spa, and Chiennee Soccer Training. According to the organizer, "the purpose of the business conference was to create a network connection with all the Austin African community entrepreneurs."

After the business conference, there was a basketball and soccer tournament, in which teams came as far as Dallas and Houston, Texas. A fashion show followed. According to Franck Tamuedjong (Maboy Premier), "fashion allowed me to launch the Double Lion brand, which customizes shoes and suits in the State of Texas."

Texas AG's Office Arrests Hervis Rogers for Alleged Illegal Voting

(HOUSTON PUBLIC MEDIA) - When Hervis Rogers went viral on social media for being the last person in line at Texas Southern University to cast a vote at 1 a.m. on Super Tuesday, he was applauded as a tenacious, civic-minded man who worked hard to exercise his right to vote.

Now, Rogers is being prosecuted by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's office for allegedly voting illegally.

Rogers was arrested and sentenced to 25 years in prison for burglary and intent to commit theft in 1995. He was out on parole May 20, 2004, and his parole was set to end June 13, 2020.

Rogers was one of millions of people in America without the right to vote, due to laws pro-



hibiting people on parole from participating in elections in many states across the country, including Texas.

Rogers was arrested on Wednesday in the South Acres neighborhood in Houston and he voted in Harris County, but the AG's office is prosecuting the case in Montgomery County. Rogers is charged with two counts of illegal voting. His bail is set at \$100,000.

Rogers is repre-

sented by the ACLU of Texas and Nicole DeBorde Hochglaube.

Because Rogers voted before his parole was scheduled to end, he was likely ineligible to cast a ballot on Election Day, despite being registered to vote, said a spokesperson with the Harris County Attorney's Office last year.

The arrest came just one day before the Texas Legislature convened on Thursday to begin a spe-

cial session, where a controversial voting bill is on the agenda.

Under a bill approved in 2007 by both the Texas House and Texas Senate, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice would have been required to notify people released from custody about their eligibility to vote. However, former Gov. Rick Perry vetoed that bill.

A similar bill filed this week by State Rep. John Bucy would require the state to give people convicted of felonies more information about their eligibility to vote.

Nicole D. Porter, director of advocacy with the Sentencing Project, said Hervis Rogers' case illustrates the need for the state to give people proper notification of their rights.

Texas Special Session

by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon
THE VILLAGER

(VILLAGER) - Last week, Governor Greg Abbott called for a special session to deal with voting issues. According to political experts, "the special session was organized because Gov. Abbott wants to pass important voting bills that only caters to Texas Republicans. Since Gov. Abbott is facing a primary within the republican party, he needs to push the republican activist agenda through the Texas Legislature."

In less than a day of the session, the Texas Legislature held some

hearing over some voting bills. According to the committee, over two hundred people came and gave their testimony for the voting bill. Some attendees were in favor of the bill; while, some others opposed the bill. The Democrats in Texas Legislature strongly opposed the bills because they believe it is too partisan.

Since the Democrats are in opposition, they decided to block the voting bill. They have blocked the voting bill by walking out of the Texas Legislature. Not only did they walk out, but they also flew to Washington DC to make their case from this partisan voting bill. Democrats are requesting the United States Congress and President Biden to push for a bi-partisan voting bill that will cater to all Americans; instead of a political party.

FDA Adds Warning About Rare Reaction to J&J COVID-19 Vaccine

by Matthew Perrone and Mike Stobbe
Associated Press



A vial with the Johnson & Johnson's one-dose COVID-19 vaccine is seen at the Vaxmobile, at the Uniondale Hempstead Senior Center, Wednesday, March 31, 2021, in Uniondale, N.Y. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

(AP) - U.S. regulators on Monday added a new warning to Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine about links to a rare and potentially dangerous neurological reaction, but said it's not entirely clear the shot caused the problem.

The Food and Drug Administration announced the new warning, flagging reports of Guillain-Barre syndrome, an immune system disorder that can cause muscle weakness and occasionally paralysis. Health officials described the side effect as a "small possible risk" for those getting the shot.

The action comes after the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviewed reports of about 100 people developing the syndrome after receiving the one-dose vaccine. Almost all of were hospitalized and one person died, the FDA said.

Guillain-Barre syndrome occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks some of its nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis that typically is temporary. An estimated 3,000 to 6,000 people develop the syndrome each year, according to the CDC.

The number of cases reported in connection with J&J's vaccine represents a tiny fraction of the nearly 13 million Americans who have received the one-dose shot. Most cases were reported in men — many 50 years old and up — and usually about two weeks after vaccination.

J&J said in a statement it has been discussing the reports with the FDA and other health regulators around the world.

The CDC said it would ask its panel of outside vaccine experts to review the issue at an upcoming meeting.

The government said the vaccines most used in the U.S., made by Pfizer and Moderna, show no risk of the disorder after more than 320 million doses have been administered.

The new warning will be included in pamphlets given to people getting the J&J shot. They should seek medical attention if they experience any symptoms, which include tingling sensations, trouble walking and double vision, the FDA said.





The CDC and the FDA have been monitoring side effect reports submitted by physicians, drugmakers and patients to a federal vaccine safety database.

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Summer setback: COVID deaths and cases rising again globally

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and MARIA CHENG | AP

(AP) - COVID-19 deaths and cases are on the rise again globally in a dispiriting setback that is triggering another round of restrictions and dampening hopes for an almost normal summer of fun.

The World Health Organization reported Wednesday that deaths climbed last week after nine straight weeks of decline. It recorded more than 55,000 deaths, a 3% increase from the week before. Cases rose last week by 10% to nearly 3 million, WHO said.

In its weekly report, the U.N. health agency said the highest numbers of new cases were in Brazil, India, Indonesia and Britain. WHO said that the more-contagious delta variant has now been identified in 111 countries since first being detected in India and that the mutant version is expected to become globally dominant in the coming months.

Amid the surge, the overall death toll in hard-hit Argentina neared 100,000. Daily coronavirus deaths in Russia hit record highs this week. In Belgium, COVID-19 infections, driven by the delta variant among the young, have almost doubled

over the past week. Britain recorded a one-day total of more than 40,000 new cases for the first time in six months.

In the U.S., with one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, newly confirmed infections per day have doubled over the past two weeks to an average of about 24,000, though

deaths are still on a downward trajectory at around 260 a day.

Los Angeles County, the most populous county in the U.S., reported its fifth straight day Tuesday of more than 1,000 new cases.

Tokyo is under a fourth state of emergency ahead of the Summer Games this month.

AUSTIN COMUNITY COLLEGE (ACC) DISTRICT

is requesting qualified firm(s) to submit Statements of Qualifications for the purpose of selecting a respondent to provide Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) for the Highland Campus (HLC) 1000 and HLC 2000 Renovation Projects for the following solicitation:

- Request for Qualifications (RFQ):
#909-21-0223-00-S-JN-RFQ

All responses must be electronically submitted to the Buyer of Record by no later than Wednesday, August 4, 2021, by 11:00 a.m., Central Standard Time (CST). See solicitation documents for details.

All responses must be electronically received by the Buyer of Record, by the date and time indicated above.

ACC will host an optional pre-response conference on Friday, July 23, 2021 at 10:00 a.m., CDT, to be held at the ACC Highland Campus (HLC) Building 1000 - ACCelerator, Room #1101, located at 6101 Airport Boulevard, Austin, TX 78752, and Via Zoom. Site Visit immediately following Pre-Response Conference.

See solicitation documents for details .ACC reserves the right to reject any and/or all responses and waive all formalities in the solicitation process.



You have done your part to protect yourselves, your family, friends and the community from COVID-19 for more than a year.

Let's stick together and get vaccinated, so we can safely spend time together again.

For more information on where to get your free vaccine call 3-1-1 or 512-974-2000 or visit austintexas.gov/covid19. No ID is required.



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Job 2107015

Coordinator, AE Enrollment Services
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Job 2107014

Assistant, Student Financial Aid
Round Rock Campus
Job 2107013

Academic Technology Support Assistant II
Multiple Locations
Job 2107012

Department Chair, Professional Nursing
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Job 2107011

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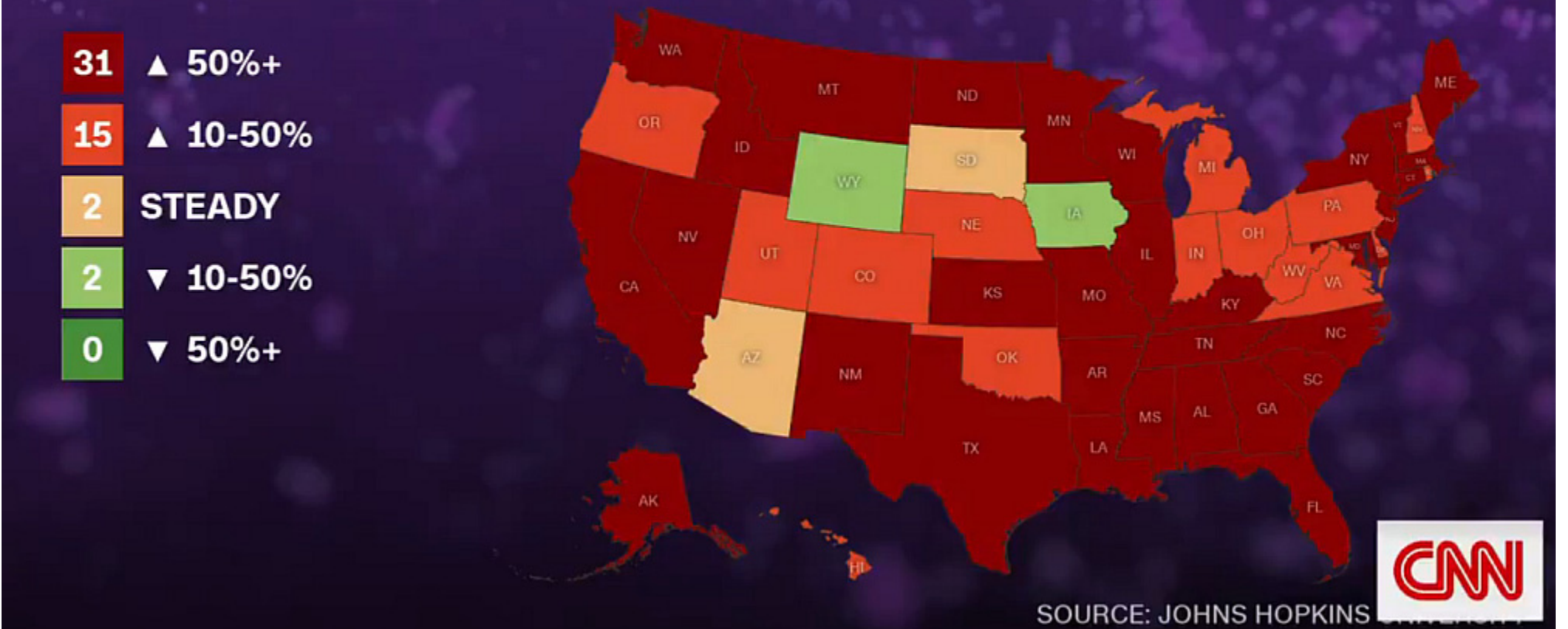
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Fox News Hammered With How Its Vaccine Coverage Will Go Down In History

By Lee Moran | HUFFPOST

CORONAVIRUS IN THE UNITED STATES NEW CASES IN PAST WEEK VS PREVIOUS WEEK



(HUFFPOST) - CNN “New Day” anchors Brianna Keilar and John Berman hammered home the same point over and over on Wednesday — that 99% of people who are now dying from COVID-19 in the United States are unvaccinated.

They also called out Fox News personalities including Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham, other conservative media outlets and GOP lawmakers who have sown doubt about the COVID-19 vaccines that have been declared by scientists worldwide to safely slow the spread of the coronavirus.

“Millions of Americans are seeing this nonsensical, non-scientific propaganda instead of this,” said Berman, cutting

to a public service announcement from Australia’s Department of Health showing a young woman with COVID-19 struggling to breathe on a ventilator.

“When history asks how so many Americans died when they could have been saved by a simple shot or two, you’ll see these TV clips again that we’ve just shown, in documentaries, about the cautionary tale that has been America’s response to the coronavirus pandemic,” said Keilar.

“About how a large part of our country, misled by misinformation often echoed by elected officials and right-wing media, was thrown a life raft, and instead said, ‘No, I’ll take my chances,’” she added.

Fed’s Powell expects Inflation to stay hot for months

Both the Fed and the Biden administration have said rapid price increases are being stoked by temporary factors.

By VICTORIA GUIDA
POLITICO

(POLITICO) Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell will warn lawmakers Wednesday that inflation is likely to remain high for months before cooling down, in the wake of hotter-than-expected price increases in May and June.

“Inflation has increased notably and will likely remain elevated in coming months before moderating,” Powell says in his prepared testimony to the House Financial Services Committee.

Both the Fed and the Biden administration have said rapid price increases are being stoked by temporary factors,

such as hiccups in the faster-than-expected re-opening of the economy. But Powell hadn’t previously indicated how long he thinks that what he calls “transitory” inflation might last.

His remarks suggest that while the central bank still sees the pace of price increases as temporary, they could last a while. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in May that she expects inflation to remain elevated through the end of the year.

On Tuesday, the Labor Department reported that the consumer price index rose 5.4 percent in June from the same month last year, the biggest jump

since 2008 and higher than expected, feeding fears that the Fed might have to intervene sooner than projected.

In his testimony, Powell reiterates that the Fed would begin removing some of its economic support “if we saw signs that the path of inflation or longer-term inflation expectations were moving materially and persistently beyond levels consistent with our goal” of an average 2 percent inflation over time.

However, he gave no sign that the central bank is planning to act imminently to slow its massive purchases of U.S. government debt and mortgage-backed



securities, saying the country is “still a ways off” from making enough progress toward the central bank’s goals, which include maximum employment.

Despite record-high job openings, the

unemployment rate was 5.9 percent in June, “and this figure understates the shortfall in employment,” given how many people are on the sidelines of the workforce right now, he says.

“Job gains should

be strong in coming months as public health conditions continue to improve and as some of the other pandemic-related factors currently weighing them down diminish,” according to Powell.

Ice Cube and Warner Bros. fight over ‘Friday’ franchise

By Michael “Ice-Blue” Harris

NNPA
BLACKPRESS

(NNPA) - Ice Cube’s Friday series is in the middle of a tug-of-war between the rapper and Warner Bros. studios. According to The Wall Street Journal, Ice Cube wants Warner Bros. to relinquish the rights to the Friday series as well as All About The Benjamins and The Players Club and has accused the studio of delaying the next installment in the franchise, Last Friday. The two parties agreed to develop Last Friday in 2012, with Cube reportedly to be paid \$11 million. Disagreements over the script and other issues have delayed the new film for years.

According to letters between the parties, Warner Bros. doesn’t intend to relinquish any rights to the film and have blamed Ice Cube instead for the movie’s delay, citing that his time has been spent with other business ventures like the Big3 basketball league. Warner Bros. responded calling the demand “extortionate” and saying it won’t release rights to Friday or any other Ice Cube films, according to correspondence obtained by the Wall Street Journal.

A letter from the hip-hop veteran’s attorney said the studio has been excessive in its feedback notes on the

scripts Ice Cube wrote for the next Friday film and feels Warner Bros. has been a “poor steward” for the franchise. “These guys don’t get me, and I don’t get them,” Ice Cube said in an interview with the WSJ.

While Friday remains in limbo, Ice Cube has signed on to star in the upcoming film Oh Hell No. The film will be directed by Kitao Sakuri who most recently directed and co-wrote Netflix’s No. 1 comedy movie Bad Trip, starring Eric Andre, Lil Rel Howery and Tiffany Haddish.

According to Deadline, Jack Black is in talks



Ice Cube (Photo credit: Bang Media)

to star in the film as well which follows Sherman (Black), who falls in love with Will’s (Cube) mom, who has only one thing

to say about that: “Oh hell no.”

Oh Hell No is expected to be released on June 17, 2022.