

# IMPEACHMENT TRIAL 2.0

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Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, serving as Presiding Judge, signing the summons for the second impeachment trial of Donald Trump

# NEWARK'S BRAVEST RESCUE TRAPPED ELDERLY WOMAN



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# LOCAL TALK



25¢

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## BOARD OF ED APPOINTMENT RAISES QUESTIONS

By Lev D. Zilbermints

**NEWARK** - Veleriz Santana, the policy director for State Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, was appointed by the Newark Board of Education to fill a vacancy. The process of appointment raised questions of conflict of interest and whether the appointment was legal to begin with.

The website [newark.chalkbeat.org](http://newark.chalkbeat.org) wrote late January 28 that Veleriz Santana was chosen by a 7-1 vote of the school board to replace Octavio "Tave" Padilla, a two-term board member who died shortly before Thanksgiving. Santana has powerful political connections, being the policy director to State Senator M. Teresa Ruiz. Previously Santana served as an aide to Newark Mayor Ras Baraka.

According to [newark.chalkbeat.org](http://newark.chalkbeat.org), the North Ward Democratic Committee backed Padilla for his two terms on the school board. Like the late board mem-



ber, Vereliz Sanatana is a member of the North Ward Democratic Committee.

According to [newark.chalkbeat.org](http://newark.chalkbeat.org), Santana majored in English at Stockton University. This was followed by a master's degree in English literature and linguistics. Currently Santana is doing her graduate studies at Rutgers-Newark. Her major is Master's in Business Administration.

Santana's term expires in April, when voters will choose someone to serve out Padilla's final year. In order to stay on the Newark Board of Education, San-

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## PARENTS & TEACHERS TAKE STANDS ON HYBRID SCHOOLS

By Walter Elliott

**MONTCLAIR** - The paths to hybrid virtual or remote/in-person classroom learning instruction, as of Feb. 10, by the Montclair Public Schools and the South Orange-Maplewood School District, 6.5 miles to its south, could not be more divergent.

The Montclair Education Association, as of press time, may have received a notice to appear before New Jersey State Superior Court-Newark sooner rather than later.

MPS Superintendent Dr. Jonathon Ponds and the Montclair Board of Education filed suit Feb. 2, seeking a court injunction that would force the union's 1,000 members back to the classroom.

Ponds asserts that the MEA's Jan. 22 refusal to report to school buildings Jan. 25, in preparation for phased-in hybrid learning, was a job action. The teachers' continuing remote instruction from their homes through Feb. 8 was equal to a

(Continued on page 3)



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Turn to  
**PAGE 16**



**Editorial**

*Dhiren Shah*  
Editor-In-Chief

*Hello Readers,*

Are Trump's lawyers failing to defend Trump in his second impeachment hearing? They have already lost one Republican Senator who said a month ago that he would vote against the impeachment proceedings because the impeachment was wrong. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana was upset with the way Trump's lawyers presented their opening arguments. He joined five other Republican senators - Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Patrick J. Toomey of Pennsylvania

as being in favor of the proceedings.

All six senators are free to vote whether to impeach the president or not, but at least as of right now, they want the proceedings and want to hear the facts. For impeachment, the Democrats need 67 votes. There are 50 Democrats (including two independents) and six republicans (if they vote in favor of impeachment). Still, they are short by 11 votes. One of the "Local Talk" reader came to me and said that the Democrats might give each Republican senator \$20 million. I do not know how he came up with such an idea, but I think it's fake news.

Another influential person told me that the Trump administration has made such a mess with the vaccine distribution, that the Biden administration is having a hard time to get some smooth sailing. He also told me

that the Trump administration has not given the Biden administration easy access to information. However, it will eventually settled and organized with a month or two.

Due to the weak performance from Donald Trump's team of lawyers, Trump and some of the Republicans are upset. Now they are preparing more videos for their presentation. For the Democrats, they want to make sure that Trump cannot run again in 2024 and his side becomes weaker in the upcoming election for the House and Senate as well in 2022.

Local businesses are struggling and need help. The government has tried their best with some huge programs. One stimulus package gave almost every adult \$1,200 and \$500 per child around March 2020. At the end of 2020, some people received \$600 more in another stimulus

package, while some received it early in 2021. Biden has promised to give another \$1,400, and as soon as the bill passes, he will sign it.

The Second economic booster was giving \$600 per week to unemployed persons for few months in 2020. The best program to boost smaller businesses was PPP (paycheck Protection Program). Also, SBA loans helped smaller businesses as well, but they have to be repaid over the course of 30 years.

In 2021, under the Biden administration, they have announced a new PPP loan which was named a second draw PPP loan. This time, it was easier than before, because those who received the first one had to show their sales reduced by 25% in any quarter from 2019 to 2020.

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**WEATHER FOR THE WEEK**

<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>
Snow Possible	Mostly Cloudy	Possible PM Snow	AM Snow	Mostly Cloudy	Snow Possible	Partly Cloudy
HI 33	HI 28	HI 29	HI 33	HI 28	HI 36	HI 34
LO 17	LO 18	LO 25	LO 16	LO 21	LO 26	LO 24

# SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway

The legend of Tom Brady continued to grow, as the future Hall of Fame quarterback won his seventh Super Bowl title, while giving the Tampa Bay Buccaneers franchise their second and first in 18 years.

The game took place in the Buccaneers home stadium of Raymond James Stadium, which was socially distanced and partially filled at 25,000 living fans, and over 30,000 cutouts. Tampa Bay defended its home ship in a dominating 31-9 over the now-former champion Kansas City Chiefs. Despite Brady leaving the New England Patriots, ironically, all four Tampa touchdowns were scored by former Pats - two TD catches from recently unretired TE Rob Gronkowski, one from WR Antonio Brown, and one on the ground from RB LeGarrette Blount.

The extra points and one FG were provided by kicker Ryan Succop, who started his career with the Chiefs as "Mr. Irrelevant." The title is bestowed upon any player selected last in the NFL Draft, in which Succop was pick #256 in the 2009 Draft.

For the fifth time in his career, Brady won the game's Most Valuable Player award, despite throwing for just over 200 yards. The real MVP was the Bucs defense, who posted a record 29 pressures on Patrick Mahomes, who had to run nearly 500 yards with a turf toe injury away from rushers. The high scoring KC offense was held to just three Harrison Butker field goals. Tight End Travis Kelce was the only Chiefs player to have any success, recording over 100 yards receiving.

(Continued on page 11)

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"strike."

The MEA membership and leadership said that they will not return to school until two conditions are met. The first condition is that they will not return until they are all vaccinated for COVID-19. The second condition is that classrooms, offices and other interiors of MPS buildings are sufficiently ventilated.

Ponds and MPS administrators said that they have ordered 400 air purifiers, to be installed and repaired windows to the tune of \$26 million. Teaching may be meanwhile done in rooms with HVAC, like the 2010-built Charles H. Bullock elementary school.

MEA leaders, however, counter that Ponds and MPS administrators had not negotiated in good faith with them and a mutually-appointed mediator the week of Jan. 19. Their charge includes department heads not furnishing details of classroom upgrades.

Teachers' Jan. 25 "no-show"

prompted up to 800 parents from two groups to protest before some MPS schools. Montclair Families Advocating for In-Person Learning (FAIL) and Concerned Parents and Community Members of Montclair, N.J. (CoPCoM) have signed petitions calling for five-day full-time in-person learning.

The MPS-MEA impasse has various Montclarions taking stands - including in its Municipal Building.

Mayor Sean Spiller, on Jan. 25, said that he believed that all sides want to reopen the schools "once everyone is convinced that the schools are safe." The first-year mayor and former councilman added that "vaccination is the only way to guarantee safety."

Spillar has more weight here than as an opinion giver.

Montclair's Board of Education and Board of School Estimate members - like those in East Orange and, with the BSE, in South Orange-Maplewood - are appointed by the mayor.

Spillar's day job is as a vice

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president in the New Jersey Education Association.

The SOMSD-South Orange-Maplewood Education Association may have meanwhile implemented their "back to classroom" agreement while you read this. Their Jan. 28 accord had been postponed due to recent snowstorms.

The agreement includes SOMEA members teaching from classrooms that have been retrofitted with ventilators and other upgrades. More classrooms among the 11 two-town district buildings will be opened when ready.

Teachers will simultaneously instruct from those outfitted classrooms to in-person students and those virtually on Zoom. This hybrid model is to start gradually from two-days-a-week and selected grades plus all special education and English language learners.

This administrator-teacher pact came after some of the latter's members held a lunch hour walkout and rally Jan. 19. That Tuesday was when teachers

were to start preparing for a Jan. 25 hybrid learning start.

Although some selected elementary school students entered their designated classrooms Jan. 19, the demonstration led Schools Superintendent Dr. Ronald Taylor to postpone the hybrid launch a third time this school year.

Montclair and South Orange's approaches to reopening schools are similar or at variance to those in districts in "Local Talk" land, New Jersey and across the country.

Teachers, administrators and politicians have struck agreements in Chicago and New York City public schools. San Francisco has sued its school district to reopen, however, and Buffalo's teachers union has sued to postpone in-person learning.

Some of the schools that have shut down in the wake of the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus pandemic's outbreak here in March have been grappling with when and how to reopen since before the 2020-21 school

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# TOWN WATCH

**DISCLAIMER:** The following items are primarily drawn from first responders. Responders' accounts may not be their full activity range. Grand juries hand down indictments when evidence presented them warrant a trial. Named suspects/defendants are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

**NEWARK** - Members of Shiloh Baptist Church, whose sanctuary here at 99-103 Davenport Ave. was levelled after its Feb. 2 roof collapse, are out to prove that a house of worship is made up of its members more than its building.

SBC Senior Pastor Malachai Brantley, Jr. and Trustees Chairman Wilburt Austin have their R.D. Spain Youth Center at 107-09 Davenport available for worship and Bible study for its 300 members. Its Shiloh Rainbow Academy child care center, at 110 Davenport, continues unaffected.

The church has started a GoFundMe.Com church replacement fundraiser while Brantley and Austin check with SBC's insurance carrier. That prospective third house of worship would be the third specially-built sanctuary, after an 1887 edifice at 723-25 North Sixth St. (now a home) and the 1926-Feb. 2 structure.

A demolition crew was called in by Newark's Engineering Services Feb. 3 to finish what a 16.2-inch snowfall had started Noon Feb. 2. Most of the sanctuary's roof had cratered under the snow's weight.

Responding Newark Fire Department crews evacuated residents from adjacent 97 and 105 Davenport until demolishers had completed their levelling. There was no one within 99-103 Davenport since the mid-March pandemic lockdown, although there had been plans to make some interior repairs.

**IRVINGTON** - Township po-

lice detectives have been looking for a vehicle - and its carjacker - that was taken from its owners on a North Ward street here since Feb. 2.

IPD first responded to 5:22 p.m. calls of a carjacking in progress in front of 833 18th Ave. that Tuesday. One cruiser's officers found two people in front of Lucky Star #1 Chinese Restaurant.

While the first vehicle occupant got out into the restaurant, the second occupant "was physically removed" by a suspect "who was armed with a weapon" and sped away.

One of the calls came from another motorist who saw the carjacking and, while pursuing the vehicle, gave its description.

None of the victims or the "good Samaritan" driver gave the carjacker's clothing description. Authorities have not released details of the hijacked car, nor its last whereabouts.

**EAST ORANGE** - An apparent domestic dispute here in the First Ward., over a car that was scratched during Feb. 8 snow shoveling, left one man dead plus a second man and a woman hospitalized.

Acting Essex County Prosecutor Theodore "Ted" Stephens II and East Orange Police Chief Phyllis Bindi said that Calvin Scott, 43, was found on Brighton Avenue's 200 block Monday morning by responding EOPD officers "with apparent stab wounds." Although he and the other two injured people were taken to Newark's University Hospital, Scott died at 11:33 a.m.

That block, over time, was filled with investigators from EOPD, the ECPO Homicide Task Force, a Newark Police Department Crime Scene Unit and police from Glen Ridge and Bloomfield. Several news crews, including one with a traffic helicopter, had also arrived.

Neighbors told reporters that Scott became upset that his car had been scratched while he and other house residents were clearing snow and accused one of his fellow diggers. A fist fight, ensued, which ended with his stabbing.

One resident told a reporter

that Scott was the fiancée of her aunt - and that the stabber was her uncle. She said that she, Scott and the uncle are among seven family or domestic members living in the same house. They are three generations who are taking care of their patriarch - an 82-year-old man.

The 200 block of Brighton, where the Doddtown and Franklin neighborhoods meet, is mostly residential. It is within walking distance of the Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Orange and Montclair borders.

Stephens and Bindi have not identified the other injured man or woman - nor a suspect. They said that the investigation remains active. Scott's official cause of death is pending autopsy results.

**ORANGE** - When - or if - one sees a SUEZ-N.A. snowplow truck here, it will be either at the Chestnut Street Pumping Station or in response to a water emergency call.

That is the word from Orange Business Administrator Christopher Hartwyck Feb. 10, who clarified who is plowing and/or removing snow.

"The snow removal is going very well," said Hartwyck Wednesday morning. "In addition to our own Department of Public Works trucks, we've contracted the Shauger Group to remove the piles of snow from corners."

The ODPW-Shauger combine is part of a coordinated snow clearing effort. The DPW, for example, had posted on Facebook Feb. 7-8 which of five sections' residents are to remove their curbside parked cars ahead of curb-to-curb clearing. That posting included a list of lots where drivers can park in the interim.

Orange residents and visitors may have also seen Essex County Roads and Bridges and NJTransit vehicles, or their contractors, plowing and/or clearing their streets or stations here. But not or not yet SUEZ.

SUEZ-N.A. issued similar snow preparedness press releases from its Paramus headquarters to municipal customers Jan. 31-Feb. 2. One news outlet, however, interpreted SUEZ as

"Orange's snow servicer" - which prompted "Local Talk" to call Orange City Hall.

The Shauger Group has performed contracted snow clearing, street cleaning, utility work and landscaping for area public and private clients since moving into the old Doddtown Shop-Rite here in the late 1980s. SUEZ and its predecessor have been managing the Orange Water Department under renewable contracts since the 1990s.

**WEST ORANGE** - Neither township police chief James Abbott, nor his detective bureau, have said whether two license plate thefts reported here Feb. 2 have any connections.

A Sunnyside Road resident reported that someone had removed the front license plate from his 2017 Nissan Pathfinder sometime between Jan. 31 and Feb. 2. He said he had backed his SUV onto his driveway that Sunday - only to find its front plate missing while clearing snow that Tuesday morning.

New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission law requires at least a front license plate be worn by Garden State-registered vehicles. MVC prefers having both front and rear plates affixed.

The owner of a Harrison Avenue garage reported that a pedestrian had removed both plates and a bumper off a car parked on its lot sometime overnight Feb. 1-2. The garage owner showed police footprints in the snow going to and away from the victimized 2008 Infiniti G37 in the same direction.

**SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD** - Current township resident Ken Kurson was among the last 56 people who President Donald J. Trump granted executive clemency to Jan. 19-20 before his leaving The White House.

Trump's pardoning of Kurson, 52, of interstate harassment and stalking charges thwarts the U.S. Department of Justice-Eastern District of New York's prosecution. He was to have stood trial in a Brooklyn federal courtroom before Trump's pardon.

Kurson, who once lived in  
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**SCHOOLS** (Cont. from page 3)

year.

Of the 584 New Jersey public school districts, 272, at last word, have gone to hybrid learning. Each district's plan has to pass the New Jersey Department of Education's muster. School administrators then have to get buy-ins from parents and teachers.

Some parents, depending on their stations in life, either had to go out as essential workers or have also stayed in house to work or if they had work at all. Those levels may limit time they can help with their children's instruction.

Some parents have discovered that virtual or remote learning is not a one-size-fits-all instructional model. Some children have thrived, some on or around pre-pandemic par and some have lagged behind.

Remote student performance may have other factors. Internet and computer availability is something many school districts, including Newark Public Schools, have strived to meet.

There are also intertwining social, economic and racial considerations. SOMSD, for example, have been grappling with getting more African American students in Advanced Placement courses, hiring more African American teachers and redistricting its schools to close a decades-old "Achievement Gap."

Some parents, under economic pressure, want to see the schools reopen as soon as possible. This is why groups like Montclair's FAIL and CoPCoM have formed. At least 11 SOMSD parents have filed a lawsuit in Superior Court, seeking an injunction to open both towns' schools five-days-a-week.

There are some parents, however, who remember past vaccination abuse and are reluctant to take COVID vaccines for themselves and their children.

"You have to consider the history of America when it comes to science and testing in the Black community," said Montclair Councilman and former MBOE member David Cummings Feb. 9. "The

Tuskegee experiment on Black people is something we'll never forget."

Some parents' desire to open schools ASAP conflicts with the wants of teachers and school staff. They are inclined to wait until the classrooms are sufficiently revamped and they can get vaccinated.

Gov. Phil Murphy, as of Feb. 10, has said that "teachers are on the on deck circle" in prioritizing who will get the COVID vaccines. The million-plus vaccination shots so far given have been given "Priority 1A and 1B," including health care workers and first responders, based on CDC guidelines.

Teachers are currently grouped with people 65-years-old and older and [people 18-64 with chronic medical conditions like cancer, heart disease, cancer, obesity - and smoking.

"I haven't smoked in 20 years," asked one reporter to Murphy. "What's keeping me from smoking again so I can cut in line?"

"It's a false choice to compare smokers versus everyone else," replied Murphy (D-Rumson). "This' based on data, facts. "Anyone under 65 who's the most vulnerable, including if you're an essential worker, an educator, you're eligible right now."

The status of the other "Local Talk" public schools districts, subject to changing COVID infection levels, are:

**BELLEVILLE:** Hybrid; grade schoolers, special education students have in-classroom option; Belleville High School remains all-remote.

**BLOOMFIELD:** All remote through at least Feb. 28.

**EAST ORANGE:** All remote until at least April 12.

**GLEN RIDGE:** Hybrid. Elementary, junior high school, special ed students have the in-classroom option; High school students all-remote.

**IRVINGTON:** All remote through Feb. 16 (for teachers) and March 1 (students). (Note: (Continued on page 11)

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# NEWARK'S BRAVEST RESCUE TRAPPED ELDERLY WOMAN

**NEWARK** - Mayor Ras J. Baraka and Public Safety Director Anthony F. Ambrose announced that Newark Firefighters rescued a 77-year-old woman who had been sheltering in her vehicle, parked at 67 Lincoln Park.

"Unfortunately, this woman lives inside her vehicle and was sheltering in place during the snowstorm," Mayor Baraka said. "When she first contacted Police yesterday, there was an error made with logging the correct address. Police officers called her back for the correct address, but received no answer," he added. "The next time members of the Department of Public Safety heard from her was at 9:30 this morning (Feb. 4), when she contacted the Newark Fire Division. They responded immediately to render aid."

"In light of the woman's age and the fact that she's a resident without an address, we combed through our records to pinpoint exactly when this incident was initially reported to us," Director Ambrose said. "We regret that human error played a role in delaying our response to the correct address, although we attempted to call her for a correction," he said. "I'm grateful that

she reached out again today (Feb. 4) and that this incident didn't end tragically."

At approximately 3:30 p.m. yesterday (Feb. 3), the woman contacted Newark Police, indicating that she was unable to leave her van because it was stuck in snow. She provided an address of 67 Lincoln Park. The Public Safety Telecommunicator mistakenly logged the address as 67 Lincoln Street. When Police arrived at that address and were unable to locate the vehicle, a navy blue mini-van, they called back the number the woman called from, but received no answer.

At approximately 9:30 a.m. today (Feb. 4), the woman contacted Newark Firefighters who responded at 9:36 a.m. and located the woman inside the vehicle. Firefighters shoveled a path to her driver's side door and freed her from the vehicle. The woman refused medical attention as well as assistance to a shelter or to a family member's home. Firefighters further offered to shovel out her vehicle, which she also refused.

The Newark Office of Homeless Services is working to offer assistance to the woman.



## UNITED STATES

### ***Impeachment Trial 2.0 Begins***

On Feb. 9, the United States experienced two firsts: a second impeachment trial, concurrent with the first of a former president.

The trial was allowed to proceed after all the Democrats in the Senate, as well as six Republicans, voted to go forward with it. This comes after the House of Representatives voted mostly but not completely along party lines to pass an Article of Impeachment on the grounds of Incitement of Insurrection.

House Impeachment managers presenting the Democrats' case against Donald Trump include lead manager Jamie Raskin, Diana DeGette, David Cicilline, Joaquin Castro, Eric Swalwell, Ted Lieu, Joe Neguse, Madeleine Dean, and Stacey Plaskett. So far, they have cited Trump's rhetoric on social media and during the Jan. 6 rally as the match that lit the incitement of the insurrection at the Capitol. Meanwhile, Trump's lawyers have defended Trump on the basis of his words being protected as freedom of speech under the First Amendment.

The trial is expected to run only eight hours per day and should not go longer than a week. While many have welcomed an impeachment of Trump, some have suggested that the trial should only come after Congress passes the proposed \$1.9 trillion aid package to assist the American people.

## INDIA

### ***Deadly Floods Ravage India***

The United Nations stands ready, if necessary, to contribute to ongoing rescue and assistance efforts, following a glacier burst and subsequent flash flooding in northern India, Secretary-General António Guterres said on Feb. 7.

At least 14 people are reported to have died and over 170 missing after part of a Himalayan glacier broke away in India's Uttarakhand province on Sunday, unleashing a torrent of water, rock and debris downstream. Key infrastructure, including a dam, are also reported to have been damaged. Some 15 people are said to have been rescued as of the morning of Feb. 8 (local time).

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, the Secretary-General expressed his deep condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of India.

"The United Nations stands ready to contribute to ongoing rescue and assistance efforts if necessary," the statement added.

According to media reports, experts are investigating the incident, which occurred in a remote area, and the cause is yet to be determined.

Glacier bursts, and the resulting flash floods, are extremely destructive natural hazards, especially for communities and infrastructure downstream. The Himalayan region is particularly vulnerable to such disasters, with the risk aggravated due to climate change and temperature rise.

## MIDDLE EAST

### ***Huge Ruling on Israel-Palestine Conflict***

On Feb. 5, Pre-Trial Chamber I of the International Criminal Court ("ICC" or "Court") decided, by majority, that the Court's territorial jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine, a State party to the ICC Rome Statute, extends to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

On Dec. 20, 2019, the ICC Prosecutor announced the conclusion of the preliminary examination of the Situation in Palestine. The Prosecutor determined that all the statutory criteria under the Rome Statute for the opening of an investigation have been met. A decision on opening the investigation in this situation is in the remit of the ICC Prosecutor. On Jan. 22, 2020, the Prosecutor seized the Chamber under article 19(3) of the Rome Statute, requesting a ruling only on the scope of the Court's territorial jurisdiction in the Situation in the State of Palestine.

In the decision, Pre-Trial Chamber I recalled that the ICC is not constitutionally competent to determine matters of statehood that would bind the international community. By ruling on the territorial scope of its jurisdiction, the Chamber is neither adjudicating a border dispute under international law nor prejudging the question of any future borders. The Chamber's ruling is for the sole purpose of defining the Court's territorial jurisdiction.

Pre-Trial Chamber I examined the Prosecutor's request as well as the submissions of other States, organizations and scholars who participated as amicus curiae and groups of victims. The Chamber held that, in accordance with the ordinary meaning given to its terms in their context and in the light of the object and purpose of the Statute, the reference to '[t]he

State on the territory of which the conduct in question occurred' in article 12(2)(a) of the Statute must be interpreted as a reference to a State Party to the Rome Statute.

The Chamber found that, regardless of its status under general international law, Palestine's accession to the Statute followed the correct and ordinary procedure and that the Chamber has no authority to challenge and review the outcome of the accession procedure conducted by the Assembly of States Parties. Palestine has thus agreed to subject itself to the terms of the ICC Rome Statute and has the right to be treated as any other State Party for the matters related to the implementation of the Statute.

Pre-Trial Chamber I noted that, among similarly worded resolutions, the General Assembly of the United Nations in Resolution 67/19 "[reaffirmed] the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to independence in their State of Palestine on the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967." On this basis, the majority, composed of Judge Reine Adélaïde Sophie Alapini-Gansou and Judge Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, found that the Court's territorial jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine extends to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In addition, the Chamber found, by majority, that the arguments regarding the Oslo Agreements, and its clauses limiting the scope of Palestinian jurisdiction, are not pertinent to the resolution of the issue of the Court's territorial jurisdiction in Palestine. Such matters and other further questions on jurisdiction may be examined when and if

(Continued on page 13)

# CDC STUDY: 1 IN 5 HAVE STI

CDC - New data published by the CDC estimate that on any given day in 2018, 1 in 5 people in the U.S. had a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The analyses, published in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, show the burden of diagnosed and undiagnosed STIs in the U.S. and the estimated medical costs associated with STIs.

It is estimated there were:

- Nearly 68 million STIs on any given day in 2018 (prevalent STIs).
- 26 million newly acquired STIs in 2018 (incident STIs).
- Nearly one in two incident STIs were acquired by people aged 15 to 24 years old.
- Nearly \$16 billion in direct lifetime medical costs resulting from STIs acquired in 2018.

“The burden of STIs is staggering,” said Jonathan Mermin, M.D., M.P.H., director of CDC’s National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention. “At a time when STIs are at an all-time high, they have fallen out of the national conversation. Yet, STIs are a preventable and treatable national health threat with substantial personal and economic impact. There is an urgent need to reverse the trend of increasing STIs, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected many STI prevention services.”

STIs can have serious health consequences. People with these infections do not always experience disease symptoms, but, if left untreated, some STIs can increase the risk of HIV infection, or can cause chronic pelvic pain, pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, and/or severe pregnancy and newborn complications.

**STIs cost the U.S. healthcare system billions of dollars annually**

HIV and HPV infections acquired in 2018 were the costliest STIs in the new CDC analysis, as medical costs for these infections include lifetime treatment for people with HIV and treat-

ment for HPV-related cancers. Other reportable STIs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis, have substantial medical costs as well.

Of the estimated \$16 billion in lifetime medical costs from STIs acquired in 2018:

- Most (\$13.7 billion) of all costs were attributed to sexually acquired HIV infections.
- \$755 million were attributed to HPV infections.
- More than \$1 billion were attributed to chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis combined.
- About 60% of these combined costs from chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were among young people ages 15-24 yrs.
- Nearly 75% of the \$2.2 billion in non-HIV-related STI medical costs were among women.

The total cost of STIs far exceeds the medical cost burden estimated in this study, which did not include costs associated with lost productivity, other non-medical costs, and STI prevention.

“Proven STI prevention - at all levels - is a cornerstone of protecting America’s health, economic security, and wellness,” said Raul Romaguera, acting director for CDC’s Division of STD Prevention. “There are significant human and financial costs associated with these infections, and we know from other studies that cuts in STI prevention efforts result in higher costs down the road. Preventing STIs could save billions in medical costs, but more importantly, prevention would improve the health and lives of millions of people.”

**Focusing STI prevention on those hardest hit and the need for better data**

COVID-19 has underscored the underlying effects of systemic health and social inequities that put racial and ethnic minority groups and other populations at increased risk of infection. Similarly, there is an ongoing

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disproportionate burden of STIs among certain racial and ethnic groups; among young people between 15 and 24 years old who accounted for nearly half of all new STIs in 2018; and among women, who account for a disproportionate burden of severe STI outcomes and medical costs.

CDC’s new estimates are critical to better understanding the scope of STIs in the U.S. However, the findings also highlight gaps in the scientific literature and the ongoing need for more data. This includes the need for population-based STI screening estimates to provide a better picture of diagnosed and undiagnosed STIs in groups disproportionately affected, including some racial/ethnic minority groups and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning LGBTQ.

**Innovative strategies critical to addressing the STI epidemic**

At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating ra-

cial and ethnic health disparities, straining the public health infrastructure, and creating additional challenges to delivering healthcare services, new strategies for increasing access to quality sexual healthcare are critical. Strategies used to overcome barriers associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to help reverse increases in STIs. Examples include:

- STI express clinics that allow walk-in STI testing and treatment without a full clinical exam.
- Partnerships with pharmacies and retail health clinics, which can provide new access points for STI services, such as on-site testing and treatment.

Telehealth / telemedicine, which can ensure access to healthcare providers, support self-testing or self-collection, and is especially critical in rural areas.

**BOARD OF ED APPOINTMENT**

(Continued from page 1)

atana will have to be a candidate in the 2021 school board election.

**Was Santana's election valid?**

There are questions whether Santana was validly elected by the board. As a policy director to State Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, Santana is in a position to influence policy on both state and local level. This raises the question of conflict of interest for Ms. Vereliz Santana. Does her allegiance lie with Newark or the state of New Jersey?

Activists say that the bylaws of the Newark Board of Education were not followed. "Local Talk" attempted to verify this statement by contacting Joseph Zarra, interim Superintendent of Newark Schools by phone. As of press time, Zarra did not return messages left with his secretary.

Another criticism put forth by activists is that the appointment itself was done at an executive meeting, away from public scrutiny. The community was denied input and participation. Denise Cole, a Newark resident, said that the Board of Education should pay more attention to what is going on.

In addition to all of the above, "Local Talk" learned from credible sources that the Newark Board of Education was very likely not following the Roberts Rules of Order during meetings. The key point, research showed, is that Robert's Rules of Order, when followed, guard an organization against conflict of interest.

**Criticism from former board members**

Writing on her blog, black-womanteacher.net, former board member Leah Z. Owens blasted Santana's appointment as deeply flawed and the board as uncarving. Owens said that the board

used the January 26 and 28 meetings in an unethical and illegal way. This is how Owens interpreted 2019 New Jersey Statutes Annotated, Title 18A - EDUCATION, Section 12-15 - Filling vacancies.

"The law states that a school board gets to fill a vacancy of this kind by majority vote of the remaining members. In no other place is a specific, required process outlined. This board, under [President Josephine C.] Garcia's leadership allowed nearly the full 65 days allotted to make an appointment before having a discussion (in Executive Session, no less) as a board about what to do. Then, with the business and regular meetings occurring two days apart from each other, made NO mention at Tuesday's business meeting of their decision to appoint someone. They approved Thursday's (tonight's) agenda at the Tuesday meeting and then amended it as soon as tonight's meeting opened. They amended the agenda to add the appointment vote.

So, if the law allows them to do this (but does it?) they're not in the wrong, right? Wrong. This board had a choice. They always had a choice as to how to go filling the vacancy. One such choice would have been to take applications from all those interested, deliberate over the applications, and then appoint someone. Another choice would have been to appoint a candidate from the last school board election, first asking the highest vote getter," Owens concluded.

**Newark group puts out statement demanding reforms**

New Jersey Communities United put out a strongly-worded statement demanding immediate reforms to the Newark Board of Education.

"We are not only disappointed but outraged by the conduct of certain members of the Newark Board of Education, particularly as it relates to community

**ESSEX COUNTY COVID-19 CASE TALLY**

Weekly Statistics from February 3 - February 10, 2021

Municipality	2-3-2021	Deaths	2-10-2021	Deaths
Belleville	3949	94	4065	95
Bloomfield	3747	93	3870	95
Caldwell	414	14	423	14
Cedar Grove	1154	119	1184	119
East Orange	4868	259	5018	264
Essex Fells	138	2	140	2
Fairfield	595	25	612	26
Glen Ridge	235	11	250	11
Irvington	3216	193	3301	195
Livingston	1318	80	1352	81
Maplewood	838	31	872	31
Millburn	605	8	625	8
Montclair	1532	63	1582	63
Newark	27647	830	<b>28692</b>	<b>842</b>
North Caldwell	305	6	318	6
Nutley	1978	50	2077	51
Orange	2456	113	2542	116
Roseland	360	15	371	15
South Orange	531	11	548	11
Verona	666	16	682	16
West Caldwell	750	50	780	50
West Orange	3337	211	3473	214
<b>Total</b>	<b>60639</b>	<b>2294</b>	<b>62777</b>	<b>2325</b>

**OTHER COVID-19 TALLIES (As of Feb. 10, 2021)**

**NJ: 650,263 cases / 19,916 deaths (Plus 2,187 probable)**

**United States (approx.): 27.23 Million / 469,500 deaths**

**Worldwide (approx.): 107.1 Million / 2.35 Million deaths**

**NY Gov. Cuomo announced that indoor dining could resume on Feb. 12 at 25% capacity.**

**Arenas will also be allowed to reopen at 10% capacity Feb. 23.**

participation in our children's education and public school system. There is an institutional culture, fostered by the Newark Board of Education, which dismisses and minimizes the concerns of the community. Public apologies are not a remedy for systemic and institutional inequity. Each member of the Newark Board of Education must honor the privilege that has been granted through the democratic process, and respect the hard work and dedication of the community who fought to restore the decision-making authority which has been wielded with such little regard," the statement read in part.

New Jersey Communities United demanded the "immediate resignation of Board President Josephine Garcia for

her remarks at the January 28th school board meeting regarding public participation; rescinding the Board's appointment of Vereliz Sanatana and following the guidelines and regulations established by the State Board of Education and the Essex County Board of Elections which provide for a public and transparent process for filling vacant seats on the Newark Board of Education; an immediate end to closed-door business meetings and decision-making that do not take place in full view of the public."

The statement went out to all Board members, the Superintendent of Newark Schools, Newark City Council members, and many other public officials and organizations.



# LOCAL WEEKLY



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## The Doctor Is In



**Dr. Adil Manzoor OP/ED**

### Why America Needs Price Transparency Now More Than Ever

If it is a function of the amount of money a country spends on its healthcare, then the United States of America should have the best healthcare sector in the whole world. But you and I know that is as far away from the case as possible. Like as far away as anything you can imagine.

The United States spends almost 18 percent of its GDP on healthcare, corresponding to over \$10,500 per person. For context, the UK spends below \$4,000 per person. There are many ways to look at this, and in every single one of them, it's ridiculous. Seriously, I'm sure no one would bat an eye if the massive amount of money spent on healthcare actually correlated to a better healthcare system. Like a system where insurance companies don't exploit people, where primary healthcare isn't crazily overpriced, a system where the average American can confidently say they are getting their money's worth of healthcare services, I can go on and on.

One question you may be dying to know is why exactly the United spends so much on healthcare, and there's no one answer to that question. It is generally through the combined effects of high service prices, higher administrative fees, and high utilization of these services.

Then comes the next question, how can the United States

reduce the total amount of money it spends. And again, there is no one answer to this question. In fact, there is no one answer that you can find seven out of ten people agreeing to. But a step in the right direction is price transparency.

So, what is price transparency then? Allow me to state it out in the simplest possible way - a system where a consumer knows what a particular service is going to cost before paying for it. It's that simple. You can look at it as a system where all about the pricing of healthcare is going to be known by the people that are paying for healthcare.

This system will require hospitals and insurance companies to offer full disclosure of all that goes into the financial aspect of any healthcare service. This will mean consumers can eventually get to know exactly what it is they are paying for. Price transparency can serve to increase both the productivity of healthcare workers and the quality of health care too. Let's be honest; it sounds nice. Very nice.

What then is the problem? Well, take a wild guess. You just guess the group of people that have a problem with this setting. Go on. I'll wait.

Of course, it's the hospitals and insurance companies. They are the ones kicking out against price transparency, and why they are doing this is not hard to see. It is because this current system benefits them. This current system where healthcare is overpriced, this current system where they can be shrouded in secrecy when exploiting consumers, this current system where there is little to no competitive pricing in the healthcare sector. So, of course, they kick out against it.

Under a price transparency system, insurance companies will have to disclose the rates they negotiate with hospitals, medical groups, and other independent providers, and they don't want that. Why is that exactly? Why don't they want a system that will benefit the people they claim they are insuring? Because that system will mean less money to their pockets. It is estimated that insurance companies charge over 40 percent of the prices that should actually be paid for a healthcare service. 40%.

It gets worse. In 2016, according to a survey of 40 hospitals by the Pioneer Institute, it was found that the price of an MRI of the knee without contrast varied across different hospitals. It stood at \$400 at Huntington Hospital in Los Angeles and a ridiculous \$4,544 at Montefiore Medical Center in New York City. Just look at that. That is the state of the healthcare sector in America.

If the prices of healthcare services are available beforehand, then it will offer some form of competitive pricing system because people tend to shop for cheaper options. The quality of healthcare does not always correspond to higher prices. This competition is much needed in the healthcare sector that is slowly transforming into a monopolistic system in many areas.

It can also help to reduce operating costs. If workers in a hospital are fully aware of the costs involved in managing their various departments, they can make smarter financial decisions. See it this way. It will be easier for an operating room workforce to lower the costs of maintaining an operating room when they know what individual resources in the operating room cost, as compared to when they have no idea of the cost of individual resources.

It is truly saddening that the healthcare sector of the United States has drifted away from producing quality healthcare to just making money. Many providers don't run their hospitals like hospitals; they run them like business ventures. And what at what cost? The health of Americans.

Am I disappointed? Yes, very much. Am I surprised? Not in the slightest. It is what the state of the healthcare sector has fallen to in the United States. Many times, we keep asking ourselves why our healthcare sector isn't getting better, why prices just seem to always be on the rise, and the answer is usually right in front of us. The people that are concerned with administering this healthcare see it as a money-making scheme.

Well, there is some good news, at least. The Trump Administration sought to pass out a Price Transparency Act effective from January 2021. Then there's

more bad news. Not long after news of this Act broke out, major hospitals and insurance companies threatened litigation. This implies that it may be several years before this Act becomes relevant, that is if it becomes relevant at all.

You know, the more I think of it, the more angered I become. Isn't it only right for patients to know the full prices of the services they are paying for? Many people say that price transparency may, in fact, lead to increased prices, but that is just baseless. There is not one sector in the United States that has higher prices because they release pricing information. Not one. So, what then is the debate about?

We are all aware of the economic impact of the Coronavirus. Many people have lost their source of income; many businesses have and are still tanking; the government is also affected by the pandemic economy-wise, and these are just the most notable ones. What the healthcare sector will look like post-pandemic if high prices of healthcare persist is scary. And this is precisely why we need the price transparency system now more than ever. I only hope insurance companies and hospitals see it this way too. I am not banking on it, though.

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# DIVISION OF HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY TO FOCUS ON PROMOTING SAFE DRIVING HABITS

*2020 Data Shows NJ Fatalities Increased Despite Reduced Traffic Amid Pandemic*

TRENTON - As preliminary data shows fatal crashes and collisions in New Jersey increased by more than five percent in 2020 despite fewer cars on the road amid COVID-19 restrictions, Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal is focusing on new initiatives led by the Division of Highway Traffic Safety ("HTS") to address what are the leading causes of crashes nationwide - distracted driving and other risky behaviors.

HTS's actions follow a report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ("NHTSA"), which studied the causes of nationwide upticks in fatal crashes during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that fewer Americans drove, but those who did took more risks and were involved in a higher number of fatal crashes.

"That risky driving increases the likelihood of accident and injury is not news," said Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal. "But what we're learning from the 2020 data is extremely concerning: even with less cars on the road due to the COVID-19 pandemic, irresponsible drivers caused more fatal accidents last year. That's why in 2021 we're focused on changing driver behavior to make the roads safer for everyone."

In response to the 2020 crash statistics, HTS will launch a #SafeDriversSaveLives social media campaign to raise public awareness of the integral role each driver plays in preventing the loss of lives on New Jersey's roadways. HTS will also use

new web-based crash analysis technology to implement data-driven strategies targeting communities most in need of education, enforcement, and public outreach programs, and will also launch a statewide multimedia campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of distracted driving.

"We're working on some very exciting initiatives and programs aimed at improving driver behaviors through education and public awareness," said Eric Heitmann, Director of the Division of Highway Traffic Safety. "The 2020 crash data indicates that now, more than ever, we need every driver working with us to keep New Jersey's roadways safe."

Preliminary data from the New Jersey State Police ("NJSP") shows that there were 552 fatal crashes on New Jersey roads in 2020, up from 524 the prior year. The uptick came at a time when traffic volumes were down in the State as a result of COVID-19-related stay-at-home orders, curfews, and widespread transition to work-from-home.

It's a scenario that mirrors a nationwide trend.

Data released by NHTSA in October 2020 showed a 30% rise in fatality rates nationwide from January through June of 2020 even though there was a decrease in the number of cars on the road for at least three of those months.

While NJSP and HTS are still compiling and analyzing underlying 2020 fatal crash data to better understand the reason for the rise in traffic fatalities in this state, NHTSA has suggested that driver behavior is to blame for the increase nationwide.

*(Continued on page 13)*

## LEGAL NOTICE CITY OF EAST ORANGE PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via zoom the City of East Orange City Hall, 44 City Hall Plaza, East Orange, New Jersey, the East Orange Planning Board shall hold a public hearing.

You have a right to be heard at the public hearing. Any interested party may appear at the public hearing and participate in the public hearing, in accordance with the rules of the Planning Board.

Please contact the Land Use Administrator at least two (2) days in advance of the meeting if you need assistance in order to access the virtual meeting. The contact information for the Land Use Administrator is as follows: Janis Nelson, Land Use Administrator, City of East Orange, phone: (973) 266-5486; and email: janice.nelson@eastorange-nj.gov. In the event that the Land Use Administrator is not available to immediately answer the telephone, please leave a message and also call back during regular business hours.

Members of the public who wish to attend the meeting can choose one of the following options:

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THE PLANNING BOARD OF  
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### SCHOOLS (Cont. from page 5)

Parent school return survey form is online.)  
**NEWARK:** All remote until at least April 12.

**NUTLEY:** All remote.

**ORANGE:** All remote until at least March 1. Reopening Phase 2, modified Jan. 12, has teachers reporting to classrooms Feb. 22, students March 1 for in-person option. Central Office staff are to meanwhile work inside four days a week, school administrators and secretaries twice a week.

**WEST ORANGE:** Transitioning from all remote. Classrooms open to all special ed students and Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 5 students. Middle school (Grades 6-8) students are to return Feb. 16, West Orange

### SPORTS WRAP

*(Continued from page 3)*

The Super Bowl LV (55) win gave Bucs head coach and Pater-son native Bruce Arians the distinction of being the oldest coach to win the big game at 68, and gave former Jets head coach and Elizabeth native Todd Bowles his first as a coordinator. Meanwhile, former NY Giant Jason Pierre-Paul remains undefeated in post season play, as in his last playoff run, the Giants won Super Bowl XLI against Brady's Patriots.

In other NFL news, the 2021 NFL Hall Of Fame class will include Peyton Manning, Charles Woodson, Drew Pearson, Alan Fanceca, John Lynch, former Raiders head coach Tom Flores, and former NFL scout Bill Nunn.

Finally, in sad news, former head coach Marty Schottenheimer has passed away at the age of 77.



## From The Pastor's Heart

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

### Taking A Stand

As we continue the celebration of Black History Month, I reflect on the phrase "Taking a Stand," which is often used in the black community to represent resistance against biases and discrimination.

Of interest is that those who are "taking a stand" are, at times, kneeling in prayer posture like Colin Kaepernick. In 2016 Kaepernick reignited the kneeling posture typical to the black community as part of its protestations against discrimination and police brutality. Colin Kaepernick is now a 32-year-old free agent quarterback who hasn't played in the NFL since the last week of the 2016 season. He spent six years with the 49ers before his peaceful protest led to his firing by the league's team owners. He has remained a polarizing civil rights activist to this day even though he is no longer granted the NFL quarterback platform. Even the former President Trump of the United States paid particular attention to Kaepernick and those who followed in the "kneeling," "standing up" protestations.

Former President Donald Trump called Kaepernick and those who began to "take a knee" with him names and asked the owners to fire them. Mr. Trump sought to turn the whole country against the kneeling protesters.

But Kaepernick and those who knelt with him did not go away, as the former president has. The former president did not calculate that kneeling as a stand-up protest is rooted in the black community for generations. It has now gone beyond the black community and is continuing to be a force that is unstoppable in the culture. The kneeling, as a stand-up, is a non-violent way of resistance against oppression.

Kneeling as stand-up protest is not new. The story of Daniel and his friends in Babylon records such protests. Read Daniel 1 and 3, and you cannot miss such protestations. Daniel chapter 6 is even more impressive in showing how Daniel engaged in a one-person kneeling protest after Babylon's fall. The king of Persia took note of Daniel's pristine character and elevated him as chief among his administrators. Jealousy broke out over Daniel's elevation.

"How could this little Jewish upstart come to such prominence over us 120 administrators," they asked? The narrative states that: ". . .the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they could not do so. They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy. He was neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally, these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'"

Knowing that Daniel prayed to the God of heaven, a different God than the gods of Persia, they schemed a plot against Daniel, asking the king to pass a decree that every person in the kingdom should pray only to the Persian

gods and the king (himself) for thirty days. The suggestion stroked the king's ego, and he agreed, even to the part of the plan that would coerce everyone to abide by the decree. The plot was that anyone who prayed to or served any other than the gods of Persia and the king should be thrown into the lion's den. Then the men watched Daniel and found out that he knelt in prayer with his face towards Jerusalem, praying to the God of heaven, three times daily.

The text says: "When Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day, he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

Yes, you guess the outcome right. The men reported Daniel to the king, and Daniel was cast into the den of lions. On the night when Daniel was thrown into the den, the king did not sleep. He thought about Daniel all night.

Then as the record states: "At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?' Daniel answered, 'May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.'"

Let me fuse Daniel's story with the kneeling in prayer protests adopted in the black com-

munity and state that things do not always work out how the story of Daniel worked out. Sometimes in a kneeling posture, dogs have been set on protesters, water cannons sprayed on them, many beaten with batons, some pepper-sprayed, some arrested, some fired from their jobs (like Kaepernick), others kept out of the Hall of Fames in their sports areas (like Hank Aaron), some threatened and ridiculed by a president (as was the case with the NFL players with former President Trump, and some killed like the people in Mother Emmanuel in Charlotte or like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Yes, standing up by kneeling is challenging to say the least. But anyone who understands the long history of pious prayer will know that this is the only way that those who wield the sword or carry guns can be beaten. As is said, "A child of God on their knees is like an army."

I am not saying that we are not to stand up in other ways than in prayer, for I argue with a lot of humility that "God helps those who help themselves." But what I am offering is that if all who know God will engage without pretense in prayer protest, we will be able to stand against forces of the demons that are encircling us today.

Yes, let us continue to "take a stand" on our knees. Let us not be intimidated even though the devil will "threaten to undo us" as the reformer Martin Luther said. Let us have confidence, and be courageous in kneeling down and standing up to protest. It is time to send up many prayers to the God of heaven.

### TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 4)

South Orange, had been in his Maplewood home, after posting \$10,000 bail and agreeing not to contact the five complainants, since Oct. 22. He was accused of cyberstalking three people and harassing two others Nov. 1 - Dec. 31, 2017. The complainants included his ex-wife and a Mount Sinai Hospital doctor.

A 17-page U.S. Department of Justice complaint has him fil-

ing false Yelp reviews and malpractice complaints against the doctor. He allegedly placed key-stroke spyware on his wife's computer and repeatedly called and hung up on her. Kurson was to have done this as "Eddie Train" and "Jayden Wagner."

The allegations first appeared in a 2018 background check after Trump had recommended Kurson for a seat on the National Endowment of the Humanities board - an application he withdrew.

Kurson - who first moved to Montclair to run in the State 34th Legislative District General Assembly Republican primary in 2008 - was a "New York Observer" editor 2013-17 while Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner owned that paper. The one-time Trump 2016 campaign speechwriter is also an associate to the President's personal attorney - Rudolph Giuliani.

"This investigation only began because Mr. Kurson was nominated to a role within the

Trump Administration," said White House Acting Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany." He's been a community leader in New York and New Jersey for decades. In addition, he's a certified foster parent, a successful business owner, is passionate about various charitable causes, is an upstanding citizen and father to five beautiful children."

**MONTCLAIR** - Lackawanna Plaza's new owner, David  
(Continued on page 15)

**SAFE DRIVING**

*(Continued from page 11)*

Reviewing nationwide fatal crashes in the first half of 2020, NHTSA found that driving patterns and behaviors changed significantly; drivers who remained on the roads engaged in more risky behavior, including speeding, failing to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

According to NHTSA:

- One report showed a median 22% increase in speeds in select metropolitan areas.
- Sixty-five percent of drivers in trauma centers after a serious crash tested positive for drugs or alcohol.
- In April, double the average number of people were thrown from vehicles during crashes, indicating no seat belts.

This year, HTS will spend more than \$15 million on programs and initiatives to enhance traffic safety and improve driver behaviors, including law enforcement training, public outreach and educational materials, and grant funding for statewide mobilizations to enforce laws on impaired driving, distracted driving, and seatbelt usage.

In a separate campaign to be launched this spring, HTS will address the issue of distracted driving, which is the number one cause of traffic fatalities in the State.

The initiative is HTS's latest effort to target key audiences in promoting traffic safety.

Last year, HTS focused on promoting safety among its youngest drivers through a "Stick to It" public awareness campaign to educate parents and young drivers about New Jersey's nationally acclaimed teen driver laws.

The campaign commemorated milestone anniversaries "Kyleigh's Law", which requires teens to affix stickers to their vehicles to identify them as novice drivers, and the 20-year anniversary of New Jersey's Graduated Driver License ("GDL") program, a three-tiered licensing process considered one of the most progressive and stringent teen driver measures in the United States.

The laws are widely credited with helping to reduce fatal crashes among teen drivers. According to data from NJSP, crash fatalities involving a teen driver (age 16 to 20) decreased by more than 47 percent between 2008 and 2018, dropping from 101 to 53. During that same period, the number of passengers under the age of 20 killed while riding in a car driven by a teen plummeted nearly 60 percent from 19 to 8.

**EDITORIAL**

*(Continued from page 2)*

Also, with the new proposal, everyone who received a \$600 stimulus package will receive another \$1,400. Unemployed persons will receive \$300 per week as well. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance has been extended to 57 weeks. However, the majority of unemployed persons are not looking for a job, as they are happy with the good amount of money coming from the stimulus. If they are working, they would have received less with their full time working salary.

As I've heard, the stimulus money is really a loan in advance (without signature on a document).

*Have a wonderful week.*

*I'll talk to you next week.*

**WORLD NEWS FLASH**

*(Continued from page 6)*

the Prosecutor submits an application for the issuance of a warrant of arrest or summons to appear.

**THAILAND**

**Lèse-majesté Laws**

United Nations independent human rights experts on Feb. 8 voiced grave concerns over increasingly severe use of lèse-majesté laws in Thailand, warning that a rise in their usage is further restricting civic space and the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms in the country.

The lèse-majesté provision of Thailand's criminal code prohibits defaming, insulting or threatening the royal family, and carries severe punishments for those found guilty.

"We have repeatedly empha-

sized that lèse-majesté laws have no place in a democratic country," the experts said.

"Their increasingly harsh application has had the effect of chilling freedom of expression and further restricting civic space and the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms in Thailand," they added.

In a news release, the experts also said they were alarmed that Anchan Preelert, a 60-year-old former civil servant, had been sentenced to over 43 years in prison for insulting the royal family. The sentence is believed to be the country's harshest under lèse-majesté provisions, for reportedly having posted audio clips that were critical of the monarchy on her Facebook page between 2014 and 2015.

Ms. Preelert's case was first raised by the UN independent experts in 2016. She was initially tried in a military court and sentenced to 87 years in prison. Her

sentence was halved when she confessed to the alleged violations after her case had been transferred to a civilian court in mid-2019. The decision is being appealed.

"We urge the appeal court to reconsider the case of Anchan Preelert in line with international human rights standards and set aside the harsh sentence," the rights experts said.

According to the experts, as pro-democracy activists have largely moved towards online advocacy in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities have begun enforcing lèse-majesté provisions more strictly and have even charged minors with these severe charges for exercising their freedom of expression.

"We are profoundly disturbed by the reported rise in the number of lèse-majesté prosecutions since late 2020 and the harsher prison sentences," they said.

While underlining their constructive ongoing dialogue with the Government on this matter, the experts said that under international human rights law, public figures, including those exercising the highest political authority, such as heads of State, are legitimately subject to criticism.

"The fact that some forms of expression may be considered offensive or shocking to a public figure is not sufficient to justify the imposition of such severe penalties," they said.

"We call on the authorities to revise and repeal the lèse-majesté laws, to drop charges against all those who are currently facing criminal prosecution and release those who have been imprisoned under for the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly," the experts said.

## Legally Speaking



**Cassandra Savoy, Esq.**  
OP/ED

### Representing Yourself In Court

Judges cringe when self-represented parties appear in their courts. Self-represented litigants all too often have no idea about the rules of court or the relevant law. Most self-represented litigants cringe when they realize they have to go court. They hope that the judge will treat them fairly and give them a chance to be heard.

The truth is that most self-represented litigants, or pro se litigants (Latin for “for self”), appear in court without an attorney because they cannot afford an attorney, not because they don’t think they need an attorney or that having an attorney would be a waste of time.

Worse than not knowing the law and the rules of court, pro se litigants are filled with emotion. They are nervous and when standing before the judge, they feel like a fish out of water. This causes them to forget most of what they planned to say while at the same time they barely hear what others in the courtroom are saying.

The not knowing the rules of court, not understanding the process, the judge’s seeming lack of empathy come together to leave many pro se litigants with an intense dislike for the judge who, in their mind, “did not hear a word I said,” or “that judge simply did not give me time to express myself!”

### Alternatives to Being Self-Represented

Most people think that having an attorney is like a stop light: Go or Stop. This is not always the case. When an attorney agrees to represent you from start to finish, that is “full representation.” This means that the lawyer will handle the matter from start to finish including preparing documents to send to the court, speaking with the other side and his/attorney, gathering information, questioning witnesses in court, negotiating a settlement.

If you cannot afford full representation, find a lawyer who will unbundle legal services allowing you to select from a menu of legal services and customize your representation. For example, the attorney may draft all of the documents submitted to the court, and you represent yourself in court. In court, you would question the witnesses and present your documents to the court. Or the other way around. You submit the paperwork to the court, and the lawyer will handle the questioning of witnesses and presentation of evidence.

If you are going to court on a child support matter, you might retain the attorney to advise you present relevant financial information. Maybe, you only pay for an hour or two of the attorney’s time to explain the law and tell you what to expect; how the hearing will proceed; what documents you will need to prove your cause; help you develop a game plan.

If you intend to represent yourself in court, it is important to understand the law and court procedures. Step one is to go to the New Jersey judiciary website at njcourts.gov. There is a section entitled “Self-Help Center.” The site is filled with useful information on many areas of the law including family, landlord-tenant, criminal, special civil and municipal court matters. You can often obtain the forms you need to send to the court and the instructions as to how to complete forms.

Another alternative is to find places that have a volunteer attorney program where you might be able to get advice about what things you can ask for in court, what facts you will need to provide the court, and what documents you might need to bring to court. Rutgers Law School has a vibrant clinic program where lawyers-in-training under the supervision of licensed attorneys may be able to help you with your case at no cost. Or they may, at very least, speak with you about your legal problem. Call the Essex County Bar Association or Newark-Essex Legal Services to see if you can obtain assistance through their resources and networks.

Lastly, consider using the web to learn something about the law and something about what you can ask for. Go on the website and read blogs written by New Jersey Attorneys concerning your issue. You will be able to learn what is important to the court and find out how the court looks at your issue. Remember, the law differs state to state so make sure you read blogs written by New Jersey Attorneys. Read more than one or two.

### Before Your Hearing

While it might be uncomfortable, talk to the other side to see if you can find a solution to the legal issue that both of you can live with. Remember, when you settle, everyone leaves something on the table, so don’t expect the other side to totally accept your proposed solution. Even if you can’t resolve all of the issues, if you can pare down the issues that the court has to decide, the better off you are.

Think about it this way, even if you don’t resolve any of your issues, at very least, you will learn the other side’s position and needs. Judges get paid the big bucks to decide important issues, but it can be frustrating for the judge to find out that he is going to be the referee because two adults could not sit like adults and at least attempt to resolve their problem. This is especially true in the family

court where the judge really does not want to tell parents how and when they can parent their children.

If you are calling a witness, think carefully about who to call. You will not have unlimited time to call everyone you know who may know something about the issue, so plan carefully. Which witness is the best witness? Who will explain most clearly? Who had the best view? Once you have selected your witness, write down your questions. Practice with the witness asking and answering the questions. Remember, a notarized statement from a witness is unacceptable because if the other side has a question about the statement, the piece of paper can’t answer the question. Only people give testimony in court.

### At the Hearing

You have done all of the things listed above, so you are ready! Remember...

1. Dress for court. Courtrooms are conservative places, so dress appropriately.
2. Be organized and prepared. Your papers should be neat and organized. If your papers are scattered all over the table, that will send a message to the judge. More importantly, you must be able to get to important information quickly.
3. Know what you are asking the court to do. You might want to have the exact language you want in the order written down before you go to court. This way if you get nervous, you will remember to say what you need to say. Be specific.
4. Take notes. When the judge or the other side is talking, write down points you want to make in rebuttal.
5. Speak only to the judge, or to the witness, not to the other party. If you need to talk to the other side, it should be done out of the presence of the judge.

**TOWN WATCH** (Continued from page 12)

Placek, has been talking with various fellow residents and community before he files his plans for the railroad terminal-turned-shopping mall to the Montclair Planning Board.

Placek, whose DBP Holdings bought the 7.6-acre property from Hampshire/Pinnacle Companies for an undisclosed amount Feb. 2, said he will pursue getting a supermarket back into the Fourth Ward mall. The six-year resident and married father of three added that he wants to talk about the access, preservation and open space issues that help send H/P's 2019 site plan application into State Superior Court.

DBP is a \$6.5 billion real estate company with holdings across the U.S. and in Montclair. Placek, through DBP, owns the E.E. Leach Storage Warehouse and the former Office Bar & Grill at 641 and 619 Bloomfield Ave. Gov. Phil Murphy, in one of his Coronavirus Briefings, praised Placek for his forgiving his tenants up to two months rent. at the pandemic's start.

The Leach and Office buildings are a block northeast of the MC Hotel, which is one of the Pinnacle Companies' recent developments. Pinnacle Companies CEO Brian Stolar declined comment on selling Lackawanna Plaza.

The plaza's sale comes while the then-developer, Montclair Township, neighboring One Greenwood Plaza LLC and A Better Lackawanna preservation group had been anticipating a Superior Court Judge's ruling on whether the township's planning board had failed to follow its own master plan.

Lackawanna Plaza was the DL&W's Montclair Branch terminus 1913-1981, when NJTransit replaced it with Bay Street Station. The terminal had meanwhile been placed on national and state historical place registers.

The site became an award-winning shopping mall with a PathMark Super Center as its anchor. PathMark closed in November 2015, after its A&P supermarket parent liquidated, accelerating the plaza's decline. Popeye's Chicken and an Italian restaurant are its remaining tenants.

**BLOOMFIELD** - Retired township police officer Ben Christiano's battle against COVID-19 has shifted to a Mountainside Hospital Intensive Care Unit room.

Christiano, who retired from the police department after 25 years' service Dec. 2, remains in the ICU as of Feb. 7. "Off. Benny," who was a member of the BPD motorcycle patrol, has been there since Jan. 21.

Get well cards and wishes may go to: Ben Christiano, Mountainside Hospital, ICU, 2 West, Montclair, NJ 07042.

**Man Shot in Doorway**

Township detectives have been looking for the five people who approached a man at 547 Bloomfield Ave., and left him with a shot right hand here just before 3:32 a.m. Feb. 7.

The 47-year-old man, who met the responding BPD officers, told them that he had refused entry of four males and a female to a second floor recording studio for it had reached its COVID capacity. One of the denied visitors then pulled out a handgun and fired a shot that shattered the front door window and struck his right hand. Police Director Sam DeMaio, before the Township Council Feb. 8, said his detectives have a lead on the driver who dropped the fivesome off.

BPD detectives sealed off Bloomfield Avenue between Washington and Conger streets in the predawn hours, detouring early morning NJTransit buses. The victim was taken to University Hospital for treatment.

**BELLEVILLE** - A Memorial Mass was held in St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church Feb. 6 for the township woman who was killed in a Jan. 27 accident here with a garbage truck.

Ximena Aguilar, 44, said Acting County Prosecutor Stephens and Belleville Police Chief Mark Minichini, was pronounced dead at Washington Avenue south of Little Street 1 p.m. that Wednesday.

Aguilar, according to a preliminary investigation, was in the avenue's crosswalk when she was struck by a southbound Interstate Waste Services Mack truck before the Jiffy Lube at 491 Washington at 12:55 p.m.

The IWS-Jersey City-based driver, who stayed at the scene, has not been charged. Southbound Washington Avenue traffic, including NJTransit No. 13 buses, were detoured during that early afternoon.

Aguilar, who was born Sept. 4, 1976, was on her way back to the nearby Signature Fitness. She was the gym's head of maintenance for three years. Signature Fitness has launched a GoFundMe.com page for her burial costs.

Husband Dawin, parents Teresa and Jorge, children David, Maria and Andres and siblings Tania and David are among her survivors. Funeral arrangements were made here by the Megaro Funeral Home.

**NUTLEY** - A township man was among the three state correctional officers charged Feb. 4 with abusing a women's correctional center inmate Jan. 11-12 and/or covering up the abuse.

Luis Garcia, 23, said Attorney General Gubir Grewal that Wednesday, has been charged with aggravated assault, of-

ficial misconduct and tampering with public records while at the Edna Mahan Correctional Center for Women in Hunterdon County's Union Township.

Garcia is accused of pepper-spraying an inmate before entering her cell and punching her in the face 28 times. He then filed a report saying that he had defended himself after she attacked him.

What Garcia said in his report, countered Grewal, does not square with video recording footage. That recording shows the inmate raising her arms to shield her face while up against her cell wall. She was left with a concussion and facial injuries.

Grewal also announced records tampering and official misconduct charges against NJ Department of Corrections Sgts. Amir Bethea and Anthony Valvano.

Bethea, 35, of Springfield-Union County, did not give the inmate time to comply with Garcia's orders after she was pepper-sprayed and did not disclose her injuries in his report.

Bethea and Valvano, 38, of Bound Brook, in a separate inmate removal incident, failed to intervene while one or more DOC officers beat the other inmate. That inmate was left with an orbital skull fracture.

Grewal said that they are among the "dozens" of Edna Mahan correctional officers and supervisors who have been suspended over other abuse allegations that have become public in the last month.

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