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Hogan Delivers Budget Supplement to Fund PG Hospital

By RACHEL BLUTH
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, MD—Gov. Larry Hogan released a supplemental budget Friday that will ensure the construction of a new Prince George's Regional Medical Center.

The supplemental budget, which is an amendment to the funding plan Hogan introduced on Jan. 20, will provide \$55 million between the 2017 and 2021 fiscal years as Prince George's Hospital Center closes and the new medical center is built. Included in that money is \$15 million in operating

funds for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins in July.

"It's been a long, sad story about the Prince George's Hospital system, and this, we believe is a tremendous solution to decades of problems there," Hogan said.

Days after he touted bipartisanship and advocated taking the "middle temperament" at his state of the state address Wednesday, Hogan announced the funding, undercutting legislation put forth by Senate President

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Hoyer Receives Prince George's County Social Innovation Fund's 'Forever 41' Award

By LATOYA VEAL
U.S. House of Representatives

MITCHELLVILLE, MD—Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) received the Prince George's County Social Innovation Fund's (PGCSIF) "Wayne K. Curry Forever 41" Award. The award recognizes a Prince George's County leader, over the age of 40, who goes above and beyond the call of duty to develop next generational leadership. The "Forever 41" Award was renamed in honor of former

Prince George's County Executive Wayne Curry. The award presentation was held during PGCSIF's 2016 Forty UNDER 40 Awards Ceremony.

"I was honored and humbled to receive this award from the Prince George's County Social Innovation Fund," said Congressman Steny Hoyer. "All of the Forty UNDER 40 young leaders tonight have asked themselves what they

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CAPITALNEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY RACHEL BLUTH

Mark Chang inserting paper into machine); Maryland's paper voting system is expected to be in place for the April 2016 primary election. Delegate Mark Chang, D-Anne Arundel, puts a test ballot into a touch-screen kiosk that will be available for disabled voters in Annapolis on Friday, January 29, 2016.

Paper Ballot System Will Be Ready For April 2016 Primary Elections

By RACHEL BLUTH
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, MD—Maryland's new paper ballot system will be available statewide for April's elections, but officials said Friday they are worried that voters won't know how to use them in time, adding to election day-wait times.

In 2007, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law requiring elections to be conducted on paper ballots instead

of the touch-screen ballots that Maryland residents have been using since 2002.

In April, the new machines will be ready for primary elections. Voters will fill out a paper ballot in pen, filling in bubbles next to their choices. They then would insert their ballot into an electronic reading machine.

"We're concerned that we don't have the money to do voter outreach, and we're concerned that that's going to add to wait times," said Maryland

Board of Elections State Administrator Linda Lamone.

Lamone told legislators Friday that election judges have had hours of training, including classroom training and mock elections, but there simply isn't enough money for voter outreach. She said that the last time Maryland changed voting systems, in 2002, there was more than \$2 million, but this year, \$1.8 million that had been budgeted for outreach was eliminated.

"If we had the funding, we'd be much more comfortable than we are today," Lamone said.

Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez, D-Montgomery, said she was worried that the limited amount of outreach would adversely affect Spanish-speakers.

"We're quite concerned," Sol Gutierrez said. "It's a new system, we've been actively trying to market it ourselves,

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EDC Assists Leading European Retailer to Open First Maryland Stores in Prince George's County

Lidl U.S. to Open 15 Grocery Stores by 2018, Creating More Than 700 New Jobs in County

By LORI VALENTINE
PGCEDC

LARGO, MD—Yesterday, Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation President and CEO Jim Coleman, along with senior staff from the County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) met with top executives from Lidl U.S., LLC to discuss the construction of more than 15 new 40,000 sq. ft. grocery stores in Prince George's County by 2018. With the opening of these grocery stores, including one store in each councilmanic district, Lidl makes its Maryland debut in Prince George's County. This \$100 million construction investment is expected to bring more than 700 new jobs to the County.

"We are delighted that the EDC could play a part in bringing Lidl, U.S. to Prince George's County," said Mr. Coleman. "Our team is always on the lookout for innovative companies like Lidl to provide our County



PHOTO COURTESY PGCEDC

Left to right: Brian Kearney, Real Estate Development Manager, Lidl U.S.; Alexander Ragonese, Real Estate Acquisitions Manager, Lidl U.S.; Davit Abraham, Associate Director, DPIE; Jim Coleman, President & CEO, PGCEDC; David Lewis, Business Development Director, PGCEDC; Steve Proctor, President & CEO, G.S. Proctor and Associates; Joseph Green, Executive Vice President, G.S. Proctor and Associates; Bellur Ravishankar, Associate Director, DPIE)

residents with a unique, top quality shopping experience, and access to well-paying job opportunities. We welcome them to Prince George's County."

For over 40 years, German retailer Lidl has been a growing presence in the European grocery marketplace. Through its 10,000 stores in 26 coun-

tries, Lidl prides itself on delivering the highest quality products at the lowest possible price and the most efficient shopping experience.

Spirit of Faith Christian Center and PGEDC Kick Off Partnership at a 'Moving Mountains: Small Business and Job Seeker Summit

Pastor Mike Freeman and EDC 'Evangelist' Jim Coleman Inspire Hundreds to 'Move Mountains' and 'Activate Prosperity' With No More Excuses

By LORI VALENTINE
PGCEDC

BRANDYWINE, MD—On Saturday, Pastor Mike Freeman, the Spirit of Faith Christian Center and the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) 'Moved Mountains', making way for super natural abundance, for more than 200 entrepreneurs and job seekers who flocked to the Moving Mountains: Small Business and Job Seekers Summit. This high impact Summit kicked off a partnership between the Spirit of Faith and the EDC to remove barriers to success by raising awareness about business building resources and job opportunities. The event marks the first stop on the EDC's 'Activate Prosperity' Tour, a year-long campaign to share the EDC's portfolio of services and programs to the community in order to promote economic empowerment.



PHOTO: LORI VALENTINE

Left to right: Pastor Mike Freeman, Senior Pastor of the Spirit of Faith Christian Center and Jim Coleman, President and CEO of the Prince George's Economic Development Corporation.

"The EDC will visit the top 25 churches in Prince George's

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INSIDE

The Obama Administration's Work on Behalf of Those Living, Working and Raising Families in Rural America

We've supported projects that bring needed infrastructure into rural communities and help them grow. We work with farmers and ranchers to provide nutritious, affordable food to every American family.

Community, Page A3

Maurice White: American Music's Shining Star is Dimmed

White's influence on American music is so pervasive, hardly an artist in the last five decades has not been touched in some way by his genius. Innovators like White not only break down barriers and open new doors, they create entirely new structures and invite the rest of the world in.

Commentary, Page A4

Stop Playing Politics with Maryland's Tourism Economy

Industry data shows that for every 1 percent increase in room rates, room night bookings see a 2 percent reduction. If implemented, this tax will not only impact consumers traveling to Maryland, but will ultimately harm hundreds of local small businesses.

Business, Page A5

Movie Review: The Forest

Beginning with a mushy flurry of disjointed flashbacks (why?), we learn that a young blonde named Sara Price (Natalie Dormer) has received word that her twin sister, Jess, was seen entering the Aokigahara Forest, from which most people do not return. Unable to reach her by phone, Sara flies to Japan to search for her.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

What is being done to save elephants around the world? I understand that these magnificent creatures are teetering on the brink of extinction.

—Millie Vicente,
San Jose, CA

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

Davies Concert features Indie-Folk-Pop with singer-songwriter Hollyfield

The Davies Concert Series continues on Sunday, Feb. 21, at 6:30 p.m., with award-winning Lynn Hollyfield, one of Washington's most influential and gifted singer-songwriters.

One review states, "Think Mary Chapin Carpenter meets Ella Fitzgerald." Lynn Hollyfield will perform songs highlighting her skillful guitar and rich vocals, ranging from Indie-Folk-Pop with a little bit of Blues and Jazz. She will be accompanied by Dave Abe (violin, mandolin), Steve Wolf (bass), Jimmy Brink (percussion) and harmonies by Carey Creed and Keely Hollyfield.

Tickets are: adults, \$15; students, \$5; and includes a Meet-the-Artist reception following the concert. Davies is at 7400 Temple Hills Road. For information, phone 301-639-2235 or go to www.DMUUC.org.

Skyline School slated to close

Two Prince George's schools have been recommended for closing: Skyline Elementary and Forestville High School. The decision was made as part of "the annual process." Both closings are being protested.

If Skyline closes, the children will be bused to William Beans Elementary and Drew-Freeman Middle in Suitland. Skyline has also been a special school for autistic children; I don't know what happens to them.

The Skyline Citizens Association had County officials attend their Feb. 17 meeting at Skyline School, including: Senator C. Anthony Muse, Delegate Dereck Davis, Councilman Obie Patterson and School Board Member K. Alexander Wallace.

I'm writing this too early to report what happened at the meeting. But I'm saddened by the possible loss of the school. Skyline School is our town hall. Where will we hold our meetings? What will we do about our annual Night Out? Where will we go to vote? What will happen to that convenient, comfortable building which I watched being built?

And just who is responsible for making this decision?

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301 888 2153

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Happy Birthday to Doris Lee, Brandon Freeman, Vincent Glee, Darion Smalling, Jean Brown, Rom Escanilla, Joachim Neckere, Janice Patterson, Conrad Carter, Patricia Ann Weaver, Rachel Cain, Lauren Crawford, Marvies Davies, Gloria Garrett, Emmanuel Oghogho, Shela Sedgwick, Ronald Davis, Jean Noel, Malcolm Terry, Isabella Alansalon Oghogho, Matthew Oghogho, Karmalita Contee-Borders, Maleke Glee, Lynn Harper, Jose Rojas, Lawrence Oghogho, Romonia Pinkney, Ruth Turner, Winthrop Chew, Jerrod Contee, Francis Deville, Barbara Hall, Elizabeth Hamilton, Selena Jackson, Zharia Lee, Mykaylia Washington and Cecelia Patterson who are celebrating their birthdays during the month of January.

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Come and dine with New Hope Fellowship Nottingham-Myers United Methodist Church Ushers. We will celebrate Black History Month with a Soul Food Feast Saturday, February 27, 2016 at Nottingham-Myers Family Life Center from 4:00 PM-7:00 PM. Bring

Neighbors

On Valentine's Day for many years, my friend Dwight Holloway used to knock on my door and present me with a heart-shaped box of chocolates. Dwight died at the age of 94 on May 22, 2014. The past two years, his son Dwight has come from his home in Annapolis to bring me chocolates. This year they are chocolate-covered strawberries.

Skyline President Stan Holmes gave me a list of "heroes" who went out of their way to help neighbors during the recent snowzilla. Some of them are: Louis Reed, Dennis Seaman, Reggie and Harold Shaw, Nora Jackson and John Jackson of Jackson Lawn Service. You can send me names of some snow heroes you'd like to acknowledge.

The Let's Rock Outreach Ministries, at 6701 Suitland Road, is starting a Noon Day Prayer "on behalf of neighborhood schools, homes and businesses," every Wednesday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., beginning Feb. 24. A kick-off brunch for the program will be on that first Wednesday. You are welcome, or you can drop prayer requests in the Church mailbox at 6701 Suitland Road. Call 301-735-3336 for information.

Coffee with Councilman Patterson

Our County Councilman Obie Patterson invites you to join him at the District 8 Community Coffee on Friday, Feb. 19, 9:00 to 11 a.m., at Darrah's Café, 10907 Fort Washington Rd. in Fort Washington. Info? Call 301-952-3860.

Former Morningsider Agnes Koch dies at 102

Agnes Koch, formerly of Morningside and Suitland, died Jan. 26 at the age of 102. She was born on the family farm in Houston, Minn., the 12th of the 13 children of Karl and Lina Börjesson Johnson who had emigrated from Sweden in 1895. Agnes spoke Swedish until she started first grade, which was a three-mile walk from home.

After high school, and two years of business school in Winona, Minn., Agnes moved to

Akron, Ohio, and worked for Firestone. It was there she met Logan Koch on a blind date; they were married in 1940. They moved to Morningside in the mid-1950s, first to Maple Road and later to Boxwood Drive. Agnes volunteered at Morningside School where she served on the Ways & Means Committee. She was active at the Morningside Baptist Church and with the District Heights Homemakers.

Later they moved to Fort Drive in Suitland and Agnes served on the Ways & Means Committee at Suitland Elementary. Some time after they moved to Florida, Logan died, and Agnes moved to Bothell, Wash., to be near her daughter, Julie.

She lived alone until she was 100 and then with Julie. She had had eye problems since her early 50s but in her last months, she wrote me, "my eyesight left me completely." In May she moved again, to an adult family home near Julie and George. She died Jan. 26.

The amazing thing about Agnes: she kept all her friends. For years, in the fall, she travelled from Bothell to visit her son Robert who lives in Maryland. But first, she'd contact friends she knew through Morningside and Suitland schools, Morningside Baptist Church, and the Homemakers, and we'd meet her at a local restaurant. The last time was at the Old Country Buffet in 2010 when she was 96.

Among survivors are her children, Robert Koch and his wife Diana, Julie Koch-Michael and her husband George; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and many old and new friends.

Even with years of poor vision, Agnes was a great letter-writer. I've kept those letters and they helped me write this column.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Melissa Harnes and Paul Bornman, Feb. 20; Ray Short, Feb. 21; Father Bernard Ihrie, Feb. 23; Larry Miller, Kevin Gray and Sibyl Deily, Feb. 25; Angela Hutchinson and Thomas "TJ" Flaherty, Feb. 27.

Happy anniversary to Clifford and Nancy Lantz on Feb. 26.

African Attire. The address is 6810 Floral Park Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613.

REUNION CLASS GIFT

We are calling all Bulldogs for Reunion 2016 which we will celebrate class years ending in 1's and 6's during Bowie State University Homecoming October 10-15, 2016. We are looking for volunteers to help make your reunion special.

The Class of 1966 will celebrate their 50th Reunion at the spring commencement on May 23, 2016. Reconnect with your classmates, participate in the commencement ceremony and represent the Gold Club (50-year alumni). A special luncheon will be held after commencement, which will include a 50th anniversary pinning ceremony.

Please make sure that we have your preferred email address on file. If you are not a member already, we encourage you to join the Bowie State University National Alumni Association to stay connected with the university. For more information, contact the Office of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving at 301-860-4327 or email alumni@bowiestate.edu.

Neighborhood Events

Edwards: In Flint and Baltimore, Government Failing Communities of Color

LANHAM, MD—Congresswoman Donna Edwards (D-MD) released the following statement on how government is failing communities of color in Flint, Michigan and in Baltimore, Maryland, calling on Governor Hogan to join her in establishing a "Future Fund" to address the long-term health and education needs of children exposed to dangerous lead levels.

"Governor Snyder has stood by and watched while citizens of his state have been poisoned: their water contaminated, their infrastructure degraded. I joined 44 Members of the Congressional Black Caucus in calling for the federal government to give immediate aid to Flint, and begin investigations into the failures of Snyder's administration.

The sad fact is that this is true across the country: urban infrastructure is suffering, creating health and economic problems that span generations. And communities of color disproportionately bear the brunt of these government failures. In Baltimore, state tests found 65,000 children between 1993-2013 suffered from dangerously high-blood lead levels. That is outrageous. In Maryland and in Michigan, we need effective leaders who will work for their communities. Like Commissioner Graziano in Baltimore, Governor Snyder has proven that he is not that leader, and he should resign.

Federal states and governments must now work together to make critical infrastructure investments. But we must also work to right the wrongs of the past. In Michigan, there have been calls for a 'Future Fund' to address the long-term health and education needs of children exposed to dangerous lead levels. We need that in Maryland, and I call on Governor Hogan to join me in making that a reality.

It is our responsibility as leaders to be voices for our most vulnerable citizens. For the 10,000 children in Flint and the 65,000 in Baltimore, we need to take action now."

Edwards—Irresponsible GOP Reconciliation Bill That Attacks Health Care of Women and Working Families

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) issued the following statement denouncing Republicans' Senate Amendment to H.R. 3762, Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015. This irresponsible bill would repeal key provisions of the Affordable Care Act and defund Planned Parenthood. The bill passed the House by a vote of 240-181, and will now be sent to President Obama who has already promised a veto.

"Just six days into the New Year, Republicans picked right up where they left off in 2015 with this damaging Reconciliation bill. This irresponsible legislation would cause over 22 million hard-working Americans to lose their health care



Congresswoman
Donna F. Edwards

coverage. It would result in millions of women, many from low-income communities, being denied access to primary care, birth control, advice on family planning, and life-saving cancer screening services. Today's vote exemplifies the definition of insanity, marking the 62nd attempt by House Republicans to repeal or dismantle the Affordable Care Act and the 11th attempt to defund Planned Parenthood. This Republican obsession with attacking access to health care for women and working families is outrageous and unacceptable.

"The American people want Congress to focus on real priorities, which include growing the economy, creating good-paying jobs, and improving the lives of working families. I continue to hope that House Republicans will recognize that the majority of Americans want them to end their attacks on the health care of women and working families, and join with House Democrats to make 2016 a year of progress for the American people."

BGE Customers Continued to Experience Improved Electric Reliability in 2015

BALTIMORE (Feb. 3, 2016)—BGE customers are benefitting from the company's ongoing investment in improving the reliability of the electric equipment serving central Maryland. In 2015, the frequency of electric service interruptions, including those caused by all weather events, was BGE's lowest on record. Last year, customers who did experience outages, except during significant weather events, had power restored faster than ever before—reducing the average length of outages by 45 minutes since 2012. BGE ranks in the top 25 percent of the most reliable electric utilities nationwide.

"As we mark our 200th year of operations in 2016, we are inspired by the spirit of innovation that helped build this company to find new ways to better serve our customers year after year," said Calvin G. Butler, Jr., chief executive officer of BGE. "We continue to invest in new equipment, smarter systems and maintenance programs to give our customers the services they need to power their lives, homes and businesses."

BGE has invested more than \$5 billion in system upgrades and expansions since 2002 and will invest an additional \$3 billion in the next five years. In addition to upgrades to poles and wires and increased trimming of trees near power lines, cus-

tomers are benefitting from a smarter grid that helps isolate damage and re-route power more quickly to help minimize disruption. The company is also accelerating the replacement of natural gas equipment under its STRIDE gas system modernization plan.

Beyond reliability improvements, recent investments in the system are also helping customers to save on energy costs. BGE estimates that customer savings created by the company's recently completed smart grid deployment will exceed \$1.5 billion dollars.

Even excluding significant weather events during what was a relatively mild year for storms in 2015, BGE's day-to-day system reliability was the second best on record, after 2014. The company also continues to share best practices with its Exelon sister utilities, ComEd in Chicago and PECO in Philadelphia, which also posted record reliability performances in 2015.

Maryland Remains Among the Top State in Latest Education Study

National Publication
Ranks Maryland's System
Fourth Overall

BALTIMORE, MD—Maryland public schools remains among the nation's highest rated school systems, according to an independent national report released today.

Education Week, a national education newspaper, ranks Maryland fourth among 50 states and the District of Columbia in its latest "Quality Counts" report. The State received a "B" grade for the second straight year, although its ranking fell slightly from third place in 2015.

Massachusetts held on to the top spot in the rankings, with a B+ (86.8 overall score), followed by New Jersey and Vermont.

Now in its 20th year, the Quality Counts report ranks states in a variety of indicators in three broad categories: Chance for Success Index, K-12 Achievement Index, and School Finance. *Education Week* has regularly altered its rubric, and cut two broad categories last year (Transitions and Alignment, focusing on State policies; and the Teaching Profession, focusing on teacher training, tenure, and other policies). As a result of that change, Maryland was knocked out of the top spot in the rankings—a position it had held from 2009 to 2013.

Maryland remains a consistent top performer in *Education Week's* annual study. The State is one of only three to rank in the top 10 in all three general categories that comprise the Quality Counts formula (New Jersey and Vermont are the others). Maryland ranks 9th in Chance for Success with a B; fourth in school finance with a B, and fifth in K-12 Achievement with a C+.

For more information, see the *Education Week* website, www.edweek.org.

COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Nathaniel Sillin

Making Phased Retirement Work for You

Phased retirement—a catchall term that describes a variety of part-time and reduced-hour work arrangements before leaving an employer for good—is gaining steam. But before you sign on, it's important to understand how "phasing out" may affect your long-term finances.

Washington is leading the way. The federal government authorized the move for its own employees several years ago and began accepting applications in late 2014 from workers aged 55 and up with a desire to switch to half-time employment in exchange for receiving half their salary and annuity.

For employees with a long-term view, phased retirement can offer significant benefits, but it requires due diligence and planning. Among the advantages, phased retirement means that there doesn't need to be a hard stop on a successful career. In fact, a 2014 study (<http://newsroom.bankofamerica.com/press-releases/global-wealth-and-investment-management/merrill-lynch-study-finds-72-percent-people-o>) by Merrill Lynch in partnership with Age Wave said that 72 percent of pre-retirees over the age of 50 report that their ideal retirement will include working "often in new, more flexible and fulfilling ways." The study also noted that 47 percent of current retirees were already working or planning to work during their retirement years.

If your company is talking about phased retirement or may do so in the future, here are some key questions to consider:

What exactly do you want to phase into? For some workers, retirement really will mean a classic vision of travel and leisure leading into old age. But for others, the picture may be different. Some retirees will want to work and some retirees will have to work. Such decisions will summon a host of personal finance and tax issues based on your personal situation—read heavily and consult qualified experts before you make a decision.

What options will my employer offer over time? While the federal government is in the lead with phased retirement, most private employers are moving at a slower pace. This gives you time to plan. For example, in a 2013 benefits study, the Society for Human Resource Management noted that only 6 percent of employers had a formal phased retirement program that provided a reduced schedule and/or responsibilities prior to full retirement. Watch how your employer's plan evolves and ask questions.

Phased or not, do you have a retirement plan in place? The decision to make a full or transitional exit from one's employer should come after years of saving and investing both at home and at work. Years before deciding how you want to leave your career, talk to qualified retirement experts about your personal financial circumstances and what you want to do in the next phase of your life. If it's a new career, volunteer work or full retirement, develop a plan first.

Have you talked to your senior colleagues? There's nothing like direct advice from individuals closer to retirement to help you with your own set of pros and cons. Even if there's no phased retirement program at your organization right now, it's still worth talking about retirement preparation with senior colleagues willing to share what they're doing. Also, start your own retirement planning in earnest with qualified retirement and tax experts.

How will phased retirement affect your overall benefits? If you're working at a lower salary level at the end of your career, ask how that might affect your future retirement benefits. Make a list of all the benefits and perks you now receive as a current full-time employee and investigate how every single one could be affected by phased retirement. And if you leave the company permanently before qualifying for Medicare, know how you'll pay for health insurance. This is a particularly important issue to discuss with a qualified financial or tax advisor.

Bottom line: Phased retirement can offer the opportunity to adjust to full-time retirement or set up a new career once you finally leave your current employer. However, before you leap, fully investigate how such a transition will affect your overall finances and future retirement benefits.

Forever 41 from A1

can do for Prince George's County, its communities, and its future. They are extraordinary young people who are improving lives and strengthening our communities, and for that we are grateful. I'm proud to be working alongside other federal, state, and local officials in Maryland and Prince George's County to foster a new generation of leaders here who are smart, driven, and innovative."

"It is very fitting that this award is being renamed for former Prince George's County Executive Wayne Curry, who



PHOTO COURTESY USDA

A Year-Long Storytelling Effort of the Obama Administration's Work on Behalf of Those Living, Working and Raising Families in Rural America

By Tom Valsack
USDA Agriculture Secretary

When I began my service as Secretary of Agriculture in 2009, I took the U.S. Department of Agriculture's nickname of the "People's Department"—first coined by President Abraham Lincoln—to heart.

President Lincoln knew the importance of agriculture to national prosperity—particularly at a time when about half of all Americans lived on the farm. He understood the critical responsibility of USDA and government to serve and support American agriculture and the rural communities who have, since the founding of our country, helped to drive innovation and economic growth on a national scale.

During the 19th century, farmers and rural Americans helped lift up the country. During the 20th century, the hard work and success of farmers and rural Americans helped to bolster the economy and lay the foundation for the strongest nation on earth. And now again, at the beginning of the 21st century, the unwavering productivity of farmers and rural Americans is ensuring that America continues for this century to be the freest, safest, greatest nation on earth.

Because of the strength of the agricultural sector, most Americans think that USDA's work focuses solely on agriculture; that our service to the American people begins and ends with the production of food. But those of us who call rural America home know that there's much more to USDA and rural America than just farms and ranches. From biobased products to rural manufacturing, the potential to grow and make innovative products in rural America is limitless.

That's why, over the course of the Obama Administration, USDA has made targeted investments to help rural businesses grow. Through projects in affordable housing, energy efficiency and availability, clean and reliable drinking water and wastewater systems, and internet access, coupled with loans and grants for rural businesses, we've helped to attract and retain a talented rural labor force, improve connectivity and access to information, move products to market, and make rural communities competitive—ultimately supporting strong local economies and expanded opportunity for rural Americans.

For more than 150 years, USDA employees have served the people and places of our country that are hard to reach, off the beaten track, or otherwise underserved. As agriculture has changed and evolved over the years, we have not lost sight of Lincoln's vision. While the number of Americans who are farmers today stands at less than one percent, USDA's values are still rooted in rural America and service to the American people.

Our legacy of strong service and superior results continues as our work on food, agriculture, economic development, science, natural resource conservation and a host of other issues impacts millions of Americans and billions more people around the world, every day.

We have made investments to support rural places where people can start businesses, where families want to raise their children, where young people want to live. We've supported projects that bring needed infrastructure into rural communities and help them grow. We work with farmers and ranchers to provide nutritious, af-

fordable food to every American family. We protect the safety of the American food supply. We battle wildfire, drought, extreme weather, and pest and disease outbreaks to ensure that our land and water resources are preserved for future generations. We work to feed our nation's youth and help struggling families to put food on the table. We conduct cutting edge research that drives agricultural innovation. We support the international feeding programs that encourage millions of children, particularly young girls, around the world to attend school and get the nutrition they need to grow up healthy and strong. We preserve America's forests, grasslands and open spaces for the enjoyment of American families.

To help capture the important, and oftentimes heartening, impacts that these investments have brought about in rural communities, USDA is launching a year-long, progressive storytelling effort that focuses on capturing just that—how the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Obama Administration has invested in and achieved results for farmers, ranchers, rural communities and every American.

Each month in 2016, USDA will release a new "chapter" of the story, focused on one aspect of our investment in Americans, rural and urban alike, over the past eight years.

January focuses on celebrating America's farmers and ranchers, who ensure a safe, affordable, nutritious American food supply. Thanks to those working in American agriculture, we pay less for our food as a percentage of our wages than any other nation in the world.



PHOTO COURTESY USDA

January 6, USDA launched USDA Results, a progressive, year-long, multimedia storytelling effort showcasing the Administration's work on behalf of those living, working and raising families in rural America. Each month, USDA will release a new chapter of the story at medium.com/usda-results. We encourage you to check out January's chapter, *Celebrating America's Farmers and Ranchers: Supporting the Producers Who Ensure a Safe, Affordable, Nutritious American Food Supply*, and follow along throughout 2016.

That means we have more money to spend on other things, which is good for our families and the nation's economy. Thanks to the ingenuity, efficiency, and sweat of those working in American agriculture, we saw our agricultural economy remain strong and resilient, even during some tough times.

As a result of the hard work and sacrifice of farmers, ranchers and producers, Americans enjoy a rich diversity of safe and nutritious food—almost all of which comes from here in America. As a nation, we are fortunate to have the ability to grow and create virtually everything we need to survive. Our farmers, ranchers and foresters, and those in supporting industries, give us the freedom to pursue any path we choose most of us have delegated the responsibility of feeding our families to the American farmer. It's

created this great freedom for us to choose and for that we owe our farmers a debt of gratitude.

I've had the privilege of serving as Secretary of Agriculture for nearly eight years—the longest-serving Cabinet Secretary in the Obama Administration and one of the longest-serving Secretaries of Agriculture ever. Over the course of those nearly eight years, I've traveled to all 50 states and countries on nearly every continent. I've talked to farmers, ranchers and Americans far and wide, from all walks of life. I've heard from them firsthand the impact of USDA's staff, programs and services on their lives and their legacies.

And despite differences in production methods, geography, and demographics, they all agree

See STORYTELLING Page A5

march for babies

march of dimes
A FIGHTING CHANCE FOR EVERY BABY

Sign up at marchforbabies.org

Prince George's March for Babies
Saturday, April 30, 2016
Watkins Regional Park, Upper Marlboro, MD
8:00 AM Registration • 9:30 AM Walk Begins

For more information, call (571) 257-2324
marchofdimes.org/marylandmetrodc

Local Sponsors:

Premature birth is the #1 killer of babies.

COMMENTARY

Cong. Chris Van Hollen

House Democratic Minority Whip



Van Hollen: 63rd Attempt to Dismantle Obamacare a “Historically Callous Action”

WASHINGTON, DC—Today Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen, Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee, led the debate on the House floor against the Republican effort to overturn the President’s veto of the budget reconciliation bill that would repeal the Affordable Care Act and defund women’s health programs. A transcript of his opening remarks is below, and video is available here:

“Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing historic about this vote today is it probably breaks the record for the number of times a Congress has tried to overturn existing law that has been twice upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States.

“Yes, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. And again. And again. How fitting it is that we’re here on Groundhog Day for the 63rd vote in the House of Representatives to overturn the Affordable Care Act. But make no mistake—the Congressional Budget Office, the non-partisan entity that analyzes bills, has told us and the American people that in overturning the Affordable Care Act, you will eliminate affordable health care for 22 million Americans. So this is a historically callous action that in one day, our colleagues are proposing that we would deny affordable health care to 22 million Americans. It’s also the 12th vote this House has taken to attack women’s health care and defund Planned Parenthood.

“You know, the American people have got to be scratching their heads. They were told that with a new Speaker, and a new year—2016—we would actually begin to address the real challenges facing this country and do some serious work.

“And yet the very first actions taken here on this House floor in 2016 with the new Speaker, was to again try to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. And yes, that legislation went through the Senate and the House and went to the President’s desk. And the President vetoed it. And make no mistake: we will not overturn the President’s veto today. This is a

futile gesture, part of an obsession to try to undo affordable care for 22 million Americans. And it’s not going to happen.

“Now what’s happened since the last vote we had here to attack women’s health programs and defund Planned Parenthood? We had a decision by a court in Texas. Here were the headlines that came out of that court decision: ‘Vindication for Planned Parenthood’

‘Texas grand jury clears Planned Parenthood, indicts its accusers’

“I have to say, Mr. Speaker, our colleagues have a lot of gall to bring this to the floor after that Texas court decision. You know, they went into that Texas court decision, and the Harris County District Attorney said at the outset of their investigation of Planned Parenthood, we must go where the evidence leads us. And it began as an investigation into Planned Parenthood, just as we’ve had a series of witch hunt investigations here in the House, where the Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee said months ago that there was no evidence that Planned Parenthood committed any wrongdoing. And now we have a Texas court not only vindicating Planned Parenthood, but indicting their accusers.

“So Mr. Speaker, I tell you, this does take a lot of gall to come back here after that and go after women’s health programs. Not for the first time, not for the second time—this is now the [12th] time. So this will be the [12th] time this House has wasted taxpayer time and money trying to overturn women’s health programs, and the 63rd time it has wasted taxpayer time and money trying to strip away affordable health care to 22 million Americans by undoing the Affordable Care Act.

“This is a shamefully historic day. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I think it probably breaks all of the records in wasting taxpayer time and money, and in a really cruel way, where if we actually did overturn the President’s veto, 22 million Americans would be denied access to health care.”

Marc Morial, President and CEO

National Urban League



Maurice White: American Music’s Shining Star is Dimmed

*Every man has a place
In his heart there’s a space
And the world can’t erase his fantasies
Take a ride in the sky
On our ship, fantasia
All your dreams will come true right away
And we will live together
Until the twelfth of never
Our voices will ring forever, as one*
—Fantasy, Earth, Wind & Fire

In an era of pop music defined by rock star excess, one group was “into healthy food, meditation, taking vitamins, reading philosophical books, being students of life.”

Maurice White, who died last week at 74, was only 30 when Earth Wind & Fire released its first album in 1971—young, but a decade older than his bandmates and his brother and co-founder, Verdine.

“We really looked up to Maurice,” Verdine White said. “He had done a lot more things than we had. Maurice was interested in establishing a credibility of a different morality about musicians and their lifestyles.”

By 1971, Maurice White was an experienced studio drummer, having played throughout the 1960s on the records of Etta James, Muddy Waters, the Dells, the Impressions and other artists signed to Chess Records. At the Afro-Arts Theater, a cultural hub for the late-

1960s black consciousness movement in Chicago, former Sun Ra Arkestra former trumpeter Phil Cohran introduced White to the kalimba—an African thumb piano that would feature prominently in Earth Wind and Fire’s signature sound.

Trained as jazz musicians, the band fused soul, funk, gospel, blues, and rock in a style both unique and uplifting.

“We were coming out of a decade of experimentation, mind expansion and cosmic awareness,” Maurice White said “I wanted our music to convey messages of universal love and harmony without force-feeding listeners’ spiritual content.”

“Being joyful and positive was the whole objective of our group.”

Parkinson’s disease forced White to stop touring with Earth, Wind & Fire in 1995 but he remained a major force as a producer and composer for pop, jazz and dance artists, film and the stage.

White’s influence on American music is so pervasive, hardly an artist in the last five decades has not been touched in some way by his genius. Innovators like White not only break down barriers and open new doors, they create entirely new structures and invite the rest of the world in.

“The light is he, shining on you and me,” White’s brothers wrote. His work was infused with light—“shining bright to see what you can truly be” in “Shining Star,” or “chasin’ the clouds away” in “September.” Illuminating, life-giving,



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Prince George’s Equestrian Center

PHOTO CREDIT: ANONYMOUS

PRINCE GEORGE’S EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Whether you’re looking for space to hold a championship game with thousands of avid fans, or a dignified setting for your next board of directors meeting, The Show Place Arena in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, has everything you need to make your next event an unqualified success—hospitality, location, space, and versatility. No matter what type or what size of event you’re holding, The Show Place Arena offers you and your guests convenience, comfort, and a place you all want to come back to—again and again. The Show Place Arena and Prince George’s Equestrian Center are facilities of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation/Prince George’s County, Maryland. For information on other facilities, classes and parks, visit www.pg-parks.com.

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



Leading the March Towards Criminal Justice

“Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. My work with the poor and the incarcerated has persuaded me that the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice ... I’ve come to believe that the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned.”

—Bryan Stevenson, Author of *Just Mercy* and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative

Bryan Stevenson’s inspiring and best-selling book *Just Mercy* shares some of the fruits of his lifelong fight to push our nation closer to true justice. In January our nation took two more steps forward in the ongoing struggle to treat children like children and ensure a fairer justice system for all, especially for our poor and those of color.

In 2012 Bryan Stevenson won the landmark United States Supreme Court case *Miller v. Alabama* banning mandatory sentences of life in prison without parole for children 17-years-old and younger. Until then the United States was the only country in the world that routinely condemned children convicted of crimes as young as 13 and 14 to die in prison. After that ruling most states that had sentenced youths to mandatory life sentences gave them the opportunity to argue for reduced sentences or apply for parole. Seven did not: Alabama, Colorado, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana and Pennsylvania. Three of these, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Michigan, accounted for more than 1,100 of the 1,200–1,500 inmates still imprisoned for crimes committed as children. A January 25 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Montgomery v. Louisiana* made clear that the Miller decision must be applied retroactively in every state. Supreme Court Justice Anthony

Kennedy wrote in the decision, “The opportunity for release will be afforded to those who demonstrate the truth of Miller’s central intuition—that children who commit even heinous crimes are capable of change.”

One of Bryan Stevenson’s searing stories in *Just Mercy* is about a child sentenced to life in prison without parole. Ian Manuel pled guilty to armed robbery and attempted murder for a crime he committed with two older boys when he was thirteen. He was incarcerated at Apalachee Correctional Institution in Florida, an adult prison, and sent to solitary confinement: “Solitary confinement at Apalachee means living in a concrete box the size of a walk-in closet ... If you shout or scream, your time in solitary is extended; if you hurt yourself by refusing to eat or mutilating your body, your time in solitary is extended ... In solitary Ian became a self-described ‘cutter;’ he would take anything sharp on his food tray to cut his wrists and arms just to watch himself bleed. His mental health unraveled, and he attempted suicide several times. Each time he hurt himself or acted out, his time in isolation was extended. Ian spent 18

years in uninterrupted solitary confinement”—despite calls from even his victim about his inhumane confinement.

Tragically Ian Manuel’s story is not unique. The same day the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Montgomery v. Louisiana*, President Obama announced a ban on solitary confinement in the federal prison system for all children and youths, and for adults incarcerated for “low-level infractions” in an executive action that should serve as a model for all states and local jurisdictions. The President wrote solitary confinement “has been linked to depression, alienation, withdrawal, a reduced ability to interact with others and the potential for violent behavior. Some studies indicate that it can worsen existing mental illnesses and even trigger new ones. Prisoners in solitary are more likely to commit suicide, especially juveniles and people with mental illnesses. The United States is a nation of second chances, but the experience of solitary confinement too often undercuts that second chance ... In America, we believe in redemption. We believe, in the words of Pope

See WATCH, Page A12

The Prince George’s Post

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

Fighting the Feeling That You Just Don't Fit In

Our society places a large value on being popular. Television, movies and magazines tend to focus on "winners," people who excel at what they do and seem to be loved and/or respected by everyone around them.

But many of us are plagued by the anxiety that comes with not really being sure of where we stand with others. We may fear that someone is only pretending to like us while actually criticizing us negatively or laughing at us behind our backs.

If you're a parent, you've most likely heard these feelings from your child. When he or she comes from school complaining that "Nobody likes me!" or "I don't have any friends!" you are usually aware that what is being said isn't the full picture. But you also see how painful and traumatic the perceived situation is for your child.

Such feelings are a natural part of a child's development. Puberty and early adolescence have children facing a number of physical and emotional changes that, while a normal part of development, can leave a child feeling insecure and frightened.

As parents, we can help overcome these fears and related feelings by showing patience and understanding. When we listen carefully to complaints and offer positive advice, we can help a child get past his or her insecurity. The key is not to dismiss your child's concerns, but instead to offer positive, reassuring feedback without being critical or judgmental.

But this isn't just a childhood problem. Many adults also face feelings of anxiety and insecurity. Someone may believe he or she can't make friends and feels uncomfortable in social situations. A common feeling can be that everything you say or do is being critiqued or judged and that you are constantly found to be falling short.

While it's perfectly normal to have such thoughts and feelings at various times, if they have become almost constant and have you withdrawing from work and social situations, avoiding family and neighbors, or always trying to not be noticed so you won't be judged, the problem is a serious one that can lead to harmful depression.

In such cases, seeking professional support is important. A professional counselor can help put things back into perspective and help you more realistically evaluate your relationships with others. You can locate a counselor through the "Find A Counselor" link on the ACA homepage at www.counseling.org

Counseling Corner is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACACorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

Storytelling from A3

on one thing: innovation and opportunity are at the heart of the American agriculture success story.

As a matter of course, farmers and ranchers must constantly prepare, invent and adapt so that they're able to meet whatever tomorrow brings head on. But the idea of rural innovation runs deeper than that. Rural America innovates and constantly strives for improvement, no matter the obstacle. It's ingrained in the very fiber of their being, just as service is ingrained in USDA's. Service is at the heart of what good government is and does, a motto that has guided our work over the course of the Obama Administration.

More than twenty years after I entered public service and after nearly eight years as Secretary of Agriculture, I still love my job each day. Whether improving domestic and international access to food, promoting nutrition and safety of our food supply, conserving our natural resources, advancing agricultural exports, or developing the rural economy, USDA helps Americans to lead better lives. I know that I'm not alone in the pride I take in rural America, American agriculture and what USDA employees do to make a difference in the lives of Americans every day. I'm pleased to share with you this yearlong reflection on the results achieved over the course of this Administration, and I hope you enjoy it too.

Bowie Tech Meetup Vetting and Prototyping

Often, entrepreneurs come up with ideas and leave them simply as an idea but with Ben Burgess, CEO of Invincible Audio LLC, he and his team took an idea, built a prototype of a Bluetooth audio football, and took it to the streets to talk with real individuals who would be the real folks purchasing the item.

Wednesday, February 24, 2016
Bowie Business Innovation Center
14000 Jericho Park Road, Center for Business,
Suite 3100, Bowie, MD
Bowie State University—Parking Lot 0
6:30 pm–8:30 pm

Ben Burgess will lead up a conversation about "getting out from behind the desk" and taking the idea to execution. He will share lessons learned, opportunities for the future, and practical steps that we can all take when we have ideas as well.

Attend our local, in-person Meetup to discover the perfect co-founder to round out your team. You'll meet with other entrepreneurs who are as energized as you are about launching a new business and who possess a wide range of unique experiences, ideas, and skills.

Stop Playing Politics with Maryland's Tourism Economy

Overriding Gov. Hogan's Veto of SB190 will Raise Taxes on MD Small Businesses and Jeopardize Maryland Travel and Tourism Economy

By PRESS OFFICER
The Travel Technology Assoc.

ANNAPOLIS, MD—During the 2015 legislative session, a coalition of local small businesses, policymakers and national consumer and industry groups assembled to highlight the negative impact SB190, a bill that would apply the state sales tax to the service fees charged by travel service providers, would have on local travel and tourism. Governor Hogan listened to these voices and many others and vetoed SB190.

Now some in the legislature want to once again play politics with Maryland's tourism industry by forcing an override of Governor Hogan's veto. The Travel Technology Association (Travel Tech), the trade association representing leaders in online travel innovation released the following statement regarding any potential override.

"A vote to override Governor Hogan's veto of SB190 is a vote to raise taxes on Maryland small businesses and a recipe to negatively impact Maryland's tourism economy. It would not only shoulder the state's 226 travel agencies and their 1,100 employees with new taxes, but also countless local tour operators, wedding and event planners and other service providers who work to bring travelers to Maryland destinations," said Steve Shur, president of the Travel Technology Association. "Proponents of a veto override are willfully placing local small businesses and Maryland's tourism economy in harms way in order to score political points."

In 2014 online travel agents (OTAs) helped travelers book over 1 million room nights in Maryland hotels. Of those room nights, Maryland residents booked 250,000. Industry data shows that for every 1 percent

increase in room rates, room night bookings see a 2 percent reduction. If implemented, this tax will not only impact consumers traveling to Maryland, but will ultimately harm hundreds of local small businesses.

"Taxing travel agency service fee income—already subject to federal and state income taxes—creates a disincentive for agents to send travelers to Maryland and risks dampening overall demand for travel to Maryland," said Eben Peck, Senior Vice President at the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA). "Travel agents will steer travelers to destinations where the tax is not owed such as Old Town Alexandria instead of National Harbor, for example."

It's not just the local travel agent community and consumer groups that stands against this onerous new tax, the association representing local independent hotels opposes SB190 as well.

"Like most taxes, these additional costs will ultimately be passed on to the consumer, making Maryland hotels more expensive and less competitive with neighboring states that don't tax travel services," said Bobbie Singh-Allen, president of the Independent Lodging Industry Association (ILIA). "The Independent Lodging Industry Association and its Maryland members are strongly opposed to the new travel tax which would result in fewer travelers visiting Maryland's independent hotels."

ABOUT TRAVEL TECH

The Travel Technology Association is the trade association for the travel technology industry, and is dedicated to promoting public policy that helps connects consumers and travel providers, eliminates barriers to travel, and protects the traveling public.

Job Seeker from A1

County this year. Our goal is to have all residents of Prince George's County successfully employed in high wage jobs or achieving generational wealth through their businesses. That's "Activating Prosperity," said EDC President and CEO Jim Coleman. "There is no excuse to not enjoy a life of abundance if you are a member of the Spirit of Faith Christian Center and you use the programs that the EDC has at its disposal."

This year, Pastor Mike Freeman, Senior Pastor of the Spirit of Faith Christian Center, adopted the theme "Moving Mountains" to emphasize the importance of removing obstacles in your personal life to achieve "super natural abundance". According to Pastor Freeman, the bible provides business principles that all business owners should follow to ensure maximum increase.

"I am delighted that the Spirit of Faith Christian Center is partnering with the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation," said Pastor Freeman. "It is important for the community to first know how God does business in order for them to prosper in their business. Learning what the EDC has to offer, being concerned about what their enterprise has to offer and being able to hear the voice

of God as a business partner will certainly move any mountains you perceive in your life."

Mr. Coleman shared his own personal testimony about how his great-grandfather's purchase of the farm he worked on as a slave in 1888 brought generational wealth to more than 300 of his ancestors. Mr. Coleman owns Coleman Crest Farm today. This is the type of super natural abundance that the EDC has pledged to provide for everyone in Prince George's County. With the tools available through the EDC, the "Activate Prosperity" initiative is on track to create 500 multi-millionaires in Prince George's County within the next 3 years.

Business owners were provided specific information on a wide-range of business support services, including how to gain access to traditional and non-traditional capital, how to write a business plan, and how to get certified to do business with Prince George's County. More than 50 business owners registered for the certification training offered by the EDC.

"Today's experience was nothing but God," said Debra Ferguson, owner of The Empire Dynasty event planning company in Laurel, Maryland. "Many people get into business with nothing more than a dream, but they don't know where to go for resources. As a result of to-

day's Summit and the resources the EDC told us about, I am confident I can be more successful in my business. I don't see how people can make it without you [the EDC], especially if they don't have their own capital."

The participants were also provided information about transformative programs like the EDC's 'Job Club,' which assists ex-offenders to 'move the mountains' of shame and rejection to re-enter the workforce.

"I really appreciated the information provided today," said an ex-offender who attended the Summit. "I felt like I was being treated like a person instead of a number, as I did at other One Stop Centers in the area. I feel really confident that I will get the help I need and the job I want with the help of the EDC's Job Club, which helps former offenders like me."

Job seekers learned about the training and certificate programs to become competitive for high wage jobs, particularly in the areas of Information Technology, Health Care, Transportation and Construction. They also learned about the available grants to provide tuition, childcare and transportation assistance for residents participating in the training programs. Participants were given the opportunity to meet with representatives from regional companies such as Dimensions Healthcare Systems, CLP Re-

sources Construction, Securitas Security Services and Goodwill of Greater Washington to hear about the more than 200 jobs they have available immediately. In addition, participants learned how to access 'soft skills' training to assist job seekers with resume writing, interviewing skills and dressing for success.

"There is clearly a need for more forums such as this one to let people know the ABC's of employment," said Elizabeth Williams, Director of Workforce Development Services for the EDC. "Our job is to transform the lives of the 24,000 job seekers in the County with a simple formula. First, get A job. Second, get a BETTER job, and third, get a CAREER. If we are successful, our job creators are successful, our County household income will rise, and we are truly 'Activating Prosperity' in Prince George's County."

For more information on how to gain access to capital, get assistance in writing a business plan and other business support services, contact John Mason at 301-583-4646 or jamason@co.pg.md.us.

For more information on how to identify job opportunities, register for job training and certification or career development workshops, contact Liz Williams at 301-883-4615 or elwilliams1@co.pg.md.us.

Maryland Senate Bill 190 Represents a Dangerous New Tax on Business Travelers

By PRESS OFFICER
BTC

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Business Travel Coalition (BTC) today strongly cautioned Maryland lawmakers not to play politics with the state's travel economy by overriding Governor Hogan's veto of SB190, a new sales tax on the service fees charged by local travel agents, tour operators, and event planners. This new tax would be passed on to corporate, university and government travel depart-

ments along with significant new costs for legal obligations and accounting complexities, compliance requirements and audits.

"SB190 is a new tax on the services provided by local small businesses. Travel and meeting managers, including state government travel offices and state universities, are under great pressure to watch every penny of travel spend. All of these administrative costs would be on top of the new tax and would be translated into higher transaction fees from the travel agency to

the travel department," stated BTC Chairman Kevin Mitchell. "As such, a double incentive would have been created to choose a less expensive destination than Maryland, if possible. If not possible, there would be less money to spend in Baltimore or Annapolis on restaurants, entertainment and other destination services adversely impacting jobs and economic activity," added Mitchell.

Not only would this bill result in downward pressure on demand for lodging properties of

all sizes, it would do harm to Maryland's 1,100 travel agencies most of which are small businesses whose owners are endeavoring to scratch out a living for themselves and their employees.

BTC expects legislators will understand very well the incentive new taxes and administrative costs would provide organizations to reconsider the great state of Maryland as a business travel destination. Therefore, BTC strongly encourages lawmakers to vote against any veto override.



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OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK
Movie Review
The Forest

The Forest
Grade: C
Rated PG-13, a little profanity,
mild violence, scary images
1 hr., 35 min

There is a forest in Japan that's famous for being a common location for suicides. That's probably not a good selling point for the Japanese national park system (it really sounds like more of a German thing), but it supplies a decent premise for *The Forest*, a mid-grade, bloodless PG-13 horror flick whose only distinction is that it's not as aggressively bad as most of the films of this type that are dumped in theaters every January.

Now, the film is set in Japan, but don't worry, it's mostly about white people. Beginning with a mushy flurry of disjointed flashbacks (why?), we learn that a young blonde named Sara Price (Natalie Dormer) has received word that her twin sister, Jess, was seen entering the Aokigahara Forest, from which most people do not return. Unable to reach her by phone, Sara flies to Japan to search for her.

Local law enforcement isn't much help. "After 48 hours, we have to assume the person has gone through with their suicide plan," says one cop. Whaddaya gonna do, y'know? The people at the ranger station inform Sara that the forest is full of angry, mischievous spirits, and that it's dangerous to leave the marked path because the ghosts will



Against the backdrop of Japan's Aokigahara forest, where people go to end their lives, an American woman braves the mysterious, uncharted terrain to search for her missing sister.

mess with your mind. This is especially true, the rangers say, if you are sad. Sadness is to forest ghosts what uncovered food is to bears.

At a forest-adjacent bar, Sara meets Aiden (Taylor Kinney), a hunky travel writer who's doing a story about the place and offers to help her find her sister. Sara is convinced Jess is still alive because they are twins, and twins know when each other are dead. That's just science. A Japanese guide, Michi (Yukiyoshi Ozawa), gives her more reason to hope: sometimes people take a tent into the forest, unsure whether they want to kill themselves or just go

camping (same difference, if you ask me). Sure enough, they find a tent with some of Jess' belongings. Perhaps she is alive and merely lost!

That's all well and good, but despite the inherently creepy setting—not just woods at night, HAUNTED woods at night—first-time director Jason Zada can't muster anything more than the standard ghostly visions and hallucinations. To compensate, the screenplay, credited to three individuals who evidently rewrote one another's work, gives Sara a lot of freaky dreams, thus providing the jolts and jump-scares lacking in her waking life. (Be-

ware of any horror film whose "scariest" parts are in someone's imagination.) The script also has a few dead ends—most notably a thread about how Jess and Sara's parents died, which turns out to be irrelevant—suggesting some themes and subplots got lost in the rewrites.

Still, with its eerie setting and its scarcity of sex, nudity, and strong violence, *The Forest* does meet the criteria for, say, a teen slumber party, or a similar gathering of easy-to-please, low-expectations viewers. Which is to say that while it isn't very good, it isn't painfully bad, either.

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

Why They Pardon Peyton



In 2015, 80 of the top 100 watched sports shows in the United States were National Football League games, and frankly it's surprising that the number isn't higher. Yet despite this immense popularity, most of the players are unknown when the helmets come off. This is because the NFL's brutally unsentimental marketing strategy has always been to promote teams, not players. You cannot market the individual when any play may be your last.

Amid this faceless warrior class, there is one star whose commercial power rises above all others: Peyton Manning. The 39-year-old quarterback is not only a ubiquitous pitchman, selling life insurance, cars, and an industrial solvent called "Papa John's Pizza." He is also ratings gold for the NFL. That's what happens when you are a second-generation, four-time MVP with 20 years in the national spotlight. When Peyton joined the Denver Broncos in 2012, they not only transformed into instant Super Bowl contenders, they also became America's Team: the most popular franchise in the country, besting the polarizing (hateable) teams in Dallas, Pittsburgh, and New England.


The financial power of Peyton Manning means that he operates by a different, deeply corrosive set of media rules than any other player. This was seen starkly last weekend. Peyton has been embroiled in a scandal over whether he used human growth hormones to aid his comeback from the four neck surgeries that left him weak as a kitten, unable to even grip a football. The Al Jazeera English news network released a documentary called *The Dark Side of Sports* that posited that HGH was delivered to Manning's home from an "anti-aging clinic" called the Guyer Institute in the name of his wife, Ashley Manning. Al Jazeera had an intern from Guyer, the cinematically named Charlie Sly, say this while being surreptitiously recorded. Sly has since recanted, but Al Jazeera claims a second confidential source as well. Two other athletes named in the documentary, baseball players Ryan Howard and Ryan Zimmerman, are now suing Al Jazeera for defamation, so the truth is coming. If there's one thing we've learned about PEDs and sports, it's that stories change mighty fast when perjury and prison loom.

As for Peyton, he emerged in a red-faced rage, denying everything except that "private" packages were in fact delivered from the Guyer Institute to Ashley Manning. He even hired former Bush press secretary Ari Fleischer to mount the PR counterattack against Al Jazeera English. Yes, Ari Fleischer: a man who once was part of an administration that "accidentally" bombed and killed Al Jazeera journalists during the Iraq War and who drafted banal memos about waging literal war on the news network would now be throwing rhetorical bombs at the news network in the court of public opinion.

The story has a great many questions, and we should all take a wait-and-see approach to this before affixing a scarlet HGH to Manning's chest, but one thing is undeniably certain: It's news. That's why it was so bizarre on Sunday when Peyton emerged from the bench to lead the Broncos to victory and the announcers, Jim Nantz and Phil Simms, did not mention the HGH story once. They did not mention it as a possible source of distraction. They did not even mention it as a story they found to be disreputable. It simply did not exist. As Nantz said the next day to sports-radio host Mike Francesa, "Why would we? If we talk about [the documentary] we would only continue to breathe life into a story that on all levels is a non-story."

The Manning "non-story" is not the only thing Jim Nantz kept to himself on Sunday. As Michael O'Keefe reported in the *New York Daily News*, Nantz is repped by powerful broadcasting agent Sandy Montag, who has also helped facilitate a plethora of Peyton's commercial deals. Nantz even has appeared in ads with Peyton Manning to hawk Papa John's Pizza as well as Sony products. And—just to make it super-cozy—Montag helped launch Ari Fleischer's sports public-relations firm a decade ago when Fleischer took his golden parachute out of the Bush administration. In an e-mail to the *Daily News*, Fleischer wrote, "I didn't even know Sandy represented Nantz and in all cases, I haven't asked Sandy to do anything on this." Believe Ari Fleischer if you choose, but the last time many trusted this man, we ended up with George W. Bush in that damn flight suit.

In addition to Nantz choosing to make this story unspoken, every broadcaster on ESPN's NFL show said with a straight face that there is no way Peyton could have used HGH—despite throwing a record 55 TD passes at age 37 just over a year removed from being unable to grip a ball—because he



TEST YOUR HOME FOR RADON

January is National Radon Action Month. Radon is a radioactive gas that is found in soil and rock in all parts of the United States. It is formed by the decay of uranium, which is a natural process. Radon gas is invisible, and it has no odor or taste.

Radon may be found in homes and buildings, and inhaling indoor air containing radon over a period of many years can increase your risk of getting lung cancer.

Test your home for radon—it's easy, inexpensive and only takes a few minutes. Radon test kits can be purchased through the National Radon Program Services or at home improvement stores and centers.

For more information about radon, visit <http://www.epa.gov/radon>

Civil War Soul Sisters: Civil War Era African American Women Who Published

By PRESS OFFICER
MNCPPC

CLINTON, MD—Biographies, essays, and autobiographies, cookbooks, children's books, poetry and speeches—over seventy-five published works by African American women during the Civil War, an era when it was illegal for the vast majority of black Americans to learn to read or write. Lavonda Broadnax, a digital project coordinator with the Library of Congress, will speak on the accomplishments of these astonishing women.

Arrive early, limited seating. This FREE event is suitable for all ages.

When: Saturday, February 27, 2016, from 4–5 p.m.

Where: Surratt House Museum, 9118 Brandywine Road, Clinton, MD

Originally built as a middle-class farm house for John and Mary Surratt in 1852, the Surratt House is infamously connected to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. During the crucial decade before the Civil War, the house served as a tavern and hostelry, a post office,

and a polling place. During the War, it was a safe house in the Confederate underground system which flourished in Southern Maryland.

Today, the museum presents a variety of programs and events, recapturing the history of the mid-19th century life and focusing on the fascinating web of the Lincoln assassination conspiracy and the involvement of the Surratt family.

The Department of Parks and Recreation provides comprehensive park and recreation programs, facilities and services which respond to chang-

ing needs within our communities. The Department strives to preserve, enhance and protect our open spaces to enrich the quality of life for present and future generations in a safe and secure environment.

For more on the Department of Parks and Recreation, visit www.pgparcs.com and stay connected on Facebook and Twitter. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation encourages and supports the participation of individuals with disabilities in all programs and services.

ADVERTISE! in The Prince George's Post
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Calendar of Events

February 18, — February 24, 2016

Platinum Live: Queen Nur's Sweet Potato Pie

Date and Time: Friday, February 19, 2016, 11:00 am
Description: Incomparable storyteller Queen Nur presents a rich blend of tales, songs and rhymes celebrating African-American heritage and the art of storytelling, all accompanied by African percussion instruments. This highly energetic and interactive performance will delight as well as enlighten all ages.
Cost: \$10/person; \$8/person (groups of 20 or more)
Ages: Seniors 60 and better
Location: Publick Playhouse
5445 Landover Rd., Cheverly, MD
Contact: 301-277-1710; TTY 301-699-2544

A Study in Archaeology

Date and Time: Friday, February 19, 2016, 6–8 pm
Description: Are you interested in archaeology and learning about what people in the past have left behind? Listen as archaeologist Kristin Montaperto from the Parks and Recreation Archaeology Program discusses archaeology and how it affects you and your community. She will also have examples of artifacts and hands-on activities to show what archaeologists do.
Cost: Free
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: Collge Park Community Center
5051 Pierce Avenue, College Park, MD
Contact: 301-441-2647; TTY 301-699-2544

A Night of Jazz

Date and Time: Friday, February 19, 2016, 6–9 pm
Description: Join us for an evening of jazz and throwback documentaries of musicians such as Art Tatum, Billie Holiday, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and others that paved the way for the sound and love of the music. Bring a friend and enjoy! Refreshments will be served, but they are limited.
Cost: Free
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex
8001 Sheriff Road, Landover, MD
Contact: 301-583-2400; TTY 301-699-2544

Creative Dialogue: Innovator Talk—Lola Bloom

Date and Time: Saturday, February 20, 2016, 10 am–4 pm
Description: The Brentwood Arts Exchange in partnership with The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center presents Art and Community Development: City Blossoms. City Blossoms is a non-profit organization working out of the Washington, D.C. area dedicated to kid-driven, community engaging, creative green spaces. Founded by UMD alumna Lola Bloom, the work of City Blossoms mixes environmental education, healthy living skills, artistic expression and community development. She specializing in an art-based, hands-on approach that emphasizes the strengths and unique qualities of the communities where they work. Lola will give an overview of the organization's history and evolution, and will lead participants through several activities that demonstrate the unique approaches to education and learning.
Cost: Free
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: Brentwood Arts Exchange
3901 Rhode Island Avenue, Brentwood, MD
Contact: 301-277-2863; TTY 301-699-2544

History & Legacy Celebration!

Date and Time: Saturday, February 20, 2016, 1–4 pm
Description: Accepting Our History, Acknowledging Our Progress & Affirming Our Future! Join Region 3 at South Tech/Rec as we celebrate the strength and resilience of our community with engaging workshops, an art exhibition, live music and entertainment, goods vendors, and dynamic speakers.
Cost: Free
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: Southern Technical/Recreation Complex
7007 Bock Road, Fort Washington, MD
Contact: 301-749-4160; TTY 301-699-2544

Jubilee Voices

Date and Time: Saturday, February 20, 2016, 2–3 pm
Description: The Washington Revels Jubilee Voices ensemble is committed to the preservation of African-American history and traditions—presenting songs and stories of struggle and perseverance, trials and triumphs, as expressed through a cappella music and poetry. Program sponsored by Darnall's Chance House Museum. Capacity limited; reservations required.
Cost: Free
Ages: 13 & up
Location: Trinity Episcopal Church
14515 Church Street, Upper Marlboro, MD
Contact: 301-952-8010; TTY 301-699-2544

PRAISE Dance Festival

Date and Time: Sunday, February 21, 2016, 4 pm
Description: The popular annual festival returns with outstanding liturgical dance from D.C. area studios, ministries, and ensembles which are selected by audition.
Cost: \$25/person (General Admission); \$20/students, seniors, groups of 20 or more
Ages: Recommended for all ages
Location: Publick Playhouse
5445 Landover Road Cheverly, MD
Contact: 301-277-1710; TTY 301-699-2544

G.E.A.R.: Karaoke Party

Date and Time: Monday, February 22, 2016, 7–9 pm
Description: Ladies bring your friends, iPod and singing voices for a karaoke party! Sing along with friends to your favorite songs and even act out your own personalized music video if you'd like.
Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
Ages: 10-17
Location: Bladensburg Community Center
4500 57th Avenue, Bladensburg, MD

EARTH TALK ... What is Being Done to Save Elephants Around the World?

Dear EarthTalk:

What is being done to save elephants around the world? I understand that these magnificent creatures are teetering on the brink of extinction.

—Millie Vicente,
San Jose, CA

In just one decade between 1979 and 1989, half of all Africa's elephants were lost to the ivory trade. Public outrage over the loss led to a ban on all international trade in elephant tusks by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)—an international agreement regulating trade in wild animals and plants—and African elephant populations were able to bounce back.

However, a disturbing new wave of illegal elephant poaching has been underway in Africa in recent years, due to rising demand for ivory goods by China's budding middle class. As much as 70 percent of illegal ivory goes to China. In Beijing, one pound of ivory can bring in \$1,000. From 2010 to 2012 alone, 100,000 elephants were killed for ivory tusks. Last year, approximately 30,000 elephants were illegally poached—this equates to one elephant being killed every 15 minutes.

Massacres that leave behind graveyards of nearly 100 elephant remains have become prevalent across Africa. In 2013, poachers on horseback in southwest Chad shot and cut

the tusks off of at least 86 elephants, including 33 pregnant females, in less than a week. American missionary Gary Roberts tried to rescue a surviving baby he found tied to a tree, but despite his best efforts the elephant died. "The poachers killed pregnant females and all the calves," said Celine Sissler-Bienvenu from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). "Even if the conditions were right, which they are not, it would take more than 20 years for this population to recover."

In Zimbabwe, poachers are using cyanide to kill entire herds at a time. In October 2015, rangers in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park found 78 elephants killed by the poison. "We're now trying to check how many elephants had fully developed tusks, because babies are among those killed," said Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management spokeswoman Caroline Washaya-Moyo. "The rate at which we are losing animals to cyanide is alarming," she added. Some 300 elephants fell victim to the same fate in the park a year before. Many non-target species are also dying from the cyanide intended for elephants. The park agency was hoping drones and trained dogs would intensify poacher monitoring.

According to a June 2014 CITES report, 20 percent of Africa's elephants may be killed in the next 10 years if poaching continues at current



CREDIT: PHILIP MILNE, FLICKRCC

A disturbing new wave of illegal elephant poaching has been underway in Africa in recent years due to rising demand for ivory goods by China's budding middle class.

levels. Meanwhile, many worry that extinction isn't far off. "This species could be extinct in our lifetime, within one or two decades, if the current trend continues," said Dune Ives, senior researcher at Vulcan Inc., which is working with the non-profit Elephants Without Borders on the Great Elephant Census to document elephant population numbers around the world. "In five years, we may have lost the opportunity to save this magnificent and iconic animal."

Meanwhile, other groups are working diligently to spread awareness about the ongoing crisis. In summer 2015, Save the Elephants staged public demonstrations in Beijing and New York City where they destroyed nearly two tons of ivory. "If we want our grandchildren to grow

up in a world where they see elephants in the wild," U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell told the crowd amassed at the New York event in Times Square, "we owe it to them to shut down the market that fuels poachers."

CONTACTS: CITES, www.cites.org; IFAW, www.ifaw.org; Great Elephant Census, www.greatelephantcensus.com; Elephants Without Borders, www.elephantswithoutborders.org; Save the Elephants, savetheelephants.org.

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Send questions to: earthtalk@emagazine.com.

Ballot from A1

and then to translate it so non-English speaking voters can use it."

Each county will pay for a "specimen ballot" to be made available to people before they vote, and there are outreach efforts by individual counties, like Anne Arundel, but Lamone said that isn't enough.

"Anne Arundel county has in excess of 300,000 voters," Lamone said. "So 800 people (who have been trained), thank goodness they know how to use

it, but they've got a long way to go."

As far as statewide outreach goes, the Board of Elections is designing an explanatory postcard that will be sent out a few weeks before the primary. Beside that, there is also one person, on contract, doing social media to reach voters, Lamone said.

Each polling place will also have a special touch-screen kiosk for people with disabilities. These machines guide the voter through each ballot item and alert them at the end

if an answer is incomplete. The screen can only show seven candidates at once, and the machine will not let a voter cast their vote until they scroll through to see all the candidates.

These machines then print out a paper ballot, which gets cast at the ballot-reading machine—which is the same one used by voters who "bubble in" their answers.

The new system cost around \$28 million, according to Donna Duncan, the assistant deputy administrator for election policy.

Also new this election season is same-day registration for early voting. There are 66 early voting centers in the state, with a potential 67th being proposed in Montgomery. To do this, the Motor Vehicle Administration is giving the Board of Elections a database of people who are eligible to register, but haven't yet.

The Board of Elections will then go through that list to make sure people are eligible—they are living and not felons—and will "pre-qualify" those people so they can register and vote on the same day.

Hogan from A1

Thomas V. Mike V. Miller Jr., D-Calvert, that would have mandated funding for the hospital.

"I have no idea what that was all about, frankly," Hogan said of Miller's bill.

The supplemental budget was introduced to both chambers of the General Assembly shortly after Hogan announced it, eliciting light applause from the Senate.

Miller called it a "step in the right direction" for bipartisanship.

"It's leadership, and it's getting things done, it's making things happen for the state of Maryland, talk is cheap, we govern by actions," he said.

Though he said he was grateful for the funds, Miller complained that Hogan is still not communicating with him.

"All of us read about these things in the newspaper," Miller said. "Like this supplemental budget, I'm glad he sent it down, but of course he had a press conference before he sent it down."

The plan will transfer operations from the county to the University of Maryland Medical System, ending years of state "bailouts," Hogan said, to keep the hospital functioning.

The budget also includes \$135 million for construction of the new hospital, which includes

\$27.5 million that was already allocated for the medical center in Hogan's original budget.

There are several applications and regulations that must be met before a new hospital may be built, including a certificate of need application signed by the Maryland Healthcare Commission.

Robert Chrencik, president and chief executive officer of the University of Maryland Medical System, said having support from the state will help the process along.

Also in the Senate Friday, a vote to override Hogan's veto of a law that would allow ex-felons to vote immediately after

they're released from incarceration, instead of waiting for their parole or probation to be finished, was postponed until Tuesday.

This is the second time this vote has been postponed. The first time, Miller wanted to wait until Sen. Craig Zucker (a delegate until Thursday) was sworn in.

Friday, the vote was postponed because two senators, Thomas Middleton, D-Charles, and Paul Pinsky, D-Prince George's, were absent.

Each vote matters, because the vote is expected to just make the two-thirds, or 29 votes, required to override a veto.

Peyton from A6

was so forceful in his denials. That's simply not a rationale that should be uttered publicly in the wake of a plethora of athletes—Lance Armstrong, Marion Jones, Rafael Palmeiro—looking more sincere than Lincoln at Gettysburg while telling us that they did not use.

Personally, I don't care whether or not Peyton used HGH. I actually think that if it is done in a regulated manner under the care of a medical professional, he should use. Especially after four neck surgeries. What matters to me is the absence of journalistic standards at play. As bizarre as it sounds, the work of Jim Nantz matters because his work helps shape our view of a sport that has a profound effect on a host of real-life issues, from the public funding of stadiums, to violence against women, to

how we understand masculinity, and, perhaps most perniciously and particularly, how we talk about race.

Here is where these journalistic double standards start to matter. Peyton Manning is a commercial leviathan not only because he has had a storied Hall of Fame career but because he is a white, All-American superstar from a prominent family in a league that is 70 percent black. This double standard also means Peyton has far more to lose than other NFL players whose PED peccadillos usually merit a yawn. But it also creates a view of criminality where Peyton Manning carries an assumption of innocence that other players do not. This was seen starkly a year ago, when discussion raged about the nexus of violence against women, sexual assault, and football. During the repeated rundowns that sports networks did of this history, you

never—seriously, never—heard the name Peyton Manning.

When Peyton was a junior star at Tennessee, he was accused of sitting on the face of a female athletic trainer, bare-assed, spread wide. Peyton in his book claimed he was just "mooning" a track athlete, also there for physical therapy, and the trainer, whom he described as having "a vulgar mouth," took offense. (At least he didn't call her a "strumpet.")

But Peyton's actions were serious enough that the "vulgar-mouthed" woman in question immediately reported the incident to the Sexual Assault Crisis Center in Knoxville. The track star Peyton claimed to be joking with wrote Peyton a letter in 2002 saying, according to USA Today, "You might as well maintain some dignity and admit what happened.... do the right thing here." The trainer, who later received her doctorate, then lost a

subsequent job as a program director at Florida Southern College after Peyton wrote about the "mooning" in his memoir. To top it off, in 2005, he broke their court-ordered confidentiality agreement by talking about the incident on ESPN. It's ugly stuff, and it sure as hell runs against the "Peyton can do no wrong/Nationwide jingle" pitchman so valuable to the league.

But just because Peyton Manning is a commodity being protected by the NFL and the media doesn't mean we have to buy what he's selling. In fact, it would probably be healthier if we didn't, beyond the benefits of avoiding the digestive anguish of Papa John's. I don't know how the Al Jazeera/HGH story will turn out. But I do know that this is far from the "non-story" that Jim Nantz claims. In fact, Nantz's silence only confirms it as a narrative worth following in the months to come.