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Brown Stresses Equity, Need for One-Stop Appointment Portal During Vaccination Site Visit

Brown thanked the dedicated Guardsmen and health care workers distributing vaccines

By CHRISTIAN UNKENHOLZ
Office of Congressman Anthony G. Brown

WASHINGTON (Feb. 8, 2021)—[Monday] morning, Congressman Anthony G. Brown (MD-04) visited the state-run vaccination site at Six Flags in Maryland to discuss progress, view ongoing operations and speak with officials on how the federal government can best support quick and equitable distribution.

During the visit, Congressman Brown stressed the need to target vaccine distribution toward the hardest-hit areas of the state like Prince George's County, the need to have members of underserved communities speak directly to vaccine skeptical populations and the need for a one-stop portal to streamline the vaccine appointments. Over the last several weeks, Maryland has consistently ranked as one of the worst-performing states for vaccine distribution.

Only 4.05% of Prince George's County residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine—by far the lowest rate in Maryland. Inequitable distribution has slowed vaccination rates with every county receiving at

Congressman Anthony Brown speaks with Maryland National Guard Brig. Gen. Janceen L. Birkhead.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN ANTHONY G. BROWN

least 300 weekly doses, Prince George's receives approximately nine doses per 1,000 residents. Maryland residents have experienced website crashes, endless hours on the phone and an appointment system that is simply "not working as it should." The result, as characterized by The Atlantic, is "no more fair or logical than an old-fashioned Moscow queue for cabbage."

"Black and brown communities have seen disproportionate infections, hospitalizations and deaths from this pandemic. Now, with multiple safe and effective vaccines there is a real risk that communities like Prince George's County will be left behind by Governor Hogan's fragmented and inequitable strategy," said Congressman Brown. "We



need to better prioritize these communities and tailor outreach that speaks directly to their needs and concerns. We knew that the largest scale vaccination effort in our country's history would be a logistical challenge. Maryland must step-up in order to protect the health and wellbeing of our residents."

At this time all appointments for Six Flags America have been reserved through February 15, 2021. According to the state of Maryland, additional appointments will be released in the near future.

Council Unanimously Approves Legislation Addressing Acts of Insurgency

Council Member Monique Anderson-Walker Sponsors Resolution Supporting County Response to U.S Capitol Attacks

By ANGELA ROUSON
Prince George's County Council Media

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Feb. 1, 2021)—The Prince George's County Council, during session on Thursday, January 28, 2021, unanimously supported CR-007-2021, legislation sponsored by Council Member Monique Anderson-Walker (D- District 8) addressing acts of insurgency related to the January 6th attacks on the U.S. Capitol.

Council Member Anderson-Walker says CR-007-2021 reinforces the Council's strong and clear message concerning the Council's position on acts of insurgency.

"On January 6, 2021, individuals from across our country committed crimes that put the fragility of our democracy on full display. CR-007-2021 wasted no time putting pen to paper in support of the County Executive's investigative actions concerning the abhorrent attack on the United States Capitol."

Under the legislation, CR-007-2021 supports the Prince George's County Executive in directing and assisting the appropriate agencies to take the proper actions directed towards any public servant of Prince George's County found to have

See LEGISLATION Page A4



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY SIX FLAGS AMERICA

Richard Pretlow has been named park president of the company's Maryland-based Six Flags America theme park and Hurricane Harbor waterpark.

New Park President Named for Six Flags America & Hurricane Harbor

Richard Pretlow Assumes New Role in Time for Longest Season in Park History

By PRESS OFFICER
Six Flags America

BOWIE, Md. (Feb. 2, 2021)—Six Flags Entertainment Corporation, the world's largest regional theme park company and the largest operator of waterparks in North America, today announced that Richard Pretlow has been named park president of the company's Maryland-based Six Flags America theme park and Hurricane Harbor waterpark. Pretlow succeeds Rick Howarth who was promoted to a new role of vice president of procurement after more than 10 years at the helm of Six Flags America. Pretlow most recently served as director of in-park services at Six Flags Great Escape Resort, located in Lake George, N.Y.

"We are thrilled to have Richard guiding the Six Flags America team into the next decade of

growth for this dynamic property. He brings a fresh perspective, proven track record of success, an understanding of the market, and a collaborative leadership style that will serve him well as park president," said Six Flags Regional Vice President of Park Operations Chris Thorpe. "I am confident he will make an immediate, positive impact as we continue our work to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic stronger than ever."

Pretlow began his theme park career in 2009, at Busch Gardens Williamsburg, in culinary operations, where he found his passion for the theme park industry. After graduating from Hampton University in 2010, he relocated to Langhorne, Pa. as culinary operations manager at Busch Gardens' sister park, Sesame Place, before departing to become the revenue manager for the Crayola Experience, based in Easton, Pa.

He joined the Six Flags team in 2018 as director of in-park services at Six Flags Great Escape Resort, prior to being promoted to this latest role. Pretlow also holds an MBA from Norwich University.

"It is an honor to join the vibrant and innovative Six Flags America & Hurricane Harbor team," said Richard Pretlow. "We have made major investments in this park in recent years and we are well-positioned for long-term growth. I look forward to working with the team to continually enhance the guest experience and solidify our status as the preferred entertainment provider in the DMV."

Six Flags America will open for its 22nd season on March 6, 2021—the earliest opening in park history. The 2021 Season will offer more opportunities than ever for families to spend time together in a safe, outdoor environment.

Prince George's County Receives 2020 Maryland Quality Asphalt Pavement Awards for the Tucker Road and Palmer Road Projects

By PAULETTE L. JONES
Department of Public Works and Transportation

LARGO, Md. (Jan. 28, 2021)—The Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) is the recipient of the 2020 Maryland Quality Asphalt Pavement Awards for the Tucker Road and Palmer Road projects. The completed projects addressed some of the pressing infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle safety concerns in Ft. Washington.

"We are Prince George's Proud that the County has received these prestigious awards," said Prince George's County Executive, Angela Alsobrooks. "The completion of these projects exemplifies the work ethics of the men, women and heroes who continue to work on the front lines in the County."

Receiving the award during the COVID-19 pandemic is especially notable, as DPW&T crews have effectively and efficiently continued to work on roadway and safety projects. These efforts are crucial to maintaining a safe transportation system and achieving the Vision Zero Prince George's goal of eliminating serious injuries and fatalities.

During the summer of 2020, DPW&T completed

the Tucker Road – Saint Barnabas Road to Palmer Road and Palmer Road – Tucker Road ending at Della Lane roadway improvement projects. The work included stormwater management improvements, constructing sidewalks, curbs and gutters.

"We are pleased that pedestrians and bikers are able to safely access civic and recreational facilities such as the Tucker Road Community Center and the Ice Rink Sport Complex," said DPW&T Director, Terry Bellamy.

Due to the pandemic, the award will not be presented in a traditional award ceremony by the Maryland Asphalt Association, but the projects are being recognized as good pavement work by the Association. It is expected that the awards will be creatively presented at a future date. DPW&T is humbly honored to be recognized by the Maryland Asphalt Association and is looking forward to continuing to safely work on projects throughout the County.

For more information, see the projects highlighted in this Vision Zero Spotlight article: https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/32187/Vision-Zero-Spotlight_Roadway-Improvements_Lottsford-and-Tucker_For-Publication

M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation Supports Community With New Initiative, Parks and Rec Cares

Initiative launches with drive-through donation drop-off on Saturday, February 13 from 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

By ANGEL WALDRON
Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation

RIVERDALE, Md. (Feb. 8, 2021)—The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation announces the launch of *Parks and Rec Cares*, a new initiative to provide support for residents of Prince George's County, with a drive-through donation drop-off on **Saturday, February 13, 2021**, from 10 a.m. through 1 p.m.

"Local families and caregivers that need support can count on the Prince George's Child Resource Center," says Bill Tyler, Director of the M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation. "The Department of Parks and Recreation is proud to support its efforts because Parks and Rec Cares," emphasizes Tyler.

The Department will distribute donated items to the Prince George's Child Resource Center (PGCRC). The Resource Center helps create healthy and nurturing environments for children in Prince George's County by supporting their families and educating their caregivers. Each year, PGCRC provides family support services to thousands of families and training to thousands of childcare providers, parents, and human services workers.

"For more than 30 years, the Prince George's Child Resource Center has supported parents and their newborns with multiple initiatives designed to help them succeed," says Tyler. "The Department is using our resources throughout the County to support those with the similar mission of making life better for the residents of Prince George's County," Tyler concludes.

In support of PGCRC's mission, we are accepting essential baby items to include:

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Onesies
- Portable bassinets (some families have small/limited spaces)
- Safety childproofing equipment for drawers, doorknobs, etc.
- Pack 'n Plays
- Baby gates
- Seasonal outerwear such as coats, jackets, and/or snowsuits

*Car seats cannot be accepted.

With COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing in place, participants can simply donate items at drive-through site locations in the County. Donators should remain in their vehicles, while Department employees safely retrieve items from them. The four designated drive-through drop-off locations are:

Laurel-Beltville Senior Activity Center
7120 Contee Road, Laurel, MD 20707

Oxon Hill Manor
6901 Oxon Hill Road, Oxon Hill, MD 20745

Prince George's Ballroom
2411 Pinebrook Avenue, Landover, MD 20785

Prince George's Stadium
4101 Northeast Crain Highway, Bowie, MD 20715
Follow us on social media or visit pgparks.com for more information.

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Conversations will last an hour beginning at 10 a.m. and occur on February 22, March 22, and April 19.

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ChildWatch:

Thank You Stacey Abrams!

The Georgia senators' wins and President Biden and Vice President Harris's win in Georgia signified a new day for the voters of color, women voters, and young voters ...

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TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

I got the COVID-19 vaccine shot— This is what it was like

Today (Feb. 4) I got my shot. Daughter Sheila drove me to the Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex in Landover, a stone's throw from FedExField. The parking lot was pretty full, but we had no trouble finding a convenient spot, as I have a handicapped placard. We met up with granddaughter Heather.

We had been told to bring an I.D. and to stay with the car until 10 minutes before our appointment. When we started walking, a golf cart passed by, picked us up and delivered us to the proper door.

From there, we were met by attendants who asked names, checked a list, took temperatures, and pointed us on our way. We finally entered in a huge room filled with about 48 white tents, bearing numbers. Each of us was directed to one of them.

My tent had a desk, two chairs, and a cot. And Thelma. She asked for an I.D. and then, with no further questions, gave me the shot in my right shoulder. She told me it was the Pfizer vaccine. Then Thelma started a timer set for 15 minutes, giving me time to be sure I had no immediate problem (or, I guess I'd ended up on that cot).

After 15 minutes, we were given leave to go, and as we stepped outside, there was the golf cart with the same helpful driver. He took us to our car and Heather drove me home.

As I entered the house, I checked the time. From the time we first boarded the golf cart to the time he picked us up after the shots and we drove home, the whole event took just a little more than an hour. I was greatly impressed with the efficiency and the helpful workers.

It's now seven hours since I had the shot. I've still had no reaction, though I wonder if it'll catch up with me tomorrow morning.

Three weeks from today (Feb. 25) I'll get the 2nd shot. But this time, it's scheduled to be at the Southern Regional Technology & Recreation Complex, in Fort Washington.

Remembering Kenny, firefighter

Kenneth Michael Hedrick died in a house fire on Walls Lane in Suitland the morning of Jan. 12, 1992. Kenny had entered the burning house and helped rescue 9-year-old Shawn Sanchez. Then Kenny, believing there was another to rescue, reentered the house, got tangled in furniture, lost his breathing mask. And his life.

Young Shawn did not survive either. Kenny was the son of Morningside's Fire Chief Les Hedrick and his wife Cathy. Even as a child, Kenny loved hanging out at the firehouse. At 16 he became a Level 1 hazardous waste tech and, later, the youngest Level 2 in the County. At 18 he was getting ready to apply for a career position, had just made the first payment on his car and planned to marry Frances Loar.

I was among the more than 2,000 mourners at Mount Calvary Church on January 16. During the service County Fire Chief Steven Edwards named Kenny an honorary firefighter and, at the grave, presented Chief Les Hedrick with Kenny's firefighter's I.D. and silver badge.

After the funeral, pallbearers carried Kenny's coffin past an honor guard and lifted it onto Morningside Engine 272. The engine, its emergency lights flashing, turned out of the church parking lot, passing beneath an arch formed by two aerial ladders draped in black bunting. A procession of 500 vehicles, lights on in solemn tribute, stretched six miles through Forestville, down Suitland Road past the Morningside Fire House, to Cedar Hill Cemetery. At one point, as the fire-bell pealed, a voice intoned, "This is the last alarm being sounded for firefighter Kenny Michael

Hedrick who died in the line of duty on January 12, 1992 in Suitland, Maryland."

Every year, on January 12, the men and women of the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department gather to remember Kenny at his memorial next to the firehouse. Drop by yourself some time and think of Kenny.

Neighbors & other good people

Happy 100th anniversary to the Maryland State Police, founded January 10, 1921 with 36 recruits.

Census Director Steven Dillingham resigned January 20. He was appointed two years ago but has been under fire. The new acting director is Ron Jarmin. So many in my community have worked for Census over the years. It's only three miles away. And huge.

My daughters Kathleen (lives near Cincinnati) and Therese (lives in Brownsville, Tex.) are both involved in the Johnson & Johnson virus vaccine study. They are compensated for their time and travel. More volunteers are needed; maybe you might be interested—check it out. J&J's vaccine is a little less effective than Pfizer and Moderna's, but requires only one shot. You'll be hearing more about it.

Blessed event

John and Stacy Smith, my dear next-door neighbors, welcomed their 14th grandchild, Rimi Cheyenne Wilson, born Jan. 19. Rimi's proud parents are Ricardo Wilson and Michelle Branham. Proud big brother is Amir Jacobs, 12 years old.

Changing landscape

The 17-year cicadas will return this year. They have spent the past 17 years underground, feeding on tree roots. Beginning around mid-May, millions of

See MORNINGSIDE-SKYLINE Page A5

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

PGCPS PROUD: IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PGCPS Proud: The Inauguration Edition! We could not have been prouder to see PGCPS alumni participating in the Inauguration festivities. Central High School graduate Eugene Goodman, hailed as a hero for his actions as a Capitol Police officer, escorted Vice President Kamala Harris to the ceremony. Goodman was recently promoted to acting Deputy Sergeant at Arms of the U.S. Senate. Eleanor Roosevelt High School Alum Paula Clarke was part of the Howard University Show Town Marching Band that escorted Vice President Harris to the White House after her swearing-in. Oxon Hill High School Alum Ronnique Murray performed with Step Afrika during the inauguration celebration "We Are One." Information from communications@pgcps.org.

ELECTRONIC BOOKS

Electronic Books are available around the clock. The Professional Library has a variety of new eBooks available just for you. For more information, contact cathe.francoeur@pgcps.org.

SHARING DISTANCE LEARNING

Capitol Heights Elementary teacher Christina Wren uses a student led discussion and technology, to empower students to think critically as budding historians and eyewitness to current events. communications@pgcps.org.

Catherine T. Reed Elementary School teacher Shamala Johnson is described as a shining star by Dr. Rachel Wallace, eager to learn, self-motivated and always prepared for success. communications@pgcps.org.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to Brandon Freeman, Vincent Woodard, Darion Smalling, Joachim Neckere, Janice Patterson, Rachel Cain, Lauren Crawford, Marvies Davies, Gloria Garrett, Fern Green, Emmanuel Oghogho, Ronald Davis, Jean Noel, Malcolm Terry, Anthony Davis, Matthew Oghogho, Isabella Oghogho, Karmalita Contee, Maleke Glee, Lynn Harper, Lawrence Oghogho and Romonia Pinkney who are Clinton United Methodist Church members celebrating birthdays in February.

AMERICAN LEGION

The American Legion-Clinton Post 259 is only open for the conduct of meetings because of COVID-19. American Legion Clinton Post 259 is located at 9122 Piscataway Road, Clinton, Maryland 20735. Telephone number is (301) 868-2550.

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY

Bowie State University Office of Alumni Engagement "Live at 5" Facebook Chat on Wednesday, January 27th was with Anshia Crooms BSU Class of 2005 CEO Briclyn Entertainment Group. Some of her titles are CEO, Co-Founder, Executive and Philanthropist.

Celebrate BSU Love. The Office of Alumni Engagement is celebrating the "power of love" the entire month of February. If you met your spouse while attending Bowie State, or some years later, we want to highlight you. Share and submit your love story and join the other BSU couples that shared how Bowie State University brought them together. Join the conversation on social media and use the hashtag #BSU4LOVE throughout the month of February. All submissions will be entered into a drawing and three lucky couples will win dinner on us. Follow the virtual conversation on all social media platforms. Facebook: @BSUOAE, Twitter: @BSUALumniOffice, Instagram: @Bowiealum.

AMERICAN LEGION POST 227

"Members and Guests, in compliance with Prince George's County Executive Orders, the Post is open and following all COVID 19 screenings and guidance. Hours are subject to change during this time and some days may be closed without notice".

"When visiting everyone will be required to wear a mask and have a temperature screening before signing in. If your temp is below 100 degrees, you can sign in. Check your membership card. Does it say 2021? If not, your dues may be overdue. Renew at the Post, online or via the mail today. We wish everyone a healthy and happy 2021. Stay safe and well." "For God & County", Commander Bowen. American Legion Post 227 is located at 13505 Cherry Tree Crossing Road, Brandywine, Maryland. Telephone number is 301-782-7371.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

"Black History Month begins Monday, February 1 and ends Sunday, February 28. Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time recognizing the central role of blacks in U.S. history. The event grew out of "Negro History Week", the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans". "From Wikipedia"

ASALH announces 2021 Black History theme, The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity" explores the African diaspora, and the spread of Black families across the United States.

OFFERING A FRIENDLY VOICE

AARP's Friendly Voice Program was set up to break through the wall of loneliness made more formidable by social distancing. Those seeking a call reach out to AARP's program through this link: aarp.org/friendly voice. Information received from my AARP Magazine.

SPRING CONVOCATION

Bowie State University Spring Convocation will be held Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Featuring Prince George County Executive Angela Alsobrooks at their virtual ceremony. Email received from advents@bowiestate.edu.

Around the County

Local Students Honored

Fall 2020 Kettering College Dean's List

KETTERING, Ohio (Feb. 4, 2021)—Kettering College congratulates the following students on being designated for the Fall Semester 2020 Academic Dean's List.

Beltsville, MD: **Nolan Dietrich**, Health Sciences - Management; **Nadine Roberts**, Nursing, BS (prelicensure)

Students that are distinguished on Kettering College Dean's List, completed at least 12 total credit hours during a semester, and maintained a grade point average (GPA) of 3.50 or greater, with no grade below a B-.

—Lauren Brooks, MA, Kettering College

115 Student-Athletes Named to the Fall 2020 Athletic Director's Honor Roll

BOWIE, Md. (Feb. 3, 2021)—The Athletic Director's Honor Roll established in 2017 recognizes the outstanding academic accomplishments of Bowie State University student-athletes. To earn this recognition student-athletes must achieve a 3.2 or higher GPA for the term semester. Sixteen scholar athletes earned a 4.0 term GPA, while eighty-six earned a 3.20 or higher GPA. Several student-athletes compete in dual sports to make up the total 115 student-athletes. Here is a breakdown by sports.

Women's Basketball (7); Women's Bowling (2); Women's Cross Country (4); Women's Indoor & Outdoor Track and Field (12); Women's Softball (13); Women's Tennis (4); Women's Volleyball (6); Cheerleaders (19); Men's Basketball (4); Men's Cross Country (1); Men's Football (35) and Men's Indoor & Outdoor Track and Field (8)

Congratulations to all our student-athletes on a job well done.

—Gregory Goings, Bowie State University

Area Residents Named to Dean's List for the Fall 2020 Semester at Quinnipiac University

HAMDEN, Conn. (Feb. 3, 2021)—The following area students were named to the dean's list for the Fall 2020 semester at Quinnipiac University:

Glenn Dale, MD: **Lydia Jones**

To qualify for the dean's list, students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.5 with no grade lower than C. Full-time students must complete at least 14 credits in a semester, with at least 12 credits that have been graded on a letter grade basis to be eligible. Part-time students must complete at least six credits during a semester.

—John W. Morgan, Quinnipiac University

Endicott College Announces Local Dean's List Student

BEVERLY, Mass. (Feb. 2, 2021)—Endicott College, the first college in the U.S. to require internships of its students, is pleased to announce its Fall 2020 Dean's List students. In order to qualify for the Dean's List, a student must obtain a minimum grade point average of 3.5, receive no letter grade below "C," have no withdrawal grades, and be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits for the semester.

Mark Lobo of Fort Washington, MD, is among those named to the Dean's List at Endicott College for the Fall 2020 semester. Lobo is majoring in Business Management.

—Michele Campbell, Endicott College

Prince George's County to Host Virtual Community Meeting on Creative Placemaking and Cultural Arts

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Feb. 3, 2021)—Prince George's County will host a virtual community meeting to engage stakeholders on how arts and culture can be used in creative placemaking to improve quality of life and create a distinct sense of place in our communities as a part of the Prince George's County Cultural Art Study (PGCCAS). The virtual meeting will be held on Thursday, February 18, 2021 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, creative placemaking helps transform communities into lively, beautiful, and resilient places with the arts at its core. Creative placemaking integrates arts and culture with other needs of a community, such as land use, transportation, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies. The meeting will highlight existing examples of successful creative placemaking in Prince George's County, discuss how to use creative placemaking, and explore what tools are needed to help communities create placemaking projects.

PGCCAS is a comprehensive assessment of the diverse arts and culture ecology in Prince George's County. This study will align and energize the arts and cultural sector, residents, and leaders, ultimately strengthening partnerships, community participation, and county government. PGCCAS is a collaborative effort between the Prince George's County Planning Department and the Department of Parks and Recreation of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council, Inc.

Community participation is integral to how the study will gather data, raise awareness, and better integrate arts and culture with the needs of Prince George's County. To participate, register at https://racp_pgccas.eventbrite.com. Log-in information will be provided evening prior to the meeting to all who register. Registration will close at 3 p.m., Wednesday, February 17, 2021. For more information, visit <http://www.mncppc.org/4860/Cultural-Arts-Study>.

—Montgomery Planning

Expungement Fair: February 20

Join the Office of the State's Attorney and the Cheverly Police Department for an Expungement Fair on February 20, 2021 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A criminal record can impact your ability to obtain housing, public benefits, financial aid, occupational licenses, quality employment, citizenship and much more. Legal professionals will be available to evaluate your record, discuss options, and assist with expungement filings. Bring your identification and court documents, if available. This event is for Maryland arrests and convictions only.

To register, visit <https://qrqgo.page.link/3zQ1z>.

—Office of the State's Attorney for Prince George's County

COMMUNITY

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

About Social Security's "First Year" Rule

By RUSSELL GLOOR,
AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor
Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty: I am 63. My birthday is 10/23/1957. I currently draw a small pension of \$14K and a salary of \$75K. I'm contemplating retirement at the end of April this year and I'd like to start drawing Social Security beginning June 1. I've been told by friends that I won't be able to start drawing it this year because I will already have exceeded the maximum Social Security allows me to earn in a year. Is this true? Should I postpone my retirement until the end of the year? Please advise. **Signed: Confused by Friends**

Dear Confused: Yours is a perfect example of why you should always check with a reputable source when receiving Social Security advice from friends.

Whenever Social Security (SS) benefits are claimed before reaching full retirement age (FRA), the so-called "earnings test" applies. This sets an earnings limit, which for 2021 is \$18,960 annually—an amount you will have exceeded by the time you start your SS benefits in June. However, Social Security also has a special "first year" rule which applies to anyone who claims early Social Security benefits mid-year.

The first-year rule essentially waives using the annual earnings limit in your first year and, instead, applies a monthly earnings limit for the remainder of the year after your benefits start. The monthly limit is 1/12th the amount of the annual limit, so in 2021 the monthly limit is \$1,580. Provided you don't exceed the monthly limit after your benefits start and during the period from June 2021 through December 2021 (and if you're fully retiring from work you won't), you'll not exceed the earnings limit during your first year collecting benefits. Note, your pension and other "passive" income doesn't count toward the earnings limit; only earnings from working count. So essentially, using the "first year" rule means your earnings before you claim benefits won't count, including any final pay you receive in the month you begin your benefits.

Starting in 2022, should you decide to return to work, you'll be subject to the annual limit, which will be a bit more than the 2021 limit because the limit changes annually with changes to the National Average Wage Index. The earnings limit applies until you reach your full retirement age, after which you can earn as much as you like without jeopardizing your Social Security benefits. In the year you reach your full retirement age of 66 ½, your annual earnings limit will increase by about 2.6 times, further mitigating risk of exceeding the earnings limit in the year you attain FRA.

For awareness, if you were to return to work in any year between 2022 and the year prior to the year you attain FRA, and you exceed the annual earnings limit, Social Security will take back benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. In the year you reach FRA, if you were to work and exceed the increased limit, SS will take back benefits equal to \$1 for every \$3 you exceed the limit by. However, at your FRA you'll receive time-credit for any months your benefits were withheld because you exceeded the earnings limit, which will result in your benefit amount being increased slightly at your full retirement age. In this way, you may, over time, recover any benefits which were withheld because you exceeded the earnings limit.

The 2.3 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] www.amac.us is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation (www.AmacFoundation.org) is the Association's non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America's Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members' behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at www.amac.us/join-amac.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

CORRECTION:

A Capital News Service story about Brynleigh's Act, "Maryland Legislation Aids School Children Who Have Seizures", which published Jan. 28, incorrectly stated in the 36th paragraph that the bill would go into effect in the 2021–22 academic year. The bill would go into effect in the 2022–23 school year.

Maryland Humanities Presents Racial Equity Speaker Series

By SARAH WEISSMAN
Maryland Humanities

BALTIMORE (Jan. 29, 2021)—Maryland Humanities hosts Beyond the Statements: Leading Racial Equity in Humanities Organizations, a free series focused on operationalizing racial equity work in the humanities field. The three-part series features local humanities leaders who will speak to the efforts they have led in their respective organizations. The speakers are: Tonya Aikens, President & CEO of Howard County Library System; Omar Eaton-Martínez, Assistant Division Chief of Historical Resources for Prince George's County Parks and Recreation; and Dr. Tuajuanda Jordan, President of St. Mary's College of Maryland. Alicia McLeod, Maryland Humanities Board Member and Executive Director of Challenging Racism, will moderate the conversations.

Topics include incorporating racial equity into hiring, where to start when leading an organization, and leading the work within a university setting. Conversations will last an hour beginning at 10 a.m. and occur on February 22, March 22, and April 19.

"At a time when many organizations have put out public statements in support of Black Lives Matter and in opposition to White supremacy, dismantling our organizational inequities remains an elusive next step," says Lindsey Baker, Executive Director of Maryland Humanities. "We know other organizations are focusing on this, as well, and we are grateful to serve as a resource to other organizations while educating ourselves."

Participants can find more information and register on Maryland Humanities' website.

Conversation Schedule:

Monday, February 22 Omar Eaton-Martínez
Monday, March 22 Dr. Tuajuanda Jordan
Monday, April 19 Tonya Aikens

The Panelists



TONYA AIKENS is President and CEO of Howard County Library System (HCLS), a nationally recognized Five Star Library for delivering excellence in public education for all ages. HCLS remains the only library system in Maryland to earn the five-star ranking, attained by fewer than one percent of public libraries in the U.S. Aikens is focused on providing equitable, high-quality educational opportunities and has directed library services for more than 20 years. She currently serves on the Community Action Council of Howard County's Board of Directors, the Local Children's Board of Howard County, the Maryland Public Library Administrator's Intergovernmental Task Force. She also served on Howard County Executive Calvin Ball's Transition Team and Spending Affordability Advisory Committee, on Howard County General Plan Update's Planning Advisory Committee, and is an appointee of the Maryland State Librarian to the State Library Resource Center Oversight Commission.



OMAR EATON-MARTÍNEZ is the Assistant Division Chief of Historical Resources for the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, Natural and Historical Resources Division, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County.

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The division includes include historical house museums, an aviation museum, the Black History Program and archaeological parks. He also oversees the programming of those sites with an emphasis placed on preserving, sustaining and enhancing these resources as well as engaging and building communities through education, outreach and innovation. Most recently, Eaton-Martínez managed the Intern and Fellows Program at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. He builds coalitions that support diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion. He has held a leading role in Museums and Race: Transformation and Justice, a movement to challenge and re-imagine institutional policies and systems that perpetuate oppressions in museums, since 2016.



TUAJUANDA JORDAN has served as St. Mary's College of Maryland's (SMCM) seventh president since July 2014. Consistently ranked among the top 100 Kiplinger's list of Best Values in Public Colleges and among the top 10 Best Public Liberal Arts Colleges in the Nation by U.S. News & World Report, SMCM continues to build upon its solid reputation for academic excellence under her watch. Since joining the College, Jordan has been widely recognized for her contributions to higher education and the larger community. Recently, she was named one of the Top 25 Women in Higher Education by *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. In addition to serving on numerous national panels and boards, she was recognized as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2018), Black Leader in Education by *The Afro* (2017), Purdue University's Distinguished Women Scholars (2015–16), and as an Influential Marylander by *The Daily Record* (2015).



ALICIA MCLEOD is the Executive Director of Challenging Racism, an organization whose focus is to empower and inspire people to disrupt racism one compassionate conversation at a time. Previously she led Ellicott City Partnership, a "Main Street" organization. Prior to that, she founded the Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce, which continues to raise the profile of black-owned businesses. Her tenure at each of her places of employment has been marked by the implementation of innovative ideas designed to raise the organization's profile and draw new supporters to the work. McLeod is a resident of Parkville and brings deep relationships to Challenging Racism's work. She is in a Masters of Public Administration program at the University of Baltimore with a concentration in non-profit management and holds a B.S. in Marketing from Kean University in New Jersey. McLeod and her partner are the parents of three children: Richard (25), Alyssa (19) and Amanda (18). She joined Maryland Humanities' Board of Directors in 2020.

Maryland Humanities is a statewide nonprofit organization that creates and supports educational experiences in the humanities that inspire all Marylanders to embrace lifelong learning, exchange ideas openly, and enrich their communities. For more information, visit www.mdhumanities.org. Maryland Humanities is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities; the State of Maryland; the Citizens of Baltimore County; private foundations such as the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Portfolios, www.BakerArtist.org; corporations; small businesses; and individual donors.

Fifteen SU Students Named Fulbright Semifinalists

By JASON RHODES
Salisbury University

SALISBURY, Md. (Feb. 2, 2021)—Salisbury University has 15 semifinalists for prestigious U.S. Fulbright Student awards for the 2021–22 academic year—tied for its largest number to date.

"They are undergraduates, grad students and alumni—and all have been highly recommended by their faculty," said Dr. Kristen Walton, director of SU's Nationally Competitive Fellowships Office. "Some are transfer students, some are winners of other international fellowships, and many are part of our Honors College."

Four seniors and three graduates are being considered for English Teaching Assistantships: Abiodun Adeoye '20, a history and political science major from Hyattsville, MD, to Kyrgyzstan; Gloria Atameklo, a political science major from Silver Spring, MD, to Germany; John Bunke '20, an international relations major from Silver Spring, MD, to Azerbaijan; Johannah Cooper, a social work and political science major from Jarrettsville, MD, to Paraguay;

Kirstyn Dugger, a history and political science major from Gambrills, MD, to Macedonia; Julia Rohrer, an English as a second language major from Silver Spring, MD, to Panama; and Kathryn Stout '15, an English major from Lusby, MD, to Serbia.

Six seniors and two recent graduates also are up for academic study and research awards: Zia Ashraf '19, a political science and international relations major from Federalsburg, MD, to Finland; Abigail Boltz, a finance major from Delmar, MD, to Finland; Briana Branch, a biological sciences major from Salisbury, to England; Jack Lenox, a biological sciences major from Odenton, MD, to Finland; Thomas Long, a history major from Salisbury, to England; Abigail Miano-Burkhardt, a biological sciences and psychology major from Germantown, MD, to Taiwan; Jessica Pierce, a biological sciences and psychology major from Silver Spring, MD, to Norway; and Sam Stevens '18, M.A. '20, a history major from Chestertown, MD, to Hungary.

Several semifinalists, including Adeoye, Boltz, Branch, Cooper, Lenox, Long, Pierce, Stevens and Stout, are members and alumni

of SU's Glenda Chatham and Robert G. Clarke Honors College.

"Becoming a semifinalist is an impressive achievement on its own, and that means each of these students is qualified for a Fulbright," said Walton. "This year's semifinalists are even more impressive, as most of the preparation was done remotely over Zoom, and the number of applications overall was high at 11,728 total."

More than 60 SU students have won national and international fellowships, scholarships and awards in the past nine years. The Chronicle of Higher Education has spotlighted SU as one of the nation's top producers of Fulbright Students for each of the past three years.

The Fulbright is America's flagship international exchange program and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

SU students or alumni who are interested in applying for national fellowships, may contact Walton at kpwalton@salisbury.edu for assistance. For more information, visit www.salisbury.edu/nationalfellowships.

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COMMENTARY

Marion Wright Edelman

President Emerita,
Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

Thank You Stacey Abrams!

"When I was 17, I set up my first voter registration table helping to sign up people to vote long before I was old enough to do so. By December, I'd made it, and when I turned 18, I registered to vote. In 1992, I helped set the course of America—I was one small voice, but I was part of a mighty wave of young people from around the country who were tired of war, tired of poverty, tired of being left behind. Not everything changed that election, and we're still fighting some of the same battles, but we've made progress. And if we want to make even more progress, if we want to lift up the names of Breonna Taylor and Elijah McClain and George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery—if we want to talk about the legacy that we can leave, it begins by casting a vote."

Amen!!! My extraordinary Spelman College sister Stacey Abrams shared this advice with Spelman students last year reminding a new generation of

young gifted women they have the power to make a difference in our nation by turning out to vote. When she arrived at Spelman in 1991 she already was passionate about helping others understand and use their power to vote and make their voices heard. Thirty years later, her passion and skillful strategic leadership and organizing in Georgia were crucial to tipping Georgia to the Democratic column.

On an Inauguration Day filled with historic 'firsts,' a powerful one happened when Vice President Kamala Harris, our first woman, Black and Asian American Vice President, stood on the Senate floor to swear in Alex Padilla, the first Latino senator from California; Jon Ossoff, the first Jewish senator from Georgia; and Rev. Raphael Warnock, pastor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Ebenezer Baptist Church and the first Black senator from Georgia. The Georgia senators' wins and President Biden and Vice President Harris's win in Georgia signified a

new day for the voters of color, women voters, and young voters who were among their strongest supporters, and many people who cheered those victories praised Abrams's tireless voter registration and protection work in that state.

She and her five siblings grew up with parents like mine who stressed the importance of service to others, and she is living up to those lessons. She served in Georgia's House of Representatives for ten years where she became Minority Leader and the first woman to lead either party in Georgia's General Assembly and the first Black leader in the House. She founded the New Georgia Project to register and engage eligible unregistered Georgia voters, building on decades of voter registration work by Black women and other organizers. She ran for governor in 2018 and became the first Black woman nominated for governor by a major party in the United States. Her run only underscored the urgent need for voter registration and protection in Georgia. Her opponent, Brian Kemp, was Georgia's Secretary of State. In his role administering the state's elections he was accused of denying and delaying new registrations, purging voting rolls, and other actions disenfranchising voters before he won the race for governor by less than 55,000 votes.

After that loss Stacey Abrams said "I sat shiva for 10 days. Then I started plotting." Instead of mourning there was action: Fair Fight, her national organization promoting fair elections and encouraging voter participation and education in Georgia and across the country. Fair Fight helped register 800,000 new voters in Georgia between 2018 and

2020, greatly expanding the electorate with new young, Black, Latino, and Asian American voters. The 2020 elections nationwide and the January Senate runoff elections in Georgia saw record breaking turnout—including new voters Abrams has been fighting to engage. Fair Fight, When We All Vote, and other organizations with similar goals demonstrated what can happen when the electorate looks more like America. The razor thin margins in Georgia and elsewhere also proved how much every vote matters and how one person, like the extraordinary Stacey Abrams, can make a difference.

It's a lesson we can't ever forget. As Donald Trump made every illegal effort to force Georgia officials to overturn the results of their presidential election, the state's Republican leaders made it clear they also wished the election had turned out differently, but there was nothing they could do to invalidate the legally accurate wishes of a majority of Georgia's voters—this time. In Georgia and across the country, the next step for leaders disappointed with this election's results will be attempts to abolish the measures that made it easier for people to vote during the pandemic and in their place install a new wave of voter suppression methods to make it much harder for people to vote in the future. We all knew this was coming and Stacey Abrams is already geared up for the fight. Our children deserve a fair, functioning democracy where as many eligible voters as possible are registered and able to vote, and the fight to make this basic democratic principle real for everyone is already Stacey Abrams's legacy. Thank you Stacey Abrams!

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

The Fight Against Racially-Motivated Voter Suppression Continues

"There are some politicians that are very concerned about the historic turnout that we saw in the 2020 election and are determined to put barriers in front of the ballot box to try and give themselves a job security play. There are some politicians who are trying to manipulate the rules of the game so some people can participate and some people can't."

—Myrna Pérez, director of voting rights and elections, the Brennan Center

No matter how many lies politicians tell about nonexistent voter fraud, someone always manages to blurt out the truth.

"They've got to change the major parts of them

[voting laws] so that we at least have a shot at winning," said Alice O'Lenick, the chair of the board of elections in Gwinnett County, Georgia.

Black Americans voted in record numbers in Georgia and other states in 2020. White politicians are hard at work to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Using "The Big Lie" of voter fraud as a pretext, state senators in Georgia this week introduced nine bills designed to make it harder for people to vote, eliminating automatic voter registration, no-excuse absentee voting, and mail ballot drop boxes, banning third-party groups from sending mail ballot applications, and prohibiting people who move to Georgia after the general election from voting in

runoff elections.

Every one of these proposals would affect Black voters disproportionately.

In a bit of sad irony, the bills were introduced the very same day the news broke that voting rights advocate Stacy Abrams was nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize for her work to promote nonviolent change via the ballot box.

Georgia's avalanche of racially-motivated voter suppression legislation isn't even close to the worst in the nation. Of the 28 states where a total of 106 voter suppression bills have been introduced, pre-filed, or carried over, Pennsylvania leads with 14.

Pennsylvania also is unique in that it is the only state where legislators are trying to reverse voting reforms they themselves brought about. A bipartisan majority in the Pennsylvania General Assembly in October 2019 overwhelmingly voted to relax registration deadlines and make voting by mail available to all voters.

In Arizona, where a majority of voters have cast ballots early in a system that has existed for more than a decade, lawmakers are pushing several bills to curtail or end early voting, including eliminating the list of voters who are automatically sent mail-in ballots, and requiring signatures on early ballots to be notarized. Other proposals would dramatically shrink the number of polling locations. The state's largest county, Maricopa, would have only 15 instead of the 100 it had in November.

But the most breathtakingly anti-democratic bill introduced in Arizona—possibly anywhere in the country—can hardly be called voter suppression as it seeks to bypass voters entirely. Rep. Shawna Bolick has introduced legislation that would allow the legislature to disregard the results of a presidential election and appoint electors of its own choosing to the Electoral College. Arizona Republic columnist Laurie Roberts called the bill "the most arrogant power grab I have ever witnessed."

Fortunately, there is a way to put an end to racially-motivated voter suppression at the state level. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would require any state with a history of voting discrimination within the past 25 years to seek federal approval before making any changes to its voting procedures. Further, it would mandate that any state, regardless of its history, receive clearance from the Justice Department or a federal court in Washington, DC, before making any changes that would disproportionately burden voters of color, such as strict voter ID laws or closing polling places in areas with large numbers of voters of color.

As President Lyndon Johnson said when he signed the Voting Rights Act in 1965, "Men cannot live with a lie and not be stained by it." The Big Lie of voter fraud has stained the nation. Passing the Voting Rights Advancement Act can redeem it.

Brown, Hoyer Call for FEMA Vaccination Site in Prince George's County

Prince George's County faces chronic staffing, bandwidth, and resource shortages that are harming equitable vaccine distribution, particularly for communities of color.

WASHINGTON (Feb. 5, 2021)—Congressman Anthony G. Brown (MD-04) and Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05) wrote the Biden-Harris Administration's Acting Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Director Janice Barlow requesting a federally run vaccination site in Prince George's County.

President Biden announced that he would deploy federal resources and mobilize FEMA to stand up at least 100 vaccination sites across the nation. The state of Maryland has been selected to receive FEMA support. The Members argue that Prince George's County faces chronic staffing, bandwidth, and resource shortages that are harming equitable vaccine distribution, particularly for communities of color.

Governor Hogan's haphazard and decentralized vaccine strategy has resulted in only 3.5% of Prince George's population being vaccinated—by far the lowest vaccination rate across Maryland's counties.

"The state of Maryland's vaccine program thus far has been especially uncoordinated. The state's decentralized strategy and lack of guidance have left counties competing with one another for resources and vaccine doses," the Members wrote. "These circumstances have exacerbated long standing health disparities and put the county at a disadvantage as it tries to meet the needs of its residents and protect their health in this public health crisis. In the face of these challenges, Prince George's County would benefit greatly from a federally coordinated and easily accessible site."

The Members continued, "Living and working across borders in the NCR has added yet another layer of confusion. The cross-jurisdictional nature of the DMV region and the high number of federal employees in Prince George's County call for coordinated, federal support and a central, federally run site in the county."

—Congressman Anthony G. Brown's Office

Legislation from A1

engaged in the insurrection of January 6, 2021, as well as unlawful actions taken the days leading up to and beyond the January 20, 2021 Inauguration day of the 46th President of the United States.

Following Council approval, Council Member Anderson-Walker noted the significance of the measure.

"This type of legislation is necessary because there are some U.S. citizens willing to use violence against our democracy and other Americans to achieve a goal based

upon falsehoods," adding, "While approval of this measure is a tremendous step forward for the Council and its residents in our stand against the insurgence, we take no pride in our somber duty to legislate against these types of actions. The election is over, the insurgence irreprehensible, and our duty to Prince George's County residents remains firm."

In a session prior to the January 20th Presidential Inauguration, the County Council adopted a formal condemnation of the "acts of violence against the U.S. Capitol and actions of the President of the United States,"

through unanimous approval of Council-Resolution-004-2021.

Council Chair Calvin S. Hawkins, II, in a Council Statement responding to the January 6th attack, said acts that seek to destabilize democracy must meet strong rebuke at every level. "Prince Georgians and all Americans must stand united against violence, and those who would seek to undermine our nation's political process. America is a nation of laws and every person who took part in the violent attacks on our Nation's Capital must be brought to justice. We will continue to pray for the soul of our nation."

Van Hollen, Cardin Announce FEMA Cost Share Reimbursement of \$182 Million to Help Maryland Combat COVID-19

WASHINGTON (Feb. 9, 2021)—Following a recent request from U.S. Senators Chris Van Hollen and Ben Cardin (both D-Md.), urging then President-elect Biden to take immediate action upon assuming office to grant pending requests to waive the 25% non-federal cost share requirement for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance related to the COVID-19 pandemic, President Biden signed a memo this week directing FEMA to reimburse state, tribal, and local governments for 100 percent of the eligible COVID-19 related expenses that they incurred during the first year of the pandemic. The Senators previously pushed President Trump, but for months, he ignored repeated requests from governors, members of Congress, and local leaders across the country to increase the federal cost share.

This decision will now provide Maryland an additional \$182 million in federal funding to cover the full cost of previously approved activities undertaken to combat COVID-19.

This new move by the Biden Administration means FEMA reimbursements,

retroactive to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic national emergency, will be adjusted to reflect the 100 percent cost share and will continue to provide assistance going forward, to expand the activities eligible for reimbursement to include activities that support the safe opening and operation of eligible schools, child care facilities, health care facilities, non-congregate shelters, domestic violence shelters, and transit systems. FEMA will develop new implementation guidance to carry out the President's directives.

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