

Opinion

THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Volume 51, Issue 84

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

BEN SHEROAN
Publisher

BRENT SCHANDING
Editor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ENCOURAGE GUTHRIE TO SUPPORT ASAP ACT

As many as half of the more than 80,500 Kentuckians living with Alzheimer's are not diagnosed, yet an early and accurate diagnosis can improve the quality of life and reduce the financial impact of the disease.

As a former caregiver, I understand the importance of early detection and diagnosis. While my grandmother was in her early 80s when she was diagnosed, my mom started experiencing symptoms in her early 60s. Due to her recognition of early symptoms, she requested a referral from her primary doctor to the UK Sanders-Brown Center on Aging. Thanks to early detection, she quickly received the standard treatments available at that time as well as enrolled in a research trial (an early version of the now FDA-approved treatment) giving us 10 more years together.

Since mom's diagnosis, huge strides have been made in early detection and treatments but we need to ensure everyone has access.

Thankfully, Congressman Brett Guthrie can play an important role in accelerating access to blood biomarker tests and earlier detection of Alzheimer's and other dementia in Kentucky and across the nation. The bipartisan Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention (ASAP) Act creates a pathway for Medicare coverage of these FDA-approved blood tests.

It also would allow coverage for future test methods approved and cleared by the FDA, helping to ensure beneficiaries do not face unnecessary delays to detection and treatment. This act also will facilitate smoother transitions from primary care to specialists reducing the burden on overextended health care workers and helping to alleviate bottlenecks in the health care system.

I have encountered so many friends who are struggling on this journey with their parents or grandparents. The ASAP Act will simplify the process for them to get definitive answers and help sooner, when it's needed most.

Please join me and the Alzheimer's Association in encouraging Congressman Guthrie to support the bipartisan Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention (ASAP) Act.

To learn more about this disease and how you can join the fight to end Alzheimer's, visit alz.org.

Nicole Cetta
Elizabethtown

TAKING ISSUE WITH TUCKER CARLSON'S REMARKS

Tucker Carlson has mocked the position that Sharia law is bad. He called that thinking brainwashing. He has spoken of the Muslim purpose of submission as good when he knows there is a two-fold definition depending on whether you're a freedom-loving American Muslim or an Islamic-jihadi Muslim.

Tucker said he didn't know any American killed by radical Islam extremists over the past 24 years. It sounded like he didn't know that Islamist extremists killed anyone at Fort Hood or the Boston Marathon or beheaded U.S. citizens.

Qatar, who he seems to favor, funds the Muslim Brotherhood. They host Hamas leaders who live in luxury. He suggested Christians are better off living in Qatar than Israel. The expatriot Christians in Qatar have a compound that is the only place they are allowed to have church. No steeples and no crosses allowed. They cannot become citizens. Qatari-born Christians are not allowed to speak openly about their faith. Whereas in Israel, Christians worship freely with hundreds of churches, carry crosses publicly and can convert freely.

Do some stricter religious Israelis like it, no, but they don't kill Christians over it. Might some if they could, maybe, but not sanctioned by the state of Israel.

Referring to Islamic societies, Carlson said Muslim countries are more advanced than those in the West. He said Muslim countries governed by Sharia law "and you go there and it's incredible to be in a place that has pride in itself, the beliefs and its religion and culture, that thinks 'we're onto something.' That kind of self-confidence is what creates stability and hospitality."

He has found time to praise Islamic countries and their ways and also found time to criticize Christians. He has criticized Ambassador Huckabee and now Franklin Graham, as if Tucker now has more knowledge or authority on Biblical or Israel issues than Franklin Graham. All while being silent about the murder of Christians in Syria and Nigeria.

And if that's not enough, the president finally had to speak out and criticize and separate himself from Tucker Carlson.

Debbie Bayles
Radcliff

TODAY'S HEADLINES



MICHAEL CONROY/Associated Press

To keep their delivery fleet on the road, the U.S. Postal Service announced a suspension of its retirement contributions for employee annuities.

To make payroll, USPS suspends pension outlays

BY SUSAN HAIGH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The U.S. Postal Service said Thursday it has informed federal budget officials it will temporarily suspend its employer contributions to Federal Employees Retirement System annuities, allowing it to keep making payroll, paying suppliers and delivering the mail.

The Postal Service also wants to increase postage rates, including raising the price of a First-Class Mail Forever stamp from 78 cents to 82 cents. USPS filed notice Friday with regulators, who still need to approve the changes.

The step taken by the Postal Board of Governors to forgo the pension payments is meant to preserve cash and liquidity due to the Postal Service's "ongoing, severe financial crisis," Postal Service Chief Financial Officer Luke Grossmann said in an internal message to USPS employees. Officials have warned the USPS is on course to run out of cash by around February 2027.

Despite the suspension of employer contributions, effective Friday, current and future retirees will not be immediately impacted, Grossman said.

"The risk to the Postal Service and the American public from insufficient liquidity for postal operations dramatically outweighs any longer-term risk to the pension funds from not making the currently due payments," he said in the statement. USPS deferred payments in 2011 during another financial crisis.

The Postal Service said it will continue transmitting employees' retirement contributions to the fed-

eral Office of Personnel Management, along with Thrift Savings Plan contributions, including employer automatic and matching funds, and will also maintain its employer contributions to Social Security.

Brian Renfroe, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers, said the temporary suspension of annuity payments is "not ideal" but it doesn't immediately impact his members, who he said understand the Postal Service's financial challenges.

"Given a menu of options, none of which are overall positive, they would certainly prefer the Postal Service making a move like this as opposed to something that immediately impacts them or immediately impacts in a negative way the service that we provide to the American people," Renfroe said.

Ninety-nine percent of career USPS employees are covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System.

In a related matter, the Postal Regulatory Commission on Thursday granted the Postal Service a temporary, multi-year waiver allowing it to redirect billions of dollars in revenue previously earmarked for retiree benefits, providing "some breathing room and flexibility" to execute contingency plans and avoid running out of cash.

Last month, Postmaster General David Steiner told The Associated Press and later a congressional committee that the 250-year-old service needs to have a decades-old \$15 billion cap on borrowing raised to \$34.5 billion so the independent agency can have access to more cash.

"That will buy us the time to make the fixes we need

to make, and we can sail on down the road," he told the AP. Steiner has called for other changes as well, including greater flexibility in how retirement funds are invested, changes to pension obligation methodology and the authority for USPS to raise postage prices high enough to cover losses.

Renfroe said this latest move to pause employer contributions is the "direct result of continued inaction by Congress" to fix such "legislative restraints" placed on the Postal Service.

Keep Us Posted, an advocacy group representing consumers, catalogs, greeting card publishers and others, has urged Congress to ensure any rate increases would be limited to once a year. The group also wants to ensure six-day-a-week mail service remains and that USPS regulators have greater control over any service changes.

USPS said the proposed price increases requested Thursday, which also affect postcards and international letters, will still make rates among the most affordable in the world. The Postal Service relies mostly on the sale of postage, products and services to finance its operations.

The Postal Service has seen annual volume plummet from about 220 billion pieces in 2006 to about 110 billion today as more people pay bills and communicate online.

USPS's net losses for the 2025 fiscal year totaled \$9 billion, even though total operating revenue increased by \$916 million or 1.2%, due largely to its Ground Advantage shipping service. Net losses in fiscal year 2024 were \$9.5 billion.

BRIEFS

From wire reports

COMMERCE DATA SAYS U.S. ECONOMY IS SLOWING

The American economy, slowed by last fall's 43-day government shutdown, grew at a sluggish 0.5% annual pace from October through December, the Commerce Department reported Thursday in downgrade of its previous estimate.

U.S. gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — decelerated in the fourth quarter after registering impressive growth of 4.4% from July through September and 3.8% from April through June.

For all of 2025, the economy grew 2.1% last year, slower than 2.8% in 2024 and 2.9% in 2023.

MARYLAND REACHES SETTLEMENT OVER 2024 BRIDGE COLLAPSE

Maryland has reached a settlement with the owner and operator of the cargo ship that crashed into a Baltimore bridge two years ago, causing its collapse, state officials announced Thursday.

The settlement in principle announced Thursday was reached with Grace Ocean Private Limited and Synergy Marine Pte Ltd, Attorney General Anthony Brown said. The settlement resolves a portion of the state's claims arising from the ship's March 26, 2024, crash into the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

"Our work is not finished, but this settlement is an important step toward making Maryland whole," Brown said.

The Maryland Transportation Authority late last year estimated the price range of a new bridge alone to be between \$4.3 billion and \$5.2 billion, with an anticipated open-to-traffic date in late 2030.

JUDGE REJECTS PLEA DEAL IN DEATH OF NAVAJO ELDER

A federal judge in Phoenix has rejected a plea agreement for a man who admitted to beating a Navajo elder and leaving her for dead.

Preston Henry Tolth, 26, now will face trial on charges of carjacking and assault in relation to the 2021 disappearance of Ella Mae Begay.

Under the agreement, Tolth would have been sentenced to three years of time served in exchange for acknowledging his role in the crime and pleading guilty to a single count of robbery.

The case received national media attention and helped highlight the broader crisis of Indigenous people who go missing or are killed. Nearly five years after she disappeared, Begay has not been found.

The rare decision to reject a plea agreement followed testimony from Begay's son and niece who told the court Tolth should not walk free without revealing Begay's location.

ARGENTINA CLEARING WAY TO MINE GLACIERS

Argentina's Congress on Thursday approved a bill promoted by President Javier Milei that eases protections on glaciers to facilitate investments in mining for metals — a move that environmental groups vow to challenge in courts.

According to mining sector estimates, the new regulatory framework could unlock more than \$30 billion in investments over the next decade. Approximately 70% of those funds are slated for new copper, gold and silver projects.

Milei is expected to sign the legislation in the coming days.

On his X account, Milei shared a statement from his party hailing the new framework as a "significant improvement" that will help "strike a balance between environmental protection and economic development, moving away from an approach that tended to stifle investment, job creation and growth."

Kiss frontman celebrates Detroit, restaurant debut

BY MIKE HOUSEHOLDER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROYAL OAK, Mich. — Gene Simmons visited Detroit Rock City on Thursday to celebrate the grand opening of a restaurant co-founded by him and his Kiss bandmate, Paul Stanley.

"Everybody talks about Detroit, we owe our stuff to Detroit — first city that appreciated the band that I'm in," Simmons said before cutting the ribbon at the new Rock & Brews in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Since opening their first location in Southern California in 2010, Simmons and Stanley have opened Rock & Brews in states from Washington to Florida.

Simmons, 76, is the longtime bassist for Kiss. The face-painting rockers were inducted in 2014 into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and were Kennedy Center honorees last year.

The New Yorkers long



MIKE HOUSEHOLDER/Associated Press

KISS frontman Gene Simmons appears with co-franchise owner Danny Yezbick at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Rock & Brews restaurant in the Detroit area.

have had a soft spot for the Motor City. Not only is "Detroit Rock City" one of their best-known tunes, Kiss recorded part of their seminal live album "Alive!" at Cobo Arena.

The band retired a few years ago from touring, but Simmons was happy to be back on the road and in the

Great Lakes State. He said Thursday's visit was a homecoming of sorts.

"Kiss really broke our rock-and-roll teeth in Detroit. Detroit accepted us way before New York and any other city," he said, before doing a little impromptu singing: "You gotta lose your mind in Detroit Rock City."



HE'S JUST A LITTLE SNEEZY AND DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE NEEDS ID TO BUY MEDICINE, BUT NOT ONE TO VOTE IN AN ELECTION

TODAY'S QUOTE

"The greatest lesson in life is to know that even fools are right sometimes."

— Winston Churchill, British statesman (1874-1965)