# ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

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STATE OF ALASKA
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Lisi Misa
being first duly sworn on oath deposes and says that she is a representative of the Anchorage Daily News, a daily newspaper. That said newspaper has been approved by the Third Judicial Court, Anchorage, Alaska, and it now and has been published in the English language continually as a daily newspaper in Anchorage, Alaska, and it is now and during all said time was printed in an office maintained at the aforesaid place of publication of said newspaper. That the annexed is a copy of an advertisement as it was published in regular issues (and not in supplemental form) of said newspaper on

July 2, 9, 16/2023

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Signed Lisi Misa

Subscribed and sworn to before

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2023 Jada L. Nowling

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MY COMMISSION EXPIRES
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AMCO RCVD 8/31/2023

Anchorage Daily News - 07/02/2023



WASHINGTON

# DOC workers say they were wrongfully excluded from pandemic bonuses

**Claire Withycombe**
The Seattle Times

OLYMPIA — Most state workers can expect a $1,000 bonus in July for staying on at their jobs, but one group of workers at the Department of Corrections says they have been wrongfully excluded from getting it.

The Washington Federation of State Employees says the agency is refusing to pay 1,200 DOC workers the $1,000 "recognition and retention" bonus.

State workers continuously employed from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, are eligible for the bonus, meant to recognize the work of public servants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The department told staff in early June that the union's employees aren't eligible for the lump-sum payment. A spokesperson for the department said that the $1,000 payment wasn't included in an award from an independent arbiter who handles all "compensation issues" for WFSE employees at DOC, and the agency is "required to carry out" the decisions of the arbiter.

Workers are signing a petition to urge the state to pay the bonus and union representatives say they intend to file grievances, a complaint with the state's Public Employment Relations Commission and a lawsuit to get the issue addressed.

The Washington Federation of State Employees represents about 15% of the DOC's roughly 8,000 total workers. Many of the people the union represents work in community corrections, helping people rejoin their communities after incarceration.

Jim Furchert, a community corrections officer in Mount Vernon, said that during the pandemic, he and his colleagues ventured out every day, risking COVID, to work with people reentering society.

"I got up, I went to work, I left my family at home, I went and did a dangerous job at times and came home at night," Furchert said. "And now, even though that's been bargained, someone has made the decision we're not going to get that. That's real detrimental to our morale."

Other DOC workers will get the $1,000 payment, including workers not represented by any union, those represented by a different union — the Teamsters — and managers at the agency, said Bill Copland, a DOC employee and union shop steward through WFSE.

"If DOC management who worked from home are getting this bonus, the folks who worked on the front lines of the pandemic should get it," said Mike Yestramski, president of WFSE and a psychiatric social worker at Western State Hospital, in a statement this week. "That's who it was meant for. The contract language clearly spells this out."

More than 400 workers at the Department of Corrections have signed a petition calling on that agency's management and the Office of Financial Management to pay the bonus.

The bonus was included in a collective bargaining agreement with state workers, approved by the Legislature earlier this year. It covers the two-year budget cycle starting July 1.

The Washington Federation of State Employees said DOC management sent an email this month saying the union's workers wouldn't be receiving the bonus.

The email, provided to The Seattle Times by the union, sent to all staff stated that employees represented by WFSE at DOC "are not eligible for the recognition and retention lump sum."

"The lump sum was not included in any of the compensation proposals during 2023-25 CBA negotiations and therefore was not part of the interest arbitration award," the email said.

Chris Wright, spokesperson for the Department of Corrections, said all compensation issues for WFSE employees at the department are handled through a process called interest arbitration.

Interest arbitration is where a third party, an arbiter, handles disputes between parties who are negotiating a collective bargaining agreement.

"The $1,000 lump sum was not included in the arbiter award," Wright said in an email. "DOC is required to carry out the decision of the arbiter."

FROM PAGE A1

## SCHOOLS

"We're still supportive of it," said Lon Garrison, the organization's executive director. "But I have grave concerns that the implementation of it is not being as responsive as it could be."

### 'Unfunded mandate'

Cyndy Mika, superintendent of the Kodiak Island Borough School District, said she moved to Alaska last year from Texas. She said a similar reading intervention program was implemented there, which led to great improvements, but it came with a significant funding boost.

"I am a proponent of this," she said. "It's just that we feel like it's an unfunded mandate."

Mika estimated the new law could cost Kodiak schools between $2 million and $4 million per year. The district is getting an additional $80,000 annually from a school funding increase approved last year as part of the reading bill, she said.

Grant Robinson, a spokesman for the governor's office, said by email that any assertion that the law was an unfunded mandate is "patently false." He pointed to $117 million set to be distributed to school districts across Alaska over five years for the new education programs.

The bill included a $30 boost to the Base Student Allocation, the state's per-student funding formula, which equated to a roughly 0.5% increase. The Legislature also approved a one-time $57 million payment last year to school districts.

State lawmakers approved another $175 million this year in one-time funds for public schools, which Gov. Mike Dunleavy vetoed down to $87.5 million. School officials expressed disappointment with the smaller-than-expected funding boost, and said it would lead to difficult budget decisions.

School districts have bought new reading course materials subsidized by the state. New qualifications in the science of reading will be required for educators teaching from kindergarten through third grade by July of 2025. Mika said those courses have been costly for the district and time-consuming for teachers.

Under the law, districts are required to develop individual plans for students who cannot read well. Deputy Education Commissioner Lacey Sanders said by email that of the state's 53 school districts, just five or six had submitted plans before a Sept. 1 deadline, and that the state was providing feedback.

Mika said the Kodiak district does not have the funding to hire dedicated reading intervention specialists, meaning "all of this is going to fall on our classroom teachers." She said teachers already have full days of classes, which would invariably push reading intervention to after school.

"Our teachers are already overwhelmed with the day-to-day tasks of teaching a class, and then developing, implementing and monitoring the individual reading improvement plan is what's going to be the hardest for our teachers," she said.

### Staffing challenges

Under the Alaska Reads Act, in addition to developing individual plans for students who need additional help, schools are asked to provide after-school reading instruction and the option of summer school. Parents would also need to be notified 10 times per year on their child's reading deficits and the child's efforts to improve.

Anne Shade, child development department director at Bristol Bay Native Association, works closely with two local school districts. She said that a nationwide shortage of educators is making it difficult to hire additional staff for after-school classes and summer school, asking, "How are we supposed to do that? There's not a lot of staff out here in the summertime."

Gene Stone, superintendent of the Lower Yukon School District, said notification requirements will be a significant administrative task in parts of Alaska where the vast majority of younger students could expect to find themselves in reading intervention programs.

"If 80% of your kids aren't proficient, you have kind of an unintended consequence," he said. "It's pretty difficult to meet that metric of all the meetings, all the progress monitoring support."

The law came with subsidies from the state to buy course materials and to pay for some teacher development. But rural school administrators say more help is needed with strained budgets from years of flat funding, high inflation and high fuel costs.

Stone said the Lower Yukon School District — comprising roughly 2,100 students across 10 Western Alaska villages — could expect to spend $518,000 per year from its general fund to implement the Alaska Reads Act.

"Mainly curriculum and supplemental materials to support some of the tutoring and also to have a budget for a summer school," he said.

At Yupiit School District, headquartered in Akiachak, there were similar concerns. Superintendent Scott Ballard is striving to center Yup'ik culture in everything the district does, and said that he felt like the Alaska Reads Act was doubling down on failed policies, with more assessments and parental notifications.

The bill was written to require "culturally responsive education" and Indigenous language learning for reading specialists. Ballard said the district has scrambled to find qualified educators who are fluent in both Yup'ik and English, but that would be challenging as "there's not a whole infrastructure that's been built up over decades."

### Rural-urban divide

Officials from some of the state's largest school districts said there have been some hiccups and obstacles implementing the new law, but they reported fewer concerns than their counterparts in rural Alaska.

Anchorage School Board president Margo Bellamy said in an interview that "we see this as a very viable program," and that she has so far heard little concern from Anchorage parents.

In Fairbanks, Kate LaPlaunt, assistant superintendent for elementary schools, and Chane Beame, executive director of teaching and learning, said the district has been focused on improving reading. Many of the requirements they found "logical and intuitive," and that they would complement what the district was already planning.

But, LaPlaunt said, "I don't disagree at all with the rural school districts. The requirements for interventions for students certainly does have a price tag associated with it," adding, "To do it very well could cost quite a bit of money that is not coming from the state."

The state has hired six reading intervention specialists who will work with the lowest-performing 25% of Alaska schools. Sanders, the deputy education commissioner, said by email that all the specialists have been hired and are currently being trained. The state anticipates the reading specialists will work with 12 schools in the first year, Sanders said, and more the following year.

However, under the new law they are only required to visit each school twice per year. Shade asked, "And that's supposed to be helpful, how?"

The Legislature also approved spending $5 million this year to establish the Anchorage-based Alyeska Reading Institute to tutor students and provide teacher development. Proponents said that would be a valuable resource, while lawmakers from outside Anchorage asked how much difference that would make beyond Southcentral Alaska.

### 'A bit bumpy'

Lawmakers left Juneau last May bitterly divided over whether the new law would lead to positive outcomes.

The Alaska Reads Act passed unanimously through the Senate, but squeaked through the House by one vote on the final day of last year's legislative session. Gov. Dunleavy had championed the bill, with Robinson, his spokesman, saying the measure was not merely about improving test scores.

"It's about transforming the trajectory of young Alaskan lives," he said. "Literacy is an essential life skill in modern society. A person who never learns to read limits their opportunities in life.

However, four Bush Caucus members in the House wrote strongly in opposition of the act last February. Dillingham independent Rep. Bryce Edgmon said recently that some of his concerns about the potential negative impacts of the reading bill to rural Alaska are coming to bear.

He said the bill may have been well-intentioned, but that "it was rushed. It wasn't that well thought out."

Palmer Republican Sen. Shelley Hughes was one of the bill's primary supporters and disputed that depiction. Alaska's reading bill evolved over years and was modeled on measures that worked in states like Mississippi, she said, which saw great success in improving literacy.

In an interview, she acknowledged that larger school districts would have a greater capacity to successfully implement the law's requirements. But she said after several years, Alaskans should be able to judge whether the new programs have started improving literacy.

"This first year is going to be a bit bumpy," she said, adding, "I think we're going to have to have a little grace for the districts — this first year or two."

Anchorage Sen. Löki Tobin, a Democrat and chair of the Senate Education Committee, was a legislative aide who worked on the bill. She has advocated for a substantial increase to the state's per-student funding formula, and said that would be key to ensuring the reading law's success.

"We knew that there was going to be struggles," she said. "I don't think any of us could have anticipated inflation and the tight labor market, and all the other struggles."

"It's a good policy," she added. "Every child has a human right to learn to read. Every child should be prepared and ready to enter into kindergarten with all the tools they need in their toolkit to be successful in their academic journey. Now, it just takes us being reflective to say what is missing to making that actually happen."

ALASKA

# Woman hospitalized after being struck by vehicle along Homer Spit

**Anchorage Daily News**

A woman from Arkansas who was struck by a vehicle Friday afternoon along the Homer Spit was hospitalized in stable condition as of Saturday, police said.

Lily Casteel, 21, from Arkansas was walking near Mile 2 of the Homer Spit just before 5 p.m. Friday when a vehicle being driven by an 18-year-old from Homer "veered over into the oncoming lane and bike path," striking Casteel, the Homer Police Department said in a social media post.

Casteel suffered what police described as major injuries. She was transported to South Peninsula Hospital in Homer and later flown to an Anchorage hospital, police said.

As of Saturday afternoon, Casteel was in stable condition and no charges had been made, police dispatcher Devon Wilson said. Police were not releasing additional information about the incident.

Homer Spit Road was closed for several hours Friday evening while police investigated, and has since reopened.

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**ASA Beverages LLC**

is making application for a new Common Carrier AS 04.11.180(d) liquor license doing business as Horizon Air located at Alaskan Skies at the following city: Barrow/Utqiagvik. Interested persons should submit written comment to their local governing body, the applicant, and to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board at 550 West 7th Ave. Suite 1600 Anchorage AK 99501 or alcohol.licensing@alaska.gov.

Hillside Natural Wellness, LLC, doing business as, Anchorage Dispensary Hillside Natural Wellness, located at 8639 Toloff Street, Suite 1, Anchorage, Alaska 99507 is applying under 3 AAC 306.045 for transfer of a Retail Marijuana Store (3AAC 306.300), license #10637 to Hillside Roots, LLC, doing business as Hillside Roots.

Interested persons may object to the application by submitting a written statement of reasons for the objection to their local government, the applicant, and the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) not later than 30 days after the director has determined the application to be complete and has given written notice to the local government. Once an application is determined to be complete, the objection deadline and a copy of the application will be posted on AMCO's website at https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco. Objections should be sent to AMCO at marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov or to 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501 and Attorney Jana Weltzin at jana@jdwcounsel.com or 901 Photo Avenue, Second Floor, Anchorage, AK 99503.

Glacier Extracts, LLC, doing business as Glacier Extracts, located at 8639 Toloff Street, Suite 3, Anchorage, Alaska 99507 is applying under 3 AAC 306.045 for transfer of a Marijuana Product Manufacturing Facility (3 AAC 306.500(a)(1)), license #10628 to JAM Sessions, LLC, doing business as JAM Sessions.

Interested persons may object to the application by submitting a written statement of reasons for the objection to their local government, the applicant, and the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) not later than 30 days after the director has determined the application to be complete and has given written notice to the local government. Once an application is determined to be complete, the objection deadline and a copy of the application will be posted on AMCO's website at https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco. Objections should be sent to AMCO at marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov or to 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501 and Attorney Jana Weltzin at jana@jdwcounsel.com or 901 Photo Avenue, Second Floor, Anchorage, AK 99503.

Pink Cadillac LLC, located at 369 Muldoon Road, Anchorage, AK, 99504 is applying for a Restaurant/Eating Place License AS 04.11.100. Interested persons should submit written comment to their local governing body, the applicant, and to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board at 550 West 7th Ave. Suite 1600 Anchorage AK 99501 or alcohol.licensing@alaska.gov.

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH**

**PROPERTY TAX BILLS WILL BE MAILED JULY 1ST, 2023**

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**861-8610**

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AMCO RCVD 8/31/2023

Anchorage Daily News - 07/09/2023



NATION

# YouTuber pranked 8-year-old at Target, so locals gave child a shopping spree

Sydney Page
The Washington Post

When T.J. Lyles II took his 8-year-old son, Gabe, for a quick shopping trip to Target, the last thing he expected was for Gabe to be pranked by a group of strangers.

But when he and his son were walking through the electronics aisle at Lyles's local Target store in Southington, Connecticut, on Saturday, three men approached them.

They asked Lyles and his son — who has bilateral severe-to-profound hearing loss, and usually wears hearing aids — if they wanted to take part in a "fill-a-cart challenge," in which they would be blindfolded and given 30 seconds to fill a shopping cart with items.

"Whatever was in the cart, they would pay for," Lyles said the men offered. "My little guy really wanted to do that."

Lyles said the men told him and his son that they are affiliated with the popular YouTuber "MrBeast," whose real name is Jimmy Donaldson. MrBeast has a sprawling audience across several social media platforms, and — in addition to creating viral videos — is known for his philanthropic endeavors. In January, for instance, he covered the cost of cataract surgery for 1,000 people who were blind or near-blind.

When the men mentioned MrBeast to Lyles and Gabe, "my son lit up like a Christmas tree," said Lyles, explaining that Gabe is a big fan of the social media star.

"One of his main dreams is to be a YouTuber, and he wants to be famous. He thought this was his chance," Lyles said of his son.

While the men were outlining the rules of the challenge, Lyles said, Gabe leaned in closer because he was having a hard time hearing them. He then told the men he is partially deaf, to which they replied: "That's exactly who we are looking for," Lyles said.

Before agreeing to participate, Lyles asked a Target employee about the legitimacy of the challenge, and "he couldn't confirm it because he's not a manager," Lyles said.

So, to satisfy his eager son, Lyles agreed that they would partake in the fill-a-cart challenge together. About 10 seconds in to the 30-second challenge, though, Lyles heard the three men run away while he and his son were still blindfolded, excitedly filling their carts.

Photo by T.J. LYLES II

Gabe Lyles after his shopping spree at Target in Southington, Conn., on July 2. The day before, he was in tears after being pranked at the store. The Washington Post obscured the license plate for privacy reasons.

"At that point, I'm taking off my blindfold, and I now have to tell my son that he got pranked," Lyles said.

The men were not affiliated with MrBeast, and the challenge was a fake.

Gabe was shocked and humiliated, Lyles said.

"He's in tears, and I'm trying to calm him down. He was devastated," Lyles said. "He's a very loving kid. He wants to see the best in people."

Lyles said he was "angered to the nth degree," and decided to post about the incident on Facebook.

"I do not know what type of sick individual targets kids with special needs," he wrote in the post. "I understand as an adult I should have known better but honestly I did not think someone would be as disgusting to stoop that low."

Lyles's hope in sharing the story, he said, was to prevent the same pranksters from hurting other children.

"I just want to make sure this doesn't happen to other kids," he said. "That's what really kills me."

Shortly after Lyles shared the Facebook post, it came to the attention of the chair of the town's Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

"This little boy was left in tears in an aisle blindfolded," said Melissa Lapila Hallgren. "That is, on every level, not okay."

She reached out to Lyles to ask for the full story.

"I feel personally responsible to protect every disabled person in my community," she said.

Once they spoke, she knew she wanted to help them out.

"I summoned my commission and got a majority emergency vote, and we were able to allocate some funds to help this little boy," she said.

Along with another commissioner, Lapila Hallgren stopped by the Target store, and asked staff if the company would be willing to match their donation of $200 for Gabe to have a shopping spree at Target. They agreed.

"It was absolutely fabulous," said Lapila Hallgren. "His day was going to be turned around."

"Despite the unfortunate circumstances of this event, our store team members were delighted to assist, and it's been a pleasure getting to know Gabe and his family," a Target spokesperson said in an email to The Washington Post. "We're also grateful to the Town of Southington Commission of Persons with Disabilities for their gift to Gabe."

> "This little boy was left in tears in an aisle blindfolded. That is, on every level, not okay."
>
> — Melissa Lapila Hallgren, chair of Southington, Connecticut's Commission for Persons with Disabilities

When Lapila Hallgren told Lyles the news, "I cried on the spot," he said. "I could not believe that they would do something that nice."

Lapila Hallgren arranged for Gabe's $400 shopping spree to take place Sunday, the day after the prank. "It was a holiday weekend, but there was urgency to this," she said. "I didn't want this little boy to have to wait."

Gabe, who is an only child, was "over the moon," his father said, and filled his cart with toys, games and stuffed animals.

"Thank you so much, everybody, for making my dream come true," Gabe said in an Facebook video from the Target parking lot, right after the shopping spree. "Thank you all who did this for me."

After the story aired on local news, one of the pranksters posted a YouTube video of Lyles and Gabe being pranked, which Lyles said he believes was edited to exclude the exchange about his son's disability, as well as the prankster saying he works for MrBeast. The Post reached the prankster by phone, and he denied editing the video.

MrBeast did not respond to a request for comment from The Post, but Lyles said representatives of the YouTuber contacted his family.

Although the incident was deeply distressing for his son, Lyles said, it taught him a valuable lesson: "If it's too good to be true, then it usually is."

It also reinforced that there are good people out there.

"I'm so happy it ended this way for him," he said. "We hope it inspires people to do nice things for others."

FROM PAGE A1

## TWITTER

> "Twitter is the place where us boomers talk about what the kids are up to on TikTok. That role as a filter for the strangest and best of the internet has moved (from Twitter) over to TikTok. The mainstream audience and the rest of the world is getting that information from TikTok now."
>
> — Neeraj K. Agrawal, 34, director of communications at Coin Center, a cryptocurrency policy think tank, and a heavy Twitter user

app's heaviest users. He removed all legacy check marks — Twitter's years-long way to assure users that posters are really who they say they are — sowing distrust and leading to large financial consequences for major brands that were easily impersonated under the new system. He then sold blue check marks, which ensured amplification to anyone willing to pay $8 a month, allowing scammers and grifters to crowd out the replies to popular tweets. Interesting content has been down ranked in favor of pay-to-play blue check mark replies, some of which push crypto scams and pornography.

Musk also flooded the "for you" timeline with his own tweets, driving away users who came to the service to follow friends and interests outside of the platform's billionaire owner.

"Before, if I saw someone was verified, they'd have to have done something of note to get it," said Ryan Fay, a theater director in Atlanta. "Now, I can't trust anyone who claims to be a journalist and has a check mark because they paid for it, and I don't know if they have any credentials or knowledge. Seeing a blue check now means this person is using Twitter to try to sell me something or some sort of scamming."

Musk also fired Twitter's Trust and Safety team, allowing harassment and abuse to explode across the platform unchecked. He's banned prominent journalists and liberal activists. He's railed against LGTBQ people and declared the word "cisgender" a slur. If that wasn't enough to drive the most dedicated Twitter users away to greener pastures, last week he began limiting the number of tweets users could read, blocking nonpaying users from being served more than 600 tweets per day.

All of this has led users to stop relying on the service. Daniel, 17, a rising senior in a Philadelphia high school who asked to be referred to by his first name only because he's underage, said that Twitter is simply "not the spot" anymore. "People my age are going to Instagram and TikTok before they go to Twitter," he said.

Some of Twitter's struggles predate Musk. The company had been hemorrhaging celebrities and high-profile figures in entertainment and media for years as they moved to more visual-focused platforms, and has long faced difficulties retaining younger users.

Twitter's biggest struggle is that it's an arcane follow-based social network, meaning users must manually seek out other users to follow to receive content, and if a user has no followers, it's very hard to be heard. Contrast that with an app like TikTok, which delivers content through a highly sophisticated algorithmic feed. This means that even a user with zero followers on TikTok can reach millions on their first video, no followers needed.

TikTok also allows users to consume a breathtaking amount of information jammed into each short video. "People on TikTok are absorbing so much more content than on Twitter," said Daniel, the high school senior. "TikTok is really good at hitting you with multiple things you're interested in."

Walid Mohammed, founder of the Breadwinners Club, a marketing agency, said that TikTok has replaced Twitter as his go-to source for news and entertainment. "I used to go to Google," he said, "then I went to Twitter, and now I use TikTok for information and news."

Popular memes and catchphrases emerge first on TikTok, teenagers say, and don't make their way onto Twitter until weeks later, making Twitter feel like a less culturally relevant place.

"Twitter is the place where us boomers talk about what the kids are up to on TikTok," said Neeraj K. Agrawal, 34, director of communications at Coin Center, a cryptocurrency policy think tank, and a heavy Twitter user. "That role as a filter for the strangest and best of the internet has moved (from Twitter) over to TikTok. The mainstream audience and the rest of the world is getting that information from TikTok now."

Amanda J Feuerman, an adjunct instructor in social media marketing at UCLA, said that Twitter has failed to make itself appealing to the younger generations, while TikTok has emerged as "a trusted source for information" among younger generations.

"You've got a whole new generation of news influencers who are being invited to the White House," she said. "Biden certainly isn't inviting Twitter influencers to the White House. I think it lends a degree of credibility to TikTok."

For a long time, Twitter was the default platform where government and public officials turned to get their message out and reach constituents. But that role too has been subsumed by TikTok. For instance, when Gov. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania sought to communicate updates on the I-95 bridge collapse, he turned to TikTok, working with a slew of TikTok news influencers to get real-time information out about the collapse and the government's response.

"Where people are finding community and trusted sources of information is changing," said Annie Newman, Shapiro's director of digital strategy. "Reaching people where they are requires a proactive, all of the above approach … we're going to keep engaging directly with Pennsylvanians where they are — whether it's their local newspaper or their favorite TikTokers."

Grant Goodman, 23, an actor in Georgia, said that, "Nowadays, people send me more TikToks than they do tweets."

"I get geography TikToks, attorneys, tons of political analysis, entertainment coverage," he said. "There's a lot of interesting, educated people covering geography, food science, chemistry, election predictions, cutting-edge information, all kinds of stuff that I used to rely on Twitter for."

Goodman blames Musk's chaotic changes for making Twitter unusable. "Since the Elon Musk takeover, I see all these terrible people in my feed," he said. "The worst replies are now prioritized to the top."

Meme accounts are also fleeing Twitter. The owner and administrator of @RightWingCope, a Twitter account that collects right-wing internet ephemera, who asked to remain anonymous to protect his identity, said, "The quality of discussions [on Twitter] has gotten worse, mainly because Twitter blue accounts are pinned to the top and spam is much worse on the site."

He now receives far more links to political TikToks than tweets, a sign he says that TikTok is the new hub for politics. "People are communicating political stories through TikTok more than ever," he said. "A TikTok video is much more engaging than reading a Twitter thread, it's also more digestible."

As part of its role as the internet's global town square, Twitter served as a hub for pop culture and comedy. But the boom in hate speech and harassment since Musk took over has permanently altered the tone of Twitter, many users say. "Twitter does not have that sense of community and playfulness," said Alex Falcone, a comedian in Los Angeles.

Falcone, like many comedians, now uses TikTok to reach audiences and workshop jokes. "There was a time where Twitter was good for posting a thought and the responses would help me tease out a thought," he said. "At some point it turned into just people saying, 'you're stupid' and the actual interactions with people dried up. Whereas on TikTok, the comments are super insightful, and there's a playfulness. It reminds me of an improv game."

TikTok position as the internet's new town square could face some competition from Threads, Meta's new app, which is essentially a Twitter clone. The app launched on Wednesday evening, immediately attracting high-profile celebrities and content creators. Its sign-ups after less than two days of existence totaled 70 million, making it the fastest-growing new site ever.

Some are not yet ready to fully make the switch from Twitter to Threads. "Engagement on Twitter has been lower," said Tiffany Fong, a content creator who grew a large audience on Twitter by covering the FTX meltdown earlier this year. "If I got more engagement on Threads, I'd switch over to Threads."

However, she added, "If I got footage of something notable I wouldn't think to post it on Twitter," she said. "I'd think I'd post it on TikTok."

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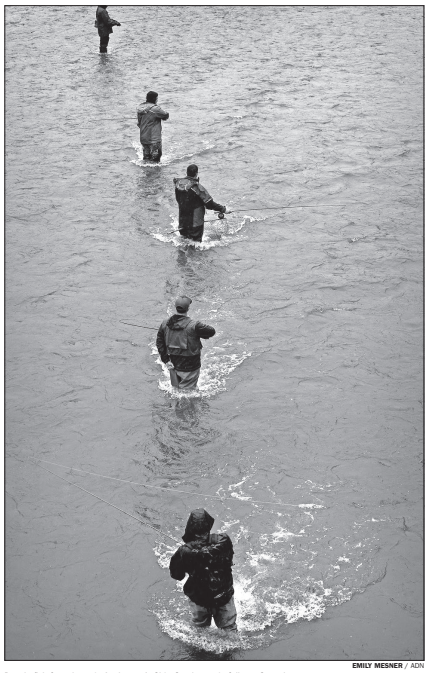
Anchorage Daily News - 07/16/2023



GETTING A LINE ON SHIP CREEK SALMON



EMILY MESNER / ADN

People fish for salmon in Anchorage's Ship Creek as rain falls on Saturday.

ANCHORAGE

# Woman dies in Glenn Highway single-vehicle crash near Eagle River

**Anchorage Daily News**

A woman was killed Friday evening when the car she was riding in veered off the Glenn Highway south of Eagle River and crashed, the Anchorage Police Department said.

Police and medics responded to the scene of the collision along the inbound Glenn near the weigh station — south of the Eagle River Loop Road exit — just before 6:30 p.m. Friday, the department said in an online statement. An initial investigation found that a Ford Crown Victoria had lost control and left the roadway, police said.

A woman who was one of the car's passengers was pronounced dead at the scene, police said. The vehicle's driver and two other passengers, which included a juvenile, were taken to the hospital with injuries that police described as non-life-threatening.

Police said the identity of the woman who died will be released once next of kin have been notified. No charges were filed as of Friday night and police are continuing to investigate the circumstances of the crash, according to the department.

The collision shut down multiple lanes of the inbound Glenn Highway for several hours Friday evening while police investigated the scene, causing significant traffic delays.

CRIME & COURTS

# Police investigating death of woman found in northeast Anchorage home as homicide

**Anchorage Daily News**

The death of a woman found inside a Mountain View home earlier this week is now being investigated as a homicide, the Anchorage Police Department said.

Officers were called to the 700 block of North Flower Street just after 8:15 a.m. Wednesday because a woman was dead in the home, police said.

"Officers made observations that have prompted them to take a closer look at the circumstances surrounding the death," police wrote in a statement Wednesday. The next day, the department posted an update saying her death was being investigated as a homicide.

Police have released few details about the woman's death. Department spokeswoman Cherie Zajdzinski did not answer questions Friday about how the woman died or what circumstances prompted officers to take a closer look, citing an ongoing investigation.

The Anchorage Police Department also isn't publicly identifying the woman for now, a decision that Zajdzinski said was made "to protect the integrity of the investigation." Police have notified the woman's next of kin about her death, according to Zajdzinski.

FROM PAGE A1

## HOUSE GOP

*The current bill, which has a price tag of $886 billion, includes a 5.2% pay raise for military personnel; more funding to support Ukraine in its war with Russia; and other measures designed to deal with rising threats, especially from China. When it hit the House floor, however, members of the Freedom Caucus called for votes on a series of divisive amendments on social policy.*

and the GOP's far-right Freedom Caucus held little sway.

There is no realistic chance that the Democratic-controlled Senate will go along with the House version approved Friday, which includes limits on abortion, transgender transition treatment, diversity training and other matters. The Senate is almost certain to return to the House a defense bill stripped of those controversial Republican amendments.

The bill would then face an uncertain future as some House Republicans who pushed through the amendments have vowed to hold the line, though some of them made similar promises during the recent conflict over raising the government's borrowing power yet still couldn't prevent its passage in the end.

The House bill that was approved on a largely party-line vote came out of the Armed Services Committee last month on a vote of 58-1 — a testament to the way these defense measures have been treated in the past. Those bills historically have been vigorously debated, sometimes amended but ultimately passed with overwhelming majorities in favor.

The current bill, which has a price tag of $886 billion, includes a 5.2% pay raise for military personnel; more funding to support Ukraine in its war with Russia; and other measures designed to deal with rising threats, especially from China. When it hit the House floor, however, members of the Freedom Caucus called for votes on a series of divisive amendments on social policy. One of the most controversial amendments would prohibit the Pentagon from paying travel costs for those in the military to get abortions or other reproductive health care in other states, if the states where they are serving do not provide those services.

That is the same issue that has led Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., to hold up hundreds of Pentagon promotions for high-ranking officers in what Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has deemed a threat to national security. Tuberville recently found himself forced to relent on his language after refusing during a CNN interview to label white supremacists as racist.

Beyond the amendments on abortion and treatment for transgender individuals, the defense bill approved by the House includes a series of additions attacking what some Republicans call a "far left woke ideology."

The amendments included a ban on the teaching of critical race theory. An amendment called for the elimination of programs in the military aimed at increasing diversity, equity and inclusion. In the eyes of some Republicans, a "woke" military is a weak military. They argue that the Biden administration has injected cultural issues into the military, whether on abortion or diversity, equity and inclusion priorities.

House Democrats faced a difficult choice — to vote against a defense bill that included much that they liked and wanted, knowing that a "no" vote could be used against them in their upcoming elections to suggest they were anti-military, or to support a bill that included provisions anathema to their personal beliefs, their party's diverse base and in some cases the views of the majority of Americans. In the end, Democrats largely united against the amended bill.

After the vote, McCarthy hailed the bill's passage and questioned why Democrats had walked away from America's troops by opposing it, though the last word on who supports the final version of the bill will come later in the year.

McCarthy, who governs with a tiny majority and needed 15 rounds of voting to secure the speaker's gavel, was again forced to accept the fact that the hard-right caucus can stymie him and other Republicans. On the debt ceiling, he was able to give the rebels their way on the first round, again passing a measure that would not stand up in the Senate, and succeeded in seeing the final package, negotiated with President Biden, attract bipartisan support. Perhaps the same thing will happen on the defense bill, but likely only if the most controversial amendments are jettisoned.

The amendments that were added to the defense authorization bill, however, highlight the degree to which cultural and social flash points have become the bread-and-butter issues for a significant part of the Republican base.

Since the Supreme Court ended the constitutional right to abortion a year ago, Republicans in several states have enacted highly restrictive measures limiting abortions. On Friday, for instance, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican, signed a law prohibiting abortions after six weeks, with some exceptions. The bill was similar to one passed earlier this year by the Florida legislature and signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, a presidential candidate.

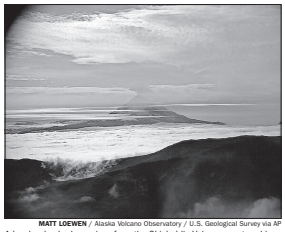
Republicans differ on whether they want to see national legislation restricting abortion. The defense bill represents the first effort at imposing the right to choose, including in last year's remarkable ballot measure in Kansas. The six-week bans go well beyond what now is a national consensus on the issue, and Republican politicians could pay a price in the 2024 elections by embracing them.

The anti-woke initiatives in the defense bill echo what Republicans have done in some states where they control both the legislature and the governor's office, including restricting how the country's racial history can be taught in schools and limiting discussion of gender and identity for schoolchildren.

Republican elected officials are gambling that these issues not only motivate their base but appeal to a broader section of the electorate. DeSantis has built his presidential campaign on proclaiming that his state is "where woke goes to die" and that he would do for the nation what he has done for Florida.

These issues will play out between now and Election Day 2024, with Biden and the Democrats branding Republicans as captured by the party's "extreme MAGA" wing, using Trump's "make America great again" slogan. The Republican presidential nomination campaign already shows the direction the party is heading, with cultural and social issues dominating the messaging from most of the candidates.

All of that might be expected. What wasn't expected is that this debate would spill over to the issue of national defense, long considered an area of consensus. The notion of the military as largely insulated from partisanship has been shattered by what House Republicans did this week.



MATT LOEWEN / Alaska Volcano Observatory / U.S. Geological Survey via AP

A low-level ash plume rises from the Shishaldin Volcano, captured in an Alaska Volcano Observatory webcam image on Friday.

ALASKA NEWS

# Volcano in Aleutians spews ash cloud, draws weather service warning for pilots

**Associated Press**

An erupting volcano in Alaska's Aleutian Islands sent a towering cloud of ash into the air Friday, prompting the National Weather Service to issue an inflight warning to pilots.

The Shishaldin Volcano began erupting July 11, according to the Alaska Volcano Observatory. A U.S. Coast Guard overflight confirmed lava erupted the same day within the summit crater.

A significant explosion at 1:09 a.m. Friday produced an ash cloud that reached up to 40,000 feet and drifted south over the Pacific Ocean. A second smaller explosion at 7:10 a.m. Friday reached about 15,000 feet.

The National Weather Service issued a inflight weather advisory due to the drifting ash cloud.

Volcanic ash is angular and sharp and has been used as an industrial abrasive. The powdered rock can cause a jet engine to shut down.

The volcano is 679 miles southwest of Anchorage near the center of Unimak Island, the largest island in the Aleutians. False Pass, a village of 40 people, is on the island's east side.

The volcano is a symmetrical cone that is 10 miles in diameter at its base. It rises to 9,373 feet and is the highest peak in the Aleutians.

Shishaldin is one of the most active volcanoes in the Aleutian volcanic arc. Most eruptions are small. An event in 1999 spewed an ash column that reached 45,000 feet.

The volcano is monitored with seismic and infrasound sensors, satellite data, a web camera and distant infrasound and lightning networks.

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