

**LEGACY**  
**5,340**  
Weeks, since the 1921  
Tulsa Race Massacre and a  
denial of justice.

**NATION**  
**60 Years Later, We March On  
Washington Again**  
*By* REV. AL SHARPTON, WORD IN BLACK  
MARCH ON WASHINGTON  
**A10**

**NATION**  
**Redlining Linked to Heart  
Failure in Black Adults**  
*By* ASWAD WALKER, WORD IN BLACK  
REDLINING  
**A12**

**SOCIAL**  
🌐 THE OK EAGLE.COM  
📱 #THE OK EAGLE  
🔄 #OKEAGLEPAPER

\$1.00

VOL. 102 NO. 32

AUGUST 11, 2023 - AUGUST 17, 2023

# Legal Challenge Filed Against Publicly Funded Religious Charter School

JENNIFER PALMER  
OKLAHOMA WATCH

LAWSUIT, RELIGIOUS CHARTER SCHOOLS

A2

## Experts: Money Alone Can't Solve Mental Health Access Issues in Rural Jails / A3

AINSLEY  
MARTINEZ  
OKLAHOMA WATCH

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS

## Meet the Black Girls Cooking Up Health and Hope / A10

ALEXA SPENCER,  
WORD IN BLACK

BLACK GIRLS COOKING UP HEALTH

LOCAL & STATE

### TRANSGENDER RIGHTS TARGETED IN EXECUTIVE ORDER SIGNED BY OKLAHOMA GOVERNOR

*By* SEAN MURPHY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS TARGETED A7





**DESPITE GUILTY PLEA, REP. MARTINEZ HOLDS OFFICE**  
Rep.'s arrest triggered a felony charge after his second driving under the influence offense within 10 years. **A6**

**TRANSGENDER RIGHTS TARGETED**  
Stitt's order, dubbed "The Women's Bill of Rights", is the latest Oklahoma policy to attack the rights of transgender people. **A7**



**OPPOSANTS** of an application by a Catholic virtual charter school wait for the start of a meeting by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City on Monday, June 5, 2023. PHOTO **PAUL MONIES/OKLAHOMA WATCH**

# A Group of public school parents, taxpayers and faith leaders on Monday filed the first legal challenge to a state-sanctioned religious charter school.

**LAWUIT, RELIGIOUS CHARTER SCHOOLS** *from AI*

**T**hey've asked an Oklahoma County judge for an injunction to stop the process of opening the St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School.

The group argues in its filing that the school is unlawful because it would discriminate against students by excluding, disciplining or expelling students based on their religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics.

They also claim the school would not adequately serve students with disabilities; its plan to teach a religious curriculum violates state law and the state constitution; and its management arrangement with the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City violates board policy.

The claims are based on the state constitution, the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act and the board's own regulations, which is why the lawsuit was filed in state court. They don't raise claims against the First Amendment's establishment clause, which prohibits the government from establishing a religion.

National legal advocacy groups Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union, Education Law Center and Freedom From Religion Foundation are representing the Oklahoma parents and taxpayers, led by the Oklahoma Parent Legislative Action Committee.

"Religious freedom is the right to believe or not believe as you choose," said Rachel Laser, president and chief executive officer of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "Unfortunately, today, emboldened religious extremists are trying to convert this sacred and foundational principle of church-state separation ... which is supposed to

be a shield to protect us."

The school would be the nation's first religiously affiliated school to receive public tax money. Significant national attention is focused on the Oklahoma decision because of the precedent it could set if allowed to continue.

Catholic leaders propose opening the online school for the 2024-25 school year, enrolling students from across the state. It would be operated by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and Diocese of Tulsa and would teach religious tenets similar to private Catholic schools.

The Statewide Virtual Charter School Board approved St. Isidore on June 5 by a 3-2 vote, over the objection of the state's attorney general, Gentner Drummond, who said the proposal violates state law and is not in taxpayers' best interest. Hundreds of public comments were submitted to the board, overwhelmingly against the proposal.

Named as defendants to the lawsuit are the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board; board members Robert Franklin, William Pearson, Nellie Tayloe Sanders, Brian Bobek and Scott Strawn; the State Education Department; Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters; and St. Isidore of Seville Virtual Charter School.

**JENNIFER PALMER** has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2016 and covers education. Contact her at (405) 761-0093 or [jpalm@oklahomawatch.org](mailto:jpalm@oklahomawatch.org). Follow her on Twitter @jpalmOKC.





PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

# Long Awaited Funding Welcomed But Gaps Remain

## MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS *from AI*

Seven years after voters approved a greater investment in mental health and substance abuse services for Oklahoma counties, the money finally is on the way.

But advocates for criminal justice reform warn that wide swaths of the state are at a disadvantage, unable to provide proper mental health and substance abuse treatment.

For instance, jail officials in Woods County, Custer County, and Noble County said they have no partnerships with nonprofit organizations and do not provide any formal mental health treatments.

“You have a problem that is systematic, and that’s kind of decades in the making,” said Damion Shade, a public policy analyst and executive director of Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform. “Your access to justice shouldn’t depend on what ZIP code you live in.”

In May, the state Legislature approved the transfer of \$12.7 million into the County Community Investment Fund, set up by the passage of State Question 781 to help cover the costs of treatment in all 77 counties.

Even with the additional money, jails are ill-equipped to provide treatment, said Judge Ken Stoner, who presides over Oklahoma County drug court cases.

Tulsa County Sheriff Vic Regalado recently ended his jail’s agreement with the state health department to provide treatment for those in custody with severe mental illness, insisting they belong in a hospital.

Such cases typically are treated at the state’s 216-bed Oklahoma Forensic Center in Vinita, which has been burdened for years by a waiting list. And a dozen rural hospitals, including their psychological treatment services, have closed since 2007, according to state data.

Nearly 70% of female offenders and 48% of male offenders in Oklahoma jails were diagnosed with a mental illness, according

**Nearly 70% of female offenders and 48% of male offenders in Oklahoma jails were diagnosed with a mental illness.**

- 2022 STATE REPORT

to 2015 state report. To help resolve the issue, voters approved State Question 781 to increase mental health and drug addiction treatments in jails in 2016. The law requires savings from State Question 780, which reduced the number of people in jails by lowering certain drug and property crimes to misdemeanors, to go into a mental health fund available to every county.

Local justice systems can use the money to add staff or provide employment training and assistance. They can bolster existing mental health and addiction diversion programs, such as Smart on Crime.

“We know that when we invest in mental health or substance use or job training, that it decreases crime,” said David Gateley, a criminal justice analyst at Oklahoma Policy Institute.

Felony filings decreased by 30% the first year after State Question 780 took effect, according to an Oklahoma Policy Institute analysis of court records. Gateley pointed to estimates provided by a group that includes the state’s Legislative Office for Fiscal Transparency, which show savings could reach \$20 million by next year.

Although rural counties will find ways to use the extra money, they may never be able to catch up to urban areas, which have better proximity to nonprofits, Gateley said.

Large jails and prisons can rely on outside organizations such as Diversion Hub and The Education and Employment Ministry to provide treatment and transportation services to incarcerated individuals, but many of those nonprofits only operate in the metro area.

In Cleveland County, commissioners increased the jail’s budget this year to pay for a licensed counselor to work at the detention center five days per week.

But in many cases, the only mental health resource for rural jails is through a partnership with Oklahoma City-based Red Rock Behavioral Health Services, which has 13 state offices. Yet, limited staff and beds can present barriers to access. Ariel Joseph,

a spokesperson at Red Rock Behavioral Health Services, said the providers find ways to cater to rural areas and limit their barriers, such as meeting virtually with clients.

But nonprofits can go the extra mile by developing individualized health and career plans for their metro-area clients, Joseph said.

## FUNDING MENTAL HEALTH/ SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT IN OKLAHOMA JAILS

Oklahoma’s 77 counties are finally receiving additional funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment that voters approved in 2016. Here is how much each county will receive based on its portion of the state’s overall population.

## MICHIGAN’S MODEL

The same year Oklahoma voters approved State Question 781, Michigan funded pilot programs in eight counties aimed at applying psychotherapy, and expanded to 10 counties in 2017.

Analysts at the Center for Behavioral Health and Justice at the Wayne State University School of Social Work then compared the treatment-based pilot programs to traditional jails. The center documented how alternative services, such as treating detainees with therapy and medication, affected individual outcomes, said Lynn Sutfin, a Michigan Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson.

People who received those jail-based diversion services were 64% more likely to engage in treatment after release compared to those who did not receive jail-based diversion services.

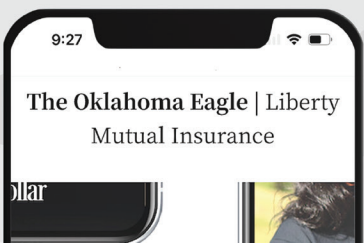
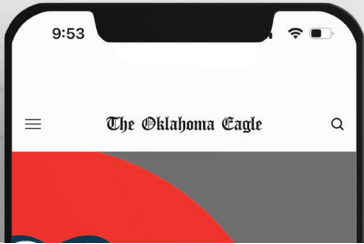
“The consensus is the more you can connect people to community services, even while they’re incarcerated, the more likely

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS *cont. A5*

The Oklahoma Eagle

## Our Mission

To amplify our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial” is the cornerstone of our continued success.





# Zelia Page Breaux: Musician and Educator

By HANNAH D. ATKINS, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



Zelia Breaux, a renowned musician and educator, was born to Inman Edward and Zelia Ball Page in 1880 at Jefferson City, Missouri. Her father was principal of the Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City from 1888 to 1898. Zelia Page attained a bachelor’s degree in music from Lincoln. On May 1, 1898, Inman Page became president of the Colored Agricultural and Normal University (now Langston University) in Langston and moved his family to Oklahoma Territory. He hired his daughter, Zelia, as a teacher of piano and instrumental music. She established and developed the music department. On December 6, 1905, she married Armogen Breaux. The couple had one son, Enimen, who became a vice president at Langston University.

The Oklahoma public schools were segregated in 1918 when she left Langston and accepted the position of supervisor of music for the African American schools in Oklahoma City. As head of the music department at Douglass High School, she

placed a music teacher in each African American grade school in the system. In addition, she organized the Oklahoma City Community Band, which was composed of many of her former Douglass students.

The Douglass High School band, which she organized in 1923 with twenty-six participants, became one of the most outstanding in the United States. Appearing all over the nation, the band influenced both local and national musicians such as Duke Ellington, Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, Sherman Sneed, Edward and Charlie Christian, and Jimmy Rushing. In 1933 Breaux took the Douglass band to the Chicago World’s Fair musical festivities, and they performed for a national radio broadcast while there. In 1915 she had bought a controlling interest in the Aldridge Theater on Northeast Second Street, and it became the main location for performances of high school operettas as well as prestigious traveling shows.

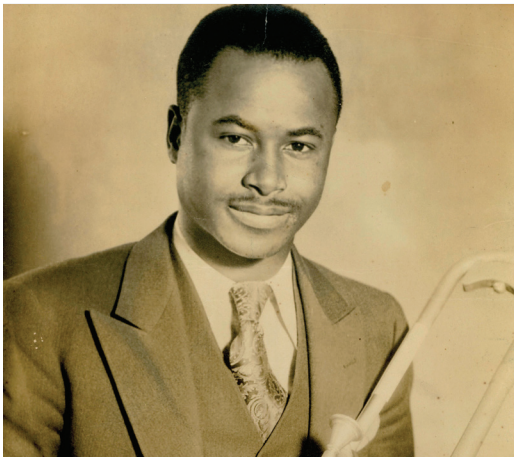
During her tenure at Douglass High School Breaux organized a twenty-four-voice chorus, an eighteen-piece symphony orchestra, and several boys’ and girls’ glee clubs. In 1932 she organized May Day celebrations, during which the Douglass band would play as the children wrapped the Maypole. In 1936 she took the Douglass band, which had grown immensely since 1923, to the Texas Centennial celebration in Dallas. In 1937 she started the Black State Band Festival, which began with seven participating bands and grew to eighteen.

In 1939 Breaux received a master’s degree in music education from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She retired from Douglass High School in 1948. Zelia Breaux died in Guthrie on October 31, 1956, at the age of seventy-six. She was inducted into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame in 1983 and the Oklahoma Bandmasters Association Hall of Fame on July 25, 1991.

**THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY** is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma’s history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

**ZELIA PAGE BREAU**X, 18429, Elwyn Welch Collection, OHS.

## Featured Last Week



Ernie Fields: Jazz Icon, Trailblazer, Tulsa Loyalist



Senate Overrides Stitt To Extend Two Sets Of Tribal Compacts



New OK County District Attorney Drops Charges Against Officers

The Oklahoma Eagle

Enjoy articles, events and featured content online

Online

WEB: [www.theokeagle.com](http://www.theokeagle.com)  
FACEBOOK: [#TheOKEagle](https://www.facebook.com/TheOKEagle)  
TWITTER: [#OKEaglePaper](https://twitter.com/OKEaglePaper)

Delivery

For questions about deliver, billing and our membership program, please contact us at +1 (918) 582-7124, ext. 241.

Submissions

Submitted content may be edited for space, clarity and for considerations of liability. All submissions become the sole property of The Oklahoma Eagle, which reserves the right to run all or part of any submissions due to timeliness or newsworthiness.

Letters to the Editor

Want to write a letter to be published in the paper and online? Email us online to submit.

Advertising

For print and online advertising information, go to [theokeagle.com/media-kit/](http://theokeagle.com/media-kit/) or call. +1 (918) 582-7124.

The Newsroom

Know something important we should cover? Send an inquiry to [theokeagle.com/subscribe](mailto:theokeagle.com/subscribe).

## The Oklahoma Eagle

### Founded in 1921

- James O. Goodwin

Publisher 1980-Present
- Robert K. Goodwin

Publisher 1972-1980
- Edward L. Goodwin, Jr.

Co-Publisher 1980-2014
- Edward L. Goodwin, Sr.

Publisher 1936-1972
- Theodore B. Baughman

Publisher 1921-1936

### Business

- Jerry Goodwin

Principal
- M. David Goodwin

Principal
- Ross D. Johnson

Principal
- David W. Cole

General Council
- Marsh Media

Advertising

### News

- Gary Lee

Managing Editor
- Ray Pearcey

Sr. Contributor
- Russell LaCour

Contributor
- Victor Luckerson

Contributor
- John Neal

Contributor

### Photography

- Cory Young

Photographer

### Print

- Sam Levrault

Production Director

### Circulation

- Kirstein Lynn

Subscription Manager

### Digital

- Web

[TheOKEagle.com](http://TheOKEagle.com)
- Facebook

[TheOKEagle](https://www.facebook.com/TheOKEagle)
- Twitter

[OKEaglePaper](https://twitter.com/OKEaglePaper)

### Contact

- Letters to the Editor

[editor@theokeagle.com](mailto:editor@theokeagle.com)
- Advertise

[advertise@theokeagle.com](mailto:advertise@theokeagle.com)
- Circulation

[publishers@theokeagle.com](mailto:publishers@theokeagle.com)
- Subscribe

[theokeagle.com/subscribe](http://theokeagle.com/subscribe)



# Best practices for counties include expanding services for police training and substance abuse treatments

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS *from A3*

they are to follow up,” Sutfin said.

After five years of data-collecting and research, the center determined the best practices for counties, which included expanding services for police training and substance abuse treatments.

Rahni Cason, jail diversion manager at the Center for Behavioral Health and Justice, said the biggest obstacle is establishing uniformity in Michigan’s justice system. Similar to Oklahoma, rural counties do not always have access to medication or other resources.

Cason said the organization partners rural counties with high-performing counties and provides extra funding when available to reduce the disparities. The center and council garner funds from the state and other third-party organizations.

Cason and Sutfin said statewide efforts are underway, and said the extensive research has aided their progress. For states considering jail diversion approaches, Sutfins recommended identifying the problems first.

“I would do a landscape analysis of what’s going on in the state and not dive in with solutions before you understand what is actually already happening,” Sutfins said.

## OKLAHOMA’S LOGISTICS

Once the money is transferred to the fund, counties will have to request



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

funding through the Department of Corrections, similar to a grant system. However, counties have a maximum amount they can request based on population (see table).

In Logan County, where they will receive approximately \$161,491 for mental health and substance abuse initiatives, Sheriff Damon Devereaux said he would like to partner with the county’s healthcare provider, Turn Key Health Clinic, and invest in a mental health module. The program would either provide more mental health providers to jails or set up more beds for outpatient care.

Either way, Logan County inmates need a consistent mental health regimen, Devereaux said.

Devereaux said the county already spends about \$250,000 on rehabilitation services, and the mental health module costs about \$1,500 per month for four more hours of care a week.

Devereaux said he was excited about the passage of State Question 781 but remains uncertain about its effect because of the seven-year delay.

“We now need to hold our legislators accountable for what

people voted for, and put the money where the mouth is,” Devereaux said.

Kay Thompson, chief of communications at the Oklahoma Department of Correction, said the department has not discussed plans or recommendations for spending 781 money, but said there is a need for more staff.

Policy analyst Shade said all the programs can be built.

“There’s a hopeful story here that I hope remains at the center of this,” Shade said. “It’s going to be a transformative, transformational change for Oklahoma.”

**AINSLEY MARTINEZ** was an intern through the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation. She studies professional media at the University of Oklahoma, specializing in data visualizations. Contact Ainsley at [amartinez@oklahomawatch.org](mailto:amartinez@oklahomawatch.org) or (405) 822-0403. Follow her on Twitter at [@gainsmartinez](https://twitter.com/gainsmartinez).

# Supreme Court Validates Turnpike Authority Bonds For Expansion Project

By **MICHAEL MCNUTT**, NonDoc

BONDS FOR EXPANSION PROJECT

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority has received approval to take out loans to finance new toll roads that were challenged by the City of Norman and area residents who stand to lose their homes to the expansion.

In a 6-3 decision Tuesday, the Oklahoma Supreme Court approved a request by OTA to validate \$500 million in bonds for ACCESS Oklahoma, a process that is required before bonds can be sold to pay for the projects. ACCESS stands for Advancing and Connecting Communities and Economies Safely Statewide, and Gov. Kevin Stitt announced the project in February 2022 as a \$5 billion, 15-year planning effort that will expand the Will Rogers Turnpike and much of the John Kilpatrick Turnpike to six lanes, while adding new connector loops in the Oklahoma City and Norman metro areas.

“The OTA has properly exercised its authority to determine the route for the south extension,” wrote Justice James Winchester. “Further, the OTA has legislative authority (...) to issue additional bonds to finalize the loop. Accordingly, we approve the revenue bonds.”

In dissenting, Vice Chief Justice Dustin Rowe countered that the majority’s decision confers upon the OTA “incredibly broad discretion without any cognizable limits.”

“The OTA is apparently free to blatantly disregard the Legislature’s directives with respect to routes and funding,” Rowe wrote. “This decision does not simply approve the proposed bonds, it sets a new precedent that future bond applications seeking our approval are merely seeking our rubber stamp — which we freely give today.”

Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz, who also serves as OTA’s executive director, said it may be several years before actual construction begins on the project’s controversial south extension, which would divert Interstate 35 traffic east around Norman and Oklahoma City with a connection near Purcell.

“To be clear, we are at the very beginning stage of this long-range plan,” Gatz said during a press conference at Oklahoma Department of Transportation headquarters. “Construction in the Norman area specifically likely will be several years away from today. However, we will assist [residents] to the best of our ability with the information that we have available and continue to work diligently.”

Gatz encouraged property owners with questions to contact OTA through its toll-free number, 1-844-562-2237, email [info@accessoklahoma.com](mailto:info@accessoklahoma.com) or visit OTA’s Oklahoma Access webpage, [ACCESSoklahoma.com](https://ACCESSoklahoma.com).

“We’ll continue to do everything that we can to work with property owners that are potentially impacted to make sure that they have the information available to them that they’re going to need to make good decisions, and we’ll do everything we can to work with them,” he said. “That holds true today just as it did in the beginning.”

6-3

In a 6-3 decision Tuesday, the Oklahoma Supreme Court approved a request by OTA to validate \$500 million in bonds for ACCESS Oklahoma.



Gatz said he does not know how many homeowners may be displaced by the new turnpikes.

“Until you have established right-of-way lines, you really don’t have a true reflection of how many property owners may be affected,” he said. “A lot of times you’re going to have differing needs among the property owners. Some will want to stay as long as they can, others may want to go ahead and move forward with a right-of-way transaction.”

## ‘It’s not just losing our homes’

Opposition has focused mostly on the ACCESS Oklahoma project’s south extension, which would run south from Interstate 40 near Newalla around Norman and into McClain County for the Interstate 35 connection just north of Purcell. While proponents say the extension will be critical to divert commercial truck traffic and other travelers around the OKC metro, opponents claim the turnpike expansion would eliminate more than 600 homes.

Lawsuits filed by members of Pike Off, a grassroots opposition group, claim OTA was vague on early agreements related to ACCESS Oklahoma and violated the Open Meeting Act. The Supreme Court in May overruled a district judge who had found in December that the OTA had violated the Open Meeting Act.

Tassie Katherine Hirschfeld, a volunteer with the grassroots organization Oklahomans for Responsible Transportation and one of the property owners whose home is in the proposed route of the southern turnpike loop, said members of the group will discuss with their attorneys whether to seek a rehearing. They have 20 days to file a petition seeking one.

“It’s not just losing our homes,” she said. “It’s giving up democracy because there’s no property rights, there’s this autocratic court.”

Randy Carter, with Oklahomans for Responsible Transportation, said he was disappointed with the Supreme Court’s ruling. He built his house 20 years ago, and its living room is in the middle of the proposed southern extension.

“It will take some wind out of our sails temporarily,” he said of Tuesday’s ruling.

Robert Norman, an OKC attorney representing the group Pike Off OTA, said that group will continue its fight.

“The dissenting opinions provided a convincing, well-reasoned explanation of why the new turnpikes clearly exceed the critically important guardrails the Legislature has placed upon the Turnpike Authority,” he said in a statement. “Justice Rowe convincingly pointed out the dangers of today’s decision. It essentially gives the OTA incredibly broad powers without known limits, and the OTA now appears to be free to blatantly disregard the people’s elected representatives.”

“We will continue our fight to vindicate the rule of law, our cherished civil rights, and representative democracy,” he said. “We must return our government to the people. We must never yield to the rule of a few unelected bureaucrats and narrow special interests who

seek to exercise unlimited power at the expense of all of us.”

## ‘This restart will take place over the coming months’

Work on ACCESS Oklahoma was halted in April as the Turnpike Authority faced ongoing lawsuits, uncertainty over the bond validation, and a request by Attorney General Gentner Drummond for a first-ever investigative audit of OTA operations and actions related to ACCESS Oklahoma.

“Restarting the engineering work will take months,” Gatz said. “It’s not something that will be immediate. (...) This restart will take place over the coming months.”

Now that the Supreme Court has validated the bonds, OTA will resubmit its application to the Oklahoma Council of Bond Oversight and will resume discussions with the Bureau of Reclamation to reapply or adjust the alignment of the south extension turnpike project, Gatz said.

In its Jan. 17 notice to OTA, the federal Bureau of Reclamation said it denied the Turnpike Authority’s request for perpetual use authorization for turnpike construction across east-Norman fee title land — near Lake Thunderbird — because the proposed project is not compatible with congressionally authorized purposes for which the land was acquired and is still needed.

“However, Reclamation does not object to OTA routing the turnpike across Norman project pipeline and flowage easements if the easement crossings are planned, designed, and constructed such that the turnpike does not interfere with Reclamation’s easement interests or impact operation, maintenance, and replacement of Norman project infrastructure,” the notice stated. “Such easement crossings would require close coordination with Reclamation through planning, design, and construction process.”

The \$500 million in revenue bonds would fund the initial work of the 15-year, \$5 billion ACCESS Oklahoma long-range plan. That work includes funding for studies and engineering design of three proposed new route alignments in the Oklahoma City metro area that will complete the “outer loop” first envisioned by lawmakers and state leaders three decades ago. The funding also would jump start construction projects in the long-range plan, including widening both the John Kilpatrick Turnpike and the Interstate 44/Turner Turnpike to six lanes, adding interchanges along many existing toll routes to connect communities, and making other safety upgrades across the system.

In its petitions with the Supreme Court, the OTA said that, in 1993, the Oklahoma Legislature added a new turnpike project authorization: “A new turnpike and bridge or any parts thereof from a point in the vicinity of the city of Mustang southerly across the South Canadian River to the H.E. Bailey Turnpike in the vicinity of the city of Tuttle; and then easterly across the South Canadian River to a point in the vicinity of the city of Norman.”

It is common for an initial turnpike route to

BONDS FOR EXPANSION PROJECT *cont. A7*



# DESPITE GUILTY PLEA ON FELONY APC, DEFERRED SENTENCE Likely Lets *Rep. Ryan Martinez Stay In Office* By Joe Tomlinson/NonDoc

REP RYAN MARTINEZ *from AI*

Oklahoma Rep. Ryan Martinez pleaded guilty to actual physical control of a motor vehicle Wednesday in relation to his October arrest outside of an Edmond bar.



BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE OF REP. RYAN MARTINEZ'S (R-EDMOND) arrest on Oct. 27. PHOTO NONDOC/YOUTUBE

AS part of a plea agreement, Oklahoma County Special District Judge Cassandra Williams ordered Martinez (R-Edmond) to serve a one-year deferred sentence and be placed on unsupervised probation during that time. Additionally, Martinez was ordered to pay \$1,000 in court costs and have an alcohol interlock device installed in his vehicle for six months.

As the sentence is deferred, final disposition of the case will be decided after Martinez's probationary period is served. NonDoc asked Oklahoma County District Attorney Vicki Behenna's office for a comment on the plea agreement, but none was provided prior to the publication of this story.

Martinez has represented House District 39 since 2016. He was reelected by default during the 2022 election cycle after no one else filed for the seat, but the "guilty" plea he entered as part of the deferred sentence would appear to halt a potential reelection bid in 2024.

Title 26, Section 5-105a of Oklahoma statutes says that "any person who has entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to [a felony] crime shall not be eligible to be a candidate for or to be elected to any state (...) office or any other elective office of any political subdivision of this state for a period of 15 years following completion of his sentence or during the pendency of an appeal of such conviction or plea."

Candidate filing for the 2024 election is set to occur in April, more than three months prior to expiration of Martinez's deferred sentence and probationary period. Martinez did not respond to a request for comment Thursday, but various State Capitol insiders believe Martinez may have already decided not to seek reelection even if he were deemed eligible.

Martinez's October arrest triggered a felony charge because it marked his second driving under the influence offense within 10 years. He was previously charged in 2014 with a misdemeanor for DUI and was put on probation for the offense, which was later expunged from court records.

The structure of Martinez's new plea agreement would appear to prevent him from having to resign from office immediately. Title 51, Section 24.1 states that "any elected or appointed state or county officer or employee who, during the term for which he or she was elected or appointed, is, or has been, found guilty by a trial court of a felony in a state or federal court of competent jurisdiction shall be automatically suspended from the office or employment." Because Martinez's sentence has been deferred for 12 months, the court has not formally found him guilty.

Asked if Martinez's felony conviction could prevent him from serving in the Legislature, Daniel Seitz, the House Republican Caucus communications director, said the office of House Speaker Charles McCall (R-Atoka) is "reviewing the situation."

Police were dispatched late in the evening of Wednesday, Oct. 26, to a call from a concerned bar patron who said Martinez had arrived drunk at The Patriarch, a bar in downtown Edmond. The reporting caller told dispatch that the bartender served Martinez one beer before cutting him off.

"I asked him if he's OK, and he said he called a cab, so he might be calling a cab," the woman told the dispatcher. "If he could be responsible, that would be good."

The caller said Martinez was falling down and at one point ran into a wall while exiting the bar. She said she called because she feared he was attempting to drive.

"You know, that one foot goes over the other and you run into the wall. It was kind of scary. I was going to leave, but I'm not going to leave right now," she said. "I don't want to be on the road with him."

Edmond police officers made contact with Martinez in his parked, running SUV at 11:41 p.m. and placed him under arrest at 12:23 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 27.

The police report and body camera footage of the arrest show that Martinez initially misled officers about the events surrounding his conduct that night, including how many drinks he had consumed and the distance he had to drive home. Martinez also falsely claimed the Legislature was in "probably like three special sessions."

Prior to his arrest, Martinez sat on a curb for about 20 minutes, where he told officers that he could not be arrested as the Oklahoma Legislature was in special session.

"My understanding is the Constitution of Oklahoma says that I can't be detained on my way to go represent the people," Martinez said, referencing Article 5, Section 22.

That provision is widely understood to prevent a legislator from being impeded while they are on their way to or from the State Capitol to take action during a legislative session. The provision does not grant legislators the equivalent of diplomatic immunity at midnight in a bar parking lot.

In March, five months after Martinez's arrest, Rep. Dean Davis (R-Broken Arrow) made the same claim to Oklahoma City police officers prior to his arrest on an allegation of public drunkenness on the patio of Skinny Slim's in Bricktown. In April, Davis pleaded no contest in OKC Municipal Court and paid a fine, though the amount is not listed in online records.

During Martinez's detention, responding officers asked him who oversees the Legislature's special session.

"The governor and the speaker of the House and the president pro temp of the Senate," Martinez answered. "Would you like me to call Kevin Stitt right now?"

In May 2022, just five months before his arrest, Martinez had called Stitt's behavior "racist and hateful" after the governor vetoed House Bill 3501, which allows the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety to revoke driver's licenses based on traffic offense convictions in tribal courts. The House and Senate overrode Stitt's veto, allowing the bill to become law.

"With the governor vetoing this important bill, would it be safe to make the assumption that his racist and hateful behavior towards the tribes of this state is getting in the way of good public policy to protect Oklahomans?" Martinez asked on the House floor during the override of Stitt's veto.

As officers determined whether the Oklahoma Legislature was actually in special session as Martinez claimed, the lawmaker offered to call then-Attorney General John O'Connor.

"I don't want to create a constitutional crisis," Martinez said. "Do you want me to call the attorney general? It would make it easier."

Eventually, an EPD officer told his colleagues and Martinez that the Department of Public Safety could not confirm a special session was ongoing.

"Even if there was a special session, the guy over at DPS says, 'I've never heard of anyone not being able to be arrested during a special session,'" the officer stated.

Martinez thanked the officer for his conduct.

"You've been very fair. I appreciate it. I have no complaints. I love Edmond, America," Martinez said. "I've had a rough couple weeks, man."

JOSEPH TOMLINSON graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a journalism degree in 2021. After covering politics in Washington, D.C. for Gaylord News, he completed a NonDoc internship and joined the newsroom as a staff reporter in 2022, predominantly covering the community of Edmond, Oklahoma. He is a corps member of Report for America. Send tips and story ideas to joe@nondoc.com.



# Transgender Rights Targeted In Executive Order Signed By Oklahoma Governor

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS TARGETED *from A1*

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt on Tuesday directed state agencies to use narrow definitions of “female” and “male,” in the latest attack on transgender rights in a state that already has laws targeting bathroom use, health care and sports teams for transgender people.

Stitt signed the executive order flanked by women from the anti-trans group Independent Women’s Voice, including Riley Gaines, a former University of Kentucky swimmer known for criticizing an NCAA decision allowing transgender swimmer Lia Thomas to compete against her in a women’s championship race.

“Today we’re taking a stand against this out-of-control gender ideology that is eroding the very foundation of our society,” Stitt said. “We are going to be safeguarding the very essence of what it means to be a woman.

“Oklahomans are fed up with attempts to confuse the word ‘woman’ and turn it into some kind of ambiguous definition that harms real women.”

In addition to requiring state agencies and boards to define the words “female” and “male” to correspond with the person’s sex assigned at birth, the executive order also includes definitions for the words “man,” “boy,” “woman,” “girl,” “father” and “mother.” The order specifically defines a female as a “person whose biological reproductive system is designed to produce ova” and a male as a “person whose biological reproductive system is designed to fertilize the ova of a female.”

It also directs schools and other state agencies to use these definitions when collecting vital statistics and further directs schools to provide dedicated restrooms and locker room facilities for boys and girls, respectively.

Stitt’s order, dubbed “The Women’s Bill of Rights” by its supporters, is the latest Oklahoma policy to attack the rights of transgender people and is part of a growing trend in conservative states. Stitt signed a bill earlier this year that made it a crime for health care workers to provide gender-affirming medical care for minors, and has previously signed measures to prohibit transgender girls and women from playing on female sports teams and prevent transgender children from using school bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity.

“This executive order is neither about rights, nor is it about protecting women,” said Nicole McAfee, executive director of Freedom Oklahoma, which supports the rights of trans people. She called it a “thinly veiled attack” that codifies discrimination against transgender women.

House Democratic Leader Cyndi Munson accused the governor of using “partisan, polarizing politics” to further divide Oklahomans.

“Once again, the Republican supermajority continues their government overreach by infringing on the rights of citizens,” said Munson, and Oklahoma City Democrat.

Stitt’s action comes during legal battles in neighboring Kansas over the

meaning of a state law that Republican legislators also christened “The Women’s Bill of Rights,” which rolled back transgender rights. It was based on language from several anti-trans groups, including Independent Women’s Voice.

Stitt also previously signed an executive order prohibiting any changes to person’s gender on birth certificates.

Associated Press reporter John Hanna contributed to this report from Topeka, KA.

Stitt’s order, dubbed “The Women’s Bill of Rights” by its supporters, is the latest Oklahoma policy to attack the rights of transgender people.



OKLAHOMA GOV. KEVIN STITT speaks to the media as he becomes the first governor to sign the Women’s Bill of Rights (WBOR) Executive Order during a press conference at the state Capitol in Oklahoma City, Okla. on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023. The executive order fortifies into law sex-based words like ‘female,’ ‘woman,’ and ‘mother’ and protecting women-only spaces. PHOTO CHRIS LANDSBERGER/THE OKLAHOMAN VIA AP

# The high court should not “inject itself into the route-making process for a new turnpike location in the vicinity...”

BONDS FOR EXPANSION PROJECT *from. A5*

change because of unforeseen circumstances, OTA attorneys said in earlier court filings.

Winchester, in writing for the majority, said the high court should not “inject itself into the route-making process for a new turnpike location in the vicinity of Norman.”

“For over 30 years, the Legislature has given the OTA discretion to select turnpike routes within the locations authorized by the Legislature,” he wrote. “The court has consistently honored the discretion given to the OTA by the Legislature and allowed the OTA to exercise its judgment as the OTA has the engineering expertise and traffic data to make these complex far-reaching decisions regarding turnpike routes. We uphold the authority given to the OTA to decide routes for turnpikes and conclude that the OTA has the legislative authority to construct the south extension.

“To hold otherwise would inject this court into the OTA’s decision-making process regarding turnpike routes. The OTA contends the proposed components of the loop and south extension will meet the purposes of the OTA to better facilitate vehicular traffic and meet safety needs, as traffic counts have steadily increased for the last three decades.”

Opponents argued that the OTA’s proposed route in the Norman area deviated from routes approved by the Legislature. But Winchester said the Legislature gave the OTA “very broad authority” to determine routes, including access and connecting roads.

“As previously held by this court, we refuse to



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

strictly construe these legislative authorizations and instead defer to the OTA’s technical expertise in determining routes,” he wrote.

The state’s Council of Bond Oversight last August approved the \$500 million in revenue bonds with the condition that lawsuits against the Norman-area toll roads were resolved first. COBO’s approval was good for 180 days, meaning it expired Feb. 2.

On May 31, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled in a 5-3 decision that OTA did not violate the state’s open meeting law. It overturned a lower court ruling that stated OTA officials willfully violated the Open Meeting Act when they unveiled the ACCESS Oklahoma toll road plan.

A group of residents and landowners claimed they would be adversely affected by the construction of one of the proposed new turnpikes — the south extension — and filed a lawsuit in Cleveland County District Court claiming the OTA violated the Open Meeting Act.

They alleged the OTA violated the Open Meeting Act by not providing sufficient nor timely notice of the new proposed turnpikes in either its January 2022 or February 2022 agendas. They also challenged the lack of notice in the Feb. 22, 2022, meeting agenda of Gov. Kevin Stitt’s announcement of the ACCESS Oklahoma program.

The Open Meeting Act requires that agendas contain subjects to be discussed in meetings and that agendas be provided to the public in advance of meetings.



CLASSIFIEDS

**OKLAHOMA  
CLASSIFIED  
AD NETWORK**  
FOR MORE INFO CALL  
**1-888-815-2672**  
**WANT TO BUY**

**OLD GUITARS WANTED!** LARRY BRINGS CASH for vintage USA guitars, tube amps, banjos, mandolins, etc. Fender, Gibson, Martin, Gretsch, others. Call or text 918-288-2222. [www.stringswest.com](http://www.stringswest.com)

**2016 Classic Mercedes**

2016 CLASSIC MERCEDES BENZ SL550 - 20,000 MILES - SILVER-LIKE NEW WITH NEW TIRES - All The Extras!! Top goes in trunk! Hawaiian interior decor, white. special wheels & covers (580)618-0159. \$67,800

**ADVERTISE STATEWIDE**

Put your message where it matters most - **IN OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPERS.** We can place your ad in 146 newspapers. For more information or to place an ad, **contact Landon Cobb** at (405) 499-0022 or toll-free in OK at 1-888-815-2672.

The Oklahoma Eagle  
Since  
**1921**  
**Our Mission**

“

**To amplify  
our core  
value of  
equity,  
through  
journalism  
and  
editorial**

**METAL ROOFS**  
**\$4750\***  
**COMPLETELY INSTALLED**  
**SIDING/WINDOWS 40%. OFF**  
**Factory warranty • Free Estimates LIMITED TIME**  
**TM CONSTRUCTION**  
**CALL NOW! 800-664-4856**  
Sr/Military Discounts \*Call for details

**IMPORTANT TULSA  
ESTATE AUCTION**  
**A VICTORIAN MANSION RE-CREATED**  
**500 LOTS OF ART & ANTIQUES**  
**OPEN FOR BIDDING NOW!**  
**Soulis Auctions**  
**816.697.3830**  
**SoulisAuctions.com**

**LARGE ABSOLUTE AUCTION**  
**BROWN'S BAKERY\*FORMERLY**  
**INGRID'S BAKERY\*OTHER RESTAURANTS**  
**BAKERY\*RESTAURANT EQUIP\*FOOD TRUCK**  
**WED. AUG. 16TH AT 9:00 AM**  
ITEMS LOCATED AT: BROWN'S BAKERY-  
1100 N. WALKER AVE, OKC;  
FORMERLY INGRID'S BAKERY-6501 N. MAY AVE, OKC AND  
DAKIL AUCTIONEERS-200 NW 114TH ST, OKC  
INSPECTION: TUES. AUG. 15TH FROM 8:00 AM TO 5:00 PM AND  
STARTING AT 8:00 AM DAY OF AUCTION  
**AUCTION HELD AT: DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC**  
**200 NW 114TH ST, OKLA. CITY, OKLA.**  
**CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE AUCTION, BID LIVE**  
**ON-LINE AT WWW.DAKIL.COM**  
See web site for detailed listing & pictures  
Buyers premium will apply.  
**Dakil AUCTIONEERS**  
405-751-6179  
**www.dakil.com**

**ABSOLUTE AUCTION**  
CUSTOM MOTOR REBUILDERS  
ENGINE REBUILT, INSTALLED\*COMPLETE MACHINE SHOP  
SERVICE\*MOTOR OVERHAUL  
**THURS. AUG. 17TH AT 10:00 AM CST**  
ITEMS LOCATED AT: 1302 E. 3RD, TULSA, OKLA.  
(3rd & Peoria)  
INSPECTION: WED. AUG. 16TH FROM 8:00 AM TO 5:00 PM  
AND STARTING AT 8:00 AM DAY OF AUCTION  
**AUCTION HELD AT: DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC**  
**200 NW 114TH ST, OKLA. CITY, OKLA.**  
**(W. Side Service Rd of the Bdwy Ext. between**  
**122nd & Hefner)**  
**CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE AUCTION, BID LIVE**  
**ON-LINE AT WWW.DAKIL.COM**  
(2) Vulcan crankshaft grinders, Sunnen valve grinder, Quick Way powerstroke cylinder hone, Peterson surface grinder, Vulcan Matani crankshaft straightener, Large inventory of engine blocks, crankshafts, heads, and rods; 225 Electric Lincoln welder, Industrial Air 120 gal. air compressor, AC/DC aluminum/steel welder, Snap-on battery charger, Hacks equipment heated parts washer, Floor jacks, Stackable snap-on tool box, US general tool box, Battery load tester, Engine hoist, Transmission jack, Jack stands, Rolling carts, Parts bins. This is only a partial listing!  
**Dakil AUCTIONEERS**  
405-751-6179  
**www.dakil.com**

The Oklahoma Eagle

Arts  
Culture  
History  
Education  
Business  
Sports  
Faith



# THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE CHURCH DIRECTORY



**The Oklahoma Eagle publishes news and announcements for churches currently listed in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* Church Directory. For information, please call our office at (918) 582-7124**

## Church Of The Living God

1559 E Reading St. Tulsa OK  
(918) 584-3206

Minister RJ Smith

Sunday school - 9:30am  
Sunday Worship - 10:45am  
Monday Worship - 6:00pm  
Wednesday Bible Study - 5:00pm

## CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1962 N. Sheridan Rd.  
(918) 834-4747  
Pastor Ruthie I. Howard  
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.  
Bible Study & Prayer Wednesday 7:00 p.m.  
For Transportation (918) 402-6027

## Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

Temporarily meeting at the Courtyard Marriott 3340 S 79th E Ave Tulsa OK  
(918) 230-3022  
Pastors Wesley & Alfie Gray would like to invite you to come and experience the Word of God in action this Sunday! God has a word for you, He Guarantee's it! You'll be glad you did!!!

## The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

List your church in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

Participation in the directory allows free church announcements/ church news.

Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

## GTOMi

Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc.  
Traveling Outreach Ministries  
609 E. Zion Street  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Elder Julius W. Bland  
Sr., Pastor  
918-810-3882

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

## MOHAWK FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

3329 E. 30th St. North • 834-0391  
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
Sunday Morning Worship 11 a.m.  
Bible Study Wednesday 7 p.m.  
Rev. Emanuel L. Collier, Sr. Pastor

## Gethsemane Baptist Church

727 East 56th St. North  
(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Church Services 11:00 a.m.

## The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participation in the Directory allows free church announcements and church news. Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

## Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

Rudisill Regional Library  
1520 N Hartford Ave.  
Tulsa OK 74106  
(918) 409-4899  
Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons  
Sunday Worship: 1pm  
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p  
"The Righteous Are As Bold As A Lion." - Prov.28:1a

## SOLID ROCK 7th DAY BAPTIST CHURCH

123 E. 59th St. North  
Ph: (918) 425-2077  
Pastor Rick Bruner  
Sabbath School (Saturday) 9:30-10:45 a.m.  
Praise & Worship 11:00 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal Wednesday 6:00 p.m.  
"The Seventh Day Is Still God's Sabbath"

## Northside Christ Gospel Church

3101 N. M.L King Jr. Blvd.  
Tulsa OK  
(918) 625-2374  
Sunday School - 10 am  
Sunday Morning Worship - 10:45  
Sunday Evening Prayer - 7 pm  
Sunday Worship - 7:30 pm  
Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm  
Wednesday worship - 8pm  
Rev. John W. Anderson

## VERNON AME CHURCH

307-311 N. Greenwood Ave.  
P: 918-587-1428  
F: 918-587-0642  
vernonamechurch@sbcglobal.net

Sunday Church School 8:30 am  
Worship Service 10:00 am  
Wednesday Bible Study 6:00 pm  
Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NORTH TULSA

THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US



Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

**Sunday** Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.  
Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m.  
**Wednesday** Prayer Meeting - 6:30 p.m.  
Bible Study - Noon & 7:00 p.m.

1414 N. Greenwood Ave.

Tulsa, OK 74103

918-582-5129

[www.fbcnt.org](http://www.fbcnt.org)

Teaching Minds Changing Hearts

Touching the World

Place your church directory with us today! Advertising your church in *The Oklahoma Eagle* will get you results! Call (918) 582-7124

## The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participation in the Directory allows free church announcements and church news. Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

## BOSTON AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1301 S. Boston  
(918) 583-5181  
Rev. David Wiggs  
Senior Minister  
Sunday Worship 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.  
Sunday School 9:40 a.m.  
Sunday TV Worship 11:00 a.m.  
KTUL Channel 8

## TIMOTHY BAPTIST CHURCH

821 E. 46th St. N. • 425-8021  
REV. TWAN T. JONES  
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.  
"We've come this far by faith"

## NORTH PEORIA CHURCH OF CHRIST

2247 N. Peoria  
Tulsa, Okla. 74106  
(918) 425-1071  
Warren Blakney, Minister  
Sunday Bible School.....9:00 a.m.  
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.  
Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.  
There's no place, like this place, anywhere near this place.

## Pettie Chapel CME



19364 S. S. Mingo Road.  
Bixby, 74008  
Phone: (918) 366-8870

Rev. Robert Givens

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

## Church In Power

732 E. 31st North  
Tulsa, OK 74106 - (918) 835-1525

Service times: 9am Sundays, 7pm Wed, and Special Supernatural Breakthrough Services every last Friday and Saturday of every month at 7pm and Sunday at 9am  
Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

Church Ministries:  
Children's Church, CIP Praise Dancers, and CIP Praise Tem.

For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.

"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

## List Your Church Today!

## The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participate in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

- Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
- Priority over non-listed churches for news.

Worship with us in our  
CONTEMPORARY SERVICE  
Every Sunday at 11:30 a.m.  
Livestream | [allsoulschurch.org](http://allsoulschurch.org)

ALL SOULS  
Love beyond belief



2952 S. Peoria Ave. | Tulsa, OK 74114



Mount Zion Baptist Church  
419 N Elgin Tulsa, Oklahoma

Office:

918-584-0510

Fax:

918-584-1958

Prayer Line:

918-584-PRAY

Sunday School

9:30 a.m.

Morning

Worship 10:45

Wednesday

Bible Study

Noon and 7:00



## In The Spirit Christian Church

"Come And Experience The Spirit"

1020 South Garnett  
Tulsa, Okla., 74128  
Phone: (918) 836-6823  
Fax: (918) 836-6833

Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary Worship, And Spirited Preaching.

Wednesday Services  
10:00 a.m. Spirit Seniors  
5:30 p.m. Support Groups  
6:30 p.m. Community Dinner  
7:00 p.m. Bible Study

Sunday Worship  
Church School  
9:45 a.m.  
Worship  
11:00 a.m.

Ministries: Administration, Children's Church, Children's Choir, Spirited Kids, Guest Services, Intercessors, Men's Fellowship, Outreach and much more...



Rev. Sharyn Cosby-Willis,

## List Your Church Today!

## The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participate in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

- Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
- Priority over non-listed churches for news.



SMILING HEARTS  
The NICK BLAKELY  
Foundation

Our vision is to turn every potential tragedy of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) into a story of survival.

[www.nickblakelyfoundation.org](http://www.nickblakelyfoundation.org)





**BLACK GIRLS COOK**  
The Baltimore and Miami-based non-profit that encourages youth to eat well and avoid diabetes and high blood pressure. **A10**

**HENRIETTA LACKS WINS SETTLEMENT**  
After a two-year legal battle, the family of Henrietta Lacks has reached a settlement agreement in the case for her cells. **A11**



# 60 Years Later, We March on Washington Again

Rev. Al Sharpton tells why we must raise our collective voices in “a clarion call for fairness and justice” on Aug. 26.

MARCH ON WASHINGTON *from A1*



A YOUNG MARCHER a holds a banner at the March On Washington. PHOTO COURTESY/ROWLAND SCHERMAN

SIXTY years ago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led a historic march in Washington, D.C., at a time when the nation was at an inflection point. Hundreds of thousands gathered at the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963, as Dr. King called for better wages, jobs, voting rights and true representation, fair housing, and equality across the board.

Six decades later, so many of those hard-fought gains are under renewed threat, along with an increase in hate crimes and democracy itself hanging in the balance. We as a country are at a crossroads; do we continue on the path of progress, or do we revert back to the dark days?

The vast majority are united, and we will raise our voices in unison for a clarion call for fairness and justice at the March on Washington once again.

My organization, National Action Network, and I have been diligently working with Martin Luther King III, Arndrea Waters King, and the Drum Major Institute as we place the final touches on this momentous demonstration. We will lead a coalition of 60 national groups that span across racial, cultural, religious, and generational lines at this pivotal event on August 26 in D.C.

The 60 partner organizations for the 60th-anniversary march include the Anti-Defamation League, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, the NAACP, the Center for Reproductive Rights, UNIDOS, the National Urban League, GLAAD, and so many more. At a moment when all of our civil rights are under attack, a united front is the key to pushing back against both a climate of hate

and mechanisms that would like to undermine all that we have achieved.

In March, the FBI released an updated report on hate crimes in 2021 (the latest year for which data is available). According to those stats, hate crimes rose 12% from the previous year, with 65% of victims being targeted because of their race or ethnicity. We continuously learn about attacks on Black and Brown folks, members of the Asian community, the Jewish community, the Muslim community, the LGBTQ+ community, and others.

White supremacist groups are on the rise, and some elected officials (and others seeking office) have only fanned the flames of this hatred and created an environment of fear and uncertainty for so many. We say, no more.

At the same time, laws are being implemented that strip away reproductive rights and civil rights. Last year, the Supreme Court dismantled abortion rights and opened the floodgates for legislation around the country that severely limits a woman’s right to choose and her ability to maintain bodily autonomy.

Just this summer, the highest court in the land effectively ended affirmative action in higher education, which will have a detrimental impact on Black students’ enrollment in many institutions. Several Republican attorneys general have even attempted to extend such measures into corporate America by putting pressure on Fortune 100 companies to not adhere to DEI programs or any race-based personnel decisions.

MARCH ON WASHINGTON *cont. A11*

# Meet the Black Girls Cooking Up Health and Hope

The Baltimore- and Miami-based non-profit, Black Girls Cook, wants the youth to eat well and avoid diabetes and high blood pressure.

BLACK GIRLS COOKING UP HEALTH *from A1*

AS a culinary instructor for the Baltimore and Miami-based non-profit Black Girls Cook (BGC), Tellita Crawford, 31, is instrumental in helping the organization fulfill its mission: reduce disease risk for inner-city girls of color.

During the summer months, she runs the cooking program at the organization’s Baltimore location, where girls between the ages of 9 and 16 learn the basics of cooking, nutrition, and healthy living.

By the end of the three-week program, the girls not only learn to cook cultural meals, such as chicken pot pie and spiced pumpkin bread, but also how to make health-conscious decisions.

The chef says the organization gives “an eye-opening [experience] to see that you can still eat healthier, but they can still be good meals as well.”

**REDUCING DIET-RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS IN BLACK WOMEN**

Black Girls Cook was founded in 2014 by Nichole Mooney, who sought to help Black girls establish healthy relationships with food and reduce their chances of developing health issues as adults.

As a child, Mooney witnessed women in her family struggle with diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity — trends that plague Black communities nationwide.

Black women are two times more likely than white women to be diagnosed with or die from type 2 diabetes, according to 2019 data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Compared to white women, Black women also lead in rates of high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease.

Structural racism contributes significantly to these health disparities. Cities like Baltimore and Miami are rife with Black and low-income neighborhoods that lack access to fresh foods.

That’s why BGC calls those places home. And it’s making an impact with its cooking, natural beauty product, and gardening classes.

Participants cook at home more often, increase their science and math skills, and grow in self-confidence and self-esteem.

**BUILDING AN APPETITE FOR OPTIMISM IN BLACK GIRLS**

“We have been going over a lot of knife techniques. How to cut different vegetables and fruit in different shapes. They have learned how to peel the fruit,” Crawford says. “We also learned the terms of cooking, like saute, broiling, base, how to boil water, how to make pasta.”

“They learned how to read recipes. They have learned how to read nutrition facts,” says Crawford, affectionately called “Chef Tee Tee” by the girls.

Substitutions are also introduced in the class. Recipes that call for dairy may be modified to contain less or are replaced with vegan options, such as almond milk.

During the final cooking class for a July cohort, the group of girls pulled up their sleeves to bake an African-American delicacy.

“Has anyone had sweet potato pound cake before,” Crawford asked the room.

In her black chef’s apron, she walked around the table of girls, guiding them through a history lesson on sweet potatoes before diving into the recipe.

“In the United States, the terms ‘yam’ and ‘sweet potato’ are used interchangeably, but they are completely different vegetables,” Crawford read.

BLACK GIRLS COOKING UP HEALTH *cont. A11*

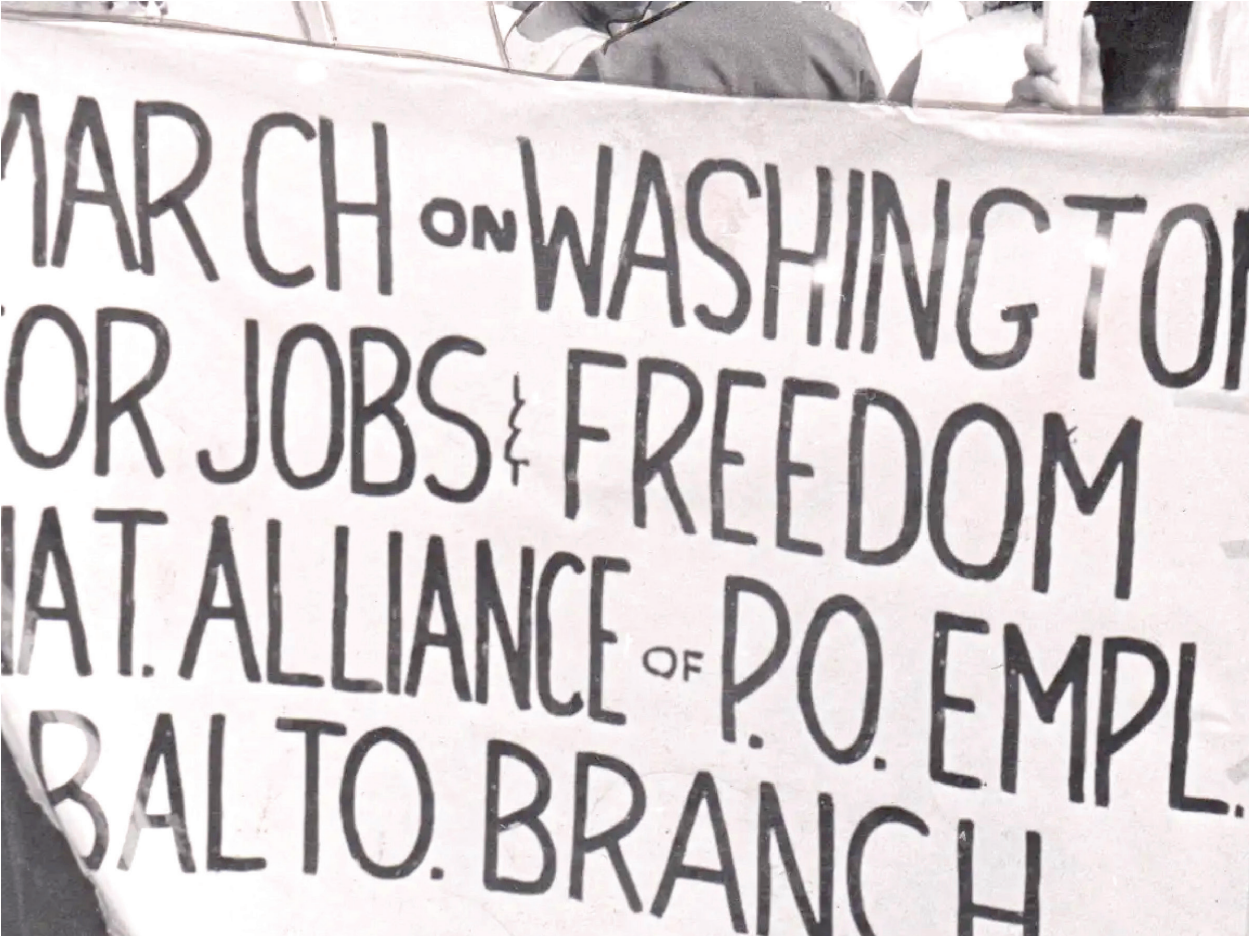


BGC PARTICIPANTS learn to cook a variety of foods, from winter soups to baked desserts. PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK GIRLS COOK



# The 60th Anniversary March on Washington Won't Be A Commemoration, But Rather A Continuation of Dr. King's work and vision

MARCH ON WASHINGTON from A10



MARCH ON WASHINGTON 1963. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BALTIMORE AFRO-AMERICAN.

The Supreme Court also limited LGBTQ+ protections earlier this summer by ruling in favor of a web designer who wanted the ability to refuse to create websites celebrating same-sex weddings. The Court also destroyed President Biden's student loan debt forgiveness program, which will directly impact Black and Brown students and adults the most as they carry a disproportionate amount of debt compared to their white counterparts.

And, of course, back in 2013, the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act itself, essentially eliminating the requirement that localities with a history of discrimination get approval from the federal government before enacting changes.

As a result, dozens of states established strict new voter ID laws, eliminated early voting days, closed polling locations, and more. New restrictions are being conjured up even today, making it more and more difficult for people to cast their vote.

While we raise awareness around these issues and organize, we are simultaneously fighting back against continued police brutality. Despite a few signs of progress, like the prosecution and conviction of former officer Derek Chauvin (for George Floyd's death) and the DOJ investigating police departments like the one in Memphis (following the death of Tyre Nichols), there are still far too many incidents of police abuse, shootings, excessive force and a criminal justice system in need of dire reform. This is why we still demand passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

When Dr. King convened that massive crowd 60 years ago on the National Mall, he demanded civil and economic rights for the Black community, and laid out his dream for America. While we celebrate the advancements achieved since that historic moment, we recognize the clear and present dangers before us.

That is precisely why the 60th anniversary March on Washington won't be a commemoration, but rather a continuation of Dr. King's work and vision.

When I founded National Action Network in 1991, with the support and blessings of the King family, I vowed to carry on his fight for freedom, fairness, and justice. On August 26, that continued push for equality and Dr. King's dream will lead us once again to the nation's capital.

As our multiracial, intergenerational demonstration meets at the Lincoln Memorial and marches to Dr. King's memorial, I am reminded of his timeless words:

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Reverend Al Sharpton serves as the founder and president of the National Action Network (NAN), anchors "Politics Nation" on MSNBC, hosts the nationally syndicated radio shows "Keepin' It Real" and "The Hour of Power," holds weekly action rallies and speaks out on behalf of those who have been silenced and marginalized. Rooted in the spirit and tradition of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., NAN boasts more than 100 chapters across the country to promote a modern civil rights agenda that includes the fight for one standard of justice, decency and equal opportunity for all.

REVEREND AL SHARPTON serves as the founder and president of the National Action Network (NAN), anchors "Politics Nation" on MSNBC, hosts the nationally syndicated radio shows "Keepin' It Real" and "The Hour of Power," holds weekly action rallies and speaks out on behalf of those who have been silenced and marginalized. Rooted in the spirit and tradition of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., NAN boasts more than 100 chapters across the country to promote a modern civil rights agenda that includes the fight for one standard of justice, decency and equal opportunity for all.

# Building culinary skills, and imparting confidence and joy

BLACK GIRLS COOKING UP HEALTH from A10



BGC PARTICIPANTS. PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK GIRLS COOK

**“In the United States, the terms ‘yam’ and ‘sweet potato’ are used interchangeably, but they are completely different vegetables.”**

TELLITA CRAWFORD, culinary instructor, Baltimore and Miami-based non-profit Black Girls Cook (BGC).

Shortly after, the chef tasked the girls with items to retrieve from the pantry.

“Go get two sticks of butter,” she told one of them. While the dish wasn't a zero-calorie, zero-fat cake, that wasn't the goal either. The plan was to make just enough to learn the recipe and taste in moderation.

“We're just making a simple pan,” Crawford said.

The girls scurried in and out of the room with ingredients before transitioning to the kitchen to bake their final dish of the summer.

Crawford's goal during her weeks with them was to build their culinary skills, but also to impart confidence and joy, even amid life's trials.

A formerly unhoused mother who launched her culinary arts career while living in transitional housing, she knows all about being open-minded.

“I want the girls to know, sometimes you may not even know what direction you plan on going. But sometimes, things work out in your favor. God ends up putting you in the right place at the right time,” she said.

“Just always be open-minded. You never know, you may be a chef one day.”

# Family of Henrietta Lacks Wins Settlement for Her Stolen Cells

By ALEXA SPENCER, WORD IN BLACK

HENRIETTA LACKS from A10

Her loved ones are getting justice for the first time since her cells were unethically extracted from her body over 70 years ago.

After a two-year legal battle, the family of Henrietta Lacks has reached a settlement agreement in the case for her cells, unethically harvested by doctors over 70 years ago and sold in products by countless companies. The long-awaited victory is the result of a lawsuit against ThermoFisher Scientific, a \$217 billion biotech company that profited from the use of the “HeLa” cells.

Attorney Ben Crump, who represents the family, announced the estate's historic win at a press conference in Baltimore on Tuesday.

“Members of the family of Henrietta Lacks and Thermo Fisher have agreed to settle the litigation filed by Henrietta Lacks' Estate, in U.S. District Court in Baltimore,” he said before a crowd at Canton Waterfront Park. “The terms of the agreement will be confidential. The parties are pleased that they were able to find



THE MOTHER OF MODERN MEDICINE BY KADIR NELSON, oil on linen, 2017. Collection of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery and National Museum of African American History and Culture. ARTIST KADIR NELSON AND THE JKBN GROUP LLC

mary, because the Lacks family wasn't getting nowhere” in the fight for justice.

“He said ‘son, see if you can take this to the finish line for me.’ And I tried,” Ron said.

Lacks died from cervical cancer in 1951 after being abused by doctors at Johns Hopkins hospital, where her cells were stolen. In a previous interview with Word In Black, Ron said his father “watched his mother die” and struggled to get “justice in an unjust system.”

“For a long time, he couldn't talk about his mom because of the trauma that he went through...I mean, ‘cause my dad, he watched his mother die,” he said.

Ron wrote a book about Lacks, whose cells were unlike any other in history. Rather than dying off, they multiply every 20 to 24 hours. When doctors discovered this, scientists began using her cells to advance medicine.

“If you have had a vaccine, had a shot, if you benefited from any medical research or advancement, then it's not a great stretch to say that you got a little Henrietta in you,” Crump said at the press conference.

ThermoFisher Scientific isn't the only company responsible for producing and

selling medical products with Lacks' immortal cells. Others have done the same without compensating her loved ones.

Attorney Chris Ayers, who worked alongside Crump on the case, says “stay tuned” because the legal battle isn't over.

“The fight against those who profit and choose to profit off of the deeply unethical and unlawful history and origins of the HeLa cells will continue,” he said.

“As Ben said, the HeLa cells were not derived from Henrietta Lacks. They are Henrietta Lacks. Her cells live today. And for those who choose to sell, mass produce, without their permission or consent without compensation to the family, we'll see them in court.”

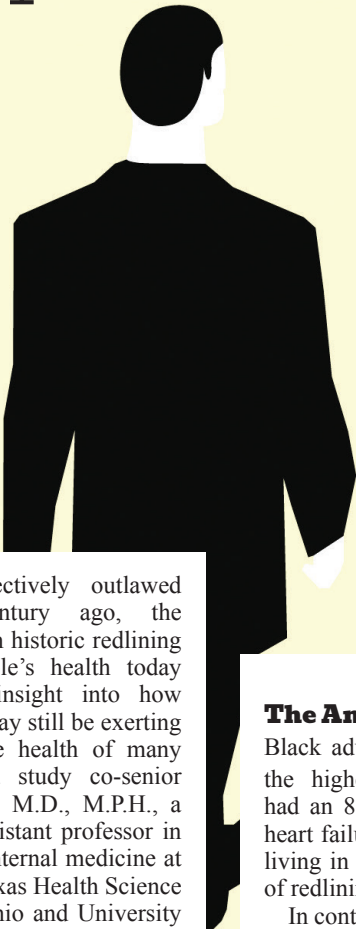


# REDLINING

Researchers discover that redlining has not only political impacts but also health impacts on Black folks.

ASWAD WALKER  
WORD IN BLACK

REDLINING



According to research published today in the American Heart Association’s flagship, peer-reviewed journal *Circulation*, the risk of heart failure in the present day was higher among Black adults who lived in U.S. zip codes historically impacted by redlining.

Are we surprised?

If the “we” is Blackfolk, absolutely not. We know that every “desert” imaginable—food, healthcare, insurance, tech, childcare, etc.—is flourishing in Black communities nationally. So, it makes perfect sense to Black people that heart failure and redlining have a link.

And apparently, also to researchers.

The analysis, published as part of the journal’s “Disparities in Cardiovascular Medicine Special Issue,” included more than 2.3 million adults from 2014-2019 who lived in U.S. communities with varying degrees of redlining, which began in the mid-1930s.

In 1933, the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, a government agency created as part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal, began sponsoring low-interest mortgage loans to help people recover from the financial crisis of the Great Depression. In a process called “redlining,” the HOLC developed a color-coding system for neighborhoods across the country based on “risk for investment” criteria; it deemed red areas, which were largely Black communities, “too risky” to insure mortgages.

The residents who lived in these neighborhoods were denied home loans, which lowered tax revenues in these communities and reduced investment in schools and government programs and services. This created numerous inequities for residents for multiple generations despite the practice being outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

The Blacks know all about redlining. Writer Ta-Nehisi Coates won awards and international acclaim for his article on the subject of redlining written for *The Atlantic*, titled “The Case for Reparations.” Coates’ work was named the “Top Work of Journalism of the Decade” by New York University’s Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute.

Blackfolk also know more than we care to know about medical issues concerning the heart; learned most often via personal experiences.

Previous research has found that communities exposed to redlining had higher rates of stroke, as well as increased risk of hypertension, Type 2 diabetes and early mortality due to heart disease.

Heart failure is a progressive condition in which the heart is unable to pump enough blood to the body either due to the heart muscle stiffening or from it losing pumping strength.

According to the American Heart Association’s 2023 Statistical Update, heart failure affects 6.7 million people in the U.S. and disproportionately impacts Black adults.

“Although discriminatory housing

policies were effectively outlawed nearly a half-century ago, the relationship between historic redlining practices and people’s health today gives us unique insight into how historical policies may still be exerting their effects on the health of many communities,” said study co-senior author Shreya Rao, M.D., M.P.H., a cardiologist and assistant professor in the department of internal medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and University Hospital, both in San Antonio, Texas.

The researchers identified nearly 2.4 million adults in the Medicare Beneficiary Summary Files between 2014 and 2019 with linked residential zip codes. Study participants were 55.4% female and had a mean age of 71 years; 801,452 of participants self-identified as Black adults, and nearly 1.6 million participants self-identified as non-Hispanic white adults.

Individuals of other races were excluded due to the low numbers available within the Medicare data. Participants were excluded from the analysis if they had a history of heart failure or heart attack in the preceding two years, had fewer than two years of Medicare coverage before the study start date or were younger than the age of 40.

The researchers mapped historical redlining maps onto modern-day maps of 1,044 zip codes in the U.S. and sorted them into four groups ranging from zip codes that had the least amount of area impacted by redlining to zip codes with the most areas exposed to redlining.

“Ultimately, we were most interested in assessing the difference in risk of heart failure between individuals from communities with the highest level of exposure to redlining and individuals from other communities,” said first author Amgad Mentias, M.D., M.S., an interventional cardiology fellow at Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio.

The researchers assessed the association between living in higher proportions of redlined zip codes and heart failure risk. They conducted separate analyses for Black and white adults and additional variables were considered, such as social determinants of health, which were determined at the zip-code level with Social Deprivation Index scores collected in the American Community Survey, including poverty rate, education level, employment, access to transportation, household characteristics (single-parent households), percentage of households that rent rather than own housing, and percentage of households that are overcrowded. Heart failure was identified as hospitalization with a primary diagnosis of heart failure. Although most adults qualify for Medicare at 65 years old, the cohort also included adults younger than 65 who qualified for Medicaid due to disability.

### The Analysis Found:

Black adults living in zip codes with the highest proportion of redlining had an 8% higher risk of developing heart failure compared to Black adults living in communities with low levels of redlining.

In contrast, white adults living in zip codes with the highest proportion of redlining did not have an increased risk of heart failure.

About half of the excess risk of heart failure among Black adults living in redlined communities was explained by higher levels of socioeconomic distress (determined by Social Deprivation Index scores) in those redlined communities.

The risk of heart failure was highest in Black adults living in redlined communities that had high scores on the Social Deprivation Index.

“These findings show us the harm that discriminatory and racist housing policies have had on generations of Black adults and suggest the long-term impact of such policies on cardiovascular health disparities,” said senior author Ambarish Pandey, M.D., M.S., a cardiologist and assistant professor in the department of internal medicine at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. “A reparative approach may be needed on the part of federal, state and local governments to intervene and drive investment in redlined communities.”

The findings also highlight the pivotal role housing plays as a social determinant of health, Pandey noted. “Aggressive enforcement of anti-discrimination laws in housing, and support for and pathways to homeownership for Black families are needed in order to begin to achieve equity in health,” he said.

The study’s limitations include that redlining is just one facet of the impact of discrimination in the U.S. Redlining does not, alone, capture the full contribution of systemic racism on health today, the authors noted.

“Decades of discriminatory housing policies have left a lasting imprint on the cardiovascular health of Black communities. This careful and systematic analysis underscores the higher heart failure risk faced by Black adults residing in historically redlined areas, and provides evidence that social determinants of health, such as poverty, education, and access to healthy food, drive this risk,” said the American Heart Association’s Chief Clinical Science Officer Mitchell Elkind, M.D., M.S., FAHA, FAAN. “The study serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing impact of structural racism and emphasizes the urgent need

for restorative actions and targeted investments to promote health equity.”

Co-authors are Mahasin S. Mujahid, Ph.D., FAHA; Andrew Sumarsono, M.D.; Robert K. Nelson, Ph.D.; Justin M. Madron, Ph.D.; Tiffany M. Powell-Wiley, M.D., M.P.H., FAHA; Utibe R. Essien, M.D., M.P.H.; Neil Keshvani, M.D.; Saket Girotra, M.D., S.M.; Alanna A. Morris, M.D., M.Sc., FAHA; Mario Sims, Ph.D., FAHA; Quinn Capers IV, M.D.; Clyde Yancy, M.D., M.Sc., FAHA; Milind Desai, M.D., M.B.A., FAHA; and Venu Menon, M.D., FAHA. Authors’ disclosures are listed in the manuscript.

The study was funded by the Haslam Family, Bailey Family and Khouri Family to the Cleveland Clinic, as well as the National Institute on Aging and the National Institute on Minority Health and Disparities, both of which are divisions of the National Institutes of Health.

### Additional Research Publishing in the Special Issue Includes:

1. Historical Neighborhood Redlining and Cardiovascular Risk in Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease; Al-Kindi et al.
2. Associations between Maternal Sociodemographics and Hospital Mortality in Newborns with Prenatally Diagnosed Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome; Lopez et al.
3. Racial Disparities in Exposure to Ambient Air Pollution During Pregnancy and Prevalence of Congenital Heart Defects; Arogbokun Knutson et al.
4. Arrhythmia and Survival Outcomes among Black and White Patients with a Primary Prevention Defibrillator; Goldenberg et al.
5. Racial differences in quality of life in patients with heart failure treated with sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 inhibitors: A patient-level meta-analysis of the CHIEF-HF, DEFINE-HF, and PRESERVED-HF trials; Lanfear et al.
6. Race-based differences in ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) process metrics and mortality from 2015-2021: an analysis of 178,062 patients from the American Heart Association Get With The Guidelines-Coronary Artery Disease (GWTG-CAD) Registry; Goyal et al.
7. Socioeconomic disparities and mediators for recurrent atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease events after a first myocardial infarction; Ohm et al.