

<div>LEGACY</div> <div>5,422</div> <div>Weeks, since the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and a denial of justice.</div>	<div>NATION</div> <div>Women Lead the Way: Black Women Shape Academia</div> <div>Word In Black, A14</div>	<div>NATION</div> <div>iUrban Teen Empowers Youth with AI-Driven Career Opportunities</div> <div>Word In Black, A14</div>	<div>SOCIAL</div> <div><div><div></div>THE OK EAGLE.COM</div><div><div></div>#THE OK EAGLE</div><div><div></div>#OKEAGLEPAPER</div></div>
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Key Legislation Impacting Tulsans Has Advanced At The State Capitol

By Joe Tomlinson
The Oklahoma Eagle
A2

LOCAL & STATE

InnovateHER Women's Summit Honors Local Entrepreneurs

The Oklahoma Eagle, **A6**

+

Senate Bill 670

designed to improve health care for Oklahomans, advanced out of the Senate Health and Human Services committee with an 8-2 vote.

+

House Bill 1224

narrowly advanced out of the Health and Human Services Oversight Committee with a 7-6 vote. The bill would allow health care providers to refuse to offer specific procedures or medical care that “violates the health care institution’s or health care payor’s conscience.”

+

Senate Bill 4

advanced out of the Senate Agriculture and Wildlife committee with a 10-1 vote

<div>LOCAL & STATE</div> <div>Court Blocks Superintendent Walters' Bible Purchase, For Now</div> <div>Oklahoma Watch, A8</div>	<div>LOCAL & STATE</div> <div>Competent to Die: State's Arbitrary IQ Rule Defies Scientific Recommendation</div> <div>Oklahoma Watch, A7</div>	<div>LOCAL & STATE</div> <div>Disabled and Evicted, Oklahoma Tenant Buys Time with Appeal</div> <div>Oklahoma Watch, A9</div>	<div>LOCAL & STATE</div> <div>Forced Housing, Hidden Kickbacks: How Stay-to-Play Squeezes Sports Parents</div> <div>Oklahoma Watch, A6</div>	<div>COMMUNITY</div> <div>Talk of Greenwood: Celebrating The Lives of Tulsans Every Week</div> <div>Dr. Jerry Goodwin, A19</div>
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InnovateHER Women's Summit Honors Local Entrepreneurs

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Key Legislation Impacting Tulsans Has Advanced At The State Capitol

Legislation
Joe Tomlinson
The Oklahoma Eagle

March 6 marked the Oklahoma Legislature's deadline to advance policy bills from their assigned committees.

The Oklahoma Eagle is highlighting five bills for our readers that have advanced out of committee and could affect underserved communities in Tulsa. One of the proposed bills could impact health care while another bill would give more time to those who face potential convictions. The bills include health care delivery, banned food substances, eviction notification, among other topics.

While lawmakers may use other legislative procedures to move bills that were not initially passed out of committee, measures that passed could reflect priorities of legislative leadership over the next couple of months.

Cont. A3, Legislation





Julia Kirt, Oklahoma State Senator, District 30.



Kristen Thompson, Oklahoma State Senator, District 22.

Senate Bill 670, authored by Democratic Leader St. Sen. Julia Kirt (D-Oklahoma City), designed to improve health care for Oklahomans, advanced out of the Senate Health and Human Services committee with an 8-2 vote.

FROM A2
Legislation

The bill would require medical doctors, osteopathic physicians, physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses to receive one hour of continuing education in integrated behavioral health care. The bill would also require those providers to include an evidence-based mental health screening to each patient during or before a routine primary care visit.

“We know we can improve overall health and decrease the cost of care by catching things early, but the problem is that for many Oklahomans, mental health care is too expensive. Even if they have resources to cover the cost, there’s a shortage of caregivers,” Kirt said.

“Family doctors are well-positioned to help more people identify their mental health needs. My legislation will help better utilize primary care providers to address this critical need.”

The bill is based on research by the Healthy Minds Policy Initiative, a Tulsa-based nonprofit whose mission is to “help policymakers and community leaders advance data-driven strategies to overcome our state’s substance use challenges and meet the mental health needs of all Oklahomans.”

While Oklahoma has a shortage of behavioral health providers at-large, Senate Bill 670 could allow the state to better leverage its primary care providers to fill the gap.

“The Legislature has begun to tackle the shortages in providers, but in the meantime, we still need to find ways to address this unmet need,” Kirt said. “That’s what SB 670 is about.”

“
We know we can improve overall health and decrease the cost of care by catching things early, but the problem is that for many Oklahomans, mental health care is too expensive.”

Julia Kirt, Oklahoma State Senator, District 30.

Senate Bill 4, authored by St. Sen. Kristen Thompson (R-Edmond), advanced out of the Senate Agriculture and Wildlife committee with a 10-1 vote.

The bill prohibits the manufacturing, sale, and distribution of 21 substances commonly found in processed foods that have been linked to health risks, including hyperactivity in children, hormonal disruption, and potential carcinogenic effects.

The banned substances in Senate Bill 4 include the following:

- Aspartame
- Azodicarbonamide (ADA)
- Blue dye 1
- Blue dye 2
- Brominated vegetable oil (BVO)
- Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA)
- Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT)
- Ethylene dichloride
- Green dye 3
- Methylene chloride
- Potassium bromate
- Propyl gallate
- Propylparaben
- Red dye 3
- Red dye 40
- Sodium benzoate
- Sodium nitrate
- Titanium dioxide
- Trichloroethylene
- Yellow dye 5
- Yellow dye 6

The bill would require entities to reformulate food recipes to exclude the outlawed substances by January 2027. The bill also calls for drug manufacturers to remove those substances from their products by January 2028.

During the Senate Agriculture and Wildlife committee Monday, Thompson said several states and countries have already enacted similar bans.

“We’re giving our businesses almost two years to reformulate if they have to. Our larger manufacturers already have reformulations based off of Canada and Europe. There’s a lot of places that these chemicals are already disallowed in food. So, I think here in Oklahoma, we’re just saying ‘no more,’” Thompson said. “You can use the formulas that you have in the other countries where the health outcomes are much better.”

If Senate Bill 4 is passed by both chambers and signed into law by Gov. Kevin Stitt, it would also require products made, sold, or distributed in Oklahoma to display a warning label if they contain any of the 21 banned additives.

House Bill 1224, authored by St. Rep. Kevin West (R-Moore), narrowly advanced out of the Health and Human Services Oversight Committee with a 7-6 vote. The bill would allow health care providers to refuse to offer specific procedures or medical care that “violates the health care institution’s or health care payor’s conscience.”

“We passed this identical language off of the House floor last year. It is what I refer to as the Medical Right of Conscience Bill... and it allows medical professionals to refuse to participate in services that they have a conscientious objection to,” West said.

During the committee meeting, West said this bill would exclude emergency care. However, the bill language does not outline how an emergency situation should be handled.

St. Rep. Cynthia Roe (R-Lindsay) asked whether this bill could deny patients “life-saving care.” West said it would not.

“We have an explicit carve out for emergency situations. Those are regulated by the federal government, so emergency situations would not fall into this,” West said.

St. Rep. Cyndi Munson (D-Oklahoma City) asked what would happen to a patient if an entire facility of providers decides that a specific procedure violates their conscience. West said if a facility does not wish to perform a procedure, that will be known ahead of time and the patient would be referred to another facility that offers the procedure.

“I’m not saying this to point to you personally, but that answer is filled with privilege, as if we have all of these health care facilities just down the street from us, and we know that’s not true,” Munson said.

“We just had a conversation last week about the lack of maternal or the amount of maternal health care deserts in this state, so we know that most of what we’re talking about here is abortion, gender-affirming care — those types of procedures or services — so where will Oklahomans go?”

West said he believes there are “plenty” of medical professionals who are willing to perform those procedures.

“You’re making the assumption that every medical provider in the state of Oklahoma is going to refuse one or two or more of these services and I say that’s not going to be the case,” West said.

Republican State Representatives T.J. Marti (R-Broken Arrow), Daniel Pae (R-Lawton), and Preston Stinson (R-Edmond) joined Democratic Representatives Ellyn Hefner (D-Oklahoma City), Trish Ranson (D-Stillwater), and Munson in voting against the bill.



The Supreme Court of Oklahoma is a court of appeal for non-criminal cases, one of the two highest judicial bodies in the U.S. state of Oklahoma, and leads the judiciary of Oklahoma, the judicial branch of the government of Oklahoma

Hannah Diggs Atkins: Librarian, Legislator, Ambassador

By STEFANIE LEE DECKER, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



A librarian, a legislator, and an ambassador, Hannah Diggs Atkins was born November 1, 1923, the daughter of James and Mabel Diggs in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Hannah married Charles Nathaniel Atkins and had three children, Edmund Earl, Charles Nathaniel, and Valerie Ann. In 1943 Atkins received a Bachelor of Science degree from Saint Augustine’s College and later obtained a bachelor of library science from the University of Chicago in 1949. She held a number of positions as a law and reference librarian before moving to Oklahoma in 1952. She worked as the branch librarian for the Oklahoma City Public Libraries (1953–56) and at the Oklahoma State Library, first in the position of reference librarian, then as the chief of the General Reference Division and acting law librarian (1962–68). She also taught both law and library science courses at the University of Oklahoma.

In 1968 Hannah Atkins was elected to the

Oklahoma House of Representatives, and she served as the first African American woman to be a legislator until 1980. During her term as representative she fought for child welfare, health care, tax and mental health reforms, and civil rights. In 1980 she was appointed by Pres. Jimmy Carter as a United States delegate to the Thirty-fifth Assembly of United Nations, an honor she considered the highlight of her career.

After her term as state representative ended, Atkins was appointed assistant director of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (1983–87) and later to the dual post of secretary of the state and cabinet secretary of social services (1987–91). She held positions and memberships in the American Civil Liberties Union, NAACP, National Association of Black Women Legislators, Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Oklahoma Chapter of the National Women’s Political Caucus (co-founder), and Oklahoma Black Political Caucus (founder).

She also served in different capacities in the Democratic National Committee.

Throughout her career Hannah Atkins acquired numerous awards and honors, including Theta Sigma Pi Woman of the Year (1968), National Public Citizen of the Year (1975), Hannah Atkins Day, University of Oklahoma (1978), and Oklahoma ACLU Angie Debo Award (1980). She was inducted into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame in 1982. She was also honored with an endowed professorship in the political science department at Oklahoma State University. In 1998 she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Oklahoma and in 2000 an honorary doctorate from Oklahoma State University. Into the twenty-first century Atkins continued to serve her community as a member of the Oklahoma Task Force for the Bombing Memorial. Hannah Atkins died on June 17, 2010.

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.

Hannah Atkins, 1983, (2012.201.B0044.0887, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

Featured Last Week



We Live In Troubled Times. Here’s How 10 Tulsans Are Coping



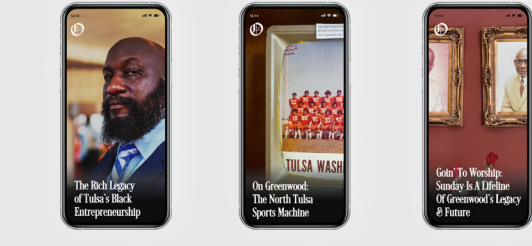
Greenwood Women’s Summit Spotlights AI



Federal memo finds United Keetoowah Band ‘successor in interest’ to Cherokee Reservation

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FROM A3

Legislation

Senate Bill 128, *authored by St. Sen. Julia Kirt (D-Oklahoma City), was unanimously advanced by the Senate Judiciary Committee.*

The bill would give people more notice of eviction hearings by extending the summons timeline from five to ten days. The measure also requires summons to be issued at least seven days before the hearing — an increase from three days.

In a press release Wednesday, Kirt said that Oklahoma ranks sixth in the nation for evictions and has one of the shortest timelines.

“When facing eviction, a few more days can help families make arrangements to catch up on their rent or find new housing. By updating our laws, we can line up

the eviction schedule with the best practices fair landlords already follow,” Kirt said. “It’s important to remember that the majority of people who face eviction in our state have children in the home.”

“Having the stability of a home is essential for Oklahomans who want to build better lives for themselves and their families. I am grateful to the business, local government, and state leaders who have joined together to agree we need to improve our eviction laws to make them better for our whole community.”

“
Having the stability of a home is essential for Oklahomans who want to build better lives for themselves and their families.

Julia Kirt, Oklahoma State Senator, District 30.

Senate Bill 1027, *authored by Sen. David Bullard (R-Durant), was advanced by the Senate Judiciary committee with a 7-2 vote. The bill puts numerous safeguards on the initiative petition process by requiring signature gatherers to disclose who is paying them and that only Oklahoma residents or entities can pay people to collect signatures. The bill also seeks to simplify the language of petition gists — the description of a ballot measure — so the general public can more easily understand.*

Additionally, the bill language states that no more than 10 percent of the total number of signatures collected for an initiative petition can come from any one county with more than 400,000 residents. Meanwhile, no more than four percent of signatures can come from any one county with a population of less than 400,000.

Bullard said that similar safeguards for initiative petitions are being enacted across the country.

“What happens right now in Oklahoma is they’re only required to go to 2.5 percent of the counties in this state, and therefore they could ignore 97.5 percent,” Bullard said. “It means that we can completely ignore everybody else in our state and just sit in two counties unless we decide to do something about it.”

Sen. Michael Brooks (D-Oklahoma City) asked Bullard during Tuesday’s committee meeting whether this bill could abridge free speech rights of voters in highly populated counties. Bullard said it would not.

“We don’t even require within our elections that 100 percent

of Oklahoma County or Tulsa County vote. People are allowed to show up and vote as they please,” Bullard said.

“What we are trying to do is make sure that if you’re going to put an initiative petition ballot on our initiative process, that more Oklahomans geographically have an opportunity to look at and decide whether they want to or not want to attest their name for that signature on that gist.”

In a press release Wednesday, Bullard said the purpose of disclosing who is paying signature gatherers is to protect Oklahoma from out-of-state interest groups.

“We need clear transparency and common-sense guardrails on how initiative petition campaigns collect signatures, who’s behind them and who’s funding them,” Bullard said.

Democratic Sens. Mary Boren (D-Norman) and Brooks voted against the measure.

Joe Tomlinson, a contributor to The Oklahoma Eagle, was a fellow with Gaylord News in Washington, D.C. and reported on the Oklahoma congressional delegation. Tomlinson earned a bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Oklahoma in 2021.



Cyndi Munson, Oklahoma State Representative, District 85. PHOTO OKHOUSE.GOV



Kevin West, Oklahoma State Representative, District 54. PHOTO OKHOUSE.GOV



Michael Brooks, Oklahoma State Representative, District 44. PHOTO OKHOUSE.GOV



David Bullard, Oklahoma State Senator, District 6. PHOTO OKSENATE.GOV

Forced Housing, HIDDEN KICKBACKS: How Stay-to-Play Squeezes Sports Parents

Stay-to-Play
Jennifer Palmer
Oklahoma Watch

The deal is taking place all over the country, in volleyball and softball and hockey and soccer: Travel to our tournament and, unless you stay in one of our partner hotels, your kid doesn't play.

They know parents are already shelling out big bucks for their child's sport. But if you want to find a cheaper hotel, drive your RV, stay with family or use hotel points, forget it. It's against the rules.

That's because hidden in the hotel bill are kickbacks to the tournament. The more rooms booked, the more money they make. It's called stay-to-play.

Some tournaments push the policies hard. The tournament organizers are often neighborhood clubs, but they can also be national companies and, in at least one case, a top-tier professional sports franchise. While the policies have become pervasive, antitrust attorneys question whether they violate federal law.

One hockey tournament threatened a



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

\$500 fee if out-of-town teams didn't book rooms through their system. Another hockey tournament warned participants away from seeking out hotel deals on their own. "No other booking sites, discounts, points awards, special rates or programs, regardless of how obtained, will be accepted," the rules said.

A soccer tournament directed teams to only stay in approved hotels booked through a specific travel agency. "Failure to do so may result in your team not getting scheduled," the tournament website read.

"You're really locked into whatever they tell you, and if you want to play, you have to stay where they let you stay," said Diane Portillo of Goldsby.

Portillo has spent hundreds of nights in hotels over the past decade, traveling to softball tournaments with her daughter, who now plays in college, and hockey tournaments with her son, a high school senior.

Portillo's a teacher and single mom who worked three side jobs — as a bus driver, umpire and concessions salesperson — to help pay for her children's sports. Each travel tournament costs families hundreds of dollars, sometimes thousands.

Tournament organizers claim their hotels have the best rates, but parents said they always find better deals on their own.

"I have not seen a single tournament ever where the hotel prices were comparable, or fair, or lower than the surrounding hotels," Portillo said.

Last Thanksgiving, her son's hockey team traveled to Dallas and checked into a Hilton hotel for \$159 a night. The tournament host was the Dallas Stars, a National Hockey League franchise worth an estimated \$2 billion, according to Forbes.

The tournament required every player's family to book at least three nights from a list of hotels, all Hiltons. Players who didn't comply, by staying with family or at a different hotel, could be disqualified from competing. Worse, the entire team could be removed from the tournament and lose their \$2,000



registration fee.

"No one wants to be the parent that causes a team to get kicked out," Portillo said.

A Common Policy

Not every youth sports tournament requires a hotel stay. But according to the Sports Events & Tourism Association, a nonprofit that tracks the business of traveling to watch or play sports, nearly 40% of tournament destinations did in 2023, down from 60% in 2021.

Sports travel is a huge market for hotels. According to Sports ETA, 63% of destinations in 2023 said sports are their largest generator of room nights. U.S. sports travelers booked 73.5 million room nights in 2023 and spent \$10.9 billion on lodging.

Tournament organizers argue that with stay-to-play policies, they can reserve room blocks early and lock in better nightly rates. They also can more easily gather data on the number of rooms booked to prove the event's economic impact. And it relieves teams of

Cont. A11, Stay-to-Play

InnovateHER Women's Summit Honors Local Entrepreneurs

InnovateHER
Kimberly Marsh
The Oklahoma Eagle

Women in Business: InnovateHER Honorees

The Greenwood Women's Business Center for the third year honored the achievements of five Tulsa women at the InnovateHER Women's Summit, held online. Event emcee Betsy Lewallan, a SmartHome real estate agent, introduced the awards to leaders who have made significant contributions to the community.

"The goal is to celebrate their impact and inspire others to follow in their footsteps. The selection process involves recognizing those who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and a commitment to community service," Lewallan.

Entrepreneur of the Year

Sovana Benis, owner of the Notes of Marrakesh Restaurant, located at 315 S. Trenton Ave. in Tulsa. Benis said Marrakesh was chosen as one of the Tulsa World's top 12 restaurants of 2024, after just six months in business.

Innovator of the Year

Cara Cowan Watts, Ph.D., CEO and principal owner of Pier Drilling. She is a Cherokee Nation citizen, owner of Cherokee Start DBA Spoken Word and has degrees and experience in a wide range of engineering disciplines.

Community Champion Award

Rita Gallardo, founder and CEO of La Cosecha/The Harvest. La Cosecha is an independent, tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization that serves all of Tulsa, with a goal of relieving hunger by providing food as well as opportunities to empower the community to increase self-sufficiency.

Maxine Horner Lifetime Achievement Award

Kristi Williams honored for her work in Black



(TOP-BOTTOM, L-R)

Cara Cowan Watts, Ph.D., CEO and principal owner of Pier Drilling;

Rita Gallardo, founder and CEO of La Cosecha/The Harvest;

Kristi Williams, Tulsa historian, founder, Black History Saturdays;

Cheryl Lawson, social media professional.

PHOTOS PROVIDED

history education and as a longtime advocate for the Greenwood District. The award also honors Horner's legacy, a trailblazer who was one of the first African American women to serve in the Oklahoma State Senate.

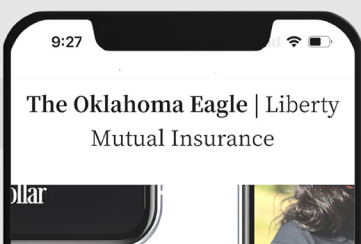
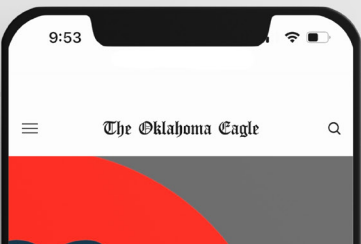
Special Recognition

Cheryl Lawson, social media professional, was honored for her pioneering work in social media and AI.

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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





The execution chamber at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester where Wendell Grissom is set to die March 20. PHOTO DAVID MCDANIEL/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Competent to Die: State’s Arbitrary IQ Rule Defies Scientific Recommendation

Executions
J.C. Hallman
Oklahoma Watch

The crime was undeniably horrific. Wendell Grissom was sentenced to death for a 2005 murder characterized by the wanton targeting of a remote Blaine County home and a perhaps misogynistic attack on women and children. The shooting that ended the life of Amber Matthews was more like an execution — carried out while Amber held one of the two daughters of her friend, Dreu Kopf, who was shot but survived the attack.

Grissom’s crime was also inexplicable. Prosecutors on the case said that while all murders are senseless, the murder of Amber Matthews was truly senseless. The crime was so beyond the pale that Grissom’s first lawyer, John Coyle, made no attempt to explain it at trial, even though he was aware that Grissom had suffered multiple brain traumas, at birth and in a series of motorcycle accidents in his youth.

Years later, private investigator Brenda McCray, hired for Grissom’s appeal, questioned eliminating Grissom’s brain damage from the case.

“The element of brain damage is precisely the kind of information that can make the crime explainable,” she said.

Subsequently, Coyle agreed.

“There are some critical areas that we failed to investigate without a strategic or tactical reason for doing so,” he said.

Grissom’s brain damage was not introduced in his case, outside of appeals court proceedings, until a February 5 clemency hearing, when the five-member Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board saw detailed reports on significant abnormalities in Grissom’s brain, as revealed by CT and MRI scans.

The board voted 4-1 to deny clemency, anyway.

Now, only a possible pardon from Gov. Kevin Stitt stands in the way of Grissom’s March 20 execution.

Oklahoma’s Definition of Mental Disability Might Not Be Constitutional

The execution of the intellectually disabled has been forbidden in the United States since 2002, when a Supreme Court case, *Atkins v. Virginia*, overturned a 13-year-old precedent. Overnight, the law changed nationwide.

What followed, said Jeffrey B. Welty, Professor of Public Law and Government at

the University of North Carolina, who has particular expertise in capital punishment, was a tsunami of litigation — attorneys attempting to use the *Atkins* decision to reduce sentences for death row clients.

“*Atkins* applies to people being sentenced today, people being sentenced tomorrow, and people sentenced in the past,” Welty said.

The *Atkins* ruling left it to states to determine how intellectual disability should be defined, paving the way for additional precedent.

In 2014, the Supreme Court shot down an effort in Florida to set intellectual disability at an IQ of 70 or below, a definition that derived from the description of “intellectual developmental disorder” in the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, known as the *DSM-5*, published in 2013.

The problem with a 70 IQ standard, the Court ruled, was that it did not account for the margin of error in testing.

In 2017, Texas attempted to put a man to death using criteria that drew on a fictional character, Lennie, from John Steinbeck’s 1937 novel, “*Of Mice and Men*.” Texas asked if an individual could form plans or lie, and whether others had ever believed them to be “mentally retarded.”

That was struck down twice because it relied on subjective opinion.

Despite those failures, state laws have focused on IQ as a factor. Oklahoma law draws a hard line at 76 IQ.

“In no event shall a defendant who has received an intelligence quotient of seventy-six (76) or above... be considered intellectually disabled,” the law reads.

Grissom’s IQ

Media accounts have tended to focus on Grissom’s crime and his victim. Evidence of his brain damage has received little attention.

Grissom’s mother said he was born after a tedious 36-hour labor that restricted oxygen to the brain. Delivery was completed with the use of obstetric forceps, a procedure known to sometimes result in brain damage.

Grissom appeared normal but was slow to learn to speak. When he did, it was in a peculiar, private language.

In second grade, Grissom was judged

unruly in school and locked in a refrigerator box in a corner of his classroom.

At age 8, he was thrown from a motorcycle and knocked unconscious, suffering head wounds that required 18 stitches.

At 11, Grissom’s IQ was measured as average, but he was two grades behind in school because of difficulty in auditory processing, stress, and attentional deficits.

Of two additional motorcycle accidents at 15 and 16, the first caused severe cuts to his scalp, and the second threw him 90 feet in the air, laying open his face and causing his head to swell to twice its normal size.

Grissom was never the same after the accidents and was unable to complete high school, his mother said.

Other traumas — possible sexual abuse by a brother-in-law, alcohol and meth addiction, and a mutually abusive marriage — contributed to a life of burglaries and prison stints. Grissom once threatened his wife with a gun, but otherwise, the absence of violence in his criminal record was a factor that made the particularly heinous murder of Amber Matthews difficult to explain.

Brain scans later revealed the extent of the damage. His occipital lobe was 20% larger than it should be. His cerebellum was 60% smaller than a normal brain. His lateral ventricle was 10 times too big.

A parade of experts agreed. Grissom was cognitively impaired. He suffered from brain damage, especially in the parts of the brain responsible for executive control functions. Worse, it was noted that no scan could measure all of the damage that was likely suffered by a brain subjected to multiple insults.

In 2009, he was given a new intelligence test. His IQ was 85.

Problems With Oklahoma’s Law

The *DSM-5* specifies that intellectual disability may result from severe head injury before age 18.

In addition, psychiatry’s most authoritative book offers a stern warning against using a fixed IQ number instead of expert judgment in determining intellectual disability.

More specifically, the *DSM-5* — the same



IQ Scores, are an ‘insufficient’ marker, according to indusry experts

FROM A7
Executions

text that provided the 70 IQ figure that inspired state law — takes pains to insist that individuals with IQs substantially above 65-75 may nevertheless suffer from intellectual disability.

Such persons can be “clinically comparable to that of individuals with a lower IQ score,” the manual reads. “Thus, clinical judgment is important in interpreting the results of IQ tests, and using them as the sole criteria of an intellectual developmental disorder is insufficient.”

That is exactly what Oklahoma law does. An IQ of 76, achieved on any test at any time, makes one eligible for the death penalty.

That struck Professor Welty as peculiar.

“I’m not aware of a court case that specifically addressed language like that,” Welty said. “If I were working as a defense attorney in Oklahoma, I would want to question the constitutionality of that. I think it would be reasonable to ask constitutional questions about it, particularly in light of the movement of the relevant professional community, away from a focus on strict numerical measurements or cutoffs.”

Vicious Crime, Model Prisoner

Grissom’s life on death row complicates the picture of him as either intellectually disabled or a stone-cold killer.

In 20 years of incarceration, Grissom has never been written up for an infraction. According to prison officials, a completely clean disciplinary record is an exceptional distinction that would qualify him for minimum security incarceration if it weren’t for his death sentence.

A high school dropout not known for literary achievement before prison, Grissom has penned cogent poems and essays while incarcerated.

At his clemency hearing, parole board members heard testimony from Grissom’s spiritual advisors, who described him as a humble, honest, and prayerful man. Sister

“
Oklahoma has not done enough for its mentally ill, and many fall through the cracks.

Tom Hird, public defender, Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA
The Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board
is the parole board of the state of Oklahoma. The board was created by an amendment to the Oklahoma Constitution in 1944. The Board has the authority to empower the Governor of Oklahoma to grant pardons, paroles, and commutations to people convicted of offenses against the state of Oklahoma.

Mary Claire, a Benedictine nun and former director of Tulsa’s Monte Cassino Catholic School, cited the lives that had been beneficially touched when she had shared Grissom’s writings with groups outside of prison.

“He is a good man,” Sister Mary Claire said. “He is a great man.”

Individuals with intellectual disability are known to benefit from highly structured environments. Death row may mask the extent of Grissom’s disability.

Federal public defender Tom Hird told the parole board that he had known Grissom since 2011.

“These years have given me the opportunity to get to know Wendell well, not just as a lawyer, but also as a friend,” he said. “It’s also given Wendell more opportunity to do good for many people, including me.”

Grissom instructed his attorneys not to speak to the press, so Hird refused to comment directly for this story. However, reflecting on a recent speech he gave to the parole board, Hird critiqued the state’s failures when it comes to addressing mental health issues more broadly.

“Oklahoma has not done enough for its mentally ill, and many fall through the cracks,” he said. “From what I hear, this is currently trending in the wrong direction, which will have costly consequences.”

The Evidence Before the Board

Previous attempts to cite brain damage in Grissom’s case, introduced only after the jury recommended capital punishment, tended to focus on whether an impairment or condition was connected to, or explained, Grissom’s crime.

Welty said explanations shouldn’t matter one way or the other.

“The Supreme Court held in the Atkins case that people with what’s now called intellectual disability are categorically exempt from the death penalty,” Welty said. “There doesn’t have to be a connection to the crime. It’s a categorical rule that if a person meets the diagnostic criteria, they are not eligible for the death penalty.”

At the clemency hearing, lawyers for the attorney general’s office did not contest Grissom’s brain damage, apart from briefly arguing that a defense expert failed to conduct tests to determine whether Grissom was faking disability.

The defense responded that such tests were unnecessary; experts could clearly see Grissom’s damage on the brain scans.

In the Q-and-A session that followed testimony, board member Kevin Buchanan was still looking for an explanation. He asked where in the defense presentation it indicated that people with head injuries were likely to kill. He did not dispute the evidence of brain damage, but seemed intimidated by the amount of clinical evidence in the defense materials.

“There’s a lot of medical in there,” he said, before voting to deny clemency.

Welty agreed with a bleak proposition: Grissom’s economic status likely played a role in the failure of his appeals.

“The vast majority of people who face capital prosecutions are indigent and eligible for court-appointed counsel,” he said.

Not everyone can afford a robust legal defense.

Regardless of whether Grissom is executed on March 20, that may be the broader point to understand.

Alabama attorney Bryan Stevenson, author of the bestseller “Just Mercy,” which chronicles the death row work of the organization he founded, the Equal Justice Initiative, has lashed out at widespread reluctance to protect the intellectually disabled or to adequately define the condition.

“The Supreme Court has banned the execution of people with intellectual disability, but states like Alabama refused to assess in any honest way whether the condemned are disabled,” Stevenson wrote. “We’re supposed to sentence people fairly after fully considering their life circumstances, but instead we exploit the inability of the poor to get the assistance they need — all so we can kill them with less resistance.”

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Court Blocks Superintendent Walters’ Bible Purchase, For Now

Bibles
Jennifer Palmer
Oklahoma Watch

The Oklahoma Supreme Court temporarily blocked the state from purchasing Bibles for Oklahoma classrooms.

A court order issued Monday bars Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters, the Department of Education, the Board of Education and the Office of Management and Enterprise Services from further implementing or enforcing Walters’ Bible mandate until a lawsuit over the Bibles is resolved.

The order applies to the 55,000 King James Bibles sought by the state last year as well as an effort initiated last month to buy biblical character instruction manuals.

A group of parents, students, teachers and faith leaders sued Oct. 17, challenging the Bible mandate under the state constitution, which prohibits public money from being spent for religious purposes.

The Office of Management and Enterprise Services, the state’s central purchasing agency, asked the court for an order allowing it to stop work on the request for proposals until the legal issues are resolved.

The state abruptly halted the purchase of 55,000 Bibles in November, but Walters has

vowed to restart it. Bidding on the biblical character materials was set to go through March 20.

In July, Walters told school leaders they must teach the Bible for its historical context, literary significance, and artistic and musical influence and place a Bible in every classroom.

“The Bible has been a cornerstone of our nation’s history and education for generations,” Walters said Tuesday. “We will continue fighting to ensure students have access to this foundational text in the classroom.”

Oklahoma law already allows Bibles in the classroom and enables teachers to use them in instruction, as long as they maintain religious neutrality and accommodate other religious perspectives.

After an Oklahoma Senate subcommittee on March 5 rebuffed Walters’ budget request for \$3 million to buy Bibles, Walters announced an initiative to collect donations of \$59.99 faux leather bound “God Bless the USA” Bibles through a partnership with singer Lee Greenwood. Those Bibles are endorsed by President Donald Trump, who receives money from sales for his endorsement.



Books including the Holy Bible are stacked on the table in front of Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters at the Oklahoma Board of Education meeting on June 27, 2024. PHOTO JAKE RAMSEY/OKLAHOMA WATCH

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Elena Rodriguez, a disabled Oklahoma City woman, maneuvers her walker over the wooden stairs that lead to her apartment. PHOTO HEATHER WARLICK/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Disabled and Evicted, Oklahoma Tenant Buys Time with Appeal

Evicted
Heather Warlick
Oklahoma Watch

Elena Rodriguez’ new landlord evicted her from the apartment she’d rented for a decade, presumably so he could renovate the unit’s dated interior.

Rodriguez wasn’t late on rent; she’d paid a month in advance. But she had no lease; without a contractual agreement, no-cause evictions and so-called renovictions are not prohibited in Oklahoma. Renoviction is a term used to describe a landlord evicting a tenant in order to renovate the rental and increase the rent.

However, Rodriguez, who is disabled, said she thinks the eviction was discriminatory. She said her landlord, J. Patrick Finley, informally evicted her just days after he grilled her about her finances and disability status but ignored her request for permission to install a wheelchair-accessible ramp.

At the Feb.10 hearing, Oklahoma County District Judge Trent Pipes ruled against Rodriguez, ordering immediate possession to her landlord.

Rodriguez decided to buy herself more time to move by appealing her eviction, a risky plan that involved paying a \$1,200 bond that will be held by the court, pending the appeal’s outcome.

In Oklahoma, one of the most landlord-friendly states in the country, eviction appeals are

rare. Usually, judge’s orders go unchallenged, and tenants are given as little as 72 hours to vacate unless they negotiate more time.

When tenants do appeal, affordable legal assistance can be hard to find.

A Tough Break

Rodriguez receives treatment for several serious medical conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis, which causes chronic fatigue and attacks her musculature, making the simplest of movements stiff and painful.

Last summer, Rodriguez was visiting with some neighbors in the apartment parking lot when she passed out.

“I went into like a seizure when I fell,” Rodriguez said. “My foot actually didn’t move, and it broke my ankle in three different places.”

Coincidentally, that morning, she’d attended a hearing for disability benefits. She initially became disabled after a workplace accident.

Rodriguez’ broken ankle required surgery and two weeks of hospital recovery. During her hospitalization, her neighbors sponsored a fundraiser to help keep her current on rent.

Rodriguez’ doctor arranged for an electric wheelchair, but

the wheelchair has been useless because Rodriguez can’t get it over the wooden steps that lead into her apartment.

A Deal on a Fourplex

The fourplex at 613 NW Sixth St. is in an up-and-coming neighborhood. The area bustles with Midtown energy and property values are skyrocketing.

The two-story Craftsman was built in 1910 and later sectioned off into four units. Finley closed on the building in December for \$487,500, or about \$164 per square foot.

Three of the units have been renovated with fresh paint, new floors and modern appliances, allowing Finley to continue charging market-rate rents of about \$1,200 for the one-bedroom units.

Rodriguez’ apartment was never updated.

She said she thinks Finley wants her out so he can remodel the unit and rent it for market rate as well.

Renoviction, the practice of evicting tenants in order to renovate their units, is a type of no-fault eviction that presents a loophole to Oklahoma’s landlord-tenant laws that some landlords use to evict legally.

“I would have gladly let him in to remodel,” Rodriguez said. “I would have even agreed to higher rent.”

A Bad Time to be Evicted

At 53, Rodriguez is too young to draw Social Security, but Medicaid covers a visiting nurse, meal service from Mom’s Meals and modifications to her home, such as the ramp for which she’d asked permission.

Rodriguez’ ongoing health problems combined with her new housing instability have left her feeling hopeless. She’s looked into assisted living options because Medicaid covers some, but going from being a relatively young, independent person to assisted living feels extreme to Rodriguez; talking about it brought her to tears.

Still, she needs to have back surgery soon and her money is tied up in her appeal bond, so she can’t afford to pay movers even if she had a place to move to.

“It’s overwhelming, because I’ve got to work on, you know, trying to figure out the attorneys, trying to figure out my rights, trying to figure out, you know, what am I going to do,” Rodriguez said.

It’s going to be hard, she said, to find an apartment that meets her needs for accessibility that also will approve her application with a fresh eviction on her record.

Previous evictions are a top reason landlords reject rental

Cont. A10, **Evicted**

The Oklahoma Eagle

General Agreement: Landlord-Tenant Act Update Needed



FROM A9

Evicted

applications, ranked just behind an applicant with a history of violent crimes.

Bills Would Update Landlord-Tenant Laws
In states with strong tenant protections, it can be difficult to evict a tenant for no cause or to renovate. California and Colorado recently enacted laws prohibiting no-cause evictions and other states have similar just-cause eviction laws, including Oregon and Washington.

Oklahoma law, however, allows most no-cause evictions when the tenant has a month-to-month rental agreement.

Some Oklahoma legislators want to update eviction laws by strengthening tenant protections, as evidenced by three bills banning landlords from retaliatory evictions, another type of no-cause eviction.

Rep. Daniel Pae, D-Lawton, filed HB 2015, which prohibits landlord retaliation and allows tenants to file lawsuits under certain circumstances. As one of only six states without anti-retaliation laws, Oklahoma tenants have little recourse against bad-actor landlords.

Pae also authored HB 2014 , which would allow funds from the Attorney General’s Legal Services Revolving Fund to be used for eviction prevention services such as Legal Aid Services Oklahoma or the HELP Clinic at the Oklahoma City University School of Law.

“I do generally believe that there’s broad agreement that we need to modify and update

“

People are struggling to pay bills and keep up, One mistake should not be on your record forever.

Julia Kirt, D-Oklahoma City

SENATE BILL 815

Oklahoma Senate Bill 815 (SB 815) aims to modernize eviction statutes by requiring the sealing of eviction records immediately upon dismissal or judgment in favor of the defendant, or two years after judgment in other cases.

our statutes when it comes to the Landlord-Tenant Act and housing issues in general,” Pae said.

SB 815, by Julia Kirt, D-Oklahoma City, requires court records to be sealed in eviction cases when the tenant wins or the case is settled before it goes before a judge. In Oklahoma, records of no-fault evictions, renovations and even cases that end in favor of the tenant remain open to the public.

“People are struggling to pay bills and keep up,” Kirt said. “One mistake should not be on your record forever.”

Kirt’s SB 128 allows more time for tenants to prepare for an eviction hearing after being served a summons. When tenants have time to arrange for childcare and time off work, they are more likely to attend their hearings and avoid losing by default.

Oklahoma has one of the shortest timelines in the country, Kirt said, and it skews heavily toward speed and encourages eviction.

A Rare Pro Se Appeal

If Rodriguez files her appeal by March 9, another hearing date will be set, prolonging the eviction process and allowing her more time to move.

Rodriguez said she likely would represent herself because neither of central Oklahoma’s nonprofits offering free legal assistance for evictions would take her appeal.

Appeals are rare in eviction court. Jenna Pilcher, director of the HELP Clinic at Oklahoma City University School of Law, represented Rodriguez in her initial eviction proceedings.

The HELP Clinic doesn’t take eviction appeals cases, Pilcher told Oklahoma Watch

in an email. She has never felt the need to recommend an appeal to a client, she said, because the three Oklahoma County district judges that handle evictions are competent and know the law well.

Since eviction cases usually don’t have court reporters or any other record other than documents, it would be difficult for an attorney who didn’t work the case from the beginning to step in for an appeal, said Ashlee Barker, a staff attorney at Legal Aid Services Oklahoma.

A record can be created via a new trial, assuming there are grounds for such, Barker said. However, a motion requesting a new trial must be filed within three days of the initial judgment.

Rodriguez saved all her text and email communications with Finley. When Oklahoma Watch called the phone number shown on Finley’s texts, the person who answered identified himself as Jim Finch.

Like many landlords, Finley does business under limited-liability company names. Finbaer, LLC evicted Rodriguez. Finley is also associated online with a realty company called Finch Realty, LLC, and is listed as the company’s registered agent with Oklahoma’s secretary of state.

Subsequent calls and emails to Finley and his attorney went unanswered.

“The whole situation is messed up,” Rodriguez said.

She said she’s only seeking more time to move. She’s fighting the eviction because she doesn’t want to regret giving in.

“I feel that I have a case as to why I shouldn’t be evicted,” Rodriguez said. “Just by doing the research, I have a gut feeling I can win.”

Heather Warlick is a reporter covering evictions, housing and homelessness. Contact her at (405) 226-1915 or hwarlick@oklahomawatch.org.

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PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

U.S. Sports Travelers Booked 73.5 MILLION Room Nights in 2023 and Spent \$10.9 billion on lodging

FROM A6

Stay-to-Play

doing the legwork themselves.

“You can get a deal with the hotel where it’s a discounted rate ... and the coach may get a free room or something,” said John Allgood, whose career includes more than 15 years with the Oklahoma City RedHawks baseball team, Oklahoma City Barons hockey team and the Oklahoma Energy soccer team. “That’s pretty common. I don’t think there’s anything bad with that.”

Allgood, now an instructor of sports management at the University of Delaware, said the bigger issue is the overall cost of competitive youth sports — known as pay to play — which is pricing out low-income families.

Parents spend thousands of dollars for each child to play on a travel team, with uniforms, equipment, club fees, and other costs. One 2019 study found baseball parents spent \$1,500 to \$6,000 on their child’s sport the previous year. Some sports cost much more.

And when teams register for a tournament and it’s stay-to-play, parents say they feel as though they have no choice.

Guthrie resident Michelle Hostetler, whose son plays baseball and hockey, said stay-to-play policies are so common that sports parents have come to expect it.

“Bigger tournaments have plenty of teams applying, so if one chooses not to comply, the host would likely just fill slots with teams that are willing to,” Hostetler said.

Mad Enough to Sue

Some families have sued, alleging such deals run afoul of federal antitrust laws. Tying arrangements, in which a seller agrees to sell an item only on the condition the buyer purchases a different item, can be illegal if they restrain trade in the market for the second item.

If Apple, for instance, required someone buying an iPhone to also buy a case, that would be a tying arrangement, said Kent Meyers, an attorney at Crowe & Dunlevy and an adjunct law professor at the University of Oklahoma specializing in antitrust law. In the case of a stay-to-play policy, the tournament would be the iPhone and the hotel room would be the case.

“The person imposing the tie is in control of an extremely desirable item ... and they choose to exercise their power in this extremely desirable product to force you to buy something you wouldn’t necessarily buy otherwise,” he said.

Cheerleading juggernaut Varsity Brands recently settled an antitrust lawsuit filed in Tennessee by families who alleged the company created a monopoly to overcharge in several ways, including forced lodging. As part of the settlement, Varsity agreed to limit stay-to-play requirements but did not eliminate the practice entirely.

Varsity Brands executives knew the policy was unpopular with cheerleaders, their families and gym owners, so in 2018 they renamed it Stay Smart. The company continued to force athletes to stay at preselected hotels and, according to an internal document referenced in the lawsuit, described the rebrand as putting lipstick on a pig.

Tournament hosts sometimes manage hotel policies with a booking agent, who either charges a commission or shares in the rebates. That can make the travel process more convenient but at a cost. Families are unaware of how much extra they are paying.

In Varsity’s case, one agreement had the company collecting \$20 per room; in another instance, Varsity received 30% of the booking

agent’s commission plus a rebate.

Court records show that Varsity collected \$4 million per year just from the room rebates.

Varsity’s former director of strategy and special projects, Jamie Parrish, described how the practice exacerbated the costs for families participating in an already expensive sport.

“They have to stay at a preferred hotel as dictated by Varsity, and pay not only the hotel, but pay Varsity a kick on top of that and they don’t even know what the kick is,” Parrish said, according to court records. “You know, if you are going to make them pay for it, at least tell them how much it’s going to be. Don’t just slide it under the guise of the hotel’s charging you this and then pocket the money”

Sometimes, the kickback amount is evident, such as when it’s charged separately. In February, families attending a hockey tournament in Tulsa were quoted \$127 per night for rooms at a Fairfield Inn. However, \$28 went to the booking agent as a non-refundable deposit, 22% of the total lodging cost. The hotel charged \$99 per room night.

Growing Reliance on Fees

Don Schumacher founded the National Association of Sports Commissions (now renamed the Sports Events & Tourism Association) and, for 25 years, was its president and chief executive officer. He’s now an independent sports travel consultant in Ohio, and he’s been warning organizations for more than a decade about the overreliance on room rebates.

“The fees were increasingly used to properly fund events rather than watching the budget or charging more in the team registration fee, and it’s even worse now,” he said.

A big driver is tournament hosts’ desire — or, sometimes, requirement — to prove their economic impact on the city where the event is held. That’s because cities often use public money to build and maintain the fields, courts and rinks used for tournaments.

Overland Park, Kansas, a Kansas City suburb, built a \$36 million soccer complex in 2009 to host tournaments as a significant piece of its economic development strategy. The city hosted 16 soccer tournaments at the complex last year and Oklahoma teams played in 12 of them.

City councilors planned to pay for the fields with hotel tax revenue and to maximize it, they wanted all tournaments to be stay-to-play.

The priority for the complex, which boasts 12 quality turf fields, was to attract “other people’s money,” while secondarily accommodating local teams, longtime city councilman Fred Spears recalled in a 2023 committee meeting, public records show. Spears also said the deal to build the complex was based on “stay to play and no leakage,” meaning all participants booked their rooms in Overland Park, not surrounding cities.

Pushing back, City Manager Kate Gunja told Spears they couldn’t legally require tournament families to stay in the city limits but tried to provide incentives for them to do so.

By 2016, out-of-town soccer families were booking 23,000 hotel rooms per year and paying \$7 to \$10 per room in rebates, adding up to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, according to a study of the complex’s economic impact by Schumacher’s association. Those families also paid one of the highest hotel taxes in the country, with a combined lodging and sales tax rate of 18.1%, according to a 2023 analysis by hospitality consulting firm HVS.

The study found it wasn’t nearly enough. The city needed visitors to book an additional 1.5 million room nights per year to recover their investment.

In 2023, the city raised its fee to rent the complex for a tournament but implemented

“
You’re really locked into whatever they tell you, and if you want to play, you have to stay where they let you stay... No one wants to be the parent that causes a team to get kicked out.

Diane Portillo, parent of softball tournament player, Goldsby, Oklahoma



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

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incentives for events that draw more hotel business. If participants book at least 2,000 rooms, the tournament pays half as much to use the fields as they would without the hotel bookings.

All upcoming spring soccer tournaments at the complex are stay-to-play.

In One Pocket, and the Other Pocket Too

Another destination for Oklahoma teams is Dallas, especially in hockey, where nearly all youth hockey tournaments are run by the Dallas Stars.

Until recently, the Stars had one of the strictest stay-to-play policies, according to several parents.

Public records reveal a potential conflict: Stars’ staff owned the travel company that the teams were required to book through.

An LLC based in Frisco, Texas, Stay2Play’s officers include Damon Boettcher, senior vice president of StarCenter Facilities, according to a Sept. 10 article in D Magazine, which highlighted Boettcher as one of the most powerful figures in the Stars franchise; his wife, Cassandra Boettcher; Lucas Reid, the vice president of amateur sports and business development for the Stars since 2014, according to LinkedIn; and Brad Buckland, the Stars’ tournament series director.

Last fall, the Stars temporarily halted its stay-to-play policy and appear to have cut ties with Buckland, Boettcher and Reid.

Dan Stuchal, the Stars’ chief operating officer, said the team no longer works with Stay2Play but refused to explain why. He said they plan to hire a new company that better meets the team’s values.

Stuchal would not confirm Buckland, Boettcher or Reid’s departure, but they’ve all been removed from the Stars’ website. Reid and Buckland list new jobs with other sports organizations on their LinkedIn profiles. Boettcher does not, but shows his employment with the Stars ended in December. Attempts to reach Buckland, Boettcher and Reid were unsuccessful.

Stuchal defended the Stars’ stay-to-play policy and said they plan to bring it back this fall.

He said the practice is very common, only generates a small amount of revenue, and is necessary to show economic impact to cities that build the facilities. The Stars now operate two city-financed indoor basketball and volleyball facilities in Texas, with a third opening next year, according to the Dallas Stars.

Without the stay-to-play rules, the organization could not track the rooms tied to its tournaments, he said.

The afternoon of Oklahoma Watch’s inquiries, details of past tournaments were scrubbed from the Stars’ website. Joe Calvillo, director of communications for the Stars, said past references to stay-to-play were removed to eliminate confusion for the remainder of the season.

Stuchal said when they paused stay-to-play, team managers were disappointed. He said stay-to-play is a service to the teams to have the rooms blocked at the best rates.

Best Rate?

Some tournaments may offer the best rate for a specific hotel, but families who shop around said they always find cheaper alternatives.

For the Winter Magic soccer tournament played in the Kansas City area in January, one hotel option through the tournament website was the Holiday Inn and Suites Convention Center for \$170 per night. Guests could have reserved that very hotel on their own for \$85 to \$109 per night, according to published rates.

The policies draw more revenue from traveling teams to fund their events using what amounts to a surcharge that local teams don’t have to pay.

“If your team is from outside (75+ miles) the local area and does not show up on our booking report when you check-in to the event, you will be required to pay an additional stay-to-play fee of \$500. ABSOLUTELY NO EXCEPTIONS!” one set of hockey tournament rules read.

That \$500 of revenue to the tournament can be a fraction of the additional cost to participants. For example, a 20-player team forced to spend a minimum of three nights in a \$159-per-night hotel spends \$9,540 for lodging. That same team, depending on the game schedule, might have been able to spend just \$119 per room for one night if allowed to book their own, collectively saving \$7,160. That’s a difference of \$358 per family.

Families want out, and some tournaments offer an out — for a fee.

At the Premier Girls Fastpitch Nationals softball tournament, teams could pay \$2,400 to opt out of the lodging policy, which required at least eight rooms per team.

Molly Tolbert, an Oklahoma City attorney, reviewed some of the examples of stay-to-play policies for this story. The buyouts, she said, seem to indicate the tournaments aren’t trying to help families get the best deal on hotel rates; they are simply replacing revenue.

“If they were trying to help you, and you said, ‘I’m going to stay with family,’ they’d say, ‘Great, glad you found a cheaper option,’” Tolbert said. “They don’t say that. They say, ‘If we’re going to lose the revenue from you staying in a hotel, you have to pay a buyout.’”

Portillo’s daughter’s team paid a buyout fee a couple of times for longer tournaments. It typically amounted to \$100 per player.

Parents were so committed to their daughters’ success that complying with tournament rules came with the territory.

“It was never questioned,” she said. “Every tournament was (stay-to-play), and it’s what you did, and no one questioned it. It’s just the industry to get your kid to play college-level sports. It’s the rough side of it.”

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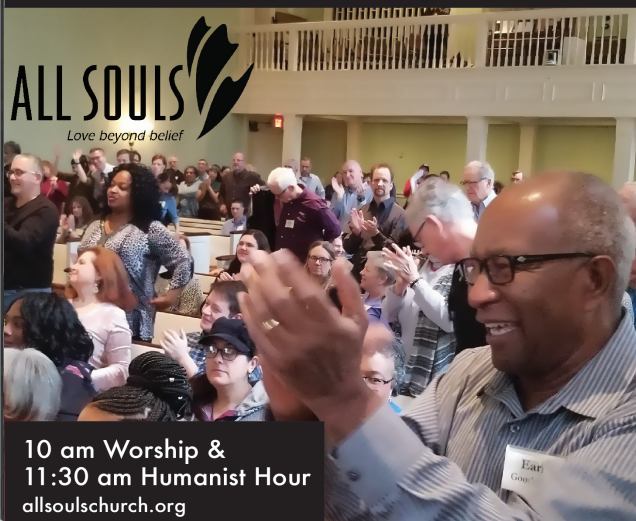
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Fax:

918-584-1958

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iUrban Teen Empowers Youth with AI-Driven Career Opportunities

Hands-on career exposure for marginalized youth

iUrban, A14



ILLUSTRATION NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWSWATCH

Women Lead The Way: Black Women Shape Academia

Academia
Lois Elfman
New York Amsterdam News

Black women are helping to shape academia as professors, researchers, deans, and college and university presidents.

African American women are helping to shape academia — as professors, researchers, deans, and college and university presidents. Although they comprise fewer than 5% of individuals in the U.S. who hold doctorates, Black women are undaunted in building a presence. Those in leadership positions are working on increasing access and opportunities for future generations. “I am the first Black president of Harford Community College,” said Dr. Theresa B. Felder about her position at the Bel Air, Md., school. “I feel the weight of that responsibility to be successful and to make the impact on the community that I came here saying I intended to make. I realize there were strong Black women [who] faced obstacles and paved the way for me to be in this spot, and I want to do the same for others. It’s satisfying, but it’s also a weight I feel every day. Being the first in anything carries responsibility.”

Finding and Creating Opportunity
Mentorship was important to Felder’s career. “Mentors found me,” said Felder. “In high school, I had teachers and counselors [who] said, ‘You’re smart, you should go to college’ ... Later in life, it was other professional women who encouraged me, who talked about my potential to see beyond what I was seeing and think beyond the job I was doing at the time. It was a president of a community college [who] said, ‘You could be a president and I will help you.’”
As a first-generation college graduate, a career in academia was not something Felder could fathom. Her undergraduate degree is in accounting and she worked in corporate accounting before starting a consulting business. She was living in Ohio and a community college there was one of her clients. Having gone to a four-year university, she didn’t know much about community colleges at the

iUrban Teen Empowers Youth with AI-Driven Career Opportunities

iUrban
Kiara Doyal
The Seattle Medium

Founded by Deena Pierott, the organization provides historically marginalized youth with hands-on career exposure, community service, and civic engagement opportunities, focusing on male youth of color and the integration of AI into education.

When Deena Pierott, founder and executive director of iUrban Teen, noticed the educational inequities

For many students, the major obstacle to college completion isn't academics



PHOTO NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWSWATCH

FROM A14

Academia

time. However, she quickly learned what was important: “As I got to know the mission and the fact that community colleges are open-access institutions, I really related,” said Felder. “I saw myself in every one of those students.”

She found she loved the work of community colleges, and returned to graduate school in her 40s, eventually earning a master’s degree in administration and a doctorate in higher education administration. While in graduate school, she began working at Clark State Community College in Springfield, Ohio, spending 17 years there and rising to the position of senior vice president, student

graduate school and a doctoral program in sociology at Yale University.

Early in White’s doctoral studies, a professor questioned whether she was doing her own writing because the quality was excellent. She became hyper-vigilant about making sure her work was as perfect as possible.

“I was at Yale at a time when there were some incredibly interesting classmates in African American studies, history, political science, and American studies, and we created our own community of Black scholars,” White said. “One of my friends, Lewis Gordon, and I started a Black graduate student network. We had a dissertation support writing group where we wanted to share information with each other about navigating the formal process of the university but also informally how you get through.”

After building a career as a professor, researcher, and writer, White moved into

“

I saw myself in every one of those students

Dr. Theresa B. Felder, president of Harford Community College, Harford County Maryland

success.

For many students, the major obstacle to college completion isn’t academics; it’s life challenges, such as finances, transportation, food insecurity, childcare, and family demands. Felder has worked to address student needs in a holistic way. With the presidential seed planted, she acknowledged her desire to lead an institution and have a positive impact on not only the students, but also the community. After participating in professional development programs, including the Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship, Felder applied for the position at Harford and was hired.

New York City native Dr. Renée T. White, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the New School, credits the mentorship of one of her professors at Brown University with directing her toward

administration and became dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Simmons College (now University).

“I’ve always been active in leadership roles in academic programs — leading a women’s studies program or a Black studies program,” White said. “I saw it as an opportunity to tap into the things I really cared about in higher ed and do things on a larger scale that would have an impact with students, and be able to advance things that I thought were really important for faculty.”

Dr. Dara N. Byrne’s direction didn’t truly come into focus until she went to Howard University, an HBCU institution in Washington, D.C., for her doctoral studies. She was born in Guyana, and her family moved to Trinidad and then Canada, where

Cont. A16, **Academia**

A coding program, which goes from levels 1.0 to 3.0

FROM A14

iUrban

affecting male youth of color, she knew she had to take action. As a mother of two African American sons and a former commissioner on the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, she saw firsthand the opportunity gaps impacting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander boys. Witnessing these disparities firsthand led her to create iUrban Teen, a nationally recognized program that provides hands-on career exposure, community service, and civic engagement opportunities for historically minoritized youth ages 12-18.

“When I started the program, and even to this day, we focus on male youth. Even though we are inclusive and probably have more girls in our program compared to others, male youth of color—Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Pacific Islander—is the focus,” Pierott said. “I was a commissioner in the state of Washington for years on the Commission on African American Affairs, and all of our ethnic commissions were looking at the opportunity gap issue, especially with male youth of color. Seeing them being marginalized, disenfranchised, and not graduating—that was a major concern for me. And then, of course, I have two African American sons, so I could see the education inequities that were impacting them firsthand.”

Since its launch in 2011, iUrban Teen has served over 20,000 students and maintains an 80% family retention rate, a testament to its strong community engagement. The program, originally launched in Vancouver, Washington, quickly expanded into Seattle in 2013 as word about the program began to spread.

“We were getting so much word-of-mouth buzz, like true grassroots outreach from parents and others that participated



Deena Pierott, founder and executive director of iUrban Teen.
PHOTO SEATTLE MEDIUM

in our Vancouver and Portland staff, that we decided to launch a chapter in Seattle,” Pierott said.

“Our headquarters is actually now in Seattle, but initially, we were getting families from Seattle driving all the way down to Vancouver and Portland to attend our events. They encouraged us to start a chapter in Seattle,” added Pierott.

Because iUrban Teen is heavily family-focused, getting youth involved has been relatively easy for Pierotti and her staff. Many return for multiple programs, and new families often discover the program through personal recommendations and community engagement.

“We do a lot of marketing, and since we have so many families already in our list of members, they just continually attend and repeat different programs that we have in place,” says Pierott. “And because there

are so many people who have heard about us now, they look to our website and sign up or want to be on our list to be notified when we have opportunities for them.”

With an emphasis on integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education, iUrban Teen offers several key programs that equip students with in-demand skills. Among its most notable are iCode, iSpy, and iMap, which provide students with hands-on training in coding, cybersecurity, and geospatial technology while also incorporating real-world research projects.

“iCode is a coding program, which goes from levels 1.0 to 3.0,” said Pierott. “Entry level coding, then a little bit more advanced, then 3.0 is more like a boot camp for older teens and young adults to really give them that training where they can possibly get an internship with a coding career once they go through iCode

3.0.”

“iSpy is the same thing, with the different three levels, but it is a cyber security program that we hope will get students into internships, or at least interviews in the cyber security field,” she continued.

According to Pierott, the iMap, is a little more challenging because it involves several different technologies that students must learn in about eight weeks. However, Pierotti says that iMap is one of her favorite programs at iUrban teen because not only are they teaching the kids geospatial technology and GIS mapping along with AI and data analytics, but they’re also learning research principles to things that are currently taking place in their community.

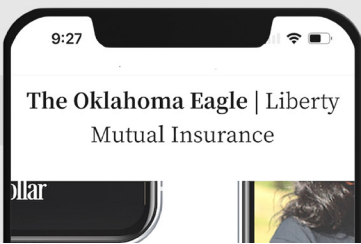
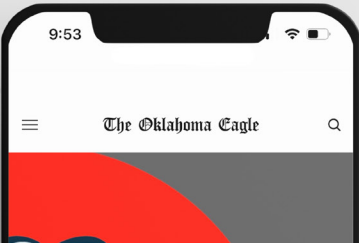
“In iMap Health, not only are these kids learning these technologies, but they are also learning about a health disparity that is impacting Black and brown communities at record numbers, and that is diabetes,” Pierott said. “When they are doing their research, they are using AI to do it and research further into diabetes. AI provides them with the research tools.”

“And how do they change that health disparity in their community? So, they are taking a deep dive into diabetes through AI, and by the end of the program, in their case studies, they are learning about healthy eating, exercise, how to manage diabetes, and even more importantly, how to prevent it,” she added.

iMap expands beyond health research to address transportation and environmental issues within communities, while still utilizing AI.

“iMap environmental focuses on climate change, and so the kids are using AI to come up with their research on different ways to prevent or to put a dent in the climate change crisis and learning how to read satellite data in their cities,” said Pierott. “iMap transportation is where they look at transportation inequities

Cont. A17, **iUrban**



Creating
new ways
forward
through
public and
private
partnerships



PHOTO NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWSWATCH

FROM A15

Academia

Byrne attended university for her bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Before Howard, she had never had a Black professor; being at a historically Black university intensified her passion for education.

After completing her Ph.D., Byrne came to NYC for a Rockefeller Foundation residency fellowship at the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center. From there, she was hired for a faculty position at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a City University of New York (CUNY) institution, where she remained for almost 20 years, taking on administrative duties as her career progressed.

In 2022, Byrne became dean of Macaulay Honors College at CUNY, one of the top ranked public honors colleges in the country. It is a highly selective college — fewer than 10% of applicants are accepted — where students receive financial and academic support so they can fully achieve their potential. Although Byrne, a professor of rhetoric and intercultural communication, misses being in the classroom, she thrives on developing leaders who have a desire to live and work in New York.

Black excellence in New York

In addition to the honors curriculum that students take at Macaulay, they also enroll at one of the eight four-year colleges in the

“
It is exciting and
challenging to retain
high-achieving
students in
New York

Dr. Dara N. Byrne,
professor of rhetoric
and intercultural
communication,
Macaulay Honors
College at CUNY

CUNY system. Graduates receive degrees from both Macaulay and the college of their choice.

“It is exciting and challenging to retain high-achieving students in New York,” said Byrne, noting that these students could go to elite institutions such as Harvard or Stanford if they are willing to incur the expense (student loans) and might never come back to New York.

“That is one heck of a responsibility: to think about what it means to leverage the best of what CUNY has to offer to provide — not just an academic experience for these kinds of students but a community for them where they learn to collaborate with each other, challenge each other, build things together, and also think about how you use that kind of talent and momentum to serve the city,” said Byrne. “I think a lot about what it means to rely on taxpayers’ dollars to do this work, so I’m not just interested in educating really smart students; I’m interested in how to create New Yorkers [who] can lead and shape New York.”

Last year’s graduating class had an average grade point average of 3.8. Byrne is working on capacity-building for all aspects of Macaulay, which must be done in a zero revenue environment: The college does not charge tuition and doesn’t collect fees. There is no working capital, so Byrne must find public and private partners who align with the work. She connects with people and entities that want to be part of educating New Yorkers with a long-term commitment to New York.

“That has brought up a lot of my creativity and innovation,” Byrne said. “What I have been finding is that my strength as somebody

who really understands CUNY, has worked in various contexts where you can only get things done in partnerships with a lot of people, is a real asset in a zero revenue environment where we go far because of gifts ... we’re thoughtful about what we’re doing and how to make a little have a big impact for these students.”

Queens native Dr. Belinda S. Miles has served as president of SUNY Westchester Community College (WCC) since 2015. Herself a graduate of York College in Queens, a senior college in the CUNY system, she understands the impact an open access institution can have for people seeking entry into higher education. As an undergraduate, she was a Pell Grant recipient and was eligible for work-study. Her job was as a tutor in the writing lab, which helped her understand the power of education, as well as how an institution can commit resources to serving its students — a concept that drives her to this day.

Over the past decade, WCC has received numerous grants to further educational opportunities. A landmark event was in October 2018, when WCC received the largest federal grant in school history — \$2.7 million over five years — through the U.S. Department of Education’s Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program. It went to WCC’s Caminos Exitto (Pathways to Success) and funded increased academic support, counseling, and advising for all students.

“Fewer than 5% of our courses had an online presence pre-pandemic,” said Miles. “Having everything online for a while gave us a chance, as we were building back, to think

Howard University

Howard University is a private, historically black, federally chartered research university in Washington, D.C., United States. It is classified among “R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity” and accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Macaulay Honors College at CUNY

William E. Macaulay Honors College, commonly referred to as Macaulay Honors College or Macaulay, is the honors college of the City University of New York system in New York City. It was founded in 2001 as CUNY Honors College.

Cont. A17, Academia



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iSports: A Portland Trailblazers and Dallas Mavericks partnership with an AI boost

FROM A15

iUrban

in their communities and research how to resolve some of those issues using AI tools,” Pierott continued.

Recently, iUrban Teen launched a new program called iSports, which also integrates AI.

“In our new iSports program, where we partner with the Portland Trailblazers and the Dallas Mavericks in Texas, we factor in AI with that program when they are doing their statistics and some of their analytics,” Pierott said. “So yes, we definitely have that AI factor at iUrban Teen, and we have been doing it for years before it became popular.”

With AI on the rise, Pierott says that it is important for students to understand AI and understand the impacts and dangers of it, especially for communities of color.

“We all know that before, but not so much now, but it is still prevalent that some of the data points that they were using for AI were not accurate for people of color, especially Black folks, and that is why it is so important

I always wanted to make sure that we were giving these youth and families the latest cutting-edge information in different fields.

Deena Pierott, founder and executive director of iUrban Teen



PHOTO iURBAN

that we learn everything about AI,” says Pierott. “Anywhere from the different models to the different uses for AI, hopefully we can get behind the scenes on being the safeguards that are helping to dictate the direction that AI is going.”

Pierott believes that exposing youth to different career and business opportunities is critical for their success.

“I always wanted to make sure that we were giving these youth and families the latest cutting-edge information in different fields. I also tell the kids that they are going

to experience a lot of different things with iUrban teen,” Pierott said. “By giving them that pathway and helping to support them all along the way, that is going to help with their economic development, and within their cities and families because you are giving them an opportunity.”

“We are just one extra tool in their toolbox for success,” she concluded.

This story is part of the Digital Equity Local Voices Fellowship lab. The lab initiative is made possible with support from Comcast NBC Universal.



PHOTO NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWSWATCH

Graduate Programs are essential for many students

FROM A16

Academia

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the intention of serving African Americans. Most are in the Southern United States and were founded during the Reconstruction era (1865–1877) following the American Civil War.

about how we could build back smarter ... We had a major opportunity to change our scheduling model in very significant ways. We were learning a lot, through our student success and completion agenda, about where students were stuck and what institutional opportunities there were to help facilitate their success.”

She keeps a constant eye on innovation: Other milestones of Miles’ presidency at WCC have included founding an honors college and a center for cybersecurity, expansion of undergraduate research, internships, and a project-based curriculum, as well as collaboration with regional industry partners. A key component of success is building strong networks to support the work of the college.

“Education is an intervention that makes a difference in individuals’ lives and their families,” Miles noted. “I continue to look down the road and around the corner to see what’s next. Feeling confident in adapting to change and sometimes facilitating change is part of what I do.”

Toward the Future

By the end of Byrne’s first year at Macaulay, she was able to launch a funded transfer system that enables the college to accept transfer students from CUNY’s seven community colleges. These transfers now join students admitted as freshmen.

Byrne knows her value as an academic leader, which serves as a guide for Black women aspiring to the academy or trying to navigate it. “Go where you’re loved,” she said. “Students get to see through me all of the places where I am welcomed.”

Miles was hooked on mentoring back in graduate school, when she made sure students who may have been struggling received needed support and encouragement. Throughout her career, she

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES (AACC)

Headquartered in the National Center for Higher Education building in Washington, D.C., AACC is the primary advocacy organization for community colleges at the national level and works closely with directors of state offices to inform and affect state policy.

has made time for women and men who seek her advice.

“It’s natural for me to mentor,” Miles said. “I teach in a couple of leadership institutes, future presidents’ institutes, like AACC (American Association of Community Colleges). I teach leadership in the Kansas State University doctoral program (online). I really enjoy working with those who are aspiring to hone their craft. Nine of my former direct reports (deans and/or vice presidents) became community college presidents (six female, three male).”

“At this point, I mentor new presidents or sitting presidents. If there’s a challenge, we try to think about how to move through it.”

White hasn’t been in the classroom in a while, so she hasn’t had the opportunity to spot talent as her professor spotted her, but she gladly serves as an informational resource for students.

“Where I’ve done the bulk of my mentoring has been with folks who are currently academics and those who are moving into administrative roles,” said White. When attending a conference or event, she will sit down with people and talk about things such as developing a tenure portfolio.

“Getting folks into graduate programs is important, making sure they graduate, and then also making sure that academics stay and can actually thrive and are being treated fairly,” White said. “I’ve learned a lot about how these processes look at different types of institutions, so I can pass that on.”

White started a group for women-identified academic leaders (of all ethnicities), such as program heads, deans, and provosts. In the aftermath of the stark impact of the pandemic, ongoing check-ins remain uplifting. Just the “how are you” question is meaningful.

“It opened up this incredibly powerful, heartfelt conversation; people were really vulnerable and honest about things they were going through,” White said. “I’ve continued to convene that group. I’ve also pulled out subsets of that group — a group of Black women leaders — at various moments when things have been really hard in the world.”

When she was provost at Wheaton College (2016–2021), White participated in a New England Humanities Consortium that launched a faculty of color mentoring program. It included training about how to mentor, which remains valuable.

“I continue to try and be a resource, to offer support, to offer calm about the difficulties of being a leader and being a Black woman leader,” White said. “[I ask] what can I do to make it a little less onerous or provide a space where there are things you can experience a little differently than what I experienced.”



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Russell M. Perry is the founder and owner of The Black Chronicle newspaper and Perry Publishing and Broadcasting Company

PHOTO PROVIDED

Perry To Receive Award From Oklahoma Press Association

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

H. Milt Phillips Award Highest Honor From OPA

Russell M. Perry, publisher and founder of The Black Chronicle newspaper and Perry Publishing and Broadcasting Company, will receive a statewide journalism award in June.

He has been selected to receive the H. Milt Phillips Award from the Oklahoma Press Association. The award will be presented

at OPA’s Annual Convention and Awards Banquet at the Grand Casino Hotel and Resort in Shawnee on June 7.

OPA said the criteria for the award nominee are publishing a high-quality newspaper, contributing to the profession and the newspaper industry, serving the community, state, and nation in various volunteer activities over the years, and demonstrating a strong love and dedication to the family.

“I realize what an honor it is and what it stands for, and it is motivation for us to continue for another 50 years,” said Perry.

Perry established The Black Chronicle

(www.blackchronicle.com) in 1979. He has been inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, and the Oklahoma Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame. In December, he was named in The Journal Record’s Power List of Most Influential Oklahomans.

Phillips was widely known as a civic leader and statewide industrial booster. He is the former publisher of the Seminole Producer and former president of the Oklahoma Press Association. In naming the award after him, it was said he was “Honored by many, regarded by others, feared and disliked by the crafty and corrupt.”

Phillips “was the kind of editor all editors should be. He was involved. He gave freely of his love and concern...”

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Langston University – Tulsa Sponsors Mardi Gras Masquerade Party, March 28

LANGSTON UNIVERSITY - TULSA CAMPUS
PRESENTS:

**mardi gras
masquerade
Dance
Party**

**FRIDAY
MAR 28, 2025
7:00 PM - 10:00 PM**

Langston University – Tulsa campus, 914 N. Greenwood Ave., will host the Mardi Gras Masquerade Dance Party on March 28.

PHOTO PROVIDED

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

Langston University – Tulsa invites the community to attend its Mardi Gras Masquerade Dance Party on its campus on March 28, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Zydeco music and other entertainment will be featured.

The organizers encourage attendees to wear masquerade attire and masks. At the event, a best costume award will be given, and dance instruction will be offered.

“Join us for an exciting evening filled with dance, music, and networking, all to support

educational programs and raise resources for our business students,” said Dr. Daryl Green, dean of the School of Business and a co-host of the event.

The program will be free to attend. Donations will be accepted to benefit the university’s scholarships and student success programs.

For more information, contact Dr. Sherri Smith-Keys at ssmithk@langston.edu or (918) 877-8140.

Langston University
As Oklahoma’s only HBCU, Langston

University, formerly known as Colored Agricultural and Normal University, was founded as a land grant college in 1897. Today, the university provides its students with a world-class education that includes hands-on learning through impactful research and beneficial internships. The administration, faculty, and staff prepare the students for life after college while letting them enjoy an open and vibrant community that wants to help them grow and develop into a world-class professional. For more information, visit <https://langston.edu>.

Events

Mar. 7-29

She Makes Art + Music exhibit, poetry and performances, and music concert to be hosted at Liggett Studio, 314 S. Kenosha. The exhibit will be on display from March 7-27, with an opening on March 7 at 5 p.m. The poetry and performances will be on March 27. The music conference is scheduled for March 29. For more information, visit www.liggettstudio.com/shemakesart.

Mar. 21

Black Wall Street Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting at the 36th Street Event Center, 1125 E. 36th St. N., 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.bwschamber.com/>.

Mar. 22

The Dance Affair and Fashion Show will be held at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave. The fashion show will begin at 7:30 a.m., and the dance will be from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. DJ Silky Soul will provide the music. The semi-formal events are BYOL and BYOF. MVP Dance Productions is hosting the program. For more information, contact Howard Barnes at (918) 951-5466 or Sheila Herbert at (918) 946-6697.

Mar. 28

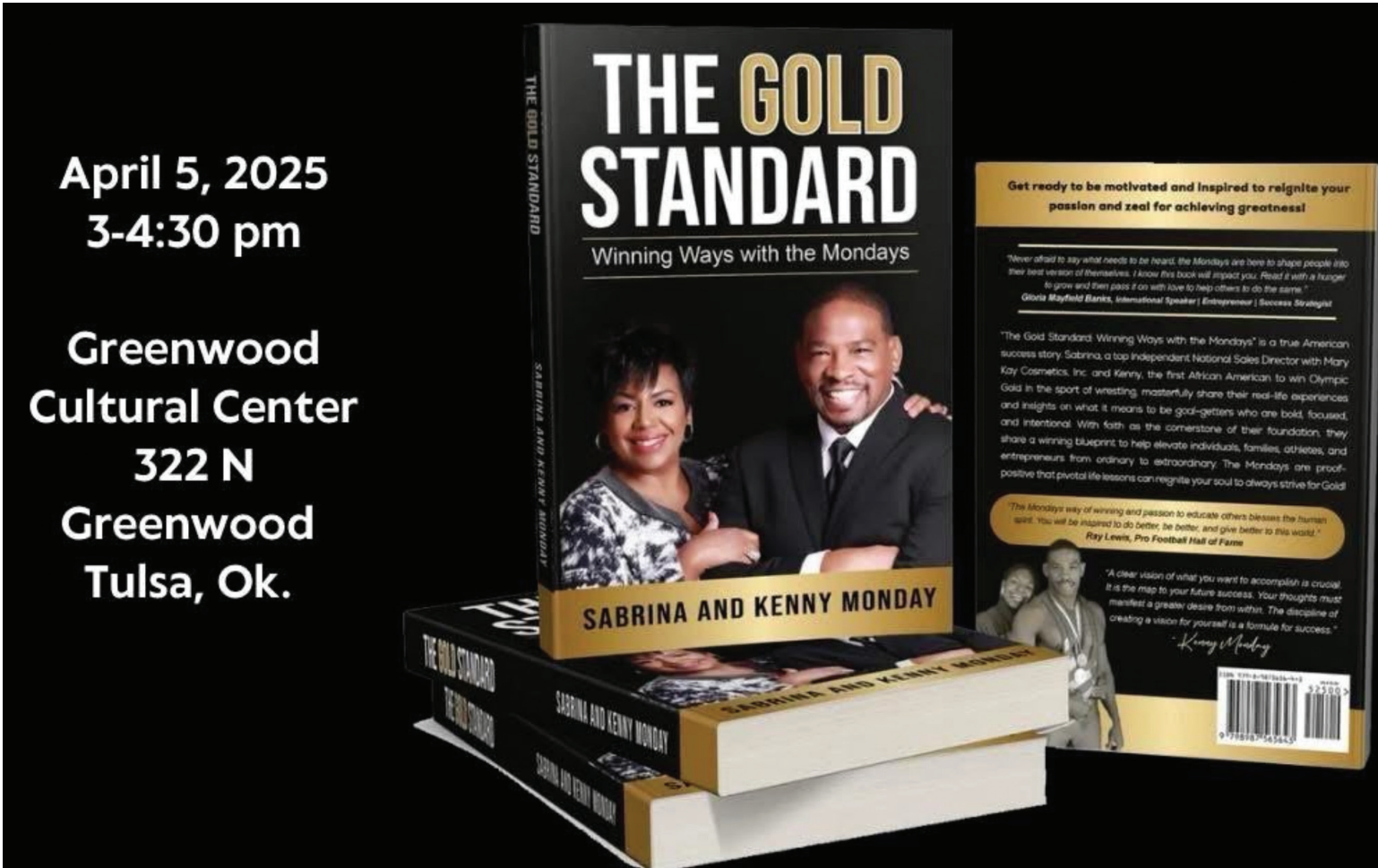
“Sister Act – The Musical” will be performed by the Theatre Department at Booker T. Washington High School, 1514 E. Zion St. The scheduled performances are March 28, 7 p.m.; March 28, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and March 30, 4 p.m. Majeste Pearson is the music director. For more information, see [Sister Act - The Musical](#).

Mar. 29

The Links, Incorporated is sponsoring Black Family Wellness Expo at Tulsa Community College, Northeast campus, 3727 E. Apache St., 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. The program is a part of the organization’s National Impact Day of Service. For more information, contact tul-salinksbfwe@gmail.com or (918) 852-7456.

Apr. 3

Booker T. Washington High School Distinguished Hall of Fame Foundation Ceremony and Scholarship Dinner will be held at 6 p.m. at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave. Honorees include Inez Black, Kevin Lockett, Nicole Lynn, Sabrina Goodwin-Monday, Bill Nelson, J. Kevin Ross, M. Reginald “Ice” Terry, and Pastor LeRon G. West. The guest speaker will be



Sabrina Monday and Kenny Monday will hold a book signing at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., on April 5, 3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.28.

PHOTO PROVIDED

Mondays To Host Book Signing, April 5

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

Native Tulsans Sabrina and Kenny Monday are scheduled for a book signing of their new book, “The Gold Standard: Winning Ways with the Mondays,” at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., on April 5, 3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

As reported in The Oklahoma Eagle on July

19, 2024, the book is a collection of real-life experiences and insights on what it means to be goal-getters who are bold, focused, and intentional, according to the Mondays.

Sabrina is a top Independent National Sales Director with Mary Kay Cosmetics. Kenny, the first African American to win a gold medal in Olympic wrestling and a multi-awarded winning wrestler on the national and global stages, is the head wrestling coach at Morgan

State University. Morgan State is home to the nation’s only HBCU D1 wrestling program.

For more information, contact mondaygoldstandard@gmail.com or visit <https://thegoldstandard.coach/>

(See Goodwin, J. (2024, July 19). ‘The Gold Standard’ is a recipe for success. The Oklahoma Eagle. <https://theokeagle.com/2024/07/19/the-gold-standard-is-a-recipe-for-success/>)

Events

Milliard House II, superintendent of Prince George’s County Public Schools. For more information, contact tulsabtw.hof@gmail.com.

Apr. 16

Travis Guillory – Senior Concert at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 6:30 p.m.

Apr. 17

Greenwood Cultural Center is presenting its Legacy Award Dinner. Nate Burleson of “CBS Mornings,” “The NFL Today,” and host of “Hollywood Squares” will be the Legacy Award honoree. For more information, call (918) 596-1020 or visit www.greenwoodculturalcenter.org.

Apr. 30

2025 Women’s Leadership Summit will be held at the River Spirit Casino Resort, 8330 Riverside Pkwy. According to the organizers, the full-day program will be dedicated to empowering, elevating, and celebrating women leaders. The program theme will be “Courageous Leaders Driving Impact.” The full-day summit For more information, contact <https://leadershiptulsa.org/womens-leadershipsummit/>.

May 18

Witness! An Evening of Spirituals will be held at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Doors will open at 5 p.m. The sounds of rich history in the tradition of the spirituals, also known as “freedom songs,” will be performed. The featured singers will be Joel-Lyn McCormick (Soprano), Phil Armstrong (Tenor), Joseph Bias (Baritone), and Donald Ryan (pianist). The program is a benefit concert for the Greenwood Cultural Center. For more information, visit eventbrite.com

Jun. 13-14

African and Indian Table Talk presents “Across Generations: The Freedman’s Journey in Indian Territory” conference. More information to be provided soon.



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