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Protesters Address Surveillance Concerns

Thousands Use World Wide Web as Platform

By ILANA SHULEVITZ
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON - Thousands are scheduled to gather on Tuesday to protest the surveillance state, but don't expect any news of riots at the White House gates or marches on the National Mall.

The stage for the demonstration, headed by a coalition of activist groups, companies and online platforms, is the World Wide Web.

So far, more than 4,500 websites have signed up to display embeddable banners and widgets on their sites that prompt visitors to call or email their members of congress in support of the USA Freedom Act, a sweeping piece of bipartisan legislation that aims to rein in the collection of data by the National Security Agency. Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Baltimore, is Maryland's lone co-sponsor.

Organizers of "The Day We Fight Back" (<https://thedaywefightback.org/>) include Demand Progress, Fight for the Future, Free Press, Reddit, Mozilla and ThoughtWorks. The sponsors are encouraging individuals, in addition to companies and groups, to take part by posting #StoptheNSA on social media.

"We're expecting thousands of smaller sites in addition to a

See PROTEST, Page A7



Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown, left, and Gov. Martin O'Malley testify in favor of raising Maryland's minimum wage to \$10.10. Capital News Service photo by Ethan Barton.

General Assembly Hear Minimum Wage Bills

By MEGAN BROCKETT
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - Maryland's minimum wage debate is set to take center stage at the State House next week, when a total of six different proposals are scheduled to go before members of the House and Senate. The options range in scope from one statewide increase to "county choice" measures that would grant jurisdictions the individual authority to set their own base rates of pay.

Gov. Martin O'Malley has pushed an increase in the state's minimum wage as his main priority this legislative session, throwing his support behind the Maryland Minimum Wage Act of 2014, which would raise the base rate to \$10.10 an hour by 2016. The measure, scheduled to be heard in the House Economic Matters Committee on Tuesday and the Senate Finance Committee on Thursday, would also increase the minimum amount of pay for tipped workers from 50 to 70 percent of

the state's base rate, and index both rates to the cost of living starting in 2017.

An estimated 455,000 residents would see a boost in their wages under the Maryland Minimum Wage Act, according to a report released last month by the Economic Policy Institute, a non-profit, left-leaning think tank based in Washington, D.C. Maryland's current minimum wage matches the federal level of \$7.25 an hour.

More than 20 states now have rates above the federal level.

Last year, a bill that would have raised the state's minimum wage to \$10 an hour died in the Senate Finance Committee.

But recent polls show the vast majority of Marylanders support a raise of the minimum wage, and with the amount of attention given to the topic by President Barack Obama in his recent State of the Union address, the shifting climate has led some policy experts to believe there is an increasing likelihood that some type of legislation will pass.

"I think it gives [the issue] a little more momentum, especially among Democrats,"

said Curt Grimm, professor of economics at the University of Maryland. "When you're talking about the state of Maryland ... where the Democrats kind of are in charge ... then it could have a factor [in getting the support of] ... some of the more moderate Democrats that would need to support this. I think that could be a factor [in] helping push this over the top."

But support from Obama isn't likely to sway the opinions of Republican lawmakers who oppose the idea of a minimum wage hike, an issue that is often split down party lines, Grimm said.

Alternative minimum wage bills introduced by some Republican lawmakers are also scheduled to be heard in General Assembly committees next week.

A "county choice" bill co-sponsored by Sen. Barry Glassman, R-Harford, and Delegate Neil Parrott, R-Washington, would give counties the power to decide whether

See WAGE Page A3

Company Finds Use for Coffee Ground

By DANIELLE DREDGER
Capital News Service

BROOKEVILLE - Eric Steiner parked his red truck outside of a Baltimore Starbucks at 5:30 on a recent Friday morning. Five times a week, he collects the store's used coffee grounds for his company, EarthBrew Compost.

He then drives to Rolling Acres Farm in Brookeville, where he mixes the coffee grounds with horse waste to produce compost, a rich soil often used for gardening.

"It's a trade secret," Steiner said.

Steiner started his composting company to help reduce waste and preserve resources. The Starbucks stores he visits each produce roughly 40 pounds of coffee waste a day, he said, and he has a verbal agreement to collect their used grounds.

"Before I came to them, they were already bagging it separately," he said. "It actually signifies that all of their stores are throwing their grounds away."

When the coffee is disposed of in a landfill, Steiner said it improperly decomposes and puts excess greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. Adding the grounds to horse waste creates a good mix of elements in the soil to promote garden health, he said.

"Part of the shift in the economy and society right now is more growing local food," Steiner said.

"And compost is going to be an important part of that. The more people want to garden and give back to the land, the better for everybody."

Many Students Unaffected By Common Core Standards

By ETHAN BARTON
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - As some parents battle against the Common Core State Standards, many students go about their studies mostly unchanged.

That's especially true for those taking mostly Advanced Placement classes, which allows students to receive college credit for courses if they score well on exams.

"I haven't seen a difference because of my schedule," said Else Drooff, 18, a senior at both Broadneck and Severna Park High Schools, both in Anne Arundel County.

The Common Core standards set universal goals for students to achieve and were implemented by the Maryland State Department of Education last fall. Various groups developed Common Core, including the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

"Common Core is just the standards, the centralized basis of what each student should know when they graduate from high school," said Benjamin Barsam, 17, a senior at Bel Air High School in Harford County.

"They're more rigorous," said Drooff, who tutors elementary, middle and high school students, and has noticed the change in the coursework from Common Core through her mentees. "They delve into the topics a bit more. I like the new curriculum."

Despite greater demands, these upper-level students said they and their peers with AP-heavy schedules haven't felt much of a change.

"It never affected me," said Edward Town, 18, a senior at Huntingtown High School in Calvert County. "It doesn't affect AP classes."

"A lot of the way AP classes were structured were like Common Core,

See CORE Page A5

Rep. Cummings Critical of Contractor That Checked Navy Yard Shooter's Background

By ANTONIO FRANQUIZ
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON - Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland on Tuesday sharply criticized a Northern Virginia-based federal contractor in charge of conducting a background check on Aaron Alexis, the man responsible for the shooting at the Washington Navy Yard that killed 12 people last year.

"We need to conduct a thorough investigation into how Aaron Alexis was able to obtain a security clearance," said Cummings, a Democrat from Baltimore, during a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing. "If somebody on my block stole a bike, they would have a (criminal) record for a lifetime. When I look at this - where people are not doing their jobs and there is criminal activity - I want to make sure we get to that."

Alexis was granted a secret security clearance in 2008 based on in-



PHOTO BY AP PHOTO/CHARLES DHARAPAK

Military personnel walk past an entrance to the Washington Navy Yard Thursday, Sept. 19, 2013. The Washington Navy Yard began returning to nearly normal operations three days after it was the scene of a mass shooting in which a gunman killed 12 people.

formation provided by USIS, the federal contractor in charge of gathering data on applicants, after showing signs of what committee Chairman Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., called "deranged" behavior, includ-

ing shooting out car tires and being arrested for disorderly conduct that same year.

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INSIDE

President Obama Visits a School

President Obama traveled to Buck Lodge Middle School in Adelphi, Maryland to visit a classroom and deliver remarks detailing major progress toward realizing his ConnectED goal of connecting 99% of students to next-generation broadband and wireless technology within five years.

Community, Page A3

Celebrate Black History Month

The DNC is launching the "Our Values, Our Voice, Our Vote" series online at www.democrats.org to celebrate the diversity of our party, reflect on the many achievements African American Democrats have made, and call our neighbors and communities to action on the work that remains to be done.

Commentary, Page A4

Bridge to Insurance Coverage

Governor Martin O'Malley signed into law legislation that will allow Marylanders who attempted to use the Maryland Health Connection website to purchase health coverage, but were unable to enroll because of technical problems, to obtain temporary coverage in the Maryland Health Insurance Plan (MHIP).

Business, Page A5

Movie Review: "Calvary"

Written and directed by John Michael McDonagh, Calvary's Priest is the flipside to The Guard's Sergeant Gerry Boyle. A good man intent on making the world a better place, he is continually shocked inhabitants of his small country town. After being threatened he must battle the dark forces closing in around him.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

Does the fact that we've had such a cold and snowy winter mean that global warming might not be such a big problem after all?

—Lacey L.,
Lynchburg, VA

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

Hedrick Memorial Award presented for Oxon Hill rescue

The Kenneth Michael Hedrick Memorial Award of the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department honors the memory of one of their own. Kenny Hedrick lost his life on January 12, 1992, in the line of duty, after rescuing a young child from a house fire on Walls Lane in Suitland and reentering the house in search of another child.

At their annual Awards Banquet on Feb. 8 the Morningside VFD presented the KMHMA to the crew of Rescue Squad 27 and Engine Co. 272 for "affecting the rescue of a civilian on Alice Avenue." Those firefighters are: Stephen Truesdell, Michael Williams, Joey Goldberg, Michael Mavaddat, Mark Shayne, Patrick Canino, Ryan Kelly, Ronnie Martin, Patrick Wise, Brandon Howell and Mike Olszewski.

Kenny's parents, Les and Cathy Hedrick, presented the awards.

Other 2013 awardees were: To Joey Goldberg as Rookie of the Year; Patrick Canino, Firefighter of the Year; Michael Stout, Fire Chief's Award, and Lisa McKlveen, President's Award.

By the way, the Department continues to recruit citizens who want to give back to the community by volunteering. Get more information at www.mvfd27.com and click on recruitment tab.

Shrove Tuesday pancakes

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. At St. Philip's the event will be remembered with a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, March 4, from 5 to 7 p.m. On the menu: lots of pancakes, sausage, bacon, applesauce and

dessert. Carryout is available. Tickets are \$6 for adults; \$3 for ages 5-10, 4 & under, free. Or bring the whole family for \$20. For information, call Theresa Roberson, 301-868-2652, or Karin Yeatman, 301-899-7784.

Teenreads.com reviewer

Rachel B. (the name she uses as a reviewer), granddaughter of John and Emily Tierney of Camp Springs, has been accepted to Teenreads.com, "a site dedicated to book lovers, providing a forum to discover and share commentary about the books and authors they enjoy."

Rachel B. lives in Charlottesville, Va., is in the 7th grade and the youngest member of the 25-member Teen Board for January-June 2014. During her term, she will do book reviews and blogs.

St. Philip's Science Fair

Seventh-grader Kennedy Sarvis was awarded Grand Prize in St. Philip's School's Science Fair. Other winners are: 8th graders, Tyrus Pincham, 1st place; Sydney McKenzie, 2nd; and Kamau Moody, 3rd.; 7th graders: Hassan Artis, 1st place; Noah Sparrow, 2nd; Caleb Mathews, 3rd.; 6th graders: Logan Green, 1st place; Joseph Graham, 2nd; Nicholas Malloy, 3rd place.

Morningside memories

Fifty-five years ago, in January 1959, Edythe Neale's column in the Morning-Side-Lines lists the new officers for the Ladies Auxiliary to the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department: Jeanne West, president; Jean Glaubitz, vice-president; Marie Hicks, recording secretary; Becky Howard, treasurer; Claire Richardson, corresponding secretary; and Audrey Holmes, membership chairman.

He commanded the USS Milwaukee

William David Shaughnessy, retired Navy Captain, formerly of Temple Hills, died Jan. 21. He was from Massachusetts, and a Naval Academy graduate.

One of the many tributes in his Memory Book was from Bud McGovern who wrote: "So sorry to hear about Capt. Shaughnessy. I was on the USS Milwaukee when he became the skipper. I'm also from Waltham Massachusetts and the bass player for Damn Right which he supported. It was an honor serving under him."

For many years Bill lived on Rayburn Drive in Temple Hills and was a parishioner at St. Philip's Church. He served as president of the Parish Council 1978-79 and was head of the lectors.

His daughter Dr. Maureen Shaughnessy preceded him in death. Survivors include his wife Patricia; children, William Jr., Ann Boland, Susan Baglini, Terri Collins, Kathryn Rioux, and Elisa Nichols; 16 grandchildren; a great-granddaughter; brother John Shaughnessy and sisters Margaret Shaughnessy and Mary Sharp.

Mass of Christian Burial was at the Church of the Resurrection in Burtonsville. Burial will be later at Arlington.

In the Memory Book, Terry Alesandrini inscribed: "He was, and always will be, the best skipper the USS Milwaukee ever had."

Milestones

Happy birthday to Winifred Lanehart, March 1; Karen (Elborne) Stern and Harold Titus, March 2; Jennifer Vilky, March 3; Amy Schlor and Matthew Flaherty, March 4; and Roy Derrick, March 6.

Happy 55th anniversary to Tom and Sarah Shipman on March 4, and happy anniversary to Larry and Susan Frost-butter, March 5.

priced quality hay for horses, cow and goats at 301-466-8360.

PRINCE GEORGES COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Join us for our Annual Dance Showcase Saturday February 22, 2014 6:30 PM-8:30 PM. The Dance Showcase will be at Charles H. Flowers High School 10001 Ardwick- Admore Road Springdale, Maryland 20774. The cost is \$10.00 for adults, \$5.00 for students five and older, and younger are free. Grades 6 through thru 12 are participating. For more information please contact Anita Lambert at 301-808-2317.

ANNUAL PANCAKE SUPPER

Please join us for our Annual Pancake Supper on Tuesday, March 4, 2014 from 5:00 PM-7:00 PM at St. Philip's Church, Baden Parish. The address is 13801 Baden Westwood Road Brandywine, Maryland 20613-8426. Adults pay \$7.00, children \$5.00 (12 years and under), children-FREE (5 years and under). Benefit is for St. Philip's Church Baden Parish. Contact number is (301) 888-1536.

Neighborhood Events

2015 Budget Town Hall Meeting

County Council to Hold FY 2015 Budget Town Hall Meeting

Opportunity for Citizens to Discuss FY15 Budget Priorities

The Prince George's County Council will hold a FY 2015 Budget Town Hall Meeting on Tuesday, February 25, 2014, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in the Largo High School Multi-Purpose Room, 505 Largo Road, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Council Chair Mel Franklin (D) – District 9 encourages County residents to participate in the FY 2015 Budget Town Hall Meeting.

"As we continue to work together to meet budget challenges in the midst of a slowly recovering economy, this meeting offers a crucial opportunity to share important information on the Council's budget review process and to hear directly from citizens about budget priorities that meet their needs."

The County Council FY 2015 Budget Town Hall Meeting will feature presentations on the budget outlook for the coming fiscal year and the Council's budget review process. Citizens will have an opportunity to address Council Members regarding their priorities for the FY 2015 budget. Important budget calendar dates for meetings and public hearings will also be provided.

This event is free and open to the public. To watch live, please visit:

www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/Government/LegislativeBranch/videocoverage.asp

WHO: Prince George's County Council

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Budget and Finance and Administration, Thomas Himler

County Auditor, David H. Van Dyke

County Residents

WHAT: County Council FY 2015 Budget Town Hall Meeting

WHEN: Tuesday, February 25, 2014

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

WHERE: Largo High School Multi-Purpose Room 505 Largo Road

Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20774

Delegate Anne Healey (District 22, Prince George's County) Introduces Two Environmental bills

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND (February, 2014) -- Delegate Anne Healey, a member of the Environmental Matters Committee, is sponsoring HB 1285 that would protect honey bees and other pollinators from harmful pesticides and HB 1237 to establish a requirement that drinking fountains be made available in state, county, municipal offices and other designated public places where possible.

HB 1285 - The agricultural process of the State is at risk if the bee population declines here as it has in other places. That is why Delegate Healey has introduced this legislation that restricts the use of powerful nicotine-based pesticides to professional use. "These poisons should only be handled and applied by trained professionals who will use the minimum amount necessary," said Healey. "It is not safe for untrained people to use them in residential areas – or really

anywhere, since bees travel as far as five miles to pollinate and can carry the poison back to the hive where it can weaken or kill the entire hive."

Nicotine-based pesticides have been banned by the European Commission for two years while they are under review.

HB 1237 - Establishing a state policy that drinking fountains should be available to the general public would serve several important purposes. It would reduce the volume of plastic waste in our environment and assure access to clean water, a necessity of life.

"Access to drinking water is a basic human right. It is one of the most basic services of the government," said the Delegate. In introducing this bill, she said "We want to make sure there are drinking fountains available in public areas so people have access to drinking water without having to pay excessively for it or carry it around." According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), "There is no assurance that just because water comes out of a bottle it is any cleaner or safer than water from the tap. In fact, tap water must meet much higher health standards than most bottled water."

Edwards Statement on Passage of Clean Debt Ceiling Legislation

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) released the following statement today regarding legislation to lift the debt ceiling, which passed the House by a vote of 221-201.

"I am pleased that House Republicans have ended the horse-trading on the full faith and credit of the United States by allowing a vote on a clean bill to increase our nation's debt ceiling. Paying our nation's bills has never before been a political issue and it never should be. That has always been my stance, and the position of House Democrats.

"Tonight, the House has stated unequivocally to Americans and the world that the full faith and credit of the United States is not in doubt, and it is my hope that House Republicans never call it into question again."

Senator Mikulski Recognized for Support of National Service

Senator Mikulski among bipartisan leaders honored on issues related to national service

WASHINGTON – Tomorrow, U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) will be recognized for his support for national service at the 11th Annual Friends of National Service Awards reception hosted by Voices for National Service in Washington, DC. Senator Mikulski will receive the Edward M. Kennedy National Service Lifetime Leadership Award for her life-long dedication to citizen service and for outstanding leadership in advancing national service as a civic commitment and legislative priority.

"There are numerous reasons why we call Senator Mikulski the 'Godmother of National Service'. She participated in the creation of AmeriCorps in 1993, and she shepherded the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act to become law, setting an ex-



Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards

pansive vision for national service in 2009. For nearly two decades, she has maintained her unparalleled support for national service," said AnnMaura Connolly, President of Voices for National Service. "Senator Mikulski's dedication, tenacity and passion for public service serve as an example to us all."

Mikulski's support for service was clear early in her career as a social worker and community activist. As a U.S. Senator, she serves as Co-Chair of the National Service Congressional Caucus and has fought tirelessly for continued federal funding for service programs like AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.

"I'm so pleased to receive this tremendous award that honors the spirit of service to our communities and our nation," Senator Mikulski said. "Every day in every way, volunteers in programs like AmeriCorps are unflagging and unflinching in their determination to make a difference through neighbor helping neighbor. These volunteers tutor teens, start neighborhood crime watches, turn vacant lots into neighborhoods, and help communities clean up and rebuild after natural disasters. I will continue to stand up for those answering the call of service that is transforming communities and transforming lives."

National service addresses critical issues in communities across the country by providing the human capital needed to support education and health care initiatives, coordinate disaster relief and prevention, and enable senior independence. For every taxpayer dollar invested in national service, there are returns to society of \$3.95 in terms of higher earnings, more output, and other community-wide benefits, according to a report released by Voices for National Service.

Volunteer Emergency Responders Will Not Count As Full-Time Employees Under Health Reform Law

Washington, DC – Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen applauded the Treasury Department's final regulation to ensure that, under the Affordable Care Act, volunteer emergency responders will not be considered full-time employees. Congressman Van Hollen had urged the Department to issue this clarification.

"This announcement provides important clarity and will ensure that towns and cities across the country won't have to eliminate volunteer emergency responder positions," said Congressman Van Hollen. "I'm committed to working with the Administration and my colleagues in Congress to make sure that the Affordable Care Act is implemented in a way that makes sense for families and communities."

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Ruth Turner 301 888 2153

COMMUNITY DANCE

Attention all Dancers and Non-Dancers. St. Philip's Church will be having Fun Night with Line and Hand dancing. The Community Dance will start on Friday February 21, 2014, Friday March 7, 2014 and Friday March 21, 2014 from 7:00-9:00 PM at St. Philip's Church, Baden Parish Fellowship. The address is 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland, 20613-8426. Admission is \$2.00. Come out and get in the groove with the latest dances and have some fun.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Bowie State University National Alumni Association, Inc. Life Member Plaques were presented to Gwendolyn Deville and Audrey Johnson residents of Brandywine Maryland during halftime program at the Bowie State University vs Lincoln University (Home) Alumni Day on February 8, 2014.

CLINTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Life Line Screening is coming to Clinton United Methodist Church (CUMC) on March 19, 2014. Register for a Wellness

Package which includes four vascular tests and osteoporosis screening from \$149 (\$139 with our member discount). All five screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete. In order to register for this event and receive a \$10 discount off any package priced above \$129, please call 1-888-653-6441 or visit www.lifelinescreening.com/community-partners. The church is located at 10700 Brandywine Road Clinton, Maryland.

2014 CENTENARIAN CELEBRATION

If you know someone who resides in the county and is 90 years old or better (as of January 1, 2014), please share the information with the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation. Send an e-mail to public.affairs@pgparks.com (subject: Residents 90 & better). If you have any questions, please call 301-44-3400 (TTY 301-446-3402).

JOHN ISABELLE ACRES FARM, INC

John Isabelle Acres Farm, Inc. in Brandywine, Maryland has hay for sale. Contact Frank Deville, Manager for reasonably

The Prince George's Post

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CALL 301.627.0900

COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

Should You Buy Pet Insurance?

One topic I've learned to avoid with new acquaintances until I know them better (along with politics and religion) is where they stand on the treatment of pets. Some people, when their dog gets sick or badly injured, say, "It's an animal — that's just part of the circle of life." Others consider Rover a close family member and would take out a second mortgage to save his life.



Pet owners from both camps probably see the barrage of ads for pet insurance and wonder whether it's worth the expense, which might be several thousand dollars over the life of your pet. I did some research and the best answer I can come up with is, it depends.

First, ask yourself: Do you regard pet insurance as a financial investment, where you expect to get back more in benefits than you paid out in premiums over the pet's life? Or, is it more like auto or homeowner's insurance, where you hope nothing ever goes seriously wrong, but you want coverage in case there's a catastrophe?

Either way, here are some basic facts about pet insurance that may help you decide whether it's right for you:

Pet insurance shares many features with human health insurance: Policies typically have annual deductibles, copayments and exclusions, and some limit which veterinarians, clinics and hospitals you can use.

But there are numerous differences as well. For example, pet insurers are allowed to refuse coverage for preexisting conditions and to set annual and lifetime payout limits. Among the many other restrictions you should watch for when comparing plans are:

Premiums vary greatly depending on where you live and may increase based on your pet's age, breed, veterinary cost inflation and other factors.

Typically you must pay the vet or hospital bill out of pocket and get reimbursed later.

Many plans deny or restrict coverage for congenital or hereditary conditions (like hip dysplasia in dogs or kidney failure in cats) and preventable conditions like periodontal disease.

Along with annual and lifetime maximums on benefits paid out, there may be a limit on how much it will pay for treatment of an individual illness or accident.

If your pet suffers a particular disorder one year, don't be surprised if that condition is excluded at renewal — or if you're required to pay an additional fee for future coverage.

Pets over certain age limits frequently are denied coverage. Certain breeds are often excluded or only eligible for restricted coverage.

Some carriers let you augment your accident and illness policy with optional "wellness care" coverage for things like spaying and neutering, annual physicals, vaccines and routine tests. Make sure the additional premium is worth the extra cost.

Perhaps the biggest challenge when choosing pet insurance is trying to compare plans, apples to apples. There are about a dozen carriers in the U.S. Each offers a variety of plans with varying deductible, copayment and maximum coverage amounts, as well as different covered benefits and exclusions.

You can go directly to their websites for plan details and to request a quote, or use an independent comparison website to pull quotes from multiple carriers. I'd recommend creating a spreadsheet to compare benefits and costs side by side, just as you would when shopping for auto insurance.

Bottom line: If you decide pet insurance isn't right for you, at least be sure you're setting money aside to cover expected — and unexpected expenses.

Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs. To participate in a free, online Financial Literacy and Education Summit on April 2, 2014, go to www.practicalmoneyskills.com/summit2014.

Md. Groups, Reps Rally for 'Democracy' 28th Amdmt, fair elections, voting rights

By PRESS OFFICER
Get Money Out - Maryland

Annapolis -- Two dozen Maryland advocacy groups rallied at the State House in the State House and lobbied legislators Tuesday to support passage of SJ 6. The binding resolution calls for an Article V Convention of the States to propose the "Democracy Amendment," that would encode voting rights in the U.S. Constitution, repeal Citizens United and the judicial construct of "corporate personhood," and to restore the federal and state governments' right to fully regulate campaign spending by corporations, unions and individuals.

"The Supreme Court has said money is speech and corporations are people," said Sen. Jamie Raskin (Md. Dist. 20), Senate Majority Whip who introduced with ten co-sponsors the resolution SJ 6 (track progress). "And 80% of the American people just reject what the Robert's court is doing in terms of our political campaigns. And we don't want billions of dollars in corporate money coming to distort our electoral process. So we have two pieces of legislation in Annapolis this session. One says that if a corporation is going to spend money in politics it must get a vote of the shareholders first, a majority of the shareholders have to participate in it, that's the premise of their decision. But the second says we must repeal Citizen's United and we're asking for a constitutional convention to pass an amendment to repeal the decision."

Del. Sheila Hixson, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, who introduced the companion House resolution HJ 7 (track progress) with 26 co-sponsors, said, "We want the rights of the people protected in order to have free and fair elections. This constitutional convention is needed so the people don't lose their voice."

Also speaking were U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD-3), who

is sponsoring legislation with similar goals in Congress, and the heads of Maryland-based organizations whose focal issues ranged from the environment and peace to labor, civil and human rights - but all shared the common conviction that success achieving their long-term goals depends on restoring our democratic institutions and rolling back the dominating influence of corporations and the wealthy in our elections and government."

Dozens of other lawmakers and staff members joined in the rally or took note as they came and went at the State House. The energized activists who braved the cold held signs with slogans such as "MONEY OUT - VOTERS IN" and "OF, BY, AND FOR, THE PEOPLE - NOT OF, BY AND FOR THE CORPORATIONS," and chanted "WE THE PEOPLE SHALL OVERCOME."

Following the rally participants formed delegations of constituents to visit offices of their senator and delegates to urge their sponsorship and support for passing the resolution.

Similar campaigns in many other states are striving to pass parallel resolutions. The California Assembly became the first to pass one last week. Organizers hope to do the same in the required two-thirds of state legislatures (34) over the coming years, requiring Congress to call an Article V "Convention of the States" to propose the 28th Amendment limited to the combination of objectives stated above. The impetus for this massive nationwide effort is that roughly 90 percent of Americans disapprove of Congress and are deeply troubled about the corrupting and dominating influence of so much money from corporations and the wealthiest in our elections and politics, severely worsened by recent Supreme Court rulings.

As stated in the resolution, "The U.S. Supreme Court has trampled the democratic political process and demolished the wall of separation between private



PHOTO COURTESY GET MONEY OUT - MARYLAND
23-Group Coalition Rallies in Annapolis to pass Md. Resolution for the 28th 'Democracy' Amdmt. for Free and Fair Elections.

wealth and democratic elections by removing prohibitions against unlimited electoral expenditures in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (Jan. 21, 2010), by denying the existence of an individual constitutional right to vote in Bush v. Gore, (Dec. 2000) and by severely undermining the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in Shelby County v. Holder (June 2013)."

"This is not a left or right issue," said Charlie Cooper, President of Get Money Out - Maryland, primary sponsor of the rally and lobby day with over 20 co-sponsoring organizations. "When our members of Congress spend five hours per day dialing for dollars, it poses an existential threat to representative democracy."

SPEAKERS: Sen. Jamie Raskin, Majority Whip and resolution sponsor Del. Sheila Hixson, Chair, House Ways & Means Committee and resolution sponsor Congressman John Sarbanes (MD-3), Sponsor of the 'Government by the People Act' Mike Tidwell, Chesapeake Climate Action Network Jennifer Bevan-Dan-

gel, Common Cause Md. Exec. Director Emily Scarr, Director of Maryland PIRG Elbridge James, Maryland State Conference NAACP Kate Planco Waybright, Exec. Director, Progressive Maryland Ryan Clayton, National Director of Wolf-PAC Plus other key lawmakers and grassroots leaders. SPONSOR: Get Money Out Maryland CO-SPONSORS: Common Cause Maryland, Maryland Public Interest Research Group, Maryland State Conference NAACP, Fund Our Communities, Progressive Maryland, Progressive Neighbors, Anne Arundel Peace Action, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Maryland Committee to Amend, Maryland Green Party, Maryland Nonprofits, Maryland United for Peace and Justice, Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore, Peace Action Montgomery, Pledge of Resistance, Prince George's County Peace and Justice Coalition, Progressive Cheverly, Progressive Democrats of America - Maryland, MoveOn - Baltimore Council, MoveOn - Howard

Wage from A1

the minimum wage for people employed within their borders should be above the federally set rate. Sen. Richard Colburn, R-Dorchester, is sponsoring an identical bill.

Backers of the county choice bills argue that while a \$10.10 minimum wage makes sense in some jurisdictions, it doesn't in counties where the median income and cost of living is lower.

"Western Maryland isn't the same as the Eastern Shore,

which isn't the same as Baltimore City, [which] is not the same as southern Maryland," Parrott said in an interview last month. "So to come up with one minimum wage rate for the whole state might be sensible in some counties, but is certainly not sensible in other counties."

Opponents of a statewide hike also say it would hurt the counties that border Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Virginia, where the minimum wage sits at the federal \$7.25 hourly minimum wage.

On the other end of the scale, a bill introduced by Sen. Katherine Klausmeier, D-Baltimore County, would explicitly prohibit counties from adopting their own minimum wage laws.

Montgomery and Prince George's Counties recently voted to raise their minimum wages to \$11.50 by 2017, but some critics say the counties have no way of enforcing the rates. Opponents also argue that different minimum wages within the state would create an economic disadvantage for certain counties.

Klausmeier's bill calls for a statewide minimum wage of \$8.25 an hour, with a "training wage" exemption that would permit employers to pay certain workers \$7.25 an hour through the first six months of their employment.

A bill that would require the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to enforce minimum wage laws set by counties will also be heard next week, along with one sponsored by Delegate Keith Haynes, D-Baltimore City, that calls for a statewide rate of \$12.50 an hour.

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COMMENTARY

By Ron Busby, Sr

President of the US Black Chambers, Inc



What Will (Y)our Legacy Look Like?

As America begins the annual ritual of "celebrating" the countless achievements of African Americans during the February observance of Black History Month, I think it makes sense to remind each other that the things we do every day will be the historical recollections for future generations.

There is no question of the value of recounting the daring exploits, the against-all-odds battles won, or of revisiting the horrors and brutalities that marked our journey through this country's history. I just don't believe that enough of us approach our daily commitments with an eye on how our actions (or inactions) will impact the lives of Black Americans in the future.

I could fill this space with the names of prodigious Black inventors, from Jan Matzeliger to Norbert Rilleaux, Garrett Morgan to Dr. Mark Dean. We all know the contributions of Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm and their Freedom's Journal, the Sengstackes, Murphys, Vanns and Scotts, the John H. Johnson and Earl G. Graves and their heroic struggles to make sure our stories were told - accurately. We know of Madame C.J. Walker and A.G. Gaston and Alonzo Herndon and Oprah and Bob Johnson and Herman Russell and the empire builders of the business world.

But today I want to give a Black History "shout out" to the millions of nameless, faceless business women and men who rose before dawn and got home long after everyone was asleep. The barbers, hairdressers, shopkeepers, brick masons, carpenters, café owners, mechanics, painters, printers, shoe shine and repairmen. The tailors, grocers, ice, coal and wood deliverymen.... All the folks whose toils paved the way for us, paid the tuition to Howard, Morehouse, Johnson C. Smith, Fisk, Xavier, Dillard and all the "A&M's" across the south!

After nearly fifty years of successfully aspiring to "good jobs," we are witnessing a boom in the numbers of Black Americans returning to our roots as entrepreneurs and business owners, and this boom couldn't have come at a better time. When it's clear that government solutions to income in-

equality fail to factor for or include us; when Black un- and underemployment threaten the nutritional health and educational opportunities for our children; when globalization of markets consigns our participation to the role of consumers... that's when it should become clear the key role that Black business plays in our communities.

The U.S Black Chambers, Inc. (USBC) is acutely aware of the battle that African Americans face in the marketplace today. When online purchases of clothing eclipses the purchases made inside actual stores, the opportunities for Black retailers practically disappears. Despite the obvious love affair Black folks have with hats, suits, shoes and boots, it is Nordstrom, Macy's, Neiman's and local designer boutiques that get their share of our income inequality, not Black-owned clothes sellers.

We struggle to find a Black-owned grocery chain, even though African Americans spend a disproportionate share of their disposable income on food. Black-owned restaurants are an increasingly endangered species, even as national chains pad their bottom lines with the lion's share of our discretionary spending on food...including sushi!

Black automobile dealers fare a little better, though the 80s and 90s wreaked havoc on the number of franchised dealerships owned by African Americans. Without question, we continue to provide the comfortable profit cushion, particularly for luxury brand automobiles. (Remember, every dollar earned without advertising/marketing effort to earn that dollar is FREE MONEY!) Telecom companies, high-end electronics, "luxury" liquors, condo sellers and jewelers all positively salivate when their coffers fill up with Black dollars.

Among the goals of the USBC, Entrepreneur Development is the loftiest, and most elusive, but we believe if we are successful at reigniting our passion for business ownership, we have the best opportunity to solve the challenges faced by Black America. The historical record of our ability to build colleges, insurance companies and hospitals

See LEGACY, Page A5

Marc Morial, President and CEO

National Urban League



Black History Month: Now More Than Ever

"There is no more powerful force than a people steeped in their history. And there is no higher cause than honoring our struggle and ancestors by remembering."

Lonnie Bunch, founding director, National Museum of African American History and Culture

Ever since the 2009 election of Barack Obama as America's first Black President and the 100th anniversary of the National Urban League in 2010, the perennial debate about the need for Black History Month has intensified. Some have questioned the need for a special month to recognize the many unknown and unsung achievements of African Americans. With Obama as President, the logic goes, we have now achieved Dr. King's dream of a non-racial America where everyone is judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin. I wish it were so.

Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act and the repeal of the Poll Tax. But unfortunately, the suppression of voting rights and other instances of racial discrimination remain. All one needs to do is look at the glaring disparities between Blacks and whites in income, employment, incarceration rates, educational achievement and health status to see that race still matters in America. Income inequality and equal opportunity are still part of the unfinished business of American democracy.

In 1926, after centuries of Blacks being excluded, not only from the mainstream of American life, but also from the textbooks in our schools, the African American historian, Carter G. Woodson, did a service to all Americans when he created Negro History Week, which was expanded to Black History Month in 1976. Woodson's vision was one of unity and inclusion. He

said, "What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race, hate and religious prejudice." That is a goal that America is still struggling to achieve.

In fact, legislatures in a number of states, including New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, have passed laws mandating or encouraging teachers to broaden their history courses to include more ethnic, racial and gender diversity. That is why we still recognize March as Women's History Month, May as Jewish American History Month, September 15 to October 15 as Hispanic Heritage Month and February as Black History Month. These celebrations serve a dual purpose: first to build self-esteem among historically oppressed people, and second to remind all Americans that in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, our diversity is our greatest strength.

Black history is American history. While the story and achievements of African Americans are especially celebrated this month, the contributions we have made and the struggles we still face deserve recognition every day of the year. Next year, for the first time, Black History will enter the mainstream when the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture opens on the National Mall in Washington. The Museum describes itself as "a place of meaning, of memory, of reflection, of laughter, and of hope. It should be a beacon that reminds us of what we were; what challenges we still face; and point us towards what we can become."

As we honor those who have made history, we must also recognize that we are history in the making. Through our work, commitment to equality and civic engagement, we can and we must, in the words of President Obama, continue to "right the wrongs of history and make our world anew."

Open to the Public



NPS PHOTO.

The Home of Frederick Douglass, the Leading African American Spokesman of the 19th Century

The Frederick Douglass National Historic Site is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the most famous 19th century African American. His life was a testament to the courage and persistence that serves as an inspiration to those who struggle in the cause of liberty and justice. Visitors to the site learn about his efforts to abolish slavery and his struggle for rights for all oppressed people.

In 1877 Frederick Douglass purchased the home which he named Cedar Hill. This location was authorized Sept. 5, 1962, as Frederick Douglass Home; and re-designated Feb. 12, 1988 as the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site.

Frederick Douglass' life spanned nearly eighty years, from the time that slavery was universal in American states to the time it was becoming a memory. Douglass freed himself from slavery and through decades of tireless efforts he helped to free millions more.

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



Celebrating, Continuing and Building on Chip's Success

We're used to making a big fuss over children's birthdays, but this week child advocates and families across the country are celebrating CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, on the fifth anniversary of its reauthorization. One family who lives in the working-class Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia with their six-, four- and three-year-old children told us they celebrate and are grateful for CHIP every day. The husband is a talented freelance videographer and the wife cares for the children. CHIP has been a lifeline for the family, providing stability with health and dental coverage for the children. With CHIP coverage, she gets regular phone calls reminding her it's time for appointments or letting her know a dental van is in the area. CHIP has opened doors to high quality child-appropriate providers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania Health System when needed and provided peace of mind for the hardworking father, whose income can vary wildly from month to month and year to year. CHIP has given him security knowing his children are getting the care they need without breaking the bank. The wife says, "The kids wouldn't have had health insurance if it wasn't for CHIP."

There are more than eight million children with stories like this. To survive and thrive, all children need access to comprehensive, affordable health coverage that is easy to get and keep. Unmet health and mental health needs can result in children falling behind developmentally and having trouble catching up physically, emotionally, socially, and academically. And it can mean life or death for children from preventable disease and illness. Our hearts at the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) are so often broken with stories of children dying for lack of timely, affordable health care and CHIP plays a critical role in the American health care system in decreasing their numbers. It has strong bipartisan roots. It was created in 1997 when Democrats and Republicans, led by

Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), came together to create a system of health coverage for children whose families earned too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to be able to buy health coverage that today costs on average more than \$16,000 a year for a family of four in the individual market. CHIP continues to provide crucial support for millions of working families: 92 percent of all children enrolled in CHIP had at least one parent employed during the last year. Since its creation CHIP has helped cut the number of uninsured children in half, to the lowest level on record, while improving child health outcomes and access to care.

Health coverage for CHIP children is more affordable for families than private insurance and its benefits are generally more comprehensive and child-appropriate than private insurance. CHIP's benefits and provider networks are specifically designed to make sure children have access to child-appropriate services, providers, specialists, and facilities.

CHIP is an essential part of the health system for children.

By preserving and strengthening CHIP and Medicaid and creating new coverage options for parents, access to health coverage is now available for 95 percent of all children in America. But eligibility and access to coverage do not guarantee enrollment. While 42 million children are enrolled in CHIP and Medicaid, more than 8 million in CHIP alone, more than 7 million children under 19 are still uninsured. Nearly 70 percent of these uninsured children are eligible for but not enrolled in CHIP or Medicaid. More than a third of the eligible but unenrolled children live in just three states—California, Florida, and Texas. The Children's Defense Fund is making and all of us must make every effort to enroll every child to save child lives.

We know health-related problems can lead to poor academic performance and that uninsured children are more likely to perform poorly in school than children with coverage. CDF has partnered with AASA, The School Superintendents Association, to link uninsured children

See WATCH, Page A8

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

Tips For Surviving A Broken Heart

Despite all the happy images Valentine's Day may bring about love, the reality is that not all romantic relationships last forever. Losing someone you possibly considered the love of your life can be a painful experience, leaving you feeling shattered, abandoned and very much alone. But there are some steps that can help get you through the pain of a lost love.

1. Recognize this as a loss, similar to the death of someone close to you. That means you will mourn. Don't feel guilty for being sad or angry.
2. Acknowledge that with time you will get better. When you have the flu, you know it won't last forever. Think of this pain as a flu of the heart. It's going to go away, too.
3. Take care of yourself physically. Get lots of rest but don't languish in bed. Exercise. Eat well and sensibly. This is not the time to junk out nor the time for stringent dieting.
4. Put structure in your life. Stick to your regular schedule as much as possible during the week. Make plans for evenings, weekends and holidays.
5. Realize you really aren't alone. Seek the support of others. There's nothing to be ashamed about. It's okay to accept comforting, but don't wallow in repeated story telling.
6. Invest your energies in life. Surround yourself with things that are alive: plants, pets, and kids. Nurturing others is a fantastic way to nurture yourself.
7. Be aware of the rebound. This is not the time to rekindle old, failed relationships, nor the time to start a new one. You need time alone to get to know yourself again.
8. Start something new, interesting and involving. Develop a new interest or rediscover an old one. Take a class at the community college... pick up that craft project gathering dust... consider some travel.
9. Forgive your ex-lover. Forgive yourself. Celebrate the good in the relationship ended, but don't hold on to mementos from it. Accept that when something's over, it's over.
10. Reaffirm yourself. Be gentle with yourself. Your life is well worth living. Learn from this experience and evaluate your own growth. Take stock and make realistic adjustments where needed.

These simple steps can help minimize that pain and put your life back on a positive, solid footing. And perhaps, come next Valentine's Day, you'll again be a participating member of the relationship celebration.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

Business Spotlight

Edwards Commends GSA For Including Prince George's County in NIH Lease Proposals

Washington, D.C. — Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) released the following statement regarding the General Services Administration including Prince George's County in two lease proposals to consolidate offices for the National Institutes of Health. The lease proposals were passed by a voice vote in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

"I commend the General Services Administration (GSA) for adding Prince George's County in the delineated area in the proposals to consolidate office space for the National Institutes of Health. Since coming to office, I have encouraged GSA to recognize the accessibility, proximity, and value to the taxpayers that Prince George's County offers. While these NIH proposals are a step in the right direction, I will continue to work with GSA to bring quality federal lease opportunities to Prince George's County to put us on equal footing with other jurisdictions in the metropolitan Washington area."

Legacy from A4

proves that when necessary we can achieve monumental "wins" through collective entrepreneurial activity. And -- in today's terminology - joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions provide the context for our next collective steps in business growth.

So, we at the USBC and our affiliates across the country encourage you to be more mindful, and more intentional as you pursue your dreams. Understand that 20, 50, 100 years from now someone will read the record of your contribution to life as they know it,

and the fact that you made a lot of money won't be enough to get your name in the record book. Business ownership opens doors of opportunity, not just for you and your family, but the families of your employees, associates, customers/clients, vendors and suppliers. That improved quality of life affords access to opportunities for education, earning, travel and the new worlds they discover will create future generations of inventors and history makers. Black History is made and celebrated every day... make sure that your everyday actions pave the way.

Governor O'Malley Announces \$500,000 Investment in Saleswarp from InvestMaryland

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Governor

BALTIMORE, MD (February, 2014) — SalesWarp, a Baltimore-based provider of e-commerce management software, has received a \$500,000 investment from the State's InvestMaryland program, the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) announced. A public-private partnership between the State and venture capital firms, InvestMaryland raised \$84 million to reinvestigate the State-run Maryland Venture Fund (MVF) and support the growth of young Maryland companies in biotechnology, cybersecurity, e-commerce and other high-growth industries. The funding, through the Maryland Venture Fund, led SalesWarp's fundraising round and will be used to grow the company's innovative line of products.

"Entrepreneurs, startup companies and small businesses play a critical role in the growth of Maryland's economy. They are the engine that drives innovation and discovery while creating the family-supporting jobs of today and tomorrow," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "We are proud to make this investment in SalesWarp and we look forward to their success in Maryland's growing community of exciting high-tech startups."

"We are thrilled to have this commitment from the Maryland Venture Fund," said David Potts, Founder and CEO of SalesWarp.

"Beyond the funding, MVF also brings many connections and skills that will help us achieve our 2014 goals and grow our team here in Maryland. We're using this funding to expand our market share nationally, meet rising customer demand and continued innovation of our product lines to propel growth."

SalesWarp, a retailer's mission control center, has experienced strong growth the past two years by serving both enterprise and emerging online retailers. A budding 32-person company located in Baltimore's Emerging Technology Center, SalesWarp expects its staff to grow to 25 by the end of 2015. Much of the company's growth can be attributed to its partner strategy and integrations with leading e-commerce firms, including shopping carts (Magento, Volusion, Demandware, osCommerce), online marketplaces (Amazon, eBay, Rakuten), accounting (Quickbooks, Peachtree) and shipping software (Shipworks, iabot, Shipstation).

Created by Governor O'Malley and passed by the General Assembly in 2011, InvestMaryland is the largest venture capital investment initiative in Maryland's history. In March 2012, the State raised \$84 million for the program through an online auction of tax credits to Maryland insurance companies. Two-thirds of the funding — \$56 million — is being managed by carefully screened private venture firms that will invest the



PHOTO BY OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
CEO David Potts said he expects to grow to between 40 and 50 by the third quarter of this year. He is looking to hire software programmers, sales and marketing people, client program managers and a chief technology officer.

funds and, if successful, return 100% of the principal and 80% of the profits to the State's general fund. The remaining third of the InvestMaryland capital is largely allocated to direct investments by the state-run Maryland Venture Fund.

The Maryland Venture Fund is a regionally recognized leader in seed and early-stage investing and a national model for state-supported investment programs. With nearly two decades of experience and numerous successful investments, MVF invests in highly innovative technology companies across the full range of industry sectors including software, communications, cybersecurity and life sciences companies in the areas of healthcare IT, medical devices and diagnostics.

About DBED: The Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development stimulates private investment and creates jobs by attracting new businesses, encouraging the expansion and retention of existing companies, and providing workforce training and financial assistance to Maryland companies. The Department promotes the State's many economic advantages and markets local products and services at home and abroad to spur economic development and international investment, trade and tourism. Because they are major economic generators, the Department also supports the Arts, film production, sports and other special events. For more information, visit www.choosemaryland.org.

Core from A1

even before Common Core was implemented," Barsam said.

Cody Dorsey, 17, a senior at Digital Harbor High School in Baltimore City, is only taking two classes, neither of which are AP, and spends the rest of the day interning. He also said that he feels no change.

Each of these four students are representatives on their respective county Boards of Education. All are all college-bound. Barsam will attend the U.S. Naval Academy after graduation and Drooff, Dorsey and Town have yet to decide what college they will attend.

Maryland held the highest percentage of seniors in the country to receive a passing grade on AP exams in 2013, according to a report Tuesday by College Board. The state has also led nation in AP success for

the eighth consecutive year, according to a press release from the Governor's Press Office.

While some parents have expressed disapproval of Common Core, these students said the educational politics of the policy haven't stretched into classrooms.

Town noted: "Most kids don't know what Common Core is."

And Dorsey said, "The [high school] students I speak to, they can't really tell the difference."

Barsam and Drooff were reluctant to comment on the effects the new standards have had on students in classes outside of AP.

"Perhaps the low-level classes are not being spoon-fed as much [as they used to be]," Barsam offered.

One controversial aspect of the new standards, which are accompanied with a new teaching style, is the vastness and speed of the implementation.

"The biggest thing is the adjustments," Drooff said. "They're growing pains and they're something we all have to work together with."

"There's a learning curve to be had with anyone," Barsam said. "With any change, there's going to be some pushback at first."

Last week, parents filled the House Ways and Means Committee room to testify in support of a bill that would repeal Common Core in Maryland.

"They [parents] haven't been in school for a while," Drooff said. "My curriculum was different than the students now, but it's quite a bit more similar than the curriculum 20 or 30 years ago."

A major concern parents presented was that student's grades have dropped.

Drooff, however, thinks parents shouldn't "focus so much on the grade" and that students

will "be more prepared for college and a career" later on.

She also recognized that parents are aggravated.

"Parents see their kids are in elementary school and they're frustrated because they can't help them," Drooff said.

But parents aren't the only ones dealing with the complications of a new system.

"Teachers across the board are frustrated," Barsam said. "Teachers are saying the work is being piled on and they aren't being compensated."

Barsam, Drooff and Town agreed that Common Core may become beneficial once the standards have settled in.

"In the end, maybe it'll have a positive result and will improve the standards," Town said.

Barsam said: "Once we've got these changes down, I think it'll be really smooth and perhaps better than before."

Background from A1

In addition to its failure to adequately vet Alexis, USIS was responsible for conducting a background check on National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden.

The company now faces fraud allegations from the Department of Justice, which claims USIS was paid for 665,000 background checks that were incomplete or never performed.

A congressional report released Tuesday found the alleged fraud "appears to have greatly reduced backlogs and resulted in significant financial rewards under the company's contract with" the federal government, including \$16 million in incentive awards granted between 2008 and 2011.

The report found that "senior USIS executives also ben-

efitted financially," including \$1 million worth of bonuses and stock granted to former CEO Bill Mixon.

At Tuesday's hearing, USIS CEO Sterling Phillips said the company is not responsible for granting clearances and shifted blame to more than 450 city governments nationwide — including Baltimore and, until recently, Washington — that refuse to provide criminal records to private contractors conducting background checks.

"USIS and OPM's (Office of Personnel Management) other contractors have no role in deciding whether an individual actually receives or retains a security clearance," Phillips said. "We only collect and report information and we do not even make a recommendation. The decision-making process is known as 'adjudica-

tion' and that authority lies solely with the agency requesting the clearance."

To avoid potential litigation, USIS also does not use Google or social networks like Facebook and Twitter to gather data on applicants, further limiting its sources of information on candidates like Alexis. Once granted, security clearances are valid for a period of 10 years.

"For the entire federal workforce, is it not wise in this day and age to at least look at the Internet?" Issa said to Phillips at the hearing. "At least begin looking at this as a tool."

Cummings has cosponsored a bill introduced by Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., that would provide real-time monitoring of applicants' arrest records and other activities, withhold some funding

from cities that refuse to provide this information to contractors, create a more electronically-accessible investigative database and shift some responsibility for conducting background checks back to the federal government.

"This is about making sure that people who get (security) clearances are cleared," Cummings said of the bill, called the Security Clearance Reform Act of 2014.

Cummings is currently the only cosponsor of the bill, which was introduced Monday.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Altegrity Inc., the parent company of USIS, spent \$330,000 in lobbying in 2013 and its PAC contributed \$5,000 to Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, D-Cockeysville, in 2012.

OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK
Movie Review
"Frozen"

FROZEN
Grade: B-
Rated R, some harsh profanity, some very gruesome images and strong violence
1 hr., 31 min

You can picture Adam Green, the writer and director of "Frozen," sitting on a ski lift one day, idly thinking, "What if I fell off? How high above the ground am I? No! What if the lift stopped moving and they couldn't get it started? What if I was trapped here!" We all have our moments of morbid fantasizing, but what separates Adam Green from me and you is that he turns his dark "what if?" scenarios into movies. His "Hatchet" had tourists terrorized in the swamps of Louisiana; "Frozen" pits the heroes against Mother Nature herself, that wanton trollop.

The setting is a ski resort in New England, where three college students are trying to talk their way onto the lift without buying tickets. Dan (Kevin Zegers) and Joe (Shawn Ashmore), best friends since grade school, come skiing here regularly, but today Joe is miffed because Dan has brought along his girlfriend, Parker (Emma Bell), in a flagrant violation of the Bros Before Hoes policy.

No one likes being the third wheel; it doesn't help that Joe and Parker don't really get along, each jealous of the other's relationship with Dan. It's the same old story: "We haven't seen you at Fezziwig's for dollar pitcher night all semester!" Joe complains. What, Dan would rather spend time with his beautiful girlfriend than drink cheap



ROTTENTOMATOES

Featuring the voices of Kristen Bell and Idina Menzel, "Frozen" is the coolest comedy-adventure ever to hit the big screen. When a prophecy traps a kingdom in eternal winter, Anna, a fearless optimist, teams up with extreme mountain man Kristoff and his sidekick reindeer Sven on an epic journey to find Anna's sister Elsa, the Snow Queen, and put an end to her icy spell. Encountering mystical trolls, a funny snowman named Olaf, Everest-like extremes and magic at every turn, Anna and Kristoff battle the elements in a race to save the kingdom from destruction. (c) Disney

beer? It's like Joe doesn't even know him anymore.

But who cares about any of this? Not you, that's for sure, and especially not with the self-consciously hip banter that passes between the three. (I like Green's ideas, but the dialogue is the movie's weakness, and all three of these characters are jerks.) Soon enough, the film gets to the point, with the ski lift shutting down while Joe, Parker, and Dan are still on it. What's more, it's Sunday night, and the resort doesn't open again until Friday. They're too high above the slope to jump off. They're trapped.

This is a simple variation on the familiar scenario of being accidentally locked in a store (or a vault, or an elevator, or whatever) overnight, with the added cruelty of being confined to a small, claustrophobic space — the chair lift — even though there is a world of open air around

them. It's like floating on a tiny raft in the middle of the ocean, dying of thirst in spite of all that water. (Speaking of which, "Frozen's" premise recalls "Open Water," where the married couple was accidentally left behind by their scuba-diving group. Someone in "Frozen" mentions shark attacks, which I assume is a reference to that.)

To an extent, things transpire according to the usual pattern. First there is irritation over the inconvenience, then fear and panic as they realize they're trapped, then the morbid humor, the blaming, the turning on each other, and so forth. The scenes between the suspense sequences, where the three have nothing to do but talk, are passable but nothing special. When you have just three actors confined to one small location, their dialogue and their charisma have to sizzle to hold the audience's attention.

Bell, Ashmore, and Zegers are good, and admirably committed to what cannot have been a pleasant shoot (everything was filmed on location in Park City, Utah), but the film can't survive with them alone.

Luckily, Green also has some excellent ideas about how to torment his characters. What can he do with three people stuck on a ski lift? You'd be surprised. Think about the possible means of escape. Then think about what could go wrong. Then think about it for a hundred years and I bet you don't come up with the details Green does.

And that's what makes "Frozen" work. Yes, the talking parts are only average; yes, the acting is solid but unremarkable; yes, the premise is simple. That's why it's all the more impressive that Green can spin it into a 90-minute film with several genuinely thrilling or horrific moments.

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

The 2014 Sochi Olympics: Something For Everyone!

Since their founding in 1896, every Olympics has arrived with the promise to unite the world. One can still hear the lyrical words of the man who presided over the 1936 Berlin games, Chancellor Adolf Hitler, who said that he hoped his Nazi Olympics could help "knit the bonds of peace between nations."



Hitler's dreams of using the vessel of what is known as "the Olympic Movement" to create a harmonious world, has tragically never come to pass, despite the best efforts of the aristocrats in the International Olympic Committee. Tragically, their efforts have been undone by the pesky people being given the glorious gift of the games. As champion of the Nazi Olympics, and longtime leader of the IOC, Avery Brundage wrote about his critics, "Warped mentalities and cracked personalities seem to be everywhere and impossible to eliminate." In Vancouver there were people chanting about the Olympics and indigenous rights. In Atlanta, the ACLU was up in arms about the jailing of thousands of young black men in advance of the 1996 games. In Greece back in 2004, there were armies of the ungrateful yammering about the exploding price tag and the deaths of Olympic workers. In Beijing, we heard carping about "human rights" and the crushing of dissent. In England, there were nattering nabobs of negativism dulling the Olympic shine by asking why fears of terror attacks were being used to harass activists, not to mention their whining about the extensive use of surveillance drones and cell phone monitoring.

At every Olympics, you can cue the complaints, getting in the way when all we're trying to do is enjoy a good luge.

Yet it took a visionary like Vladimir Putin, a man with the pecks to match his steely will, to finally figure out a way to unite the world and make the Olympics something for everybody. Everyone, thanks to Putin, has something to care about during the 2014 Sochi Games.

If you are a person with even the mildest concern for anything outside the five feet in front of your face, then this Olympiad is for you. No matter your cause, no matter your passion, Vladimir Putin has given you something to perk up about.

Is your issue the corruption of crony capitalism? Well, Sochi will be the site of the most expensive Olympics in history with a \$51 billion price tag, a cool \$40 billion over budget, \$30 billion of which has somehow magically disappeared in the cavernous pockets of the powerful.

Do you care about LGBT rights? These Olympics promise a cascade of athlete activism against Russia's anti-gay propaganda laws. This legislation, as Jeff Sharlet wrote from Moscow, have made life a living hell for Russia's LGBT residents. Expect a fierce and spirited competition over which country will punish their athletes most harshly for speaking out.

Is your issue indigenous rights? The Sochi Games are taking place on the very grounds of the 1864 Circassian Genocide, which took place exactly 150 years ago. Sochi is even a Circassian word, not that you will hear that in the Olympic coverage. Nor will you see much of a Circassian presence on camera. As Dana Wojokh, an organizer of Circassian descent from the organization No Sochi 2014, said to me, "By building the games on top the anniversary of the Circassian genocide, Putin is doing more than disrespecting our ancestors or usurping our history. Nine out of ten Circassians live in diaspora, with no right of return while Russia is spending \$51 billion to invite the world and celebrate atop a site of our gravest tragedy."

What about worker's rights? Since 2009, as many as sixty workers have died in the rush to build Olympic facilities. Many more have been damaged in workplace accidents. The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) have pledged to demonstrate at the Russian embassy in Geneva. They issued a statement that read, "There is blood in the snows of Sochi and the impunity of workers' exploitation has to stop."

Perhaps your issue is the environment. Despite the claims of Russian Olympic officials that they were going to build "an environment in harmony with nature," their idea of "harmony" is decidedly off-key. From a "former wetlands buried under two metres (6.5 feet) of crushed rock" to polluted water, to a "wrecked habitat, destroyed wildlife populations and bungled attempts to remedy the consequences," the environment has been written off as collateral damage to the staging of the games. As Sochi is steeped in very real concerns about terrorism, environmentalists that have raised concerns about the wetlands are finding themselves behind bars for the duration of the games, with one leading activist imprisoned for "swearing in public."

What about animal rights? Well, Russian Olympic officials have announced the mass extermination of stray dogs. One dog had the temerity to interrupt a dress rehearsal of the opening ceremonies so now they will all collectively pay for his impudence. As Alexei Sorokin, the head of the contracted "pest control" company said, "A dog ran into the Stadium, we took it away. God forbid something like this happens at the actual opening ceremony. This will be a disgrace for the whole country."

Let's say you understand that injustice is a part of life, and you value a free press's role in reporting what is happening. There will be no free press in Sochi. The Russian government passed a decree in November to "collect telephone and Internet data of the Games' organizers, athletes, and others, with particular emphasis on journalists." The text of this law was then published in the state newspapers, an act of press intimidation unto itself. Reporter friends of mine are taking out their cell phone batteries as they walk in between events so they cannot be monitored. The NSA must be having nocturnal emissions at the mere thought of it all.

You have to hand it to Vladimir Putin. We would not be able to raise these myriad issues without Putin's determination to use the Olympics to "remake a region" on the backs of Russia's most vulnerable, no matter the cost in blood or treasure. He is everything the International Olympic Committee has ever wanted in a world leader. So the next time someone knocks Putin and the Olympics, just remember: they have united people across the world... in collective disgust.

Maryland Zoo Lion Cub Update

BALTIMORE, MD — Luke, Leia and Zuri, the lion cubs at The Maryland Zoo, are growing by leaps and bounds under the care and supervision of the Animal Department staff at the Zoo. Here is an update on their condition:

- Zuri, from Zoo Miami, cleared quarantine a few weeks ago and is healthy and strong.

- Luke weighs almost 45 pounds while Zuri and Leia are slightly smaller at 40 pounds.

- They each eat 3 pounds of meat a day.

- Their personalities are quite distinct:

- o Luke is cautious and more easily startled than the two girls.

- o Leia is bold, taking the lead when presented with new play items.

- o Zuri is more observant, assessing the situation and the other cubs' reactions before deciding what to do next.

- Luke tends to rotate between playing with Leia and then with Zuri. Leia and Zuri get along with one another, but don't often play together.

- As they have grown, so have their claws and teeth! Animal care staff have less physical interaction with the cubs, and are managing their care through protective barriers as necessary.

- The cubs spend much of their awake time playing with various objects. This play time is very important to their growth as they are learning skills they



PHOTO Courtesy of the Maryland Zoo

Left to right: Leia, Zuri, and Luke

will use as adults including stalking and pouncing.

- Animal care staff have been "baby-proofing" the lion exhibit with additional safety features to ensure that the cubs aren't at risk when it is time for them to explore their outdoor habitat.

- Due to the continuing frigid winter weather, the cubs will remain in their den until there are consistently warmer temperatures.

While the cubs can see and hear adult lions Cuma and

Hassan in their indoor dens, they have not yet been physically introduced to one another. Cuma and Hassan are out on exhibit together daily, weather permitting.

About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contri-

butions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo's varied natural habitat exhibits in areas such as Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the award-winning Children's Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums.

Calendar of Events

November 7 — November 13, 2013

First Tuesdays At Abraham Hall

Date & Time: Monthly, First Tuesdays
Description: Abraham Hall, constructed in 1889, is the best example of an African American benevolent society lodge in Prince George's County. Located in the community of Rossville, it is the first African American historic site in the county to be fully restored using public funds. Home of M-NCPPC's Black History Program, please call the number listed below for more information about the First Tuesday program.
Ages: All ages
Location: *Abraham Hall*
 7612 Old Muirkirk Road, Beltsville 20705
Contact: 240-264-3415; TTY 301-699-2544

Senior Days

Date and Time: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 8 am-12 noon
Description: Seniors (Prince George's County residents only) are allowed FREE use of both the fitness center and pool during these times.
Cost: FREE
Ages: 60 & up
Location: *Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex*
 8001 Sheriff Road
 Landover, MD 20785
Contact: 301-583-2400; TTY 301-583-2483

No Longer Forgotten

Date & Time: Thursday, February 27, 2014 7-9 pm
Description: What happens to African American children when they go missing? Are there differences in how missing cases are handled according to race? Is the legal system treating black youth any different today than they did with the Scottsboro 9, Emmett Till, the Jena 6 or Trayvon Martin? Join us in an exhibition and open discussion about the disparities in color and demographics in keeping black youth safe and on the right path. Advanced registration suggested for this free event.
Cost: Free **Ages:** 18 & up
Location: *Newton White Mansion*
 2708 Enterprise Road, Mitchellville 20721
Contact: 301-249-2004; TTY 301-446-6802

Black History Month: African-American Heroes & Advocates Costume Contest

Date and Time: Friday, February 28, 2014 6-9 pm
Description: Join us for a costume contest as we close out Black History Month! To celebrate, dress as one of your favorite African American heroes, recite a speech and/or share a story that pertains to the Civil Rights Movement. Awards will be presented to the best dressed and for the most enthusiastic speaker!
Cost: Free **Ages:** All ages welcome
Location: *Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex*
 8001 Sheriff Road, Landover 20785
Contact: 301-583-282; TTY 301-583-2483

Meet Me at the Movies

Date & Time: Friday, March 14, 2014 12 noon-4 pm
Description: Come travel with us to the Regal Theater in Hyattsville to catch the latest blockbuster movie! Bring additional money for your lunch. Bus departs from College Park Community Center at 11:45 am and returns back to the Center by 4 pm.
Cost: Resident \$10; Non-Resident \$12 **Ages:** 50 & up
Location: *College Park Community Center and Youth Soccer Complex*
 5051 Pierce Avenue, College Park 20740
Contact: 301-441-2647; TTY 301-445-4512

Montpelier's Spring History Lecture Series: History Through a Drinking Vessel

Date & Time: Wednesday, March 19, 7:30 pm
Description: This is the first of three history lectures on the beverages, libations and social culture of 18th century life. In this talk, Rod Cofield, Executive Director of Historic London Town and Gardens, will speak on taverns and travel in colonial America.
Cost: Free **Ages:** 12 & up
Location: *Montpelier Mansion/Historic Site*
 9650 Muirkirk Road, Laurel 20708
Contact: 301-377-7817; TTY 301-699-2544; montpeliermansion@pgparks.com

Shopping Trip to Arundel Mills

Date & Time: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 9:30 am-4 pm
Description: Join us for a shopping trip to Arundel Mills Mall! Enjoy lunch on your own and shop with your friends. Don't forget to see if you can snag a sale! Bus departs promptly from College Park Community Center at 9:30 am and returns back to the Center by 4 pm.
Cost: Resident \$5; Non-Resident \$7 **Ages:** 50 & up
Location: *College Park Community Center and Youth Soccer Complex*
 5051 Pierce Avenue, College Park 20740
Contact: 301-441-2647; TTY 301-445-4512

LIVE at Montpelier!-Todd Marcus, Jazz/Bass Clarinet

Date and Time: Friday, March 28, 2014 8 pm
Description: Join us for this edition of LIVE at Montpelier with Baltimore-based bass clarinetist and composer Todd Marcus! He is one of the few jazz artists worldwide to focus exclusively on the use of the bass clarinet as a primary solo instrument. Marcus' music swings hard, both with fiery and introspective intensity; however, it also maintains a strong, lyrical sensibility—presenting the instrument with a modern, straight-laced jazz approach. This performance is supported by a Maryland State Arts Council Maryland Touring Grants Program.
Cost: Tickets: \$25/person; 10% discount for Montpelier members & seniors
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: *Montpelier Arts Center*
 9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel 20708
Contact: 301-377-7800 or 410-792-0664; TTY 301-490-2329

EARTH TALK ... "A Nuclear Power Resurgence?"

Dear EarthTalk:

I thought Japan's 2011 Fukushima nuclear plant meltdown would have sealed nuclear power's fate, but I keep hearing otherwise. Can you enlighten?

— Jacob Allen,
New York, NY

The 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster did cause many nations to reconsider their nuclear commitments, though many European countries—Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden—had already begun phasing out nuclear power decades earlier. After Fukushima, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland all moved to decommission their nuclear facilities altogether by 2022, 2025 and 2034 respectively.

Japan's nuclear program, which provided 30 percent of the country's electricity needs before the March 2011 disaster, is now essentially non-operational due to public safety concerns. Furthermore, Japan announced in November 2013 that, due to the shuttering of Fukushima and other nuclear facilities, it was backpedaling its on prior commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent from 1990 levels.

Here in the U.S., Fukushima has not had any major effect on our nuclear industry. No nuclear plants have been closed, license extensions for existing facilities continue to proceed, and the federal Nuclear Regulatory Com-

mission (NRC) has even green-lighted construction of two new reactors at a nuclear power plant in Georgia. But public concerns over the safety of nuclear power and what to do with spent fuel indicate that nukes will likely become a smaller and smaller slice of the U.S. energy pie moving forward.

Elsewhere, however, many countries are looking to nuclear power as a way to increase energy production without adding to greenhouse gas emissions. Casey Research reports that developing countries are increasingly relying on it to supplement coal and other fossil fuels. The International Energy Agency predicts global electricity demand will grow 70 percent by 2035, with the majority of the increase coming from developing countries—China and India combined will account for half of the projected growth.

"Serious pollution problems mean that those developing countries cannot produce all that electricity by burning coal," says Amir Adnani, CEO of Uranium Energy Corporation, a uranium mining company. "The plans to develop nuclear power in China and other countries are very much driven by a set of realities that is very different and very acute. People are dying every year in China, literally choking to death, because of all the toxins that are being put into the environment by burning coal."

China now has 17 nuclear plants in operation and another



CREDIT: KAWAMOTO TAKUO

The 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster did cause many nations to reconsider their nuclear commitments, but many countries are still looking to nuclear power as a way to increase energy production without adding to greenhouse gas emissions.

29 underway. India has 20 plants running and seven more being built. And the Russian Federation operates 33 and has another 11 in the works. So while it might be premature to call it a "nuclear renaissance," much of the world doesn't seem too worried about what happened at Fukushima. Indeed, nuclear power looks like it could be around for a long time.

According to MIT's Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research, the real impact of Fukushima has been to remind us all to take safety much more seriously: "While the international nuclear industry appears so far to have dodged being hit square in the head by a bullet from

Fukushima, it should not expect that it will get another chance if there is another serious nuclear accident anywhere in the world."

CONTACTS: Casey Research,

www.caseyresearch.com; MIT Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research, <http://web.mit.edu/ceepr/www>.

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Protest from A1

number of big ones like Tumblr and Reddit," said David Segal, the executive director of Demand Progress.

Similar tactics were used two years ago by a handful of the same sites involved in the coalition to protest the Stop Online Piracy Act, an anti-piracy bill. The date for this week's protest is meant to commemorate the two-year anniversary of the collapse of SOPA.

Standing with the opposition, major websites like Google, Reddit and Wikipedia went dark for a day in January 2012. The blackout drew widespread attention against the bill and contributed to its demise.

Sponsors of this month's event include big names in social media, in addition to a wide array of advocacy organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and the conservative FreedomWorks. The real question, however, is whether or not the larger public will take notice.

Unlike SOPA, the current debate deals with national security issues that can be more sensitive.

Carla Howell, executive director of the national Libertarian Party, said the protest is a backlash against Democrats and Republicans who have passed bills like the Patriot Act and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The Libertarian Party is one of the protest's organizers.

"Politicians are now on the defensive and starting to come around to admitting that what they've done is highly unpopular, rejected by the American people, and being cast as an egregious violation of our rights," said Howell. "More and more politicians are being forced to line up to support bills in favor of NSA drawback."

Polling results on the issue have evolved with more Americans disapproving of the NSA's data collection program today than when it was first exposed by leaker Edward Snowden. A Pew Research Center poll last month found that 53 percent of Americans disapproved of the NSA's program.

In defense of the NSA's surveillance tactics last month, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, told lawmakers that never before had he "experienced a time when we've been more beset by crises and threats around the globe." For the second year in a row, Clapper named cyber attacks as the biggest threat currently facing the United States.

The protest is just days away, and the count for participants continues to rise on the website's ticker. But the organizers don't know how to gauge the scale of their endeavor, yet.

"I'm not in the business of predicting. We will all know come Tuesday how big a splash we're making," Segal said.

The Importance Of Indoor Air Quality

NAPSI)—The quality of the air in your home should always be a priority, but during the colder months it's particularly important to monitor it.

The Problem

One of the most common air-quality problems in an indoor environment is particles in the air, such as allergens, viruses, bacteria and other contaminants. You have longer exposure to these particles when you're inside for a long time in the winter, and just because you can't see these pollutants, it doesn't mean they're not there. These lightweight particles can stay suspended in midair unless properly removed, and smaller particles can sometimes cause the most adverse health effects.

The human body's immune system is able to deal with a certain level of contaminants. However, once allergens or other airborne pollutants reach a threshold, negative health effects and allergic reactions can occur.

"When the temperature drops, people tend to spend more time indoors, which means more time sharing air in a confined area," said Kent

Kuffner, indoor air quality product manager, Carrier. "In addition, the air is notoriously harsh and dry in the winter months, so evaluate your home to ensure that the air quality inside is optimized no matter how severe the weather gets outside."

What Can Be Done

Fortunately, by reducing the contaminant levels of airborne particles through proper indoor air-quality technologies, these problems may be alleviated. Here are some hints on how:

- Air purifiers clean harmful microscopic airborne pathogens from the conditioned air and some even capture and kill them to prevent them from re-entering the home.

- Another common issue during the winter is dry air. Installing a humidifier can help maintain proper humidity during heating season and help you avoid itchy, cracked skin, dry nasal passages and static electricity. It may even reduce the drying that can damage wood furniture and flooring.

"An added benefit to properly humidified air is that it feels warmer than drier air," Kuffner said. "When the hu-



Healthy living starts with having a healthy home. A practical solution could be the right indoor air-quality products.

midity is right, you can actually lower your thermostat during heating season and stay more comfortable while saving on utility costs."

- Air infiltration is also a big concern. Today's homes are built for better energy efficiency, with tighter construction and less air infiltration. While that's great for maintaining temperatures, it means air can become stagnant and stale in your home, especially when you and your family are spending more time indoors.

You need fresh air in your home and that's where a ventilator helps. It works with your heating and cooling system to

allow clean, fresh outdoor air into your home without jeopardizing your comfort.

Who Can Do It

When evaluating your home's indoor air quality, it's important to discuss it with a certified heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) contractor. All these helpful solutions can tie right into your home comfort control, making it easy to monitor and regulate indoor temperature, humidity and air quality.

More Information

You can find further facts and tips online at www.carrier.com.

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Watch from A4

with health coverage by adding a question to school enrollment forms asking whether children have health coverage and helping connect uninsured students with coverage. One school administrator put it simply, "As superintendent, I care about the young people we serve. If they are ill and miss school, we miss opportunities to promote their learning." School-based outreach is an important tool in connecting eligible children to CHIP and we urge every school official to take steps to make sure all their children are enrolled in health programs for which they are eligible.

CHIP has strong bipartisan support among Americans across the political spectrum and has been a bright spot in health coverage since its creation. Although CHIP is authorized through 2019, its funding is running out and will virtually disappear by October 2015 unless Congress takes immediate action. If funding is not continued, millions of children would lose health coverage and millions more would likely receive less comprehensive coverage at significantly higher cost. Either would be an enormous step backwards for children. Congress must act this year to keep CHIP funding for millions of families and prevent uncertainty and discontinuity for children, parents, or states about CHIP's future.

When CHIP was reauthorized in February 2009, President Obama correctly said: "No

child in America should be receiving her primary care in the emergency room in the middle of the night. No child should be falling behind in school because he can't hear the teacher or see the blackboard. I refuse to accept that millions of our kids fail to reach their potential because we fail to meet their basic needs. In a decent society, there are certain obligations that are not subject to tradeoffs or negotiations - health care for our children is one of those obligations." I could not agree more. CHIP remains a critical piece in the puzzle of connecting millions of children to health coverage. We've made tremendous progress and must continue to move towards the finish line so that every child in our country has access to comprehensive, affordable, and easy to get and keep health coverage. Let's celebrate CHIP's track record of success the common sense way by acting now to ensure CHIP in states across the country can continue the good work.

Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund whose Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. For more information go to www.childrensdefense.org.

Mrs. Edelman's Child Watch Column also appears each week on The Huffington Post.

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