



## Brantley advances to state title game

SPORTS, 1B

# Montgomery Advertiser

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A homeless man challenged Alabama's panhandling bans as a violation of his free speech rights. DAVID DELPOIO/PROVIDENCE JOURNAL FILE

## Supreme Court sidesteps push to ban panhandling

Maureen Groppe  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – A push by Republican states to ban panhandling was sidelined at the Supreme Court, which on March 2 rejected an invitation from Alabama to rule that begging is not protected speech under the First Amendment.

In an appeal backed by 19 Republican attorneys general from other states, Alabama had asked the court to decide whether the Constitution allows criminalizing panhandling.

A homeless man from Montgomery, Jonathan Singleton, successfully challenged the state's panhandling bans as a violation of his free speech rights.

Singleton was cited six times for violating a state law against soliciting contributions, including for holding a sign that read "HOMELESS. Today it is me, tomorrow it could be you" while standing in the grass near a highway exit.

Violators could be punished with fines up to \$500 or three months in jail under one anti-begging law. Another measure set fines up to \$100 or as many as 10 days in jail for soliciting contributions from people in cars.

After Singleton filed a class-action lawsuit in 2020, lower courts blocked enforcement of the laws.

A federal appeals court based in Atlanta cited its previous decision in a

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# Attacks on Iran have impacts in central AL



An Air Force Commissioned Officer Training course trainee stands in formation, May 24, 2018, on Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. PROVIDED BY U.S. AIR FORCE, AIRMAN 1ST CLASS SAMUEL CONTRERAS

## Maxwell Air Force Base and Gunter Annex tighten security after strikes

Marty Roney  
Montgomery Advertiser  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The United States and Israel-led attacks on Iran are having an impact in Central Alabama.

The military actions that began Saturday targets the military forces of Iran and the nation's ability to build nuclear weapons.

In Montgomery, Maxwell Air Force Base and Gunter Annex have stepped up security so that all entry points will have a 100 percent ID check, the bases said on social media. The Trusted Traveler Program is suspended, which allowed Department of Defense identification holders to vouch for passengers.

Visitors without base access will

have to go through the visitor center to get a pass.

### Central Alabama residents react to the Iran attacks

For Travis Jackson of Montgomery, the attacks bring back memories, bad memories. He served one tour in Iraq from 2007-2008 with the U.S. Army. He attained the rank of sergeant before leaving the service and has worked the last 10 years as a community activist and diversity, equality and inclusion coordinator.

"I had a flashback of being overseas again," he said when he first heard news of the attack. "The first thing I thought of was corporate greed. Of yet

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## Mideast conflict could push Alabama gas prices up

Jennifer Lindahl  
Montgomery Advertiser  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gas prices in Alabama may rise this week as global oil markets react to the escalating conflict in the Middle East, analysts say. Drivers across the state could see prices inch upward after crude oil surged amid concerns about potential supply disruptions.

Regional gas prices in the Gulf Coast averaged \$2.53 per gallon of regular fuel on Monday, up slightly from

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# How a coffee shop visit changed author Allen Levi's life

Gary Cosby Jr.  
Tuscaloosa News  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Allen Levi, the author of "Theo of Golden," never intended to become a best-selling writer. Levi was a lawyer, a musician, a probate judge and was looking for a new pursuit in life when a visit to his favorite coffee shop changed his perspective and maybe his life.

The Columbus, Georgia, resident, who was born in Bay Minette, Alabama, had never written fiction before his visit to the coffee shop. He had previously written a memoir about caring for his brother during the last year of his sibling's life and he had written a children's

book. "I had no goal in sight until I was in a coffee shop (in Columbus). It's a place I go frequently, not so much for the coffee but for the portraits," Levi said to a crowd of about 400 people in the North Zone at Bryant-Denny Stadium during a Feb. 22 visit to Tuscaloosa.

The portraits inside the coffee shop depicted everyday people around Columbus, and they had been painted by one of his friends. As he sat having coffee and contemplating the portraits, an idea was born.

"I bought four of them that day and took them to my home and set them on the floor against the wall and started ruminating on the portraits. An idea for

the story started to come together a little bit. It was just a personal challenge. I did not intend to publish the book," Levi said.

The novel "Theo of Golden" was born from the visit to the coffee shop. Levi said the book is a love story, not so much of the romantic variety of but of one man's quest to spread love to his fellow man.

The Feb. 22 discussion at the North Zone in Bryant-Denny Stadium was hosted by fellow author Patti Callahan Henry and organized by the University of Alabama and Books-A-Million. She questioned Levi in front of the

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Best-selling author Allen Levi talks about his book, "Theo of Golden," in a discussion moderated by fellow author, Patti Callahan Henry, in the North Zone at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa on Feb. 22.

GARY COSBY JR./TUSCALOOSA NEWS

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