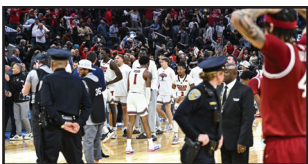


We meet again
Razorbacks, Red Raiders tangle
in Sweet 16 rematch. — Sports, 1C



Keepin' it fresh
Secrets to helping the season's blooms
and greenery stay festive. — Style, 1E

Arkansas Democrat Gazette

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In the news

■ **King Charles III**, 77-year-old head of the British royal family, said in a recorded video he is “able to share with you the good news that thanks to early diagnosis, effective intervention and ‘doctors’ orders,’ my own schedule of cancer treatment can be reduced in the new year.”

■ **Allen Brown**, one of nine people accused of burglarizing a marijuana grow facility in Oakland, Calif., was charged with discharging a firearm in connection with a drug trafficking crime, as well as other drug and conspiracy counts in connection to a 2023 heist that led to the death of an undercover police officer, court documents show.

■ **Michael Ma**, a Conservative member of parliament of Markham-Unionville, Canada, defected from his party after concluding “that Prime Minister Mark Carney is offering the steady, practical approach we need to deliver on the priorities I hear every day while door knocking.”

■ **Rekeya Frazier**, 26, of Minneapolis, was jailed without bond as federal authorities claim she drove an SUV and “involuntarily carried” a federal immigration agent from an apartment complex in Plymouth, Minn., to a police station in New Hope.

■ **Elwood Jones**, who spent 25 years on death row for the robbery and murder of a New Jersey woman at a hotel in Blue Ash, Ohio, had the case against him dismissed after prosecutors conducted a monthslong, comprehensive review of evidence and court filings in his case.

■ **Bruce Blakeman**, Republican executive of Nassau County, N.Y., said he's running for governor “to make people more prosperous, to make them safer and to make New Yorkers happy again.”

■ **Jessica Adams**, a lecturer for Indiana University's School of Social Work, was allowed to return to the classroom but ordered to work under the supervision of a special monitor after investigators concluded that she violated the state's “intellectual diversity” law.

■ **Micah Sykes**, 31, was arrested on suspicion of fatally stabbing his father, Jubilant Sykes, a Grammy-nominated classical singer, in his Santa Monica, Calif., home.

■ **Adrian Ferguson**, a skydiver, used a hook knife to cut himself free and sustained minor leg injuries after his parachute became entangled on the tail of an airplane that he jumped from at Tully Airport in Australia's Queensland state.

WEATHER

LITTLE ROCK

TODAY



HIGH
49

TONIGHT



LOW
24

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Heading to retirement



Navy Adm. Alvin Holsey salutes during the presentation of colors during his relinquishment of command and retirement ceremony at U.S. Southern Command in Doral, Fla., on Friday. (AP/Rebecca Blackwell)

Article, 6A

Navy finishes review of Kelly's role in video

JOHN ISMA
THE NEW YORK TIMES
WASHINGTON — The Navy has sent Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's office a report evaluating the role of Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., and a retired Navy captain, in participating in a video last month telling members of the military that they must refuse unlawful orders.

Whether the Pentagon's investigation of Kelly, part of a series of moves by the Trump administration to seek retribution against President Donald Trump's perceived political enemies,

will continue is unknown.

Any decision on pursuing potential disciplinary action against Kelly would be up to the secretary of the Navy, John Phelan, and not Hegseth. Phelan's conclusion, if any has been made, remains unclear.

The Defense Department's Office of General Counsel is “providing a legal review and input” of Phelan's report, a Pentagon official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the investigation. The Penta-

gon did not answer a query Thursday evening on whether Phelan's report uncovered any evidence of wrongdoing that could result in criminal or administrative proceedings against Kelly.

At issue is a provision of federal law that allows for retired officers to be brought back onto active duty to face disciplinary action in military courts for gross misconduct or criminal actions, though in practice such proceedings are rare.

After an officer retires from active duty, a finding—
See **NAVY**, Page 5A

Clinton, Trump in Epstein pictures

Democrats show 89 photographs

DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE STAFF
AND WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON — House Democrats released a selection of photos from the estate of Jeffrey Epstein on Friday, including some of President Donald Trump, former President Bill Clinton and the former Prince Andrew.

The dozens of photos initially released by Democratic lawmakers on the House Oversight Committee were a small part of more than 95,000 they received from the estate of Epstein, who died in a New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges. The photos released Friday were separate from the case files that the Department of Justice is now under compulsion to release, but anticipation is growing as the Trump administration faces a deadline next week to produce the Epstein files that have been the source of conspiracy theories and speculation for years.

The photos were released without captions or context and included a black-and-white image of Trump alongside six women whose faces were blacked out.

The president said he hadn't seen the photos from Epstein's estate released Friday, but they were “no big deal.”

Trump said Epstein was
See **EPSTEIN**, Page 6A

Duplicate school enrollments seen



Darrell Smith (right), assistant commissioner of the state Office of School Choice and Parental Empowerment, seated beside Courtney Salas-Ford, chief of staff for the state Department of Education, answers a question from state Rep. Julie Mayberry (not pictured), R-Hensley, at a Legislative Joint Auditing Committee meeting near the state Capitol on Friday. (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/Adam Vogler)

Education audit elicits questions

JOSH SNYDER
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Duplicate enrollments in Arkansas' Educational Freedom Account program

and in public schools involved students who were enrolled merely part time at the school or received special education services there, officials told lawmakers on Friday.

Darrell Smith, assistant commissioner of the Office of School Choice and Parental Empowerment, testified before the state Legislative Joint Auditing Committee that students flagged with duplicate enrollments signed up for private schools without notifying the public schools they previously attended.

Smith's comments came in response to a finding by Arkansas Legislative Audit of dozens of instances

See **SCHOOL**, Page 5A

Business owner seeks to avoid prison

Lawyers argue Trump pardon for federal case should apply to state sentence

GRANT LANCASTER
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The owner of a failed nursing home chain who was pardoned by President Donald Trump shouldn't have to serve his Arkansas sentence for Medicaid fraud and tax evasion, because there was an “express agreement” that the outcome of the federal

case would “determine the disposition” of his state case, the man's attorneys argued in a court filing this week.

The supposed agreement was based on prosecutors not disagreeing with statements Joseph Schwartz's attorney Kevin Marino made in court and on statements made by former Arkansas Deputy At-

torney General Lloyd Warford, who worked on the case in 2023, Schwartz's attorneys said in the filing on Tuesday in Pulaski County Circuit Court.

Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin rejects that argument, spokesman Jeff LeMaster said Friday.

On Dec. 2, Griffin [asked](#)

the judge in the case to order Schwartz to surrender at an Arkansas prison, arguing that although Trump pardoned him Nov. 14 after he spent 89 days in federal prison and one in Arkansas custody, Schwartz was serving his one-year state sentence concurrently. He still

See **PRISON**, Page 3A

Sides differ on hearing details in murder of 3

PENNY WEAVER
RIVER VALLEY DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

FORT SMITH — The adult son of Charity Beallis claims his mother had requested an emergency hearing related to her divorce, and when she did not appear for it, police checked on her and found her and her twin children dead.

The attorney for Beallis' estranged husband, however, claims he was unaware any emergency hearing was scheduled, Sebastian County Circuit Court documents show.

The dueling court filings came this week as the wider Bonanza and Fort Smith communities mourn the deaths of Beallis, 40, and the 6-year-old twins, who were her children with Randall

Beallis, a 56-year-old doctor.

Charity Beallis and the twins attended St. James Missionary Baptist Church at 4916 High St. in Fort Smith, and a Dec. 5 letter from Pastor Judge Green IV paid tribute to the trio.

“Inadequate are the words to express the grief and shock that has settled upon our community and our hearts,” Green wrote. “Charity was a member of our SJMBC family, a member whose faith touched lives within our congregation and beyond.

“Her children were active in our Sunday School and youth ministries. Their joy and zest for life will be missed,” the pastor wrote.

Green told congregants
See **HEARING**, Page 3A

Fording the waters



A man pushes a truck through a neighborhood flooded by the Skagit River in Burlington, Wash., on Friday. (AP/Stephen Brashear)