Cat connoisseurs

Diamond State Cat Fanciers draw felines of all struts for 2-day event. – Arkansas, 1B





John F. Kennedy

Sixty-three years later, assassination still haunts memories. – Style, 1E

Arkansas Democrat Gazette

ARKANSAS' NEWSPAPER

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In the news

■ **Joy Bennett**, a Mason, Ohio, council member, said, "It's the worst thing we do as a society online, just pile on, without all the information and with all the judgment," amid calls to imprison the parents of the unknown child whose knit cap was fatally swallowed by Fiona the hippo in Cincinnati.

■ **Roman Letsis**, a salesman at his family's Wichita Falls, Texas, car lot, said, "I knew I wanted to make her my dog" of Nova, the then-dirty, Great Pyrenees-mix puppy who ran from the street and into his lap, even after the lifesaving, $4,000 veterinarian bill.

■ **Yvonne McCall**, of Maple Shade, N.J., asked the community to light their porches blue for close family friend Xavier Taylor, a 12-year-old boy who died of 6-month-old injuries inflicted by a thrown ball during baseball practice.

■ **Chokwe Antar Lumumba**, ex-mayor in Jackson, Miss., got more than three years in prison for bribery after FBI agents posing as real estate developers paid $50,000 to his reelection campaign for the fast-tracking of their projects.

■ **Roger Reese** said his late wife's picture smiled at him after the buyers of his former car brought back his lost wedding ring in a Bemidji, Minn., senior center months after it had slipped from his finger and into a door compartment.

■ **Rachel Mitchell**, county attorney in Arizona's Maricopa County, said a prosecutor "exhibited poor judgment" when he ran up a blood alcohol level of 0.247, became argumentative and bolted out of the building during a controlled drinking session for new police officers to observe intoxication levels.

■ **Bradley Kasal**, a Marine recipient of the Navy Cross injured in Iraq whose photo in combat has inspired sculptures, is being investigated for undisclosed claims from his time as a Nevada high school's JROTC assistant.

■ **Lewis Pugh**, the U.N. Patron of the Oceans, swam the 9.3-mile Strait of Hormuz over three days which, began with blasts from a nearby tanker attack but also showed "one of the most beautiful places I have ever been" and its threat from oil spills.

■ **Giorgia Meloni**, Italy's prime minister, is "deeply shocked" by the apparent suicide of Gianni De Gennaro, the former national police chief who had denied obstructing investigations of a 1992 Palermo bombing that killed a magistrate and five police officers.

WEATHER

LITTLE ROCK

TODAY	TONIGHT
HIGH 72	LOW 44

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Arkansas quarterback KJ Jackson (right) walks to the sideline after failing to convert on fourth down during the second quarter against Texas at Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium in Austin, Texas, on Saturday.
Complete coverage, Sports, 1C.
(WholeHogSports/Hank Layton)

Woman in bar exam case got $20K payout

ELLA McCARTHY
AND BRETT BARROUQUERE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The woman at the center of the Arkansas bar exam tampering scandal walked away from her state Supreme Court job with a check for nearly $20,000.

Nancie Givens, 62, received the "leave pay-out" from the state when she retired from the Office of Professional Programs in the spring, according to records obtained by the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. She coordinated her retirement with the state employee's public retirement system.

Authorities in early November arrested Givens on 65 counts of tampering with public documents. Robert Brech, her replacement as director of the Office of Professional Programs, discovered that bar exam scores had been altered for 64 people, according to an arrest warrant affidavit.

After taxes and withholding — and including her final pay — Givens received roughly $19,650. The check was dated March 6, records show.

Before deductions, the leave amount, which included birthday and sick pay, totaled $28,200, according to records.

Receiving leave pay and coordinating retirement benefits are common practice for departing employees. It was not known whether Givens' leave payout would have been different had she been fired, rather than retired.

Michael Helms, deputy director of the Arkansas Supreme Court's Office of Professional Conduct, declined to answer questions about the records, including whether anyone asked Givens to retire and whether employees still receive leave payouts

See **PAYOUT**, Page 5A

Mourning the losses



Mourners grieve over the bodies of Khaled Naem, Mustafa Refa'i and Ahmad al-Sawafiri, who were killed in an Israeli airstrike, during their joint funeral in Gaza City on Saturday.
(AP/Yousef Al Zanoun) *Article, 3A*

Sanders fields queries on past, plans amid tour

Governor still national figure; higher office aspirations mum

ELLA McCARTHY
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — Seated before a crowd of conservatives, Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders was asked about a memorable moment during her time as White House press secretary: The Red Hen restaurant incident.

"Has that restaurant in Virginia ever called you or reached out to you to congratulate you on your reelection? Your first election? Your battle with cancer? To invite you and your family back for a nice sit-down meal?" Justin Cheung asked Sanders at the Nov. 12 event at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, one of several stops on her national book tour.

She quickly responded: "They actually shut down," and the audience erupted with laughter and applause.

Sanders in 2018 was asked to leave the restaurant in Lexington, Va., because she worked in the Trump administration.

"I don't think they have a phone because they are no longer in operation," Sanders said shortly thereafter. "I guess I should probably have a better attitude about that than I do, but I can't say I was sad to see their doors close."

In late 2023, The Red Hen closed, and the owners planned to reopen a restaurant in the same location with a new name and concept, according to the Lexington newspaper The News-Gazette.

Cheung's question, albeit among the more lighthearted, was one of many posed to Sanders during Q&A sessions at two stops she made in southern California during her book tour. The

See **SANDERS**, Page 5A

Kennedy vows action to curb measles' spread, regain status

LENA H. SUN
AND RACHEL ROUBEIN
THE WASHINGTON POST

Hours after the United States lost its measles-elimination status, erasing a landmark public health victory earned 26 years ago, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. declared the country would fight the spread of the disease.

"We will stop measles outbreaks, protect American families, and work to regain U.S. measles elimination status," Kennedy posted on X. "I continue to recommend MMR vaccination as the most effective way to prevent measles."

But as federal and state governments confront the spread of one of the world's most contagious diseases, some state and local officials question whether Kennedy and his department can bring it under control. Kennedy had sowed doubt about the safety of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine for years and, as the top U.S. health official, has sought major changes to childhood immunization policy, to cheers from some supporters of his Make America Healthy Again movement. Those actions,

See **MEASLES**, Page 9A

Universities defend threatened programs

TAREK ANTHONY
NWA DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The University of Arkansas is already in the process of cutting some degree programs targeted for elimination by state officials, but wants more time to boost enrollment in a pair of comparative literature and cultural studies programs.

Arkansas State University is fine with dropping a data science certificate, but says other programs recommended for elimination aren't costing any additional

See **PROGRAMS**, Page 9A

Court OKs $7.25B deal to end Roundup suits

DAVID A. LIEB
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Agrochemical maker Bayer will pay up to $7.25 billion over two decades to resolve thousands of claims from U.S. cancer patients asserting the company should have warned people that its popular weed killer Roundup could cause lymphoma, according to a settlement approved Friday by a Missouri judge.

The nationwide settlement applies both to Roundup users who already are ill and those who become diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma in future years. Participants could get an average of between $10,000 and $165,000, depending on how they used the product, how old they were when diagnosed and the severity of their illness.

For Germany-based Bayer, which denies that Roundup causes cancer, the settlement provides some financial certainty against mounting litigation costs that have led it to contemplate pulling the product from U.S. agricultural markets. Bayer already has changed the formula for its Roundup version sold to residential users.

Litigants also faced uncertainty. While the settlement was pending, the U.S. Supreme Court undercut one of the central arguments in the Roundup lawsuits. The high court ruled in June that Bayer cannot be sued in state courts on claims it failed to

See **SUITS**, Page 10A

Cartel's retaliation



Soldiers drive past a burned-out cargo truck on a highway between Guamuchil and Guasave in Sinaloa state, Mexico, on Saturday, evidence of overnight violence after Mexican authorities captured cartel boss Fausto Isidro Meza Flores, better known as "El Chapo Isidro," in Guasave.
(AP/Martin Urista) *Article, 8A*