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'MAGICIAN'

Pride finalize record deal with Tigres for Lizbeth Ovalle



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DOWN 21%

Worrell's office reduces nonarrest backlog

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Rachel Potter stages an album-release concert

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PULSE CROSSWALK REMOVED OVERNIGHT



A rainbow crosswalk was removed overnight outside of Pulse nightclub in Orlando, one of the most significant LGBTQ sites in Florida, as part of state and federal transportation officials' aim to wipe "political banners" from public roadways. On left, the crosswalk is shown in 2017. On right, the crosswalk is pictured on Thursday. **WILLIE J. ALLEN JR./ORLANDO SENTINEL**

DeSantis: We will not allow our state roads to be commandeered for political purposes

By Ryan Gillespie and Skyler Swisher
Orlando Sentinel

Workers under cover of night removed a rainbow crosswalk outside of the former Pulse nightclub in Orlando, one of the most significant sites in Florida for the LGBTQ community, apparently as part of state and federal transportation officials' aim to wipe "political banners" from public roadways.

Florida officials who have targeted such crossings in other communities have not directly acknowledged responsibility for removing this one. But local leaders had no doubt about the perpetrators, even though the state's campaign had previously been carried out through public exhortations and directives, not clandestine repainting.

"The Florida Department of Transportation, in the middle of

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Editorial: State-sponsored vandalism can't dim Orlando's colors, **Opinion, Page 8**

the night, ripped rainbow colors off of a city street," said state Sen. Carlos Guillermo Smith, who visited the site Thursday morning. Smith, the first openly gay Hispanic legislator in Florida, noted the rainbow was intended to be "a tribute to 49 mostly LGBTQ people of color who were murdered here in cold blood."

FDOT didn't return requests from the Orlando Sentinel for comment.

The governor's office directed the Sentinel to a post on DeSantis' X account, which was a response to a tweet about the Orlando crosswalk's removal. DeSantis stated, "We will not allow our state

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Sen. Carlos Guillermo Smith helps Dallas Perdew color the sidewalk with chalk she brought to bring color back to the intersection in Orlando on Thursday. "I wanted to do something simple, lawful and respectful," said Perdew.

New abuse allegations hit priests

Sheriff's probe calls for charges against former Orlando cleric

By Silas Morgan
Orlando Sentinel

A Catholic priest who worked in Orlando churches for more than a decade faces sexual abuse accusations from sheriff's investigators and a lawsuit that accuses him of grooming and then abusing a child for years.

Father George Zina, who now works as a pastor at a church in Roanoke, Va., denies any wrongdoing, according to the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, which oversees his church.

But the Orange County Sheriff's Office said this week that it investigated the accusations against Zina and heard "very compelling testimony" from an alleged victim. In February, the sheriff's office decided Zina should be charged with two counts of sexual battery and sent that recommendation to the Orange-Osceola State Attorney's Office.

The state attorney's office said Thursday the case is under review. Zina worked at Holy Family Catholic Church and St. Jude Maronite Catholic Church, both in Orange County, from around 1997 through 2009.

The allegations come amid an intensified focus in Central Florida on the decades-long, world-

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Court erases Trump's fraud penalty

By Jennifer Peltz and Michael R. Sisak
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York appeals court on Thursday threw out the massive financial penalty a state judge imposed on President Donald Trump, while narrowly upholding a finding he engaged in fraud by exaggerating his wealth for decades. The ruling spares Trump from a potential half-billion dollar fine but bans him and his two eldest sons from serving in corporate leadership for a few years.

Trump, in a social media post, claimed "total victory."

"I greatly respect the fact that the Court had the Courage to throw out this unlawful and disgraceful Decision that was hurting Business all throughout New York State," he wrote.

The decision came seven months after the Republican returned to the White House. A sharply divided panel of five judges in New York's midlevel Appellate Division couldn't agree on many issues raised in Trump's appeal, but a majority said the monetary penalty was "excessive."

After finding Trump flagrantly padded financial statements that went to lenders and insurers, Judge Arthur Engoron ordered him last year to pay \$355 million in penalties. With interest, the sum has topped \$515 million. Additional penalties levied on some other Trump Organization executives, including Trump's sons Eric Trump and Donald Trump

Turn to Penalty, Page 2

Stung by audit, Visit Orlando argues tourism is worth billions



Visit Orlando President & CEO Casandra Matej delivers remarks during Visit Orlando's National Travel & Tourism Week event at the Orange County Convention Center on May 8. Orlando is often touted as the most-visited tourist destination in the U.S., contributing \$5.6 billion in state and local tax revenue. **JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL**

By Stephen Hudak
Orlando Sentinel

As Orange County commissioners prepare to discuss a scathing audit of Visit Orlando, the tax-funded marketing agency hosted a video conference Thursday to make the case for tourism's impact on the local economy.

The industry welcomed 75.3 million visitors to Central Florida in 2024 and those paying guests spent about \$59.9 billion here, said Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics, who has been measuring the economic impact of visitors in the region for 15 years.

Both figures were up over 2023 data.

"If you break that out on a daily basis, that'd be \$164 million every single day, 85% of it (spent) in Orange County, 12% in Osceola

and 3% in Seminole County," said Sacks, whose team works with 500 destinations world-wide, hotel companies and attractions.

While there is little argument over the vast importance of tourism to the theme park capital of Central Florida, there is burgeoning controversy over the role of tax money in promoting it, making the timing of Visit Orlando's Thursday conference apt. Constrained by state laws that limit its use of a six percent hotel tax, also called a tourism development tax, Orange County hands over \$100 million-plus to Visit Orlando annually.

But some local leaders want to spend much of that money on other things, suggesting Visit Orlando doesn't manage funds well and that the industry should do more to promote itself.

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