

# Go Guide

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Perkins: Dolphins players want role in rebuild. **Sports, Page 1**

## Trump airport

Another lawsuit aims to stop renaming. **Local, Page 3**

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## Legal action OK'd against Broward's tax collector

School Board members became livid over withheld funds

By Scott Travis  
SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

The Broward School Board has authorized its lawyers to take legal action against County Tax Collector Abbey Ajayi over her office's decision to withhold \$5.5 million from school referendum dollars.

The action, approved Tuesday, allows General Counsel Kathy Dupuy-Bruno's office to "pursue any and all legal avenues and any and all tangentially related actions" on behalf of the school district, "including but not limited to initiating conflict resolution and/or formal litigation against any party, relating to the recovery of the commissions withheld by the Broward County Tax Collector and/or others," according to the agenda item.

School Board members became livid in January after they learned that the tax collector's office, which started operations in January 2025, had withheld the \$5.5 million, or 2% of the \$275 million generated annually from a referendum that voters.

The referendum was passed in 2022 to enhance employee salaries, safety and

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## Despite outcry, jewelry store gets approval for Las Olas

By Susannah Bryan  
SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

A high-end store selling Rolex and other luxury brands could be coming to Fort Lauderdale's Las Olas Boulevard as soon as next year despite brewing controversy over the five-story height.

The project won unanimous commission approval Tuesday night before a packed room that included both supporters and opponents.

The Weston Jewelers store would open at 1117 E. Las Olas Blvd. as soon as December 2027.

"This is really a no-brainer," Commissioner Steve Glassman said before the late-night vote. "This project should be approved. At some point in time, the city of Fort Lauderdale has to decide what we want to be when we grow up. I'm hoping we can say yes to this in a big way."

A second and final commission vote is set for June 2.

Critics in nearby Colee Hammock and other surrounding neighborhoods have come out in force against the project.

They don't like the height and mass of the building, saying it's way too big for the parcel it will sit on. They don't want the

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Former Cuban President Raúl Castro looks at the Cuban flag during his speech at the event celebrating the 65th anniversary of the triumph of the revolution in Santiago, Cuba, on Jan. 1, 2024. **ISMAEL FRANCISCO/AP FILE**

## US indicts ex-Cuba leader



Audience members give a standing ovation on Wednesday as Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche, center, speaks at a Miami event where federal prosecutors announced charges against former Cuban President Raúl Castro in the 1996 downing of civilian planes operated by Miami-based exiles. Also shown, from left, are Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier; Jason A. Reding Quiñones, U.S. attorney for the southern district of Florida; Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega; Sen. Ashley Moody, R-Fla.; and FBI Deputy Director Christopher Raia. **REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP**

Charges tied to 1996 downing of 2 Brothers to the Rescue planes

By Joshua Goodman and Alanna Durkin Richer  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI — Federal prosecutors Wednesday announced charges against former Cuban President Raúl Castro in the 1996 downing of civilian planes operated by Miami-based exiles as the Trump administration escalated pressure on the socialist government.

The indictment was related to Castro's alleged role in the shutdown of two small planes operated by the exile group Brothers to the Rescue. Castro, now 94, was Cuba's defense minister at the time. The charges included murder and destruction of an airplane.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche and other top Justice Department officials made the announcement in Miami at a ceremony to honor those killed in the shootdown.

"For nearly 30 years, the families of four murdered Americans have waited for justice," Blanche said. "They were unarmed civilians and were flying humanitarian missions for the

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## Killer of Broward mom and 4-year-old to be executed

By Angie DiMichele  
SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

In their Coral Springs apartment 26 years ago, a mother and her 4-year-old daughter were stabbed dozens of times.

The little girl, Hanessia Mullings, was found curled in a fetal position near a closet door, surrounded by pieces of broken knives. The body of her mother, 24-year-old Odessia Stephens, was found in the living room with more pieces of knives scattered around her. She was six weeks pregnant.



Knight

The convicted killer, a man who had been raised by Hanesia's father's family, is scheduled to be executed Thursday at Florida State Prison.

Richard Knight, now 47, was sentenced to death in 2006, six years after the brutal stabbing murders. He had been living in the Coral Springs apartment at the time with Stephens, her daughter and Hans-Peter Mullings, who was Stephens' boyfriend and the girl's father.

A resident of Green Glades Apartments called 911 just before midnight on June 28,

2000, after hearing banging and crying coming from the apartment directly beneath her.

When Coral Springs Police Officer Vincent Sachs arrived minutes later, no one answered his knock at the door, he told the South Florida Sun Sentinel this week.

Looking into the apartment through a window, Sachs recalled seeing blood on the dining room carpet. He walked around to a sliding glass door that led into the main bedroom and discovered Hanessia's body.

See **EXECUTION** on Page A6

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