



Critics: DOE plan will have chilling effect

NEWS, 6A

ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2026 | ONLINEATHENS.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

EAT ATHENS



Buffalo Wild Wings opened at 1956 W. Broad St. in Athens on Aug. 11. PHOTOS BY ANDREW SHEARER/ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

PEPPER POWER

Buffalo Wild Wings creates a hot sauce blended from nine fiery peppers

Andrew Shearer
Athens Banner-Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

Though I never miss an episode of "Hot Ones," I'm not a thrillseeker when it comes to spicy food. My last attempt at testing my mettle resulted in bright red lips and a scorched tongue at Saucepouse a couple of years ago, and you'd think that the experience would be enough to temper any future curiosity for the amount of heat that I could stand. There's no good excuse that I can offer in regards to why I recently tried Blazin' Knockout sauce.

Located at 1956 W. Broad St., Buffalo Wild Wings (BWW) was the only new restaurant to open in Athens in 2025 that I had yet to visit, so I decided to stop by for dinner last week. Open from 11 a.m. to midnight Sunday through Thursday and from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday, BWW has a signature sauce that is made using nine different hot peppers that combine to form the Voltron of gut grenades.

BWW was founded in Columbus, Ohio, in 1982 and began opening franchises in 1992. The Athens BWW



An order of Blazin' Knockout cauliflower wings at Buffalo Wild Wings in Athens on Dec. 22. The sauce is made using nine different hot peppers.

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Poet Mikhayla Smith reflects

Andrew Shearer
Athens Banner-Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

As the second-ever Poet Laureate of Athens, Mikhayla Smith was intent upon continuing to build on predecessor Jeff Fallis' work in establishing poetry as a component of community events and outreach in town. Smith told the Banner-Herald that she spent the first year of her term meeting with the elders of the local poetry scene, listening to them and making connections with anyone who was looking to collaborate with her.

Smith's two-year term as Poet Laureate will come to an end on Jan. 1, 2026, but she has set the bar high for the next selected applicant. Athens-Clarke County Public Arts Coordinator Tatiana Veneruso told the Banner-Herald that Smith's work "activated" the title of Poet Laureate.

"Through her presence in classrooms, community spaces, and public conversations, (Smith) made poetry feel accessible, necessary, and alive in Athens. Her work expanded what it means to be a poet in service to a city."

Visibility is everything in the culturally rich, diverse and ever-evolving Athens community, and Smith read her original poems everywhere from large outdoor family events at public parks and packed music venues to writers' groups at the Athens library and commission board meetings at City Hall. Smith's work also took her beyond the city limits to places like St. Simon's Island, where she joined other Athens artists to honor the Igbo resistance at Ebo Landing.

Smith's presence at local hip hop shows and open mics also helped her establish deeper roots within the time-honored Athens music scene. As she stood onstage under the lights and read spoken word-style, often without any musical accompaniment, audiences were transfixed by her image and affected by her powerful abilities as a writer and performer. It was in those unforgettable moments that Smith went from Poet Laureate to rock star.

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Roberts: Nation's legal foundation unshaken

Maureen Groppe

USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The legal underpinnings of the nation remain strong, Chief Justice John Roberts said in an annual report Dec. 31 that looked ahead to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Roberts' 2025 year-end report on the federal judiciary doesn't mention President Donald Trump's attacks on judges or warnings from some of Roberts' liberal colleagues that the Constitution and the rule of law could be at risk.

Instead, the former history major extolled the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, which he said continue to survive through national discord.

Roberts cited President Calvin Coolidge's comments at the nation's 150th anniversary that "amid all the clash of conflicting interests, amid all the welter of partisan politics," the "two great charters of freedom and justice remain firm and unshaken."

"True then; true now," Roberts wrote.

Roberts, who oversees the federal judiciary in addition to his leadership role

on the Supreme Court, also said the responsibilities for living up to the promises of the Declaration of Independence rest on all three branches of government and on every American.

"Those of us in the Third Branch must continue to decide the cases before us according to our oath, doing equal right to the poor and to the rich, and performing all of our duties faithfully and impartially under the Constitution and laws of the United States," he wrote.

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Chief Justice John Roberts emphasized the strength of the judiciary in his report.

JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON VIA REUTERS FILE

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Volume 243 | No. 4

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\$3.50

