



PASSING
ATTACK

TO CONTEND FOR A SPOT IN THE COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS, FRESHMAN QUARTERBACK BRYCE UNDERWOOD AND THE U-M FOOTBALL TEAM KNOW IT NEEDS TO IMPROVE OFFENSIVELY. **B1**

CURRENCY

Mint in Philadelphia presses
the final U.S. circulating penny



At the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia on Wednesday, U.S. Treasurer Brandon Beach holds one of the last pennies. *Matt Slocum, AP*

The nation’s birthplace struck
its first penny 232 years ago.

MaryClare Dale *Associated Press*

The U.S. Mint on Wednesday ended production of the penny, a change made to save money and because the 1-cent coin that could once buy a snack or a piece of candy had become increasingly irrelevant.

The last pennies were struck at the mint in Philadelphia, where the country’s smallest denomination coins have been produced since 1793, a year after Congress passed the Coinage Act. Officials said the final few pennies would be auctioned off.

“God bless America, and we’re going to save the taxpayers \$56 million,” U.S. Treasurer Brandon Beach said just before hitting a button to strike the final penny.

Pennies remain legal tender, but new ones will no longer be made.

The last coin to be discontinued was the half-cent in 1857, Beach said.

President Donald Trump ordered the penny’s demise as costs climbed to nearly 4 cents per penny and the 1-cent valuation became somewhat obsolete. Billions of pennies remain in circulation, but they are rarely essential for financial transactions in the 21st century economy.

“For far too long the United States has minted pennies which literally cost us more than 2 cents,” Trump wrote in an online post in February. “This is so wasteful!”



THE FIRST U.S. PENNY

1793: The design on the front of the first U.S. penny was of a woman with flowing hair symbolizing Liberty. The reverse showed chain links to represent the union of the states. The chains reminded some Americans of slavery and they were replaced by a wreath shortly thereafter along with a Liberty with finer features.

1909: Abraham Lincoln became the first president featured on our coins.

Still, many people have a nostalgia for them, seeing them as lucky or fun to collect. And some retailers voiced concerns in recent weeks as supplies ran low and the end of production drew near. They said the phase-out was abrupt and came with no government guidance on how to handle transactions.

Some rounded prices down to avoid shortchanging shoppers. Others pleaded with customers to bring exact change. The more creative among them gave out prizes, such as a free drink, in exchange for a pile

of pennies.

“We have been advocating abolition of the penny for 30 years. But this is not the way we wanted it to go,” Jeff Lenard of the National Association of Convenience Stores said last month.

Some banks, meanwhile, began rationing supplies, a somewhat paradoxical result of the effort to address what many see as a glut of the coins. Over the last century, about half of the coins made at mints in Philadelphia and Denver have been pennies.

But they still have a better production cost-to-value ratio than the nickel, which costs nearly 14 cents to make. The diminutive dime, by comparison, costs less than 6 cents to produce, and the quarter nearly 15 cents.

Back in 1793, a penny could get you a biscuit, a candle or a piece of candy. These days, many sit in drawers or glass jars and are basically cast aside or collected.

No matter their face value, collectors and historians consider them an important historical record that can be traced back more than 200 years. Frank Holt, an emeritus professor at the University of Houston who has studied the history of coins, laments the loss.

“We put mottos on them and self-identifiers, and we decide — in the case of the United States — which dead persons are most important to us and should be commemorated,” he said. “They reflect our politics, our religion, our art, our sense of ourselves, our ideals, our aspirations.”

MICHIGAN UTILITIES

DTE requests
\$163 million gas
rate increase for
its customers

Any rate increase approved
by state regulators would
not affect this winter.

Lucas Smolcic Larson
lsmolciclarson@mlive.com

LANSING — Michigan’s second-largest natural gas provider is kicking off the process of increasing its rates, though the impact will not be felt this winter heating season.

DTE Energy submitted a request with state regulators Thursday to hike rates by a net total of about \$163 million for its 1.3 million customers, according to the utility’s filings.

If granted in full, the increase would boost rates about 8% for residential customers. That means a customer with average usage would see a \$6.16 increase to their monthly bill.

A jump that large is unlikely, as regulators frequently trim utility requests after scrutiny from business groups, environmental organizations and consumer watchdogs during a 10-month legal process called a rate case, held before the Michigan Public Service Commission.

New gas rates would go into effect no earlier than October 2026.

“Natural gas plays a vital role in everyday life — from heating homes to cooking meals,” DTE Gas President and Chief Operating Officer Bob Richard said. “This request allows us to continue investing in the safety and reliability of our system, while keeping costs low for the customers who depend on us for generations to come.”

Advocates have already signaled their intent to challenge aspects of the request.

“Michigan families are doing everything they can to manage rising costs, and they shouldn’t have to brace for rate hike after rate hike from DTE and Consumers Energy,” Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said the week before the filing.

SEE MICHIGAN UTILITIES, A3



DTE says its rate hike request would keep customers’ natural gas bills among the lowest in cold-weather states in the Midwest and Northeast. *MLive.com files*

Lawmakers pass
bill to conceal
their addresses,
employment

At issue is personal safety
versus public transparency.

Michael Kransz *mkransz@mlive.com*

LANSING — State representatives voted Thursday to conceal their employment, property addresses and other personal information from public view.

The House passed the legislation by an 84-17 vote to allow currently serving state and federal lawmakers, secretaries of state, attorneys general and lieutenant governors to request their personal information not be publicly posted.

Current as well as former governors of the state also could request to have the information protected from public view.

The legislation now heads to the Michi-

gan Senate for consideration.

If passed there without amendment, it would head to the governor’s desk to sign into law.

A spokesperson for Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks, D-Grand Rapids, did not immediately return a request for comment.

While the legislation is intended to safeguard the state’s elected officials from violence and threats of violence, it also creates significant transparency issues.

By concealing property addresses of elected leaders, it will make it harder for the public to determine whether an elected official actually lives in the district

they were elected to represent, Michigan Press Association Public Policy Manager Lisa McGraw said.

By concealing the employment of elected leaders, the public will also not be able to determine whether a politician, or their employer, is benefiting from a law or policy that they’re pushing, McGraw said.

The legislation comes amid rising political violence across the country.

Earlier this year, a Minnesota state representative and her husband were killed in their home. The gunman also drove to the home of a Minnesota state senator, wounding him and his wife.

SEE LEGISLATION, A3

