

KG

KALAMAZOO GAZETTE



FINAL FOUR

MICHIGAN'S YAXEL LENDEBORG AND THE WOLVERINES' BASKETBALL TEAM TAKES ON FELLOW NO. 1-SEED ARIZONA IN A NATIONAL SEMIFINAL GAME TONIGHT IN INDIANAPOLIS. **B1**

ECONOMY

Out of pennies? Some states rush to set rounding rules.

Consumers and businesses are facing a future in which making exact change will be difficult.



3.7 CENTS
That's what it cost in 2024 to make one single penny.

\$56 MILLION
The annual amount the Treasury says it will save by ceasing penny production.

1909
When Lincoln became the first president featured on a circulating U.S. coin.

114 BILLION
That's roughly how many pennies are still in circulation.

1793
The year the U.S. Mint first officially struck the penny for circulation.

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Hannah Fingerhut Associated Press

Months after the last of the United States' 1-cent coins were pressed, some states are beginning to offer their own two cents on the penny problem by setting rounding guidance for cash purchases.

President Donald Trump announced early last year an end to penny production, saying it was wasteful. It cost 3.7 cents to make each 1-cent coin in 2024, according to the U.S. Mint.

The move led to a shortage of pennies in cash registers last summer, forcing consumers and businesses to confront a penniless future in which making exact change would be difficult.

The Treasury Department has said it will continue circulating the roughly 114 billion pennies that exist for "as long as possible." Pennies must still be accepted as payment.

One solution to the penny problem is rounding to the nearest nickel, using a practice called symmetrical rounding. If the final price, after taxes, ends in one, two, six or seven cents, payment in cash rounds down.

For example, \$1.91 or \$1.92 becomes \$1.90. If the price ends in three, four, eight or nine, cash payment rounds up. For \$1.98 or \$1.99, the consumer pays \$2.

A bill introduced last year in Congress and passed out of the House financial services committee would apply symmetrical rounding across the country. U.S. Rep. Lisa McClain, R-Mich., said in an email the federal law is important to prevent a "confusing

AND WHAT ABOUT THE NICKEL?



14 CENTS
That's the estimated cost in 2024 to make a nickel.

50 BILLION
The number of nickels produced since 1938.

1 BILLION
The number of nickels the U.S. Mint produces annually to meet demand.

patchwork of state policies." The bill hasn't been voted on in the House and would still need to move through the U.S. Senate before reaching Trump's desk.

ROUNDING BILLS INTRODUCED IN ABOUT 2 DOZEN STATES

In the meantime, bills to deal with penniless cash transactions have passed both chambers and await the governor's signature in Arizona, Florida, Oregon, Ten-

nessee, Virginia and Washington. Some states are proposing to allow businesses to round cash purchases, while others consider requiring it.

In Indiana, a bill signed into law last month by Republican Gov. Mike Braun tells businesses they must round cash purchases for all transactions that do not end in a zero or five.

Lawmakers revised that provision in a second bill that makes rounding optional.

In both bills, Indiana businesses can choose to always round cash purchases up to the nearest nickel, always round down or round up or down depending on the amount.

In Republican-led Tennessee, legislation makes symmetrical rounding exempt from legal claims under a state consumer protection law but does not require rounding.

"It is to provide safe harbor for private businesses," said Republican Rep. Charlie Baum, the bill sponsor in Tennessee, during floor debate.

Rounding bills have been introduced in about two dozen states since late last year, according to an Associated Press analysis using the bill-tracking service Plural.

Outside of lawmaking bodies, some state agencies have published guidelines to advise that rounding should happen after tax, and that businesses must make sure the full taxed amount still goes to the state.

SEE ECONOMY, A3

WARNING ISSUED

Oakland County resident treated after rabid skunk bite

People who have been bitten by a stray or wild animal should seek medical help immediately.

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PONTIAC — An Oakland County resident is undergoing preventive treatment for rabies after being bitten by a wild skunk on March 27.

The skunk tested positive for rabies on March 31, according to County Health Officer Kate Guzmán.

She urged residents to avoid contact with stray or wild animals and seek prompt medical treatment for any animal bite, including pets.

She and other county officials also urged pet owners to get their pets vaccinated against rabies, which is a preventable viral disease that can be fatal. Rabies is transmitted via bites or scratches from an infected animal.

"This rabies case serves as a reminder to all residents that if a person or a pet is exposed to any wild or unknown animal, wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water, then seek medical or veterinary attention immediately," Guzmán said. "We recommend avoiding contact with wild or stray animals."

The rabies virus infects the central nervous system. If not treated immediately, a person infected with rabies can develop a severe brain disease and could die.

Guzmán said humans are rarely infected, but there's always a risk from a rabid animal's bite. Skunks and bats are the most likely rabies carriers in Michigan, she said.

Treatment for people who have suffered a bite from a potentially rabid animal includes wound care, human-rabies immune globulin injections and a series of four to five vaccines.

The county employs two nurses who specialize in the human-rabies immune globulin treatments.

Last year, the county investigated 607 animal bites, and 271 people were told to undergo the rabies-prevention treatment.

SEE WARNING ISSUED, A3



A rabid skunk was identified in Oakland County after it bit a person last week, officials said. MLive.com files

Dowagiac mayor presses company for clarity on 'vague' plans

Hyperscale Data is accused of breeding uncertainty.

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DOWAGIAC — A small-town Michigan mayor is demanding an out-of-state tech company clarify its plans to greatly expand an artificial intelligence data center in his city, saying the company has only communicated vague details through news releases.

Last year, Las Vegas-based Hyperscale Data Inc. announced plans to scale up a data center in Dowagiac, located in southwest Michigan, to eventually require about 340 megawatts of electricity, as much power as 200,000 to 300,000 homes.

It followed up the proclamation with a news release Monday announcing intentions to purchase more property to expand its Michigan footprint, without naming exactly where.

"Both announcements were vague, and you have neither applied for nor received any approvals necessary to facilitate your expansion plans. By doing this, you've bred uncertainty and eroded our confidence that you will do the right thing in our community," Dowagiac Mayor Patrick Bakeman wrote in an open letter to Hyperscale Data CEO Will Horne, released Wednesday.

Bakeman, who owns and operates a

barber shop in Dowagiac, is a first-term mayor elected last year, replacing an incumbent who served for nearly three decades.

His city, about an hour from Kalamazoo and 20 miles from the Indiana state line, is home to about 5,700 residents.

While on vacation with his family in Missouri, Bakeman released a video of himself reading the letter to the tech CEO directly into camera.

"In Dowagiac, we pride ourselves on our ability to create an environment in which both businesses and neighbors can be successful," he said.

SEE DATA CENTER, A3