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SPORTS, 1B

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The Fayetteville Observer

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Spring Lake Mayor Kia Anthony high fives a woman after voicing her concerns about closing Manchester Elementary to the Cumberland County Board of Education during a public hearing at the school on April 27.

ANDREW CRAFT/THE FAYETTEVILLE OBSERVER

Spring Lake residents urge board to spare school

Rachael Riley
Fayetteville Observer
USA TODAY NETWORK

SPRING LAKE — Spring Lake's mayor, a school cafeteria employee and an 80-year-old resident were among 13

speakers who lambasted the Cumberland County Board of Education during an April 27 meeting on the board's recommendation to close Manchester Elementary.

The board approved a recommended timeline for district-wide school clo-

sures and consolidations at its April 2 meeting, with closures for J.W. Coon and Manchester elementaries as early as the start of the 2026-2027 school year.

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ANALYSIS

Guards in Iran seize power

New supreme leader's role has diminished

Samia Nakhoul, Parisa Hafezi and Asif Shahzad
REUTERS

DUBAI — Two months into a war with the United States and Israel, Iran no longer has a single, undisputed clerical arbiter at the pinnacle of power — an abrupt break with the past that may be hardening Tehran's stance as it weighs renewed talks with Washington.

Since its creation in 1979, the Islamic Republic has revolved around a supreme leader with final authority on all key matters of state. But the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the first day of the war and the elevation of his wounded son, Mojtaba, have ushered in a different order dominated by commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and marked by the absence of a decisive, authoritative referee.

Mojtaba Khamenei remains at the apex of the system, but three people familiar with internal deliberations say his role is largely to legitimize decisions made by his generals rather than issue directives himself.

Wartime pressure has concentrated power into a narrower, harder-line inner circle rooted in the Supreme National Security Council, the supreme leader's office and the IRGC, which now dominates both military strategy and key political decisions, Iranian

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Prosecutors will seek death penalty in Fayetteville child killings

F.T. Norton
Fayetteville Observer
USA TODAY NETWORK

Prosecutors will seek the death penalty against a Fayetteville woman accused of killing her adopted children, according to court records.

Avantae Emerald Deven, 65, has been indicted on two counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of her adopted children, Blake and London Deven, whose disappearances and deaths drew widespread attention in 2024. Court records show Deven is charged

In a notice filed March 31, Assistant District Attorney Kayley Taber said the state intends to try Deven capitally — meaning prosecutors will pursue the death penalty if she is convicted — citing the presence of statutory aggravating factors required under state law.

with first-degree murder, concealment of death and child abuse in connection with Blake, who was 11 at the time of his death in 2017. Prosecutors allege he suf-

fered serious bodily injury, including starvation and malnutrition, and that his remains were dismembered and concealed.

In a separate indictment, Deven is charged with first-degree murder, concealment of death and first-degree kidnapping in the death of London, whose killing is alleged to have occurred between June 2020 and May 2021.

In a notice filed March 31, Assistant District Attorney Kayley Taber said the state intends to try Deven capitally — meaning prosecutors will pursue the death penalty if she is convicted — citing the presence of statutory aggravating factors required under state law.

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