



Powerhouse? Coach Duhon and Gaston Christian look to end the debate

SPORTS, 1B

THE STAR

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THE REV. JESSE JACKSON | 1941-2026

Civil rights icon 'kept the dream alive'

Rose to prominence in 1960s promoting Black voting rights



The Rev. Jesse Jackson founded Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and ran for president as a Democrat in 1984 and 1988.

JAKE CRANDALL/MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER FILE

Trevor Hughes

USA TODAY

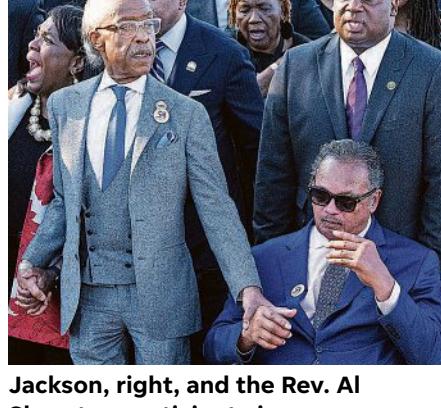
The Rev. Jesse Jackson, a towering civil rights icon who battled alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., negotiated global hostage releases and shamed corporations for their lack of diversity and failure to support voting rights, died on Feb. 17. He was 84.

Jackson was a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, a Democratic presidential candidate and one of the world's best-known Black activists.

"It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Civil Rights leader and founder of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, the Honorable Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr.," said a statement from the organization. "He died peacefully on Tuesday morning, surrounded by his family."

Jackson is survived by his wife of 63 years,

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Jackson, right, and the Rev. Al Sharpton participate in a ceremony March 5, 2023, to commemorate the 58th anniversary of the civil rights march in Alabama.

MICKEY WELSH/MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER FILE

He "devoted his life to lifting people in poverty, the marginalized, and those pushed to society's edges."

The Rev. Bernice King
Daughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.



A bipartisan committee will seek testimony from survivors of alleged sexual abuse at sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's New Mexico ranch.

DRONE BASE/REUTERS

New Mexico lawmakers to look into Epstein's Zorro Ranch

Advocates say property overlooked in probes

Erica Stapleton and Andrew Hay

REUTERS

SANTA FE, NM — New Mexico lawmakers on Feb. 16 passed legislation to launch what they said was the first full investigation into what happened at Zorro Ranch, where the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein is accused of trafficking and sexually assaulting girls and women.

A bipartisan committee will seek testimony from survivors of alleged sexual abuse at the ranch, located about 30 miles south of Santa Fe, the state capital. Legislators are also urging local residents to testify.

Epstein died in what was ruled a suicide in a New York jail in 2019 while facing federal sex trafficking charges.

The so-called truth commission, comprising four lawmakers, seeks to identify ranch guests and state officials who may have known what was going on at the 7,600-acre property, or taken part in alleged sexual abuse in its hacienda-style mansion and guest houses. The Democratic-led investigation adds to political pressure to uncover Epstein's crimes that has become a major challenge for President Donald Trump, weeks after the Justice Department released millions of Epstein-related files that shed new light on activities at the ranch.

The files reveal ties between Epstein and two former Democratic

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Meet Cleveland County's top speller of the year

Diane Turbyfill

Shelby Star

USA TODAY NETWORK

Twenty-one Cleveland County students recently competed in the annual spelling bee.

Fourth through eighth graders stepped up to the microphone, smaller spellers standing on their tiptoes to be heard.

Some words that took out the young competitors were ballad, pinnacle and tectonic.

The full auditorium applauded as

students left the stage and roared when the event ended with a winner.

The winner who emerged from the row of students was Greyson Wells.

The Cleveland Innovation student is a two-time champion, having taken home the trophy in 2025.

Crest Middle School student Caleb Marlowe was this year's runner-up.

Each received a trophy. Wells also earned \$100, and Marlowe got \$50.

Wells will move on to a regional spelling bee with the hopes of making it to the national competition.



Congratulations to 2026 Spelling Bee Champion Greyson Wells from Cleveland Innovation. Wells is a two-time champion, having taken home the trophy in 2025.

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