



NEW HAMPSHIRE
UNION LEADER

"FROM COOS TO THE SEA"

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From SEARING PAIN to TEARS of JOY



MARK BOLTON/UNION LEADER

Manchester West's Liam King during practice Wednesday at the school as he prepares for the 2026 CHaD All-Star Football Game on Friday.

CHaD doctors alleviated Liam King's arthritis; now the Manchester West grad is excited to play it forward

By Alex Hall
Union Leader Staff

Liam King felt like a new player last football season at Manchester High School West. It was the first time King ever played the sport he loves without being in constant pain. "It was amazing to feel and to see the difference," King said before practicing on Wednesday for the Dartmouth Health Children's and Children's Hospital at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center (CHaD) New Hampshire East-West all-star football game. King, who transferred to West from Manchester Central before his senior year, grew up with consistent joint pain

in his knees, hips and lower back. The 5-foot-7, 150-pound wide receiver/defensive back dealt with agonizing lower-back pain during his sophomore season with Central. He and his family didn't know the reason for the pain. They thought maybe it was genetic. After King woke up one morning unable to walk, he and his family needed answers. They went to Dartmouth Health Children's and CHaD, where pediatric rheumatologist Dr. Ana Iris Quintero Del Rio diagnosed King with juvenile arthritis. "Inside: See more CHaD coverage • B4" See CHaD, Page A2



MARK BOLTON/UNION LEADER

Manchester West's Liam King catches a pass during the Team West practice at Manchester West as they prepare for the 2026 CHaD All-Star Football Game on Friday.

HEALTH CARE

Concord Hospital slammed at state hearing

Patients criticize ER wait times, overall experience, while doctors applaud changes after \$30 million acquisition; CEO apologizes.

By Gabriel Perry
Union Leader Staff

Patients said access to services has been greatly reduced and their experiences have worsened in the years following Concord Hospital's \$30 million acquisition of Franklin Hospital and Lakes Region General Hospital in Laconia in 2021. However, Concord Hospital doctors said things have never been better. During a Wednesday night meeting in Tilton seeking post-acquisition feedback with the New Hampshire Attorney General's Healthcare Consumer Protection Advisory Committee, Concord Hospital CEO Robert Steigmeyer apologized to patients who described having poor experiences. Criticism included one woman who said she and her ill husband languished in the lobby of Concord's emergency room for 23 hours.

"An antitrust review focuses on looking at whether the proposed merger, as it's laid out, if it was allowed to move forward, what would be the impact potentially on competition on the other side of that affiliation," said Senior Assistant Attorney General Brandon Garod, who is chief of the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau. "Do those two entities compete with one another in a significant way, in any specific service area, such that we could reasonably expect on the other side of the affiliation, competition could be less, prices could go up, quality could go down." Siobhan Connelly of Sandwich said she's been a patient since before the acquisition

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MANCHESTER

City reaches tentative pacts with police unions

Mayor calls special June 30 meeting to review new contracts, nomination for Board of Assessors chair.

By Dave Pierce
Union Leader Staff

Manchester Mayor Jay Ruais announced tentative agreements with two city police unions Wednesday afternoon. Ruais called for a special meeting of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen for Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. to review the proposed pacts with the Manchester Police Patrolmen's Association and Manchester Association of Police Supervisors. He also announced the nomination of Charles Kurfels to be the city's next chair of the Board of Assessors. The contracts and nomination will be taken up at the meeting. "Given the critical and time-sensitive nature of these items, and the upcoming summer schedule, I find it necessary to call a special meeting for consideration of these contracts," Ruais wrote in an email. The proposed contracts include guidelines for overtime, training, health care benefits, vacation time, promotions and

► See Pacts, Page A2

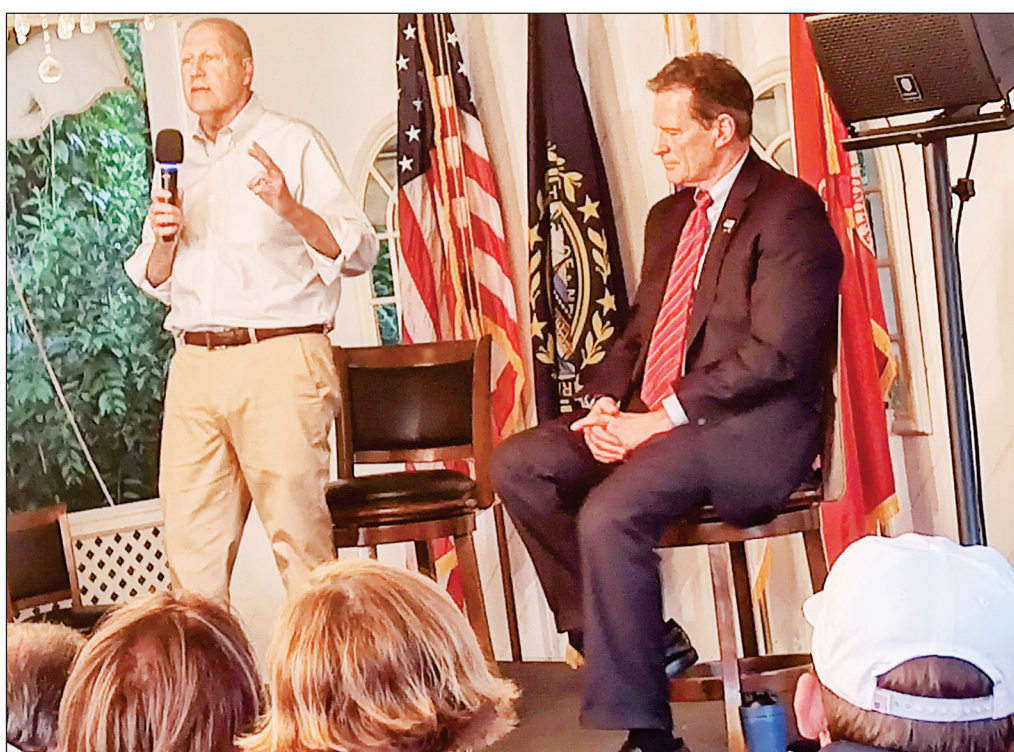
U.S. SENATE RACE

Sununu, Brown bash rival Pappas in first debate

Republican candidates agree goal No. 1 is ousting incumbent Democrat.

By Kevin Landrigan
Union Leader Staff

Anyone expecting the first debate between former Republican U.S. Sens. John E. Sununu and Scott Brown to turn into a food fight left the Victoria Inn in Hampton disappointed Wednesday night. Brown, the underdog in this open seat primary, did tag Sununu a few times as a captive of the big-moneyed interests and the Washington establishment backing his campaign. "You need to know when you go there that there is a tremendous amount of pressure, especially if you have taken all that money and gotten all those endorsements. You owe them,"



KEVIN LANDRIGAN/UNION LEADER

Former U.S. Sens. John E. Sununu, left, and Scott Brown, both Republicans, engage in a spirited but amiable debate in Hampton on Wednesday. GOP debate coverage in 1st Congressional District • A3

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Coming in this weekend's **NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS**

State House visitors can view NH's 1776 Dunlap Broadside of the Declaration of Independence • The joys of late-day fishing

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NH Fuel Gauge

Most recent statewide averages:
Regular gas \$3.945
Diesel \$5.269
Sources: gasprices.aaa.com

Today's Chuckle

People who fish for compliments ought to learn how to scale them down.

A Small Prayer

Send us your light and faithful care, Lord. Amen

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