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Burlington County Times

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2026 | BURLINGTONCOUNTYTIMES.COM

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Leon Huff, a Grammy-winning producer and songwriter who's in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, is shown in his former home in Moorestown. The Camden native, along with Kenny Gamble, formed Gamble and Huff and produced a multitude of R&B hits. COURIER-POST FILE

States mull ways to deal with abuse

Laws aimed at coercive control in spotlight after domestic shooting

Marc Ramirez
USA TODAY

Some states are trying a new approach to domestic violence prosecution, making family psychological intimidation illegal.

Such laws are coming under the national spotlight after a Louisiana man fatally shot his seven children and their cousin April 19. He's just one of the nation's millions of family and domestic violence abusers, a crisis affecting an estimated 10 million victims every year, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Nearly a dozen states across the country now have or are now pushing for laws that define domestic violence more fully, taking into account notions of power and control long held in domestic violence circles. So-called "coercive control laws" target offenders who intentionally aim to control partners or family members through fear, intimidation, surveillance, gaslighting and other non-physically abusive behavior.

Coercive control refers to abusive behaviors that limit another person's freedom. Such mental abuse, lawmakers argue, becomes the seedling for physical or sexual violence.

"It incapacitates people from taking care of themselves and entraps them so they can't protect their kids," said Joan Meier, founding director of the National Family Violence Law Center and a professor of clinical law at George Washington University. "It's an inextricable net that closes in on them so they can't move in any direction without some fallout from the abuser."

The concept has been criminalized in Hawaii and incorporated into family or civil court definitions of domestic violence in states such as California, Connecticut, Colorado, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Vermont. Others are pending in New York and Maryland.

It's a relatively new legal approach on America's domestic violence problem that continues to be contested.

On April 19 in Shreveport, police say

See ABUSE, Page 8A

New series to showcase South Jersey figures

Bruce Siwy Cherry Hill Courier-Post | USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

As the U.S. approaches another milestone birthday, our reporters took time to reflect — and research — South Jersey's most influential figures. • Members of our news team have selected approximately of the 250 most prominent people with southern New Jersey ties in celebration of America's 250th year as a nation. The result is a 10-part series that's scheduled to roll out with a new installment each Friday from May 1 through July 3. • Our list includes those who had significant impacts in a variety of areas, including U.S. warfare, civil rights movements, culture and the arts, business and politics. • In addition to this series, look for advance coverage and more reporting from our journalists on other America 250 celebrations planned across southern New Jersey and the entire Philadelphia region throughout this milestone year.

NJ yard space found to be among nation's most expensive

Risha Inaganti

Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Dreaming of a big yard and a white picket fence? In New Jersey, that may cost you a pretty penny.

According to a recent study by the New Jersey Real Estate Network, New Jerseyans pay some of the highest prices for their yards. Out of all 50 states, New Jersey ranked as the eighth-

most expensive for yard space.

The study showed that the average cost of a square foot of yard space is \$42.01 in New Jersey, which is approximately 65% more expensive than the national average.

This is roughly half the cost per square foot of California — which has the highest at \$80.32 per square foot — but is several times more expensive than land in Alaska, which averages \$2.15 per square foot.

New Jersey ranked better than neighboring New York, which came in third place at \$53.74 per square foot.

Yards in other neighboring states, namely Delaware and Pennsylvania, were cheaper, coming in 15th and 25th, respectively.

These rankings came from Zillow listings, which were analyzed for every state.

"What stood out to us was how dramatic the gap is between neighboring

states," a spokesperson from the New Jersey Real Estate Network said on the findings. "A homebuyer in New York is paying nearly three times more per square foot of yard space than someone just across the border in Pennsylvania."

Risha Inaganti writes about trending topics across South Jersey for the Courier-Post. If you have a story she should tell, email her at rinaganti@usatoday.com. Subscribe to stay up to date on the news you need.

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