



State Police superintendent to retire at end of year

YOUR REGION, 5A

New Jersey Herald

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FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

UNITY UNDONE

U.S. travel ban shuts out Haiti, Iran fans for tournament



President Donald Trump and FIFA President Gianni Infantino speak to reporters Dec. 5 on the red carpet ahead of the World Cup Final Draw. The travel ban is part of Trump's larger immigration agenda. BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS

Hannan Adely NorthJersey.com | USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

When FIFA officials announced the names of 42 countries that would compete in the 2026 World Cup during a fanfare-filled ceremony last week, soccer fans around the globe celebrated.

But for fans of two qualifying teams – Haiti and Iran – the celebrations were bittersweet.

Fans described feeling pride and joy for the countries where they have roots.

But a U.S. travel ban on Haiti and Iran has cast a shadow over the event, they said, keeping out many fans and

politicizing what is supposed to be a show of global unity.

For Bergson Leneus, the initial feeling after hearing that Haiti had qualified to compete, for the first time since 1974, was elation.

“The entire diaspora is talking about it,” said Leneus, a Haitian American councilman in East Orange. “It’s on the tip of everyone’s tongue. The world has paused and everything in it. This has become front and center.”

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Human trafficking focus added for World Cup security in NJ measure

Katie Sobko

NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

A bill to increase public awareness of and combat human trafficking as the 2026 FIFA World Cup approaches has cleared a New Jersey state Sen-

ate committee.

The bill, sponsored by state Sens. Teresa Ruiz and Brian Stack, would create a Governor’s Survivor Leader Advisory Council to evaluate existing law, review existing programs or create new initiatives, promote a coordinated response and develop mech-

anisms to increase public awareness of human trafficking. It cleared the Senate’s Budget and Appropriations Committee on Dec. 1.

This council would have nine members, appointed by the governor,

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Scutari pulls bill to scale back office’s role

Comptroller’s power to investigate was on line

Katie Sobko

NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

A bill that would have eliminated the investigatory powers of the State Comptroller’s Office is not advancing, the state Senate president said on Dec. 9.

The legislation, which caused an outcry from advocates and state officials alike, would have moved investigative “powers, functions and duties” from the comptroller’s office to the State Commission of Investigation.

Senate President Nick Scutari, who sponsored the bill, told the New Jersey Globe that he had “heard the concerns” and was “going to listen to them.”

“I never cornered the market on good ideas,” he said.

“But I’m not going to move forward with the bill right now.”

Scutari’s office did not respond to USA TODAY Network New Jersey requests to confirm the decision to pull the bill or to comment on the decision.

After word of Scutari’s decision spread, U.S. Sen. Andy Kim said in a statement that this is a “win for the people of New Jersey and a signal of the power of a growing anti-corruption movement throughout our state

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Senate President Nicholas Scutari, right, greeting Gov. Phil Murphy in January, reportedly said about his bill that he had “heard the concerns” and was “going to listen to them.” NORTHJERSEY.COM STAFF

More inside

Stile: Democratic warfare whacked Scutari’s attack on transparency. **5A**



The bobcat cub arrived at the West Milford refuge in critical condition with a severe neck entanglement.

PROVIDED BY THE LAST RESORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

Wildlife refuge treating injured bobcat cub

Manahil Ahmad

NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

A young bobcat cub is recovering at a New Jersey wildlife hospital after arriving in critical condition with a severe neck entanglement that cut off blood flow and caused major trauma to its airway and spine, said the Last Resort Wildlife Refuge.

The cub was brought to the West Milford refuge’s hospital unit on Dec. 6 with significant swelling affecting its larynx, esophagus, trachea and cervical spine. Staff said the entanglement had tight-

ened as the cub struggled, leaving him in a life-threatening condition.

After receiving overnight ICU care, the bobcat is now stabilizing, though veterinarians caution that his prognosis remains guarded. Medical teams will closely monitor his ability to breathe comfortably, swallow and regain normal mobility over the next several days.

Nancy Warner, the refuge’s director, said the young bobcat is showing encouraging signs.

“The kitten is responding beautifully to treatment,” Warner said. “We’re hopeful that he will make a full and speedy recovery so we can get him back

to the wild and reunited with his mother in the next few days.”

The cub’s mother is still in the area searching for him, and staff members say reuniting the pair remains their top priority if the cub continues to improve.

Last Resort asked supporters to send “love, strength and healing energy” to the injured animal as he continues to recover. Bobcats remain an endangered species in New Jersey, making juvenile rescues particularly sensitive and time-critical.

The bobcat population in New Jersey has surged in recent years, but only 200 to 400 remain in the state.

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