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## OBSERVER-DISPATCH



### Aces and Liberty top list of early WNBA title contenders

SPORTS, 1B

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# ‘This is about being able to plan my future’



Bethany Hamilton, left, joined coworkers Matt Haynes and Michelle Kenney at NYSUT's annual lobby day in Albany earlier this year. She is one of many Tier 6 members pushing for reforms to the pension system. PROVIDED BY BETHANY HAMILTON

## How NY educator says state pension reform would help her

**Emily Barnes**  
New York State Team  
USA TODAY NETWORK

When Bethany Hamilton began her teaching career in New York 14 years ago, she wasn't really thinking about retirement, despite all the state pension system changes that were unfolding at the time.

Hamilton, then in her late 20s, was just starting out. She had recently graduated with a master's degree in English education from Bard College after

spending some time in nonprofit work, had yet to start a family of her own and loved her teaching job.

Her parents were of retirement age and had spent their careers working for state agencies — a Tier 3 correction officer and a Tier 4 Department of Environmental Protection employee — that Hamilton said had retirement systems with “great payoff.” The potential challenges of reductions in New York's Tier 6 pension program, which took effect only a few months prior to the beginning of her career in the classroom, had yet to

be felt by anyone.

Now, at age 41, newly married and raising a family of her own in the Hudson Valley town of Saugerties, Hamilton has awakened to the pension reduction impacts. She's having to consider what the future looks like not only for her, but for her two children as well.

“We really have been sold this message over time that yes, public service may not make as much as the private

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### ANALYSIS



A man collects materials to sell from the rubble of the National School of Design in Havana on March 16. Cuba has struggled with blackouts and energy shortages.

YAMIL LAGE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Trump's options for Cuba thorny

President has threatened U.S. intervention recently

**Rick Jervis and Francesca Chambers**  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — As President Donald Trump begins to look beyond Iran, his options on what to do with Cuba appear varied and thorny — and all of them fraught with political landmines.

Launch a military strike and the United States could be saddled with an unpopular nation-building mission. Cut a deal with Havana and risk a revolt from Cuban American lawmakers in Trump's party — who bristle at the thought of negotiating with the regime that forced their families into exile.

In many ways, it's a lose-lose-lose situation, said Michael Bustamante of the Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami.

“It's a domestic political issue that seems to have very little upside for anyone involved,” he said, adding: “None of these options seem particularly palpable or feasible.”

See CUBA, Page 3A

## Wheelchair seating may be coming to future flights

**Zach Wichter**  
USA TODAY

Wheelchair users are closer than ever to being able to fly on their own mobility device.

Airbus announced that it completed the first test flight of its new Airspace U Suite seating concept, a flexible pod that can be installed on aircraft that allows passengers to fly in a variety of seating configurations, including in a secured wheelchair.

Based on renderings, the U Suite ap-

pears to be configured with five or six seat spaces facing each other. The seat bottoms can fold up, enabling multiple configurations, including space for wheelchair stowage, the ability to extend a bed across the pod, or a table to allow business travelers to meet during their flight.

Currently, passengers with mobility devices have to check their devices at the boarding door.

But for Airbus, the accessibility option is at the forefront of the design.

“Because your own wheelchair is a

vital extension of your body for everyday mobility, having to use an airport chair is genuinely a terrible experience,” Dirk Thalheim, an Airbus Design Office engineer, said in a statement.

Thalheim is also a wheelchair user and was the first person to flight test the Airspace U Suite while traveling in his own wheelchair in March.

Airbus acknowledged that the current system, which requires wheelchair users to leave their mobility devices and

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If the Airspace U Suite is approved and installed by airlines, wheelchair users will be able to fly in their own mobility devices. PROVIDED BY AIRBUS

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