



BUSINESS
\$42 million City Station North opens in Troy. **D6**



SPORTS
UAlbany finale vs. Delaware State a rematch after marathon loss. **B1**

REGION
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TIMES UNION

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Gov. Hochul seeks to change New York’s rape laws

Cornell case exposes ‘loophole’ that makes it difficult for prosecutors to pursue charges

By Dan Clark
STAFF WRITER

ALBANY — Gov. Kathy Hochul said Friday she’ll seek to change a section of state law that makes it difficult for prosecutors to pursue rape charges when a victim voluntarily consumed alcohol or drugs.

The governor’s commitment comes as new details have emerged in recent weeks about an alleged sexual assault at Cornell University, where a former student has said she was raped by multiple men while incapacitated from drugs and alcohol.

“If someone is too intoxicated to consent, it should not matter whether they chose to use drugs or alcohol,” Hochul said Friday. “Voluntary intoxication is not a

license for sexual assault or gang rape.”

The woman alleged in a lawsuit filed last month against the men and Cornell University that, after she was pressured to drink and do drugs, she was raped multiple times at a fraternity house in 2024.

Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten said in a statement earlier this week that part of the reason his office declined to bring charges against the men at the time was that the victim was not forced to consume those substances.

“The facts provided by Jane Doe’s statement do not allege that she was either rendered incapable of controlling her own conduct or that any drug was administered to her without her con-



Susan Watts/Office of Governor Kathy Hochul

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said she would seek to change the state’s “voluntary intoxication loophole” following reports of an alleged rape at Cornell University.

sent,” Van Houten said.

Reporting by the New York Times and other outlets subsequently revealed that portions of Jane’s Doe statement to campus police — including her unequivocal claim that she was raped — were not included in a summary

Cornell police provided to the district attorney’s office.

Under New York law, someone accused of rape can defend against those charges by showing that the victim chose to consume drugs or alcohol before the encounter. While they can still be prosecuted, a conviction can be difficult.

Hochul said Friday she would seek to remove that defense from state law, which would make it easier for prosecutors to pursue rape charges when victims are intoxicated, whether voluntarily or not.

“I support closing this loophole and will work with the New York state Legislature to accomplish this,” she said.

A bill that would make the change already exists in the state Legislature and has for quite some time. It was first introduced in 2019 by former state

See **CORNELL**, A3

All aglow



An adult and child walk through the Autumn Glow Festival on Thursday in Rotterdam Junction. The festival, which features a walking path through elaborate Chinese lanterns and entertainment, runs Thursday to Sunday nights through Nov. 1.

JIM FRANCO/TIMES UNION

Case puts hospital CEO in spotlight

Albany Med’s Daniel Pickett and former girlfriend embroiled in civil dispute

By Nora Mishanec
STAFF WRITER

ALBANY — In late July, organizers of a gala for Saratoga Hospital learned that a local process server was asking where Albany Med Health System President and CEO Daniel T. Pickett III would be seated inside the tent where the Albany Med-affiliated hospital planned to host its annual fundraiser.

The person was attempting to serve Pickett with legal documents related to an alleged sexual assault that burst into public view this week, when the CEO and his accuser, a former girlfriend, met in civil court to dispute ownership of property valued at more than \$300,000.

The attempt to serve Pickett ultimately failed, but it was the first public indication of what has become a contentious legal standoff between the CEO and his ex-girlfriend more

See **PICKETT**, A3



Pickett

Schenectady mayor proposes 43% tax levy hike in budget

Neighboring Rotterdam, Niskayuna also face double-digit increases

By Tyler A. McNeil
STAFF WRITER

SCHENECTADY — After months of warnings about financial strain tugging at the city, Mayor Gary McCarthy on Thursday shared a 2027 budget proposal that includes what would be the largest tax hike of his tenure.

The four-term city leader has proposed raising the city’s tax levy, or the amount of taxes it collects, by 43% — a jump of \$33 million to \$48 million — in an effort to fill a budget hole that he has

See **SCHENECTADY**, A3



Lori Van Buren/Times Union

Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy has described his 2027 budget as the toughest proposal he’s put out since becoming mayor in 2011.

Underground Railroad museum grant restored

By H.R. Schneider
STAFF WRITER

ALBANY — A federal grant to the Underground Railroad Education Center has been restored after it was canceled in a round of cuts targeting diversity, equity and inclusion programs and initiatives.

Co-founder Mary Liz Stewart said the institution learned earlier this week that the \$250,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities would be reinstated.

“We’re ready to rock and roll again,” Stewart said.

The grant was awarded in 2024 and required matching 3-to-1 funds. It would help fund the construction of an interpretive center near the Livingston

Avenue museum, a former stop on the Underground Railroad and home of leading Black abolitionists Stephen and Harriet Myers.

“It’s a place that not only has become an anchor for the Arbor Hill community, but it’s also a historically recognized site,” Stewart said. “It’s been a small building with big impact.”

The news comes a little over six months after the museum filed a lawsuit against the NEH, the Office of Management and Budget and the now-defunct Department of Government Efficiency, arguing its First and Fifth Amendment rights were violated when the grant was canceled last May in a second

See **MUSEUM**, A3