

BAMA, MIAMI IN, IRISH OUT OF 12-TEAM CFP BRACKET **SPORTS** | PAGE B1



WILL FEWER GAS MILEAGE RULES MEAN CHEAP CARS? **BUSINESS** | PAGE A6

FIND THE LATEST NEWS
www.republicanherald.com
Breaking News
Features
Sports

REPUBLICAN HERALD

\$3.00 | MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2025 | REPUBLICANHERALD.COM



This combination of photos shows an Elf on the Shelf doll in various locations at the home of Antonia Katsanos in Totowa, N.J. in December 2020-2021. PHOTOS FROM ANTONIA KATSANOS VIA AP

LACKAWANNA COUNTY Fraud case sheds light on drawbacks to poll worker election system

Scranton judge of elections facing multiple charges

By Carter Walker
VOTEBEAT

For this November's election, no candidate was listed on the ballot for judge of elections in Scranton's Ward 6, Precinct 1. So the poll worker on duty allegedly wrote her own name on the ballots.

Kathie Sico, who was serving as the precinct's judge of elections that day, decided to write herself in for the position on the ballots before handing them to voters, according to Lackawanna County District Attorney Brian Gallagher.

Sico — who has been charged with multiple violations of election law, including felony fraud by election officials and interference with elections — “stated that she knows it looks like voter fraud, but she has had so much going on the past couple weeks with her medical condition that she didn't even think,” the criminal affidavit notes.

Outright fraud by an elected poll worker, such as Sico is accused of, is rare. But the case highlights one of many issues that have arisen from Pennsylvania's unique system of selecting the people who run voting locations — and some argue it's time for change.

Unlike most states, which use some variation of an appointment-based system, Pennsylvania elects its poll workers. Each polling place has at least five workers, including three who are elected: the judge of elec-

See **FRAUD** on Page A2

DON'T FORGET THE ELF

Parents under pressure offer tips for moving Santa's spy Elf on the Shelf

By Alicia Rancilio
ASSOCIATED PRESS

A few years ago, Kurt Neesley of Redondo Beach, California, was brainstorming where to put his family's Elf on the Shelf for his three kids to find the next morning.

He decided to make it look like the doll, named Elfie, had painted on their kitchen wall. Neesley used Tootsie Rolls to build an elf-size climbing wall, posed Elfie on it with a paintbrush, and painted a message in green reminding the kids to behave. There was even paint splatter on the floor. (The paint, Neesley said, was left over from St. Patrick's Day when a leprechaun visited and made a mess.)

“Three glasses of wine usually gets the creativity flowing,” said Neesley, who had planned to repaint that kitchen wall anyway. “Elf on the Shelf can be very stressful.”

This isn't just the holiday season. It's Elf on the Shelf time, and parents like Neesley need ideas.

Elf on the Shelf, who turns 20 this year, has created lots of family memories, laughter and the occasional parental panic over where to move the elf next.

FIRST, A WEE HISTORY

If you're unfamiliar with Elf on the Shelf, here's how it works: Parents stage the doll in different spots around the home during December. The idea is that Santa Claus has dispatched the elves to keep track of the naughty and nice.

The idea of small, mischievous elves who protect the home -- if they are treated well -- can be found in Scandinavian folklore. The modern Elf on a Shelf began in Atlanta in the 1970s, when Carol Aebersold introduced her twin daughters to a magical elf doll named Fisbee who would visit each December. They would wake to find Fisbee in a different spot each morning after his quick trip overnight to the North Pole.

The sisters, Chanda Bell and Christa Pitts, remember telling Fisbee what they wanted for Christmas, believing he gave them a direct line to Santa. “It's the most wholesome thing you'll ever see,” said



An Elf on the Shelf doll appears in a freezer with a figurine of Olaf, a character from the Disney film “Frozen,” at the home of Antonia Katsanos in Totowa, N.J. on Dec. 18, 2020.

Bell, who also recalls that the elf would be placed up high so they couldn't touch it. (This is now part of the lore. Children must not touch the elf because that will take away its magic.)

In 2004, Aebersold and Bell self-published an “The Elf on the Shelf” book that came with a doll. Pitts helped with sales and marketing. It eventually took off.

Bell and Pitts co-founded a company, Lumistella, which has also created other dolls from Santa's world. Netflix streams

four Elf on the Shelf-related movies, and there's an Elf float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

SOME PARENTS HAVE MISCHIEVOUS FUN

Antonia Katsanos of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, has made her family's Elf, named Twinkle, a year-round presence for her two daughters.

See **ELF** on Page A2

Memorable gifts that won't break your budget

By Kimberly Palmer
NERDWALLET

Growing up, my parents taught me a basic concept around gifts: The more creativity you put into the gift, the more the recipient will appreciate it — regardless of the cost.

I took the lesson to heart. As a child, I would hand out “experience” gifts — like an offer to spend quality time with someone or a voucher to do a chore. As I got older, I got more creative.

For my parents' recent 50th wedding anniversary, I wrote them an original song to a Beatles tune and arranged for their nine grandchildren to sing it to them. They loved it so much they were crying happy tears — and it cost me only my time, not money.

Last year, I used a digital illustrator on Etsy to turn a family photo into a Regency-era portrait because my mom loves Jane

See **BUDGET** on Page A2

PEARL HARBOR ANNIVERSARY

As we lose more Pearl Harbor survivors, people turn to other ways to learn about the bombing

By Audrey McAvoy
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONOLULU — Survivors of the 1941 Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor have long been the center of a remembrance ceremony held each year on the military base's waterfront.

But today only 12 are still alive — all centenarians — and this year none was able to make the pilgrimage to Hawaii to mark the event Sunday.

MORE INSIDE
Taking a look back at the events of Dec. 7, 1941. **Page A8**

That means no one attending had firsthand memories of serving during the attack, which killed more than 2,300 troops and catapulted the U.S. into World War 2. The development is not a surprise and is an evolution of an ongoing trend. As survivors fade, their

descendants and the public are increasingly turning to other ways of learning about the bombing.

“The idea of not having a survivor there for the first time — I just, I don't know — it hurt my heart in a way I can't describe,” said Kimberlee Heinrichs, whose 105-year-old father Ira “Ike” Schab had to cancel plans to fly in from Oregon after falling ill.

Survivors have been present

every year in recent memory except for 2020, when the Navy and the National Park Service closed the observance to the general public because of coronavirus pandemic health risks.

“I CAN STILL SEE WHAT WAS HAPPENING.”

The ceremony began with a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m., the same time the attack began

See **PEARL** on Page A2



Pearl Harbor survivor Archie Odom, of Federal Way, Wash., salutes during a moment of silence in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Dec. 7, 1991, in remembrance of those killed during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Odom was a signalman on the bridge of the USS West Virginia when the Japanese attacked. **ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE**

SUBSCRIPTION

Call 570-628-5985 for a subscription. To place an ad, call 570-628-6054. Copyright © 2025, Republican Herald republicanherald.com

WEATHER

TODAY H: 29 L: 12
TUE. H: 31 L: 28
WED. H: 38 L: 30
Full weather report A6

INDEX

Business A6
Classified B6
Comics B5

Horoscopes B4
Lottery A3
Obituaries A2

Opinion A7
Sports B1
Television B7

