

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Sullivan 250
Celebration
Begins

PAGE A2



Rebels take big
Hogoheegee
win over
Chilhowie

PAGE B1

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

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THE BRIGHT SIDE



CAROLYN WILSON

Abingdon Town Manager Mike Cochran discusses the new commercial kitchen that has been installed in the Abingdon train station. It will be made available for farmer's market vendors and other entrepreneurs.

ABINGDON TO OPEN COMMUNITY KITCHEN FOR ENTREPRENEURS

CAROLYN R. WILSON

Special to the Bristol Herald Courier

ABINGDON, Va. — After more than a year of construction work, the town of Abingdon is set to unveil the opening of a shared community kitchen, offering entrepreneurs a dedicated space for food preparation.

The new community kitchen will be available to farmers market vendors, food truck operators and other entrepreneurs who need space for preparing food in a licensed commercial kitchen.

The shared kitchen space is in the former Abingdon passenger train station at 305 Depot Square next to the Arts Depot.

A ribbon cutting ceremony and tour of the facility will be held from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on April 30.

"There's an absolute need for this kind of service," said Mike Cochran, Abingdon

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town manager. "We have a lot of folks who make their living as vendors at the farmer's market. People who needed a commercial kitchen previously had to travel outside of the area to locations as far away as Unicoi, Tennessee and Independence, Virginia."

Please see **KITCHEN**, Page A6

Early turnout in SW Va. lags behind in redistricting referendum

DAVID MCGEE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

More than 118,000 early votes have already been cast in far Southwest Virginia in advance of Tuesday's state Congressional redistricting referendum but turnout has generally lagged behind much of the state.

Polls open at 6 a.m. and remain open until 7 p.m., on April 21, as voters will choose for or against a Democratic initiative to redraw the borders of the state's 11 U.S. House of Representatives districts.

Early voting turnout exceeded 20% in three Southwest Virginia counties.

Unofficially, 8,874 votes were cast early in Washington County, or 21.7% of registered voters, followed closely by Tazewell County, at 5,838, or 20.7%. Scott County had the highest percentage locally in early voting, at 22.1%, or 3,578 voters.

"This is the most people to vote early in a non-presidential election in Washington County," General Registrar Derek Lyall said Monday. "We had more people vote [early] than voted in the gubernatorial election last year... The turnout has been tremendous so far and we're expecting to have really strong turnout as well on Election Day."

Lyall said his poll workers expect to be busy. All regular polling locations will be open in localities statewide for voting, although the election outcome remains in question.

Statewide, 91 localities reported 20% or higher turnout, with 11 reporting greater than 30% turnout.

Five of 12 Southwest Virginia localities ranked among the bottom 10 statewide in percentage of turnout. Bristol had 15.9%, Wise County 15.8%, Lee County 14.1%, Smyth County 14.1% and Buchanan County 12.1%.

More than 118,000 votes have been cast early across the present 9th District, which includes all of Southwest Virginia. Within the proposed redrawn 9th District, that total was about 121,000.

Statewide, more than 1.3 million early votes have been cast.

All early voting totals were obtained through the Virginia Public Access Project via the state Department of Elections and are subject to minor changes, since mailed ballots

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ETSU to host former U.S. Sen. Bill Frist for public health lecture **PAGE A7**

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Weather

Mostly sunny, pleasant
High 70
Low 45
Forecast • A10



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