

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

News anchor's dachshund inspires children's book about kindness and acceptance

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Eastside's Shelby Stanley is 'Pappy' finalist

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Thursday, May 21, 2026

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AAA ON THE ROAD



EMILY BALL, BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Vehicles travel in the Northbound Lane of Interstate 81 near Exit 10 in Washington County, Virginia. Heavy traffic is expected over the holiday weekend even with high fuel prices.

Heavy holiday travel expected despite high gas prices

DAVID MCGEE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Despite facing some of the highest fuel prices in four years, motorists are still expected to hit the roads in near-record numbers during the long Memorial Day weekend, according to AAA.

AAA forecasts an estimated 45 million Americans will travel 50 or more miles from home during the five-day period, which begins Thursday and concludes Monday night. Of that total, 39 million are expected to hit the highways where they can expect much higher prices at the pump than in 2025.

"Memorial Day travel is still reaching record levels, but with the smallest year-over-year increase in more than a decade," Megan Cooper, spokeswoman for AAA

- The Auto Club Group, said in a written statement. "Although travel demand remains strong, higher fuel prices and persistent inflation may cause some travelers to shorten trips, delay plans or stay closer to home."

The national average for regular unleaded gas was \$4.55 on Wednesday, 51 cents higher than one month ago and \$1.38 more than during last year's Memorial Day travel period - the unofficial kickoff of the summer travel season.

Impacts from the Iran conflict and ripple effects across the petroleum industry have driven crude oil prices up and pushed gas prices to four-year highs, according to AAA.

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School board member touched student, faces charge

CAITLYN MEISNER
Knoxville News Sentinel

A Washington County, Tennessee school board member was charged May 18 with physical assault more than a month after he touched a high school student at a board meeting and called her "hot."

A grand jury indicted Keith Ervin, a member of the board since 2006, on May 11, according to a court document provided to Knoxville News by the county criminal court clerk. The charges were filed a week later.

Ervin is charged with misdemeanor physical assault under Tennessee law. Ervin touched the girl, who was at the school board's April 2 meeting to make a presentation, and the court website lists that date for the violation Ervin is charged with.

The school board said in a statement that it is aware of the charge against Ervin and continued to disavow his behavior. The board censured Ervin on April 8 after criticism from across the country.

"The Board reiterates that Mr. Ervin's actions do not reflect the standards, policies, or values of the school district. The Board remains committed to ensuring a safe, respectful and appropriate environment for all students and staff," it said in the statement.

Knox News attempted to reach Ervin, but did not receive a response.

Ervin initially came under fire in early April when video of him at the board meeting went viral showed him putting his arm around a student, pulling her closer and saying, "God, you're hot."

Other board members and district Superintendent Jerry Boyd did not react in the moment and faced intense public scrutiny, both online and in person.

The board voted to censure Ervin, which is a public reprimand but does not remove him from office. He remains on the board and ran uncontested in a recent Republican primary. Replacing Ervin could require flipping his seat and electing a Democrat in his place.

Ervin was present when the student made her first public statement about the incident to the board May 7, where she called board members cowards.

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Two charged in connection with armed robbery PAGE A3

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