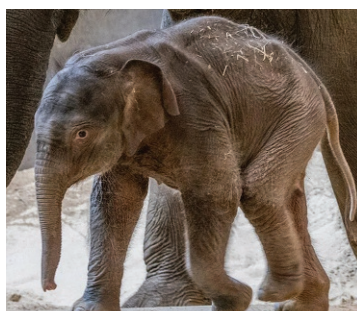


# CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

Cedar Mountain Battlefield Foundation is official State Park friends group

LOCAL, A2



The National Zoo's Asian elephant cub is getting ready to make her public debut

REGION, A4

Thursday, April 16, 2026

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

StarExponent.com • \$3.00

**WILDERNESS CROSSING**

## Lawsuit in legal limbo

Court of appeals deciding jurisdiction for legal questions

**ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION**  
Culpeper Star-Exponent

ORANGE — A legal challenge to the 2,600-acre Wilderness

Crossing private development in eastern Orange County remains in legal limbo nearly three years after a historic coalition filed a civil lawsuit against the Board of Supervisors. The complaint claims the local government acted illegally when it approved the rezoning adjacent to historic Civil War battlegrounds.

The question is whether the case will advance to the state court of appeals for resolution of legal questions or remain in Orange County Circuit Court under the jurisdiction of Judge David Franzén.

At a March 27 hearing in the case, the judge delayed action, seeking to immediately move the case to the higher court without first

having the case decided at trial. He rejected a similar request last fall.

The fight continues.

The project at Virginia 3 and Virginia 20 proposes thousands of new homes along with industrial and commercial development, including Amazon data centers.

Please see **LAWSUIT**, Page A6

**MOUNT PONY BLAZE**

## FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN



CHANGE TO VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

A Virginia Department of Forestry firefighter helps monitor flame Monday on Mount Pony.

Firefighters emphasizes 4 p.m. burn law in effect through April 30 for spring wildfire season.

**ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION**  
Culpeper Star-Exponent

A small forest fire burned on the backside of Mount Pony on Sunday afternoon into Monday morning in rugged terrain, fueled by high winds and dry conditions.

A local firefighter sustained a minor injury

when his foot was burned through the boot during operations on Sunday on the wooded hillside in the 19000 block of Mount Pony Road. EMS treated the firefighter on site.

An estimated 40 firefighters, and possibly

Please see **BLAZE**, Page A6

## Virginia tax revenues remain strong

**MICHAEL MARTZ**  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Virginia tax collections remained strong through March, despite growing economic headwinds as unemployment inches up and gasoline prices top \$4 per gallon.

State revenues exceeded the current budget forecast by more than \$708 million in the first nine months of the fiscal year, with three more months to go to ensure enough money to pay for spending in the budget by June 30. Compared to the same period a year ago, the state has collected an additional \$1.56 billion, primarily from income taxes withheld from paychecks, the largest single source of revenue to pay for core services in the general budget.

However, Gov. Abigail Spanberger and her finance team maintained a cautious outlook in announcing March revenue collections on Monday, noting that Virginia's unemployment rate ticked up in January to 3.7%, gasoline and diesel fuel prices have jumped up sharply because of the U.S. war with Iran, and consumers are more pessimistic about inflation.

"While revenues continue to exceed forecast, the broader economic environment is not showing the same strength," Spanberger said in her revenue announcement.

"These and other pressures, reflected in record low consumer sentiment, are contributing to a more fragile outlook for the months ahead," she said.

Secretary of Finance Mark Sickles, who will present the revenue report to the Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee on Tuesday, also played down the March revenue increases, which he said were driven by investor income tax payments and lower tax refunds than expected.

"Next month, we will have a much better understanding of the impact of refunds on revenues as more Virginians file their taxes," Sickles said in a statement. "Continued caution is still advised given the uncertainty caused by conflict in the Middle East and the consequent rise in fuel prices."

The federal income tax filing deadline is Wednesday, and the Virginia income tax filing deadline is May 1.

The revenue report comes as the General Assembly has been deadlocked over a proposed two-year budget to take effect on July 1. The legislature is scheduled to return to Richmond on April 23 for a special session to adopt the budget, but Senate budget negotiators were doubtful last week that they would resolve a budget impasse with the House of Delegates and Spanberger in time. The Senate has proposed to repeal

Please see **TAX**, Page A6

Early Mountain Vineyards in Madison names its first brand ambassador **PAGE A2**

**Weather**  
Hot  
**High 97 • Low 62**  
Forecast • A8

**Inside**

CLASSIFIEDS	B6	LOCAL	A2	SPORTS	B1
COMMUNITY	A3	OBITUARIES	A3	STATE	A4
LIVELY	INSIDE	OPINION	A7	WEATHER	A8

