

Malachi Fields’ TD highlights strong NFL debut for former UVa standouts

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Virginia AG sets new wage theft enforcement push

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Tuesday, August 18, 2026

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ABC

‘Spirits Palooza’ boosts Virginia ABC profits

Despite falling sales

MICHAEL MARTZ
Richmond Times-Dispatch

With alcohol sales plummeting in Virginia and across the country, the state Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority found a way to literally lift its spirits and boost its profit margin at the end of the fiscal year in June. “Spirits Palooza” helped ABC offset lower revenues from its

dwindling number of retail stores by working with suppliers to offer deep discounts on alcoholic beverages, including dozens of rare and highly regarded whiskies, tequila and other liquors over three days in early June. The result was the best month for revenues in the fiscal year that ended on June 30, with net revenues exceeding the ABC budget by \$6.2 million. Combined with aggressive cost-cutting, the authority

generated more than \$20 million in net profit during the month, or \$6.8 million over budget. “By all measurements, Spir-its Palooza was a huge success,” said Tom Kirby, who is serving as interim chief executive officer after Gov. Abigail Spanberger declined last month to reappoint CEO Dale Farino. “In a down market, it was an aggressive play,” Kirby said in an ABC board meeting last week that

reviewed the authority’s financial performance in June and the fiscal year. “It worked out well for us.” Spanberger hasn’t replaced Farino or commented publicly on his departure. Kirby, a former police officer who previously led ABC’s enforcement division, was serving as chief administrative officer before Farino stepped down on July 17.

Please see **SPIRITS PALOOZA**, Page A2

GUN CONTROL

READY TO RESIST



ELI LERDAU, THE DAILY PROGRESS

A member of the Campbell County Militia watches Dan Abbott, the militia’s leader, give a lesson on reconnaissance tactics, Saturday, July 18, 2026.

Virginia’s assault weapons ban still isn’t in effect, but one militia is still preparing to push back no matter how the courts rule

ELI LERDAU
The Daily Progress

On a farm tucked deep in the rolling hills of Central Virginia, a few dozen men in military fatigues spent a hot and humid Saturday earlier this summer practicing long-range marksmanship and combat reconnaissance. They are the men of the Campbell County Militia, founded in 2020 by former U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Dan Abbott and claiming close to 500 active members. It is one of the largest militias in the commonwealth today. And while each group operates under its own command structure, they train together and stay in communication. Like many other militias in Virginia, the Campbell County Militia can trace its roots back to 2019, when then-Gov. Ralph Northam signed into law sweeping gun control legislation, including a one-handgun-a-month limit and mandatory universal background checks. Multiple counties responded to the new laws by declaring themselves “gun sanctuaries,” vowing not to enforce the restrictions. This prompted then-U.S. Rep. Donald McEachin, D-4th, to float deploying the National Guard

to compel compliance. “Ultimately, if you’re being threatened with force of arms, there’s really only one way to respond,” Abbott told The Daily Progress on that hot and humid Saturday, his men firing at targets 600 yards away. “You either do what you’re told, or you respond with your own force of arms.” The National Guard was never deployed, but Abbott nevertheless responded by pooling arms, and bodies, and forming a private militia. In 2020, the Campbell County Board of Supervisors voted 6-1 to formally recognize residents’ right to form a militia, citing the Virginia Code. In doing so, the county sailed into murky legal waters. Under the state code, there are two types of militias: organized and unorganized. Organized militias include the Virginia National Guard and the Virginia Defense Force. Although it would be easy to assume that the Campbell County Militia and others like it fall into the unorganized category, that isn’t the case.

Please see **MILITIA**, Page A3

CANNABIS

Up in smoke

Federal judge denies hemp industry request to delay new Virginia law

LAURENCE HAMMACK
The Roanoke Times

A federal judge in Roanoke decided Friday not to delay implementation of a new law that a group of hemp companies say will cause them catastrophic economic harm. U.S. District Judge Robert Ballou denied a request for a preliminary injunction made by seven businesses, which are challenging a state law which will criminalize most of the products they sell. With Ballou unwilling to intervene, the law went into effect Saturday. In an 18-page opinion, Ballou ruled the growers and sellers of hemp-derived products had not shown they would be irreparably harmed by the law or demonstrated they would likely succeed on the merits of their case — the two hurdles they needed to clear to win a preliminary injunction. The granting of such an injunction is an extraordinary remedy, Ballou wrote, and courts in general are reluctant to intervene in the legislative process.

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ENERGY

Dominion seeks surcharge to cover grid work

DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Dominion Energy is asking for a surcharge that would boost bills by 2% to cover the costs of continuing programs to prevent power outages on its system. The surcharge, if approved by the Virginia State Corporation Commission, would amount to a \$3.46 increase to the benchmark \$180.79 monthly bill for 1,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity. It would generate \$463 million in revenue for the company. That includes \$196 million for its now-6-year-old grid transformation project, which involves Dominion’s efforts to “harden” main feeder power lines — the lines that run from its substations to reach Virginia’s neighborhoods — by installing sturdier poles and new safety equipment.

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‘Safety net or trap?’: Differing takes on changes to food assistance and Medicaid

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Weather
Partly sunny and humid
High: 85 **Low:** 69
Forecast: A6

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Commentary	A5	360	C1
Weather	A6	Lively	D1

