

# The Virginian-Pilot

\$3.00 | THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2026 | PILOTONLINE.COM



The NASA Artemis II SLS (Space Launch System) rocket with the Orion spacecraft launches Wednesday from Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. **JOHN RAOUX/AP**

## NASA BLASTS OFF FOR THE MOON

Artemis II mission first such voyage in more than 50 years



By Marcia Dunn | ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Four astronauts embarked on a high-stakes flight around the moon Wednesday, humanity's first lunar voyage in more than half a century and the thrilling leadoff in NASA's push toward a landing in two years. Carrying three Americans and one Canadian, the 32-story rocket rose from NASA's Kennedy Space Center where tens of thousands gathered to witness the dawn of this new era. Crowds also jammed the surrounding roads and beaches, reminiscent of the Apollo moonshots in the 1960s and '70s. It is NASA's biggest step yet toward establishing a permanent lunar presence. Artemis II set sail from the same Florida launch site that sent Apollo's explorers to the moon so long ago. The handful still alive cheered this next generation's grand adventure

See **ARTEMIS** on Page A4

Astronauts Jeremy Hansen, from left, Victor Glover, Reid Wiseman and Christina Koch on Wednesday. **CHRIS O'MEARA/AP**

## Jefferson Lab lands a 5-year contract

New \$1.8B deal includes performance incentives

By Devlin Epding  
STAFF WRITER

It's been more than a year since the Trump administration abruptly canceled and then restarted a search to replace a longtime Jefferson Lab operator, throwing the lab's immediate operations into question. But the U.S. Department of

Energy announced Tuesday it awarded a new contract to operate the Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility.

The winner? SURATech, a company comprised of Southeastern Universities Research Association and Virginia Tech. SURA is the

See **SURATECH** on Page A4



A new \$1.8 billion contract to operate Jefferson Lab will run through May 2031. **STAFF/FILE**

## School calendar adjusts for election

Districts across state cite safety concerns as reason to close

By John Buzbee  
STAFF WRITER

The school districts in Hampton Roads and others throughout Virginia have canceled classes or will move to virtual learning April 21, when many school buildings will become polling places for a special election.

School officials said the call was made in consideration of students' safety. The April 21 special election centers on a referendum that — if passed — would clear a way for state lawmakers to redraw the commonwealth's congressional districts.

Voter turnout is expected to be higher than average. Already, based on early voting figures, there have been more ballots cast than at this stage for the Nov. 4 election, which saw the state's highest turnout on record for a non-presidential election. As of March 31, about 594,000 ballots have been cast, data collected by the Virginia Public Access Project shows.

The school districts of Virginia Beach, Norfolk,

See **SCHOOLS** on Page A4

## PORTSMOUTH

### Budget aims to make capital projects reality

By Natalie Anderson  
STAFF WRITER

PORTSMOUTH — The city's proposed fiscal 2027 budget prioritizes following through on several long-awaited capital projects, beefing up public safety resources and investing in city employees with raises and enhanced training.

Similar to last year's budget, Portsmouth is again prioritizing employee raises, a new public safety facility and the relocation of City Hall to free up waterfront space for redevelopment. Other priorities for fiscal 2027 include the hiring of a public safety director, more police technology, a new K-8 school and funding for

See **BUDGET** on Page A4

## INSIDE

### FOOD TRUCK OWNERS' RIGHTS VIOLATED

A federal judge ruled that the town of Parksley and a former council member violated the rights of food truck operators. **PAGE 2**

### SOARING GAS PRICES

Stoppag measures are not adding up to enough oil since the start of the Iran war. **BUSINESS, PAGE 10**

## SUBSCRIPTION

Visit [myaccount.pilotonline.com](http://myaccount.pilotonline.com) or call 757-446-9000 to sign up for a subscription. To place an ad, visit [placeanad.pilotonline.com](http://placeanad.pilotonline.com).

## WEATHER FORECAST



Mostly cloudy and very warm with a high of 83. **Page 16**

## INDEX

Business ..... A10  
Classified ..... A14  
Comics ..... B10-11  
Lottery ..... A2  
Obituaries ..... A13  
Opinion ..... A12  
Puzzles ..... B11  
Sports ..... B1  
TV ..... B9



I asked what kind of family Amina wanted. She said, 'A family like yours.' That's when I knew I had to adopt her.

Denise, adopted 17-year-old Amina



LEARN ABOUT ADOPTING A TEEN YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE REWARD

[ADOPTUSKIDS.ORG](http://ADOPTUSKIDS.ORG)