

WVDN JUL 20, 2021



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Celebration Of Life Held For Hale Houston Arbuckle Jr.

By autumn shelton | WVDN JUL 20, 2021



A celebration of the life of Hale Houston Arbuckle Jr. took place at the Droop Mountain fire tower on Saturday, July 17.

Dozens of friends and family members came together to remember a man who, through his humble life, made more of an impact on people in our part of the world than he ever could have dreamed.

“The big green truck and the people Hale served through it, going up and down the hills and hollers of northern Greenbrier County and Pocahontas became Hale’s life’s work,” said Frankford Presbyterian Church Pastor Susan Sharp Campbell. “As he delivered food, ran errands, facilitated the payment of bills and sought to help his customers in any way he could, his customers became lifelong friends. They loved him and they knew that he loved them.”

“Hale’s devotion to his Lord and his church was evident in the way he lived his life,” she continued. “Church was an important part of Hale’s life. He was a devoted church member and passionate leader.”

In addition to his food delivery career, Arbuckle served his country in World War II and served those in Greenbrier County as a Sunday School teacher, a little league coach, a member of the board of directors for the Family Refuge Center, a member of the Maxwelton Ruritan Club and as an umpire at community softball events. He was notorious for his love of family and his love of baking.

Those in attendance at his memorial were able to tell their favorite Hale stories and joined together for a potluck.

Arbuckle passed away on October 3, 2020, at age 93. Following his passing, Arbuckle left behind his wife of nearly 72 years, Gerry; a daughter, Celia; grandchildren, Kerri and Elana; and many extended family members. His son, Douglas, passed away on March 18, 2021.

One of Hale’s customers, Diane Hall, has created a Facebook Page “Hale Arbuckle’s Food Truck Store” where

community members can come together and remember a life well-lived.

Star Room Tavern Exhibit Packs North House

By Bobby Bordelon | WVDN JUL 20, 2021



The Greenbrier Historical Society had a packed North House with the opening of the Star Room Tavern on Friday, July 16.

The building was completely packed, with dozens on dozens of guests passing through and reading the exhibits scattered throughout the former home. The tavern event specifically celebrated the North House's history as a hotel in the 1800s.

"The Star Hotel was popular among traveling judges and lawyers who could do their research next door at the library," explains the historical society's website. "To create the Star Hotel, [James] Frazer more than doubled the size of the North House by adding on two additional wings of rooms for guests and various outbuildings. An 1854 description of the property stated there were two good cellars, an orchard, a vegetable garden, a fifty-horse stable, outhouses comprising of servants' (enslaved) cabins, kitchens, a meat house, and a dairy. The hotel operated until James Frazer's death in 1854."

The Tavern Room event recreated the tavern room from the Frazer's Star Hotel, bringing it into the 21st century with a variety of local brews, including Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company and Hawk Knob's cider.

"We want to extend a HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who attended the Star Hotel Tavern Room Opening tonight!" reads the historical society's Facebook page. "MA'AM rocked it out and we had a packed house!" The event also featured MA'AM, a two-woman band composed of "M.A. (Mary Ashton), and A.M. (Amy McIntire),"

who performed originals and covers of pop, country, and jazz songs on guitar and banjo. The pair began the evening playing in the tavern room, then moving to the North House lawn as the crowd grew.

“I am overwhelmed by the community support for this exhibit.,” Venezky said. “My amazing staff have worked so hard to make the museum more relevant to the community, and this event shows that our work has really paid off. We had several community members come to the museum for the first time and were so surprised by all the updates and interesting exhibits they were able to explore. It is always so exciting to see people discovering their local history for the first time! Though it is truly bittersweet that this was my last event at the Greenbrier Historical Society, I am confident the organization will continue to grow and remain a vital asset for the Greenbrier Valley. “The opening was also Greenbrier Historical Society Executive Director Nora Venezky’s last opening with the organization. Venezky is soon departing to take another job as executive director of the Seneca Falls Heritage and Tourism Center and the Museum of Waterways and Industry in Seneca Falls, New York.

The future of the Tavern Room is up to the museum’s next executive director, but Venezky noted it could “hopefully” be open for First Friday’s in Lewisburg.

Education Town Hall Results

By del. todd longanacre | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

Last Thursday on July 15 the first of many similar meetings to solicit input from educators and the general public regarding public education law in WV occurred at the Ronceverte Volunteer Fire Department. Members of the Legislative Joint Committee on Education hosted the event which was attended by a diverse group of people to include parents, teachers, retired teachers, school service personnel, and other members of the general public who are concerned about our public education system.

The Legislative Joint Committee on Education members hosting the event were myself (Delegate Longanacre), Senator Roland Roberts (Raleigh County), and Delegates Statler and Kimble (Monongahela and Harrison Counties respectively).

The purpose of the meeting was to collect information from stakeholders, in the form of both written and verbal feedback, concerning public education laws and policies and their impact on academic standards and success. I opened the meeting with prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance to our Country, and identified the rules of the meeting; chiefly that the focus will be on only those issue currently in the WV Code. I then handed out a 15 question written survey for all in attendance to complete. Included was a blank sheet of paper on which participants could write down any other issue of concern they have concerning the education of our State’s children. In this article I will disclose the results of this survey without comment.

Several years ago and before my time, a “Listening Tour” was conducted across the state by some Legislators. However, to my knowledge the goal of this was not to specifically revamp Chapter 18 of the WV Code (public school law) and when rumors began to swirl about the Legislator “coming after public schools”, the Teacher’s Union turned up the pressure on certain Legislators – presumably the one’s who’s campaigns they had funded – and any hope of a legislative azimuth check on public education was quickly scuttled. So how is the current House Concurrent Resolution 103 and its series of statewide information gathering workshops different than the previous attempt to better our State’s schools? First, this is an effort to review how certain language within State law may, or may not be, impacting academic standards and achievement.

Secondly, this effort is a student first focused initiative which is designed to drill down on academic standards and how to increase learning in the areas of math, science, reading, writing, and factual history, both good and bad. Finally, the 85th Legislature is determined to take the information gleaned from these series of meetings across the state, identify any popular trends which directly impact student learning, and cross reference the data with the actual language in State Code that effects said findings. The ultimate goal would be to isolate any language in current law that may be hindering student learning and contributing to West Virginia consistently being listed as the worse public school system in the nation (according to numerous current national measures).

There were 53 people in attendance at Thursday evening's town hall style meeting. Of these, 49 turned in a written survey, some were fully completed surveys while some were only partially completed. Regarding the sixteen-question survey, I will not attempt to analyze the results in this article and will simply leave that to you, the readers.

1. Do you work in a public school system in WV? Yes: 49%, No: 43%, No Answer (NA) 8%.
2. Should education standards be set by the State Department of Education (DOE) or by the people's representatives in State Congress (the Legislature)? Author's Note: In retrospect this question should have stated DOE/State BOE/County BOE instead of simply "DOE". Educators: DOE 75%, Legislature 8%, No Answer (NA) 17%. Non-Educators: DOE 33%, Legislatures 48%, NA 19%.
3. Should education standards be enforced by the DOE or by the Legislature? Author's Note: In retrospect this question should have stated DOE/State BOE/County BOE instead of simply "DOE". Educators: DOE 79%, Legislature 4%, NA 17%. Non-Educators: DOE 52%, Legislature 38%, NA 10%.
4. Generally, is negative speak about public education perception or reality? Author's Note: In retrospect this question should have stated Accurate or Inaccurate instead of "perception or reality". Educators: Perception 58%, Reality 21%, NA 21%. Non-Educators: Perception 14%, Reality 67%, NA 19%.
5. Many nationwide measures list WV at 50th in the nation in public Ed. Are these assessments accurate or inaccurate? Educators: Accurate 25%, Inaccurate 50%, NA 25%. Non-Educators: Accurate 52%, Inaccurate 19%, NA 29%.
6. Regarding your answer to question number five, why or why not? (Various Answers Rendered).
7. Generally, are current Ed policies helping or hindering education in WV? Educators: helping 17%, hindering 33%, NA 50%. Non-Educators: helping 5%, hindering 62%, NA 33%.
8. Generally, are academic standards where they need to be? Educators: Yes 29%, No 63%, NA 8%. Non-Educators: Yes 10%, No 76%, NA 14%.
9. Should there be more emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects? Educators: Yes 54%, No 33%, NA 13%. Non-Educators: Yes 81%, No 0%, NA 19%.
10. Do you believe that public school disciplinary policy, as applied to students, is where it needs to be? Educators: Yes 25%, No 67%, NA 8%. Non-Educators: Yes 0%, No 62%, NA 38%.
11. Do you believe that public school disciplinary policy, as applied to students, must be improved and enforced? Educators: Yes 67%, No 8%, NA 25%. Non-Educators: Yes 71%, No 0%, NA 29%.
12. During the 2019-2020 school year, WV saw a positive increase to 91.2% in graduation rate. Should graduation rate be the measure by which we assess academic success? Author's Note: In retrospect this

question should have stated is funding tied to graduation rate and, if so, is graduation rate an accurate measure of student learning and academic achievement? Educators: Yes 21%, No 54%, NA 25%. Non-Educators: Yes 5%, No 86%, NA 9%.

13. Regarding your answer to question number twelve, why or why not? (Various Answers Rendered).

14. Should reading, writing, and arithmetic take priority over other subjects? Educators: Yes 83%, No 13%, NA 4%. Non-Educators: Yes 81%, No 0%, NA 19%.

15. Do you believe there should be more student academic accountability? Educators: Yes 70%, No 17%, NA 13%. Non-Educators: Yes 81%, No 0%, NA 19%.

16. Is there a specific county/state policy or law that you believe should be better enforced or altogether repealed? If so, which one and why? (Various Answers Rendered).

Various random answers derived from the written survey are as follows, are in no specific order, may or may not be specific to current law and/or education policy, and were provided on a separate page without respondents providing the title "Educator" or "Non-Educator".

"More and more is being put onto educators across the State." "Internet must be addressed." "This group you represent is an informal workgroup of the Joint Committee on Education. You should be honest about that, not representing yourself as something else." "The Legislature should take action to prevent 1619 Projects, Lincoln Projects, and CRT (Critical Race Theory) from being taught in WV schools." "Keep kids in the classroom 180 FULL DAYS." "Eliminate [the] Committee which autonomously promulgates rules and regulations." "I would like to see more parent involvement and more attention given to parent suggestions." "Put textbooks back in the hands of students." "Teachers should not be afraid to confront their students." "Many remote students did no school work." "Cameras need to be in the classroom. This would improve many things." "I feel very disrespected by the Legislature." "Still concerned about what school districts are doing about drugs in school system." "I understand CRT is not taught in grade school or middle school but is being talked about in most high schools. Unions seem to be pro-CRT." "Class sizes are [too] large. Students are falling behind due to overcrowding and behaviors." "Limit computer usage and increase classroom instruction back to 190 days per year." "The power of unions [are] hindering education." "Too much focus on social issues." "Congratulations on passing what is essentially the voucher system for some state funds to go with the student." "I think the legislature is on the right track to allow parents to get public funds to help pay for alternative schools - all WV students/parents should have school choice!"

"Too many empty [school] busses." "I am a teacher employed by Greenbrier County Schools. I work hard. I do my job. To my knowledge, if I choose to not call a transgender student what he/she wants me to call him/her, I could be fired. I will not encourage confused students towards this lifestyle." "Legislators are not educated enough to understand." "What does [school choice] have to do with making public schools better?" "If a student performs poorly academically then he/she should not be allowed to graduate "just because". Students should have a more intrinsic input in [their] education. This includes middle school values." To the question is graduation rates a good measure of academic success: "Test scores, test scores, test scores, should be the measure of [student learning], not graduation rates." "National measures of the best and worse school systems in America are due to inadequate funding or unfunded mandates." "Negative speak of WV being the worse school system in the nation is inaccurate, made up, fake news." "[Negative talk about WV education] is only reality because thanks to you, you are making it this way." "As long as we continue lowering [academic] standards for everyone involved, then graduation rate becomes meaningless." "How can we ever fix 50 years of bad law written, not for students, but to protect the unions by politicians funded by the unions?" "The problems with [public school] education are due to the Legislature supporting Charter schools and public funding for them."

There are many more pages of comments but I think this is a good rendering for now. Take from this survey what you will. All I will say at this point is that, depending on who you are, this may be a very complex problem we are faced with or perhaps there is no problem at all. Write a letter to the editor and let your friends and neighbors know what you think on the matter.

Todd Longanacre

Delegate, 42nd District, WV House

Former Huntington mayor Jean Dean dies

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (AP) — Jean Dean, the first woman to serve as mayor of Huntington, West Virginia, has died.

Dean died Saturday morning, her son Justin Gibson told the Herald-Dispatch. Her health had been deteriorating, he said.

Dean served from 1993 to 2000. Before that, she was director of administration and finance, a position similar to a city manager.

“She considered it a great honor to serve the people,” Gibson said.

Current Mayor Steve Williams called Dean a “graceful giant.”

Her vision, determination and graceful countenance set a foundation on which we continue to benefit,” Williams said in a statement.

Gibson said his mother was willing to work with representatives in Congress, local business leaders and residents to support the city.

“Whatever she could do to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Huntington, she would give everything to do that,” he said.

Funeral arrangements were pending Sunday.

Blasting scheduled along I-64 construction zone in WV

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

NITRO, W.Va. (AP) — Parts of Interstate 64 in West Virginia will be closed periodically through the end of August while blasting work occurs as part of a widening and bridge project.

Blasting was set to start Monday and will require rolling roadblocks on eastbound I-64 between the Cross Lanes exit and the U.S. Route 35 interchange at Scott Depot, as well as entrance ramp closures on both sides of the interstate, the state Department of Transportation said in a news release. One blast is scheduled Monday through Friday between the hours of noon at 2 p.m.

The \$224 million project also includes major upgrades to the Nitro-St. Albans Bridge. Plans call for two new bridges, carrying traffic in each direction, and to widen the interstate to six lanes and replace several smaller

bridges between Nitro and Scott Depot.

Work is expected to be complete in October 2023. Another project to upgrade I-64 to six lanes between Huntington and Barboursville is scheduled for completion in August 2024.

Talent show winner featured on WV adult literacy campaign

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — “America’s Got Talent” winner Landau Eugene Murphy Jr. is being featured on an adult literacy campaign in West Virginia.

Murphy’s photo is on billboards throughout the state as part of the “Never Too Late to Graduate” push by the state Department of Education’s Office of Adult Education.

Murphy also is displaying the materials and banners at his state concerts to provide information to help people earn their diplomas and pursue other educational opportunities, the department said.

“I truly believe it is never too late to graduate, and I hope others use my story as an example of how to always have a goal and a dream,” Murphy said.

The Logan, West Virginia, native dropped out of school in the 11th grade, a decision that haunted him for years. He worked numerous odd jobs and at one point was living out of his car.

Last year during the coronavirus pandemic, the singer took online classes during the spring and summer after his road performances were eliminated by the virus shutdown. He earned his high school equivalency diploma 30 years after dropping out.

In 2011, Murphy’s smooth renditions of Frank Sinatra hits helped earn him \$1 million, his own Las Vegas show and a recording contract when he won the NBC talent contest.

WVDA Announces Return Of Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is pleased to announce the return of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). SMFNP was delayed earlier this year due to a lack of a banking contract. With the contract now in place, vouchers will be delivered to participating partners and be available to senior citizens starting Aug. 1. The WVDA is working to avoid this issue for the 2022 season.

“What we saw in West Virginia is not unique to our state. Many other programs around the country are struggling to find banking partners to handle the redemption of the vouchers. The USDA is aware of the issue and is working through how to adjust the federal program so states can continue serving our senior citizens,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Vouchers will be distributed to all 55 counties in West Virginia by the WVDA

through the United States Department of Agriculture's program. Vouchers can be exchanged for fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey and herbs from participating farmers markets, roadside stands and community-supported agriculture programs. Eligible seniors who are over the age of 60 and meet certain financial requirements can sign up through their local senior centers.

"We are extremely proud of the staff who made this program possible despite the banking issue we had to confront. SFMNP is important to the health of our at-risk senior citizens, as well as the farmers who provide the produce," Leonhardt said.

In 2020, the WVDA and its partners distributed a total of 16,800 vouchers to seniors in West Virginia. A total of 349 farmers, 101 farm stands and one farmers market participated in the program by accepting the vouchers.

For more information, contact Crescent Gallagher cgallagher@wvda.us 304-558-3708.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works..

Tribe claims remains of kids who died at assimilation school

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021



SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The remains of nine Native American children who died more than a century ago while attending a government-run school in Pennsylvania meant to assimilate them into white culture have been returned to their South Dakota tribe for burial on its reservation.

The Rosebud Sioux planned to reburial the remains during a ceremony on Saturday, the Argus Leader reported. The effort to return the remains took nearly six years. A caravan of young adults tasked with bringing the remains home to the reservation set out Tuesday from the site of the former Carlisle Indian Reform School, which is about 20 miles west of the Pennsylvania capital Harrisburg.

It made several stops along the way, including in Yankton and Whetstone on Friday for emotional ceremonies with tribal members. Another ceremony was held earlier Friday at a Missouri River landing near Sioux City, Iowa, which was where the children, who died between 1880 and 1910, boarded a steamboat for their journey east.

“This is a common sorrow we share, but on this day we have a common celebration,” Ben Rhodd, a member of the Rosebud Sioux, told the gathering in Yankton.

Rodney Bordeaux, the tribe’s president, said Friday’s events were historic and thanked the young people for bringing the remains back.

“This is going to make us that much stronger as a people as we reclaim who we are,” he said. “Indian Country nationwide is rising up. We’re going to be stronger as we go forward.”

Christopher Eagle Bear, 23, who was part of the youth council responsible for bringing returning the remains, said, “On this day, it is an honor to be Lakota. Hopefully, what we do here can inspire another youth group to move the road further than what we have started.”

Some of the children will be reburied in a veterans’ cemetery on the reservation and others will be interred at family graveyards, tribal officials said.

U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland last month announced a nationwide investigation into the boarding

schools that attempted to assimilate Indigenous children into white society.

Haaland, the first Native American to serve as a Cabinet secretary, said “forced assimilation practices” stripped away the children’s clothing, their language and their culture. She said the government aims to locate the schools and burial sites and identify the names and tribal affiliations of children from the boarding schools around the country.

The Carlisle school, which was founded by an Army officer and opened in 1880, was the first of its kind off a reservation and set an example later used by other schools to assimilate Native American children into white culture. It took drastic steps to separate students from their Indigenous cultures, including cutting their braids, dressing them in military-style uniforms and punishing them for speaking their native languages. They were also forced to adopt European names.

More than 10,000 Native American children were taught at the Carlisle school and endured harsh conditions that sometimes led to death from such diseases as tuberculosis.

Court blocks order lifting CDC virus rules on cruise ships

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

CURT ANDERSON AP Legal Affairs Writer

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Pandemic restrictions on Florida-based cruise ships will remain in place after a federal appeals court temporarily blocked a previous ruling that sided with a Florida lawsuit challenging the regulations.

The one-paragraph decision by a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was filed at 11:50 p.m. Saturday, just minutes before a Tampa judge’s previous ruling on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention restrictions was set to take effect.

The judges’ issuance of a temporary stay keeps the CDC regulations regarding Florida-based cruise ships in place while the CDC appeals the June decision by U.S. District Judge Steven Merryday.

The lawsuit, championed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, claims that the CDC’s multiple-step process to allow cruising from Florida is overly burdensome, harming both a multibillion-dollar industry that provides some 159,000 jobs and revenue collected by the state.

A spokeswoman for DeSantis did not immediately respond Sunday to an email and a text message seeking comment. In court filing, attorneys for Florida urged the 11th Circuit to reject the CDC request to keep its rules intact for now.

“The equities overwhelmingly favor allowing the cruise industry to enjoy its first summer season in two years while this Court sorts out the CDC’s contentions on appeal,” Florida’s lawyers argued.

The CDC, however, said keeping the rules in place would prevent future COVID-19 outbreaks on ships that are vulnerable to the spread of the virus because of their close quarters and frequent stops at foreign ports.

“The undisputed evidence shows that unregulated cruise ship operations would exacerbate the spread of COVID-19 and that the harm to the public that would result from such operations cannot be undone,” the CDC said in a court filing.

The CDC first flatly halted cruise ships from sailing in March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which had affected passengers and crew on numerous ships.

Then the CDC on Oct. 30 of last year imposed a four-phase conditional framework it said would allow the industry to gradually resume operations if certain thresholds were met. Those included virus mitigation

procedures and a simulated cruise to test them before embarking regular passengers.

Merryday's decision concluded that the CDC can't enforce those rules for Florida-based ships and that they should merely be considered nonbinding recommendations or guidelines. Several cruise lines have begun preliminary cruises under those guidelines, which the Tampa judge agreed with Florida are too onerous. "Florida persuasively claims that the conditional sailing order will shut down most cruises through the summer and perhaps much longer," the judge wrote in June, adding that Florida "faces an increasingly threatening and imminent prospect that the cruise industry will depart the state."

The 11th Circuit's brief decision did not include any opinions from the judges, which the panel said would be released later. The decision noted that one appeals judge dissented.

Disney Cruise Lines held its first simulated sailing under CDC rules Saturday when the Disney Dream departed from Port Canaveral, Florida. The passengers were volunteer Disney employees.

Senator: Bipartisan infrastructure bill loses IRS provisions

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

WASHINGTON (AP) — A proposal to strengthen IRS enforcement to crack down on tax scofflaws and help fund a nearly \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure spending is officially off the table, Republican Sen. Rob Portman said Sunday.

Portman, who is involved in negotiating the bill, cited "pushback" from fellow Republican lawmakers who dislike the idea of expanding the reach of the IRS, which they have accused over the years of unfairly targeting conservatives. He said another reason the IRS provision was shelved is that Democrats are including a more robust enforcement plan in a separate \$3.5 trillion infrastructure bill that they intend to pass through the Senate using special budget rules and without Republican votes.

"That created quite a problem because the general agreement is that this is the bipartisan, negotiated infrastructure package and that we will stick with that," the Ohio senator said on CNN's "State of the Union." Portman's announcement that the IRS provision had been removed underscores the difficulty facing the bipartisan group of Republican and Democratic senators in finding mutually agreeable ways to pay for billions of dollars of new spending their White House-backed plan calls for.

Portman said meetings were planned Sunday to discuss alternatives to the IRS provision, which had been estimated to bring in an estimated \$100 billion over 10 years. The proposal to go after taxpayers who skip out on income taxes initially had potential bipartisan appeal, but outside groups came forward to lambaste it as a way to enable the IRS to snoop around Americans' personal finances.

IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig said at a congressional hearing in April that the national gap between federal taxes owed and actually collected is about \$1 trillion annually, more than double what official government estimates have previously indicated.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is pressuring lawmakers to reach agreement this week on the pair of massive domestic spending measures, signaling Democrats' desire to push ahead aggressively on President Joe Biden's multitrillion-dollar agenda.

Schumer, D-N.Y., said last week that he is scheduling a procedural vote for Wednesday to begin debate on the still-evolving bipartisan infrastructure bill. Senators from both parties, bargaining for weeks, have struggled to reach final agreement on a \$1 trillion package of highway, water systems and other public works projects. Portman on Sunday called that an "arbitrary deadline" and one that was premature given that senators haven't even agreed on details of the "complex" bill yet.

“We want to get it right. It’s not too much to ask that we have time to do that,” Portman said. “We ought not to have an arbitrary deadline forcing this process.”

Schumer said he also wanted Democratic senators to reach agreement among themselves by Wednesday on the specific details of a separate 10-year budget blueprint that envisions \$3.5 trillion in spending for climate change, education, an expansion of Medicare and more.

Biden transfers 1st Guantanamo detainee to home country

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021



DINO HAZELL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Monday transferred a Guantanamo Bay detainee to his home country for the first time, a policy shift from the Trump presidency that sent a Moroccan man back home years after he was recommended for discharge.

The prisoner, Abdullatif Nasser, who’s in his mid-50s, was cleared for repatriation by a review board in July 2016 but remained at Guantanamo for the duration of the Trump presidency.

A review board determined that Nasser’s detention was no longer necessary to protect U.S. national security, the Pentagon said Monday. The board had recommended authorization for Nasser’s repatriation, but that

couldn't be completed before the end of the Obama administration, it said.

Nasser, also known as Abdul Latif Nasser, arrived Monday in Morocco, where police took him into custody and said they would investigate him on suspicion of committing terrorist acts — even though he was never charged while in Guantanamo.

The State Department said in a statement the Biden administration would continue “a deliberate and thorough process focused on responsibly reducing the detainee population of the Guantanamo facility while also safeguarding the security of the United States and its allies.”

The detention center opened in 2002. President George W. Bush's administration transformed what had been a sleepy Navy outpost on Cuba's southeastern tip into a place to interrogate and imprison people suspected of links to al-Qaida and the Taliban after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

The Obama administration, seeking to allay concerns that some of those released had “returned to the fight,” set up a process to ensure those repatriated or resettled in third countries no longer posed a threat. It also planned to try some of the men in federal court.

But his closure effort was thwarted when Congress barred the transfer of prisoners from Guantanamo to the U.S., including for prosecution or medical care. President Barack Obama ultimately released 197 prisoners. With Nasser's transfer, the Guantanamo population stands at 39.

The prisoner transfer process had stalled under President Donald Trump. He said even before taking office there should be no further releases from “Gitmo,” as Guantanamo Bay is often called. “These are extremely dangerous people and should not be allowed back onto the battlefield,” he said.

The possibility that former Guantanamo prisoners would resume hostile activities has long been a concern that has played into the debate over releases. The office of the Director of National Intelligence said in a 2016 report that about 17% of the 728 detainees who had been released were “confirmed” and 12% were “suspected” of reengaging in such activities.

But the vast majority of those reengagements occurred with former prisoners who did not go through the security review that was set up under Obama. A task force that included agencies such as the Defense Department and the CIA analyzed who was held at Guantanamo and determined who could be released and who should continue in detention.

The U.S. thanked Morocco for facilitating Nasser's transfer back home.

“The United States commends the Kingdom of Morocco for its long-time partnership in securing both countries' national security interests,” the Pentagon statement said. “The United States is also extremely grateful for the Kingdom's willingness to support ongoing U.S. efforts to close the Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility.”

In a statement, the public prosecutor at the Court of Appeal in Rabat said the National Division of the Judicial Police in Casablanca had been instructed to open an investigation into Nasser “on suspicion of committing terrorist acts.” It didn't specify what those “terrorist acts” are.

Nasser initially got news he was going to be released in the summer of 2016, when one of his lawyers called him at the detention center and told him the U.S. had decided he no longer posed a threat and could go home. He thought he'd returned to Morocco soon: “I've been here 14 years,” he said at the time. “A few months more is nothing.”

Nasser's journey to the Cuban prison was a long one. He was a member of a nonviolent but illegal Moroccan Sufi Islam group in the 1980s, according to his Pentagon file. In 1996, he was recruited to fight in Chechnya but ended up in Afghanistan, where he trained at an al-Qaida camp. He was captured after fighting U.S. forces there and sent to Guantanamo in May 2002.

An unidentified military official appointed to represent him before the review board said he studied math, computer science and English at Guantanamo, creating a 2,000-word Arabic-English dictionary. The official told the board that Nasser “deeply regrets his actions of the past” and expressed confidence he would reintegrate in society.

Capitol rioter who breached Senate faces 1st felony sentence

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 20, 2021



By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — A Florida man who breached the U.S. Senate chamber carrying a Trump campaign flag is scheduled to become the first Jan. 6 rioter sentenced for a felony, in a hearing that will help set a benchmark for punishment in similar cases.

Prosecutors want Paul Allard Hodgkins to serve 18 months behind bars, saying in a recent filing that he, “like each rioter, contributed to the collective threat to democracy” by forcing lawmakers to temporarily abandon their certification of Joe Biden’s election victory and to scramble for shelter from incoming mobs.

Video footage shows Hodgkins, 38, wearing a Trump 2020 T-shirt, the flag flung over his shoulder and eye goggles around his neck inside the Senate. He took a selfie with a self-described shaman in a horned helmet and other rioters on the dais behind him.

His sentencing Monday in Washington could set the bar for punishments of hundreds of other defendants as they decide whether to accept plea deals or go to trial. Hodgkins and others are accused of serious crimes but were not indicted, as other were, for roles in larger conspiracies.

A lawyer for Hodgkins, who pleaded guilty last month to one count of obstructing an official proceeding, asked U.S. District Judge Randolph Moss not to impose a prison sentence, saying the shame that will attach to Hodgkins for the rest of his life should be factored in as punishment.

“Whatever punishment this court may provide will pale in comparison to the scarlet letter Mr. Hodgkins will wear for the rest of his life,” Patrick N. Leduc wrote in a recent filing, citing a Nathaniel Hawthorne novel in

which a woman accused of adultery is forced to wear a letter "A."

The filing argues that Hodgkins' actions weren't markedly different from those of Anna Morgan Lloyd — other than Hodgkins stepping onto the Senate floor. The 49-year-old from Indiana was the first of roughly 500 arrested to be sentenced. She pleaded guilty to misdemeanor disorderly conduct and last month was sentenced to three years of probation.

Hodgkins was never accused of assaulting anyone or damaging property. And prosecutors said he deserves some leniency for taking responsibility almost immediately and pleading guilty to the obstruction charge, which carries a maximum 20-years prison sentence.

But they also noted how he boarded a bus in his hometown of Tampa bound for a Jan. 6 Trump rally carrying rope, protective goggles and latex gloves in a backpack — saying that demonstrated he came to Washington prepared for violence.

On the day, he walked through grounds already littered with smashed police barriers and broken windows, evening passing police officers and others injured as the crowd surged toward the Capitol, prosecutors said. "Time and time again, rather than turn around and retreat, Hodgkins pressed forward," the government filing said.

Leduc described his client as an otherwise law-abiding American who, despite living in a poorer part of Tampa, regularly volunteered at a food bank. He noted that Hodgkins had been an Eagle Scout.

His actions on Jan. 6 "is the story of a man who for just one hour on one day lost his bearings ... who made a fateful decision to follow the crowd," the attorney said.

Leduc's 33-page presentencing filing devotes several pages to the Civil War, highlighting Abraham Lincoln's calls for reconciliation weeks before his assassination.

"The court has a chance to emulate Lincoln," he wrote.

Follow Michael Tarm on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/mtarm>

FBI releases trove of records on gangster 'Whitey' Bulger

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BOSTON (AP) — The FBI has released hundreds of pages of records from notorious Boston mobster James “Whitey” Bulger’s file.

The Boston Herald reports the 300 pages of heavily redacted records show the agency was aware that Bulger was involved in loan-sharking, horse-fixing and other crimes before recruiting him as an informant.

The FBI says the records were posted on the agency’s Vault public records database earlier this month and will be the first in a series of records released on Bulger.

The newspaper says the records show the FBI was tracking Bulger and other “different hoodlum groups in the Boston area” that were involved in loan-sharking in the early 1970s.

The records also detail a horse racing scheme that involved bribing jockeys and drugging horses to fix races at tracks in Boston, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Las Vegas to benefit mobsters operating in those areas.

Bulger led a largely Irish mob that ran loan-sharking, gambling and drug rackets in the Boston area.

He was convicted in 2013 in connection with a series of gangland slayings and other crimes while also working as an FBI informant who ratted on the New England mob, his gang’s main rival.

Bulger fled Boston in late 1994 after his FBI handler warned him he was about to be indicted and was one of America’s most wanted men before being arrested in California in 2011.

Bulger was killed in federal prison in West Virginia in 2018. Authorities have not charged anyone with his killing, but law enforcement officials said at the time that two Massachusetts mobsters were suspects.

Williamsburg Community Fair

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUL 20, 2021

The 72nd Williamsburg Community Fair will be held July 30 and 31 at the Williamsburg Community Center.

Events begin with Bingo on Friday, July 30 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Breakfast is available from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. followed by the parade registration at 9:15 a.m., flag raising at 10 a.m. followed by the parade at 10:30 a.m. (helmet required for those under 16 on any self-propelled or motorized vehicles). The thrift shop will be open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Lunch concessions will be available from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be a Homerun Derby fundraiser for Frankford girls softball beginning at noon, from 1- 4 p.m. kids games, dunk tank, water fun, horseshoe tournament beginning at 2 p.m., and a Cruise-In from 2-5 p.m. Bingo will resume from 3-5 p.m. in the Rescue Squad. Snack food will be available from 2-4 p.m.

From 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. a spaghetti dinner will be served. The fair will culminate with a free concert from 6-9 p.m. Bring your own chair. Call 304-667-9288 for more information.