



NEWSLETTER

September 2025 ISSUE#: HV019

Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley is a steady source of news to heal the accelerating erosion of our fundamental freedoms nationally and locally.

Embrace our First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Source: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/primary-sources/bill-of-rights>

Kind regards,
Publius Bonhomme Richard, Publisher & Co-Editors

HOW TO CONTACT US:

Email us at: info@mercervethepeople.com

Please email us to be included for future newsletters.

Printed copies of the newsletter will be made available at Rosedale Mills and local library. Any other suggested location(s) please let us know.

Call for Contributors!

MercerWe the People of Hopewell Valley is looking for contributors to write articles, especially informing the community about what is happening at local meetings. If you're interested in writing for us about that or any other topic, whether it is monthly or as needed, please reach out to us at info@mercervethepeople.com

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PILOT

Pennington Borough To Appeal Hopewell Township Tax Deal Decision To NJ Supreme Court

By Borough of Pennington Mayor and Council originally published Press Release on Pennington Borough website (September 3, 2025)

PRESS RELEASE – Borough of Pennington – Mayor and Council – FOR RELEASE

Pennington Borough to Appeal Hopewell Township Tax Deal Decision to New Jersey Supreme Court

Pennington Borough Leadership Vows to Continue Fight for Fair Treatment of Regional Taxpayers

PENNINGTON, NJ – Following last week's adverse ruling by the New Jersey Appellate Division in *Hopewell Borough v. Hopewell Township*, Mayor James M. Davy and the Pennington Borough Council announced today their intention to seek review by the New Jersey Supreme Court of a decision that threatens to burden Pennington taxpayers with millions in additional costs over the next three decades.

"This decision fundamentally undermines the principles of fairness and regional cooperation that should govern how municipalities treat their neighbors," said Mayor Davy. "We cannot stand by while Hopewell Township arbitrarily shifts the financial burden of their development deal onto the backs of Pennington families."

The Stakes for Pennington Residents

The appellate court upheld Hopewell Township's controversial 30-year tax exemption agreement with developer Lennar for over 1,000 housing units. Under this PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) arrangement:

- **Lost Ratable Base for School Revenue:** The Hopewell Valley Regional School District will lose millions in ratable tax base needed to fund our children's education
- **Shifted Tax Burden:** Pennington taxpayers will be forced to make up the difference through higher property taxes
- **Unfair Distribution:** PILOT payments go directly to Hopewell Township rather than being shared proportionally with regional partners like Pennington

"Our residents will pay more to subsidize Hopewell Township's development decisions in which we had no voice" said Council President Nadine Stern.

Why the Supreme Court Must Review This Case

According to Council Member Kati Angarone, "this case raises fundamental questions of equity taxpayers in shared school districts across the state and must be addressed."

The Borough Council has determined that the decision:

1. Erodes Regional Equity

The current legal framework allows municipalities to make tax policy decisions that devastate their neighbors with no accountability. This threatens the foundation of regional cooperation essential to New Jersey's governance structure.

2. Presents Constitutional School Funding Concerns

The decision creates a dangerous precedent allowing municipalities to circumvent their obligations to regional school districts, potentially violating the state constitutional requirement for thorough and efficient education funding.

3. Represents a Flawed Legal Standard

The appellate court's interpretation of the Long-Term Tax Exemption Law essentially eliminates meaningful oversight of municipal tax giveaways. The law should require substantial proof that tax exemptions are needed.

4. Violates Discovery Rights

By severely limiting discovery, the courts have made it virtually impossible for affected parties to challenge even the most questionable municipal tax deals, undermining due process rights.

A Fight for Fairness and Accountability

"This is bigger than one development project," emphasized Council Member Kit Chandler. "This is about whether New Jersey will allow municipalities to externalize the costs of their decisions onto neighboring communities while keeping all the benefits for themselves."

Borough officials argue that the appellate court's decision:

- Creates perverse incentives for municipalities to approve questionable tax deals
- Leaves neighboring communities defenseless against harmful regional impacts
- Undermines the collaborative regional approach necessary for addressing housing and development challenges
- Establishes a precedent that will encourage similar unfair arrangements across the state

Standing Up for Pennington Families

"Every family in Pennington will feel the impact of this decision in their property tax bills for the next thirty years," said Council Member Charles Marciante. "We have a moral obligation to exhaust every legal avenue to protect our residents from this injustice."

The Supreme Court should review the case because:

1. **Statewide Significance:** The decision affects every municipality in New Jersey and sets dangerous precedents for regional cooperation
2. **Constitutional Issues:** Questions about equal protection, due process, and educational funding require the highest court's attention
3. **Statutory Interpretation:** The proper interpretation of tax exemption laws has broad implications beyond this single case
4. **Regional Governance:** The decision threatens the shared responsibility for school funding that is the foundation of regional school districts

Moving Forward with Determination

"We understand the legal challenges ahead, but we believe strongly that justice requires us to continue this fight," said Council Member John Valenza. "The New Jersey Supreme Court has consistently shown its commitment to fairness and regional equity. We are confident they will recognize the fundamental injustices created by this decision."

The Borough plans to file its petition for certification with the New Jersey Supreme Court within the required timeframe.

Community Support

Borough officials noted the overwhelming support from residents for continuing the legal challenge. "Our community understands what's at stake," said Council Member Daniel Rubenstein. "This isn't just about one tax deal – it's about whether we'll allow the fundamental unfairness of forcing some communities to subsidize others' development choices to become the norm in New Jersey."

Access Press Release: <https://www.penningtonboro.org/DocumentCenter/View/1459/Press-Release---Appeal>

Access NJ Appeals Court ruling article: Appeals Court Upholds Hopewell's PILOT for Hopewell Parc as Pennington Weighs Next Steps (By Seth Siditsky originally published in MercerMe August 22 2025)

Access the NJ Appeals Court Ruling (August 21 2025): HOPEWELL BOROUGH, ET AL. VS. HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP, ET AL. (L-0497-22, MERCER COUNTY AND STATEWIDE)

Publishers Note: While the above court case plays out, are you aware there are several other local PILOTS? Aware how they will impact you?

- Hopewell Parc (1077 units): Pilot agreement
 - Special Edition April 13 2024: Includes Hopewell Parc Pilot Impact Assessment attained via OPRA, stating: Summary Of Findings, Proposed Residential Development in Hopewell Township (Page 1). Applying standard CUPR multipliers to the 861 “market” housing units would yield, 2,270 residents, including 279 public school children while the “affordable” demographic multipliers applied to the 216 “affordable” housing units would yield 396 residents and 50 public school children, for a total of 329 public school children. The estimated enrollment, at the current “average” per pupil costs would amount to \$7,471,920 (per year).
- The Collection at Hopewell (370+ units): Pilot agreement
- Woodmont Forge (300 units): Pilot agreement
- The Hopewell Chapter (270 units): Refer to Hopewell Parc Pilot (Block 93 Lot 5.01)
- BeiGene (Manufacturing, R&D): Pilot agreement
- Venue at Hopewell (600 units): Non-pilot age-restricted (55+) residential development
- Heritage at Hopewell (60+ units): Non-pilot

If any of this is concerning, please voice your questions and/or concern(s) at the next Township Committee meeting(s) in-person or by zoom: E.g., September 8 2025 at 6:30 PM <https://www.hopewelltp.org/calendar.aspx?CID=32>

Re: A Primer On PILOTS

OPINION

By Dufresne

The September 2025 issue of the Hopewell Express contains an article from Hopewell Township Committeeman Kevin Kuchinski entitled “A Primer on PILOTS”.

There are several distortions in that article that deserve to be addressed.

First is the title itself. A primer would have explained that PILOTS are tax breaks designed to offer developers incentives to build affordable housing units. The tax breaks vary from PILOT to PILOT, but the undeniable result is that less tax revenue reaches Hopewell Township.

PILOTS also alter the distribution of the revenue that does come in. Normally, every tax dollar is distributed to the Township, the School District, the Fire District, the Library System, and to the County. Every taxpayer can view this distribution on their tax bills.

Under a PILOT, however, 95% of the tax revenue comes to the Township. The County receives 5%, and the Schools quite notably receive nothing.

Why should you care. Because the amounts are staggering, more than \$300 million over the 30-year life of the PILOTS. In sum, the PILOTS deprive the School District of more than \$160 million over the 30-year life of the PILOTS. And so, when Hopewell Township promises the School District \$16.1 million, you can quickly understand that they are offering far less than the Schools would have received had there been no PILOTS.

PILOTS are optional. Simply put, PILOTS are NOT required to meet our affordable housing obligations. Hopewell Township agrees to them to incentivize multi-billion dollar corporations who frankly do not need the incentives. West Windsor, for example, does not pass PILOTS because they understand how perniciously they affect their schools.

Sadly, Committeeman Kuchinski explained none of this in his “primer.”

Second, he notes that the NJ Court of Appeals has correctly (in my view) ruled that the Township had the legal right to pass its PILOTS. He fails to add that Pennington Borough is appealing that decision to the NJ Supreme Court arguing that it is not fair or constitutional that one Borough’s actions should work to raise taxes on another borough. I am not a lawyer, but their arguments are compelling.

Third, he argues that there will be no net impact on taxpayers. Mr. Kuchinski lives in a strange world. He failed to account for the fact that residents of the new developments can vote yeah or nay on the referendum, but if it passes, the entire new tax burden will be existing residents. Add to that residents in the new developments will not be paying taxes to the Schools, resulting in a huge additional burden to existing residents. There’s nothing fair about that.

Know that the school district is not a party to the PILOTS. They are also victims here. I intend to vote yes on the referendum because the schools need the funds and because our community will thrive with a superior school district.

The blame here rest solely on the Township.

As for the \$5.2M contribution from BeOne Medicines, it is so sad that those funds, which should be used to build new affordable housing, must instead go to pay off part of the abortive plan at Pennington, the result of a truly ill-designed scheme to place affordable housing in location where residents would be unable to walk to a market or to a job.

Access the September 2025 issue of the Hopewell Express (page 34) containing an article from Hopewell Township Committeeman Kevin Kuchinski entitled "A Primer on PILOTS".

ELECTION 2025

Growing Responsibly In Hopewell

Steven Niederer's Facebook post (August 14 2025) to article: N.J. Family Fears The Worst As Town Takes First Step Toward Condemning 175-Year-Old Farm (By Nyah Marshall originally published in NJ.com August 3 2025)

I am supportive of town growth and find it necessary at times. But when do we as a community draw a line in the sand? I'm posting an article from an incident that is going on in a nearby town in Middlesex to show how far things can go, in hopes it creates awareness in our town to keep an eye on each other.

Please don't think I'm spreading fear, this is purely awareness. I am grateful that our town is not taking these measures to the farms that are left in town, because these farms are important. Not only do they help feed our families, but they help preserve the rural aspect that we all love to see in this town.

On the other side, land is disappearing every day in this town, I urge you all to drive through these construction sites on scotch road (where you are allowed) and see how this giant tract of land is being turned into a city where all of the farm land in that area has been stripped of the soil that generations of farmers have worked night and day to put food on your table.

Not only is this farm, and several other tracts of land going to be turned into housing over the next five or more years in hopewell township, but the population in this town will sky rocket, adding several other infrastructure hurdles that have not been considered enough.

Our schools will be over crowded, our public workers and first responders will be overworked and understaffed, our roads will be gridlocked much more than they already are, flooding will be even more fierce in areas and the safety of our community members will be much more of an issue moving forward.

I was at the hopewell night out community event at stony brook elementary school the other night. It was a breath of fresh air meeting so many new and old faces that evening, but I can't help but think about the storm of development that is coming and how it will directly impact everyone in this town.

I encourage everyone in this community to look out for each other, and if you have a chance, let your voice be heard if it can in fact benefit our towns well being. Even go to a committee meeting and listen to what is happening around this town, or voice a concern to maybe fix an issue. You can change a life, or even save one.

That's my thoughtfulness rant for the day.

With love, Steve Niederer

Restore Balance and Common Ground in the **HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE**

 <p>Steven NIEDERER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Lifelong Hopewell resident (fourth-generation farming family)★ Local small business owner★ Graduate of Hopewell Valley Central High School★ TCNJ graduate (degree in Social Sciences & Criminology)★ Retired from the Mercer County Sheriff's Office★ Served with the US Marshals Regional Fugitive Task Force and Sheriff's Tactical Response Team★ Serves as a Mental Health Advocate for first responders and community members	 <p>Ed JACKOWSKI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ A 50-year resident of Hopewell★ Served honorably as a US Marine★ Worked in the financial services industry★ Owner of Jack's Greenhouse and Farm★ Officer of the Trenton Cyrus #5 Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons★ Parent of two daughters who went through the Hopewell school system
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On November 4th, vote for **COMMUNITY** ★ **SERVICE** ★ **SAFETY**

Paid for by Friends of Ed and Steve, 91 Titus Mill Road, Pennington, NJ 08534

Are You Looking For A Meaningful Way To Serve Your Community And Support Our Election Process?

By Hopewell Valley Republican Association

Are you looking for a meaningful way to serve your community and support our election process?

Become a poll worker or election challenger!

Poll workers help run polling places on Election Day—greeting voters, checking in ballots, and making sure everything runs smoothly.

Challengers observe the election process to help ensure transparency and fairness.

Both roles are essential to maintaining free and fair elections, and training is provided. If you care about your community and want to make a difference, **please contact us** at info@hvravgop.org to learn more.

Offshore Wind Is The Wildcard In New Jersey Gov Race

By Kevin Mooney originally published in Restoration News (August 11 2025)

Activists are awaiting responses from Team Trump, challenging environmental establishment with fresh science.

Electricity rates have risen as much as 20 percent in parts of New Jersey, fueling public frustration with wind power projects driving cost increases—and potentially helping Republicans in the Garden State's contentious election this November.

Jack Ciattarelli, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, is pounding away at the state's "energy crisis" in a series of powerful ads and public comments. The wind plans for the Jersey Shore—and the Trump administration's ability to halt them—figure prominently into the conversation.

New Jersey residents battling the offshore wind projects are still waiting to hear back from top Trump administration officials who have the authority to rescind prior approvals for the project. While construction has not yet taken place, local conservationists have expressed concern that the company behind the wind proposal could quickly reconstitute its plans once it has enough allies back in government.

That's why the citizen activist group known as Save LBI is continuing to pursue litigation at the state and federal level aimed at blocking the project while at the same time petitioning Trump administration officials to take further executive action. Save LBI is also reaching out to some of the larger, more established environmental groups with correspondence asking them to reconsider their prior support for offshore wind. The anti-wind activists have collected updated scientific research that demonstrates how offshore wind damages the environment and marine life.

A Checkered History

Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind is the partnership between Shell New Energies US and EDF Renewables North America that has envisioned building up to 200 wind turbines positioned as close as eight miles off the coast of Long Beach Island (LBI), Brigantine, and Atlantic City in southern New Jersey.

That partnership has experienced some significant setbacks in recent months. In February 2025, Shell New Energy withdrew from the project and wrote off \$1 billion of its investment. At the time, a company official told reporters the offshore wind effort no longer fit with its "capabilities" and did not generate the kind of returns the company would like to see. Shell's decision prompted the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to cancel its "fourth offshore wind solicitation," which meant it would not be providing Atlantic Shores with additional subsidies.

The January 2025 executive order from President Trump calling for a temporary cessation and immediate review of federal wind leasing and permitting practices dealt another blow to Atlantic Shores.



Meet the Candidates
for Hopewell Township Committee

Steven
NIEDERER

Ed
JACKOWSKI

Monday, September 22nd
from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm



PLEASE JOIN US
to Restore Balance and
Common Ground in the
Hopewell Township Committee

Needle Creek Brewery
91 Titus Mill Road, Pennington

☞ Light fare served ☞

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Please make checks payable to: Friends of Ed and Steve

Paid for by Friends of Ed and Steve, 91 Titus Mill Road, Pennington, NJ 08534

Not Quite Dead (Yet)

But does this really mean the project is dead?

Bob Stern, the president of Save LBI, and an engineer who previously managed environmental reviews for the U.S Department of Energy, says no.

"I tell people the project is halted," Stern told Restoration News in an interview. "But as long as they hold the lease area, it's still active and could come back."

The other corporate partner EDF Renewables is a French-owned utility known in full as Electricity de France. In March 2025, EDF wrote down \$940 million of its cost for the project. But the company has made comments indicating it's still poised to going forward.

"EDF keeps making statements they are committed to the project," Stern said. "The Atlantic Shores CEO also seems to be looking for new opportunities to proceed. So, it sounds to me like they want to see who wins the next gubernatorial election in New Jersey."

Ciattarelli, a businessman and former assemblyman, is running for governor against Rep. Mikie Sherrill, a Democrat House member representing New Jersey's 11th Congressional District. Ciattarelli is unequivocally opposed to offshore wind plans while Sherrill's congressional record shows she has a history of supporting green energy projects. Gov. Phil Murphy, the incumbent Democrat and a proponent of offshore wind, is term-limited and will leave office in January 2026.

(RELATED: Tax Hikes and Upset Voters Could Be Clincher for GOP in New Jersey's Governor Race)

Lee Zeldin Stands Out from the Pack

Among all the government officials Save LBI has interacted with, the group has had the most success with EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin. The petition Save LBI activists sent to the EPA Environmental Appeals Board proved to be instrumental in having Zeldin withdraw the air permit for the Atlantic Shores project back in March.

"This is the permit that deals with air emissions or pollutant emissions offshore from the pile driving that travel onshore," Stern said. "So, when they do the pile driving to embed the foundations into the seabed, it takes a lot of power and a lot of energy. You've got diesel engines operating and vessels operating and they give off a significant amount of pollutants. Even though these are 8 or 9 miles offshore, that can travel onshore and impact the Brigantine National Wilderness Area which has strict requirements against degradation of its air quality."

In analyzing the air permit, the Save LBI team found what Stern said were "a lot of flaws" in the process Biden's EPA used to approve the air permit. Stern also told Restoration News that the agency failed to provide any meaningful explanation for its decisions and did not disclose whether the air emissions it had modeled matched up with the energy needed to pile drive the foundations into the seabed.

"Zeldin agreed with us and remanded the air permit and called it back for a further look and that was really very important to us because then the project did not have all the permits it needed to construct," Stern said. "That enabled us and the administration to halt construction. That was a notable success on the permitting side."

But on the flip side the letters and requests Save LBI sent to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick have gone unanswered.

Specifically, Save LBI has asked Burgum to initiate a process for cancelling the lease and for Lutnick to create a turbine-free migration corridor along the East Coast for the benefit of the Right Whale.

The New Jersey conservationists have also asked Burgum and Lutnick to rescind the Biden administration's Endangered Species Act (ESA) approval for the project.

They are still waiting for answers. But in meantime Save LBI has also released a new report titled "The Benefits and Risks of an Offshore Wind Project" that details what the negative impacts of the Atlantic Shores project will be if it moves forward. In letters addressed to executives of environmental advocacy groups, Stern encourages them to read the report and "critically examine" their prior support for offshore wind.

Reflecting on four years of effort trying to preserve the shore and the ocean environment, Stern concluded that the "mainstream environmental organizations had lost their way" and that "they have been consumed by the climate change issue, at the expense of other environmental protections."

The letters from Stern and Save LBI were addressed to the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club and more than a dozen other left-wing environmental groups.



Stern said his organization would be exploring the feasibility of creating a new national environmental organization dedicated to shore and ocean protection and “making practical international progress towards addressing climate change.”

Other offshore wind projects up and down the East Coast that have stirred controversy include Revolution Wind off Rhode Island and Connecticut, Empire Wind off New York and New Jersey, and Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind.

Access the article: <https://restoration-news.com/offshore-wind-is-the-wildcard-in-new-jersey-gov-race>

(READ MORE: Jack Ciattarelli Targets Illegal Alien Sanctuaries in Critical Gov. Race) Publisher Note: After reading, don't forget: This small N.J. town voted to declare itself a 'sanctuary city' (By Cristina Rojas originally published NJ.com February 9 2017)

The Cost Of Deception: Why Integrity Struggles In Local Politics And How To Change The Game

By Defender of the Republic originally published in Defender of the Republic Substack (August 19 2025)

In the rough-and-tumble world of local politics and right here in New Jersey, it often feels like the loudest liars and slickest hypocrites rise to the top. From township committees to county boards, I've seen people climb the ladder not through hard work or genuine service but by bending the truth, making empty promises, and wearing masks of virtue that crumble under scrutiny. It's disheartening to watch those with integrity—people who stick to their principles and refuse to play dirty—get sidelined. Yet, the problem isn't just the system or the players; it's also how we, as a community, respond to it. By shifting our mindset and taking concrete steps, we can empower the “good guys” to succeed without compromising their honor.

The Game of Deception in Politics

New Jersey's local politics can feel like a microcosm of everything wrong with power dynamics. I've watched candidates in my own state promise transparency while hiding shady deals, or champion “community values” while ignoring constituents' concerns behind closed doors. One local official I recall campaigned on protecting green spaces, only to support a developer's project that razed a beloved park—claiming it was “for the greater good” after the fact. Another figure, a regular at community events, preached unity while privately slandering opponents to secure votes. A political figure, who touts themselves as a defender of children, deals in sexual favors. That same person forces her children to take photos with Bibles while admitting privately to being an atheist. These aren't isolated incidents; they're part of a pattern where charisma and half-truths often trump substance.

The data backs this up. A 2023 study from Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics found that only 42% of New Jersey residents trust local government officials to act in the public's best interest. This erosion of trust stems from repeated scandals—think of the pay-to-play schemes in counties like Hudson or the nepotism exposed in towns like Toms River. Hypocrisy thrives because it's rewarded: voters, swayed by polished speeches or fear of “the other side,” often overlook red flags. Meanwhile, honest candidates who refuse to exaggerate their records or sling mud struggle to cut through the noise.

Why the Good Guys Fall Behind

People with integrity, those who prioritize truth and principle over expediency, face an uphill battle. Honesty can seem like a liability when opponents are willing to say anything to win. A local school board candidate I know refused to make unrealistic promises about budget cuts, sticking to a practical plan. He lost to someone who vowed “no tax hikes ever,” only for taxes to rise months later. The good guys often lack the flash that grabs headlines or the stomach for backroom deals that secure endorsements. They're also less likely to exploit fear or division, which can make their campaigns seem less urgent or exciting.

This dynamic creates a vicious cycle. Honest leaders, discouraged by losses or burnout, may step back, leaving the field open to opportunists. Voters, jaded by broken promises, become cynical, making it harder for genuine candidates to inspire trust. It feels like the system is rigged against honor, and in many ways, it is—but it's not unbreakable.

Shifting Our Mindset

To change this, we need to rethink how we view politics and our role in it. First, we must stop rewarding deception with our attention and votes. Too often, we're drawn to the loudest voices or the slickest ads, mistaking confidence for competence. Instead, we should value substance over style, seeking out candidates who back their words with actions. This means doing our homework—checking voting records, attending town halls, and asking tough questions.

Second, we need to redefine success. The “good guys” don't always lose because they're honest; sometimes they lose because they're playing by outdated rules. Integrity doesn't mean being passive or overly polite. It means being strategic, bold, and unapologetic about values while still engaging voters effectively. We should encourage principled leaders to fight smarter, not dirtier.

Finally, we must let go of cynicism. It's easy to say, “All politicians are corrupt,” but that mindset hands power to the worst among them. By believing change is possible and supporting those who embody it, we create a culture where integrity can thrive.

Helping the Good Guys Get Ahead

Empowering honest leaders requires action from all of us. Here are practical steps to level the playing field:

- 1. Amplify Authentic Voices:** Use platforms like X or local forums to highlight candidates who walk the talk. Share their records, not just their rhetoric. For example, if a candidate has a history of community service, post about it and tag local groups to spread the word.
- 2. Build Grassroots Support:** Honest candidates often lack the funding or connections of their opponents. Volunteer for their campaigns, organize meet-and-greets, or donate small amounts. In 2024, a grassroots campaign in Princeton helped a first-time candidate with no political machine defeat a well-funded incumbent by focusing on door-to-door outreach.
- 3. Demand Transparency:** Push for public access to council meetings, budgets, and voting records. In towns like Cherry Hill, residents have used open records requests to expose conflicts of interest, forcing accountability. If officials know they're being watched, they're less likely to play fast and loose.
- 4. Educate Voters:** Many people vote based on name recognition or last-minute ads. Host community workshops or share fact-based voter guides to help neighbors make informed choices. A 2022 initiative in Monmouth County increased voter turnout by 8% through local education efforts.
- 5. Mentor New Leaders:** Encourage principled people to run by offering mentorship or connecting them with ethical incumbents. Organizations like the New Jersey League of Women Voters provide training for first-time candidates, helping them navigate the system without compromising their values.

A Path Forward

The frustration of watching liars and hypocrites succeed in local politics is real, but it's not the whole story. Every time a community rallies behind a leader of integrity—someone who prioritizes service over self-interest—we prove that the system can bend toward justice. By changing our mindset to value substance, reject cynicism, and actively support honest candidates, we can help the good guys get ahead. It won't be easy, and it won't happen overnight, but every step forward counts. Let's stop letting the loudest liars win and start building a politics that rewards honor.

Access the article: <https://defenderoftherepublic.substack.com/p/the-cost-of-deception-why-integrity?r=poef4&triedRedirect=true>

Education

What's Happening In HVRSD Schools? HVRSD Board Of Education Meeting August 11, 2025

By The Wall of Ed

Agenda: <https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/hvrSD/Board.nsf/Public#tab-meetings>

Meeting Recording: <https://youtu.be/aQzJk0oaMM>

Next Meeting September 15th starting with a tour of HV Central High School at 5:30 with the regular board meeting starting at 6:30pm at the High School: 259 Pennington Titusville Rd, Pennington NJ

\$84 Million Bond Referendum Moves Forward with Two-Part Question

The board unanimously approved a two-part bond referendum question for the November 4, 2025 general election. The first question will address critical infrastructure needs, with a price tag of \$58.4 million, and the second question, totaling \$25.8 million, will address expanding classroom space at Bear Tavern and Toll Gate Grammer to accommodate increases in enrollment due to the new housing developments that have been added. The first question must pass in order for the second question to pass. There was no reason given for why.

Proposed Question 1 – Preliminary Total Cost \$58.4 M	
1	Building Integrity Partial Roofing Replacements (HS, Timberlane, Bear Tavern, Hopewell ES, Toll Gate, Stony Brook) Exterior Door Replacement (Timberlane, Bear Tavern, Hopewell ES, Stony Brook) Correct Drainage Issue (Stony Brook) Front Entrance Upgrades (Timberlane, Bear Tavern Staff Entrance)
2	Critical Building Systems and Infrastructure Various HVAC Upgrades (HS, Timberlane, Bear Tavern, Hopewell ES, Toll Gate, Stony Brook) Sewer Pumping Station Renovation (Bear Tavern)
3	Safety and Security Enhancements Interior Door Replacement (Bear Tavern, Hopewell ES)
4	Improve Space For Students Aux. Gym Floor Replacement (Timberlane) Interior Renovations (Bear Tavern) Toilet Room Renovations (Bear Tavern, Hopewell ES)
5	Site Improvements Repaving (HS Solar Lot) Driveway Improvements at Front Loop (Toll Gate)

Proposed Question 2 – Preliminary Total Cost \$25.8 M	
4	Space For Students Addition at Bear Tavern (Approx. 19,000 sf, (10) Pre-K classrooms, Small Group Rooms, Student Services) Addition at Toll Gate (Approx. 9,500 sf, (6) Pre-K classrooms, Staff Rooms and Toilet Rooms – Includes Parking Expansion and Removal of Modular Buildings)

State and Local Aid and Expected Property Tax Increases

HVRSD tried to pass an \$87 million bond referendum last September, voters rejected it. They removed the turf fields and bathroom/concession building, but since last September the school has seen more building failures and rising inflation has increased costs, so the total the district is seeking to borrow is \$84.2 million.

Most of the projects included in the first question are eligible for 40% of state aid. The Hopewell Township Committee (HTC) also promised to pay \$16M to help pay for the Bear Tavern addition, however the money is tied up due to a pending lawsuit between the Township and Pennington Borough involving the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement. After the August Board Meeting, the courts ruled in favor of Hopewell Township's pending lawsuit with Pennington Borough, which would allow the Township to release the \$16 Million to HVRSD, however Pennington Borough has appealed this decision, so the lawsuit is still pending until the court decides if they will hear the case. In other words, the recent win for Hopewell Township will have no impact on the bond referendum, as the money is still tied up due to the lawsuit.

Board of Education member, Dr. Pamela Lileston said that "These are projects that we are going to have to take on as a district whether the referendum passes or not, but when we take them on and it (the referendum) does not pass, it's going to be at a higher cost to the district. It's going to result in more interruptions to student learning and the money is going to come from teacher salaries, cutting positions, and cutting programs."

Board Member and Finance and Facilities Chair, Mark Peters, could not be at the meeting, but sent in a written statement and he said that nearly all districts are facing budgeting issues in NJ. "Simply put, capital projects are nearly impossible to budget for given the current constraints on how administrators are told to budget by Trenton." Under the state's current school funding policies, HVRSD currently receives nearly no state funding.

Estimated Tax Impact

If questions one and two pass, the annual tax impact would be \$471 for Hopewell Township, \$411 for Hopewell Boro, and \$489 for Pennington Borough. These estimates are based on the average assessed value of \$477,718, \$408,445, and \$488,135, respectively. If your home is assessed higher than the average, you would receive a higher increase.

Click here for the full referendum presentation from the June 2025 BOE Meeting: [https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/hvr/d/Board.nsf/files/DHQ3AS05F7BB/\\$file/HVRSD_5639_CommGrpPres_06.16.25_Final.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/hvr/d/Board.nsf/files/DHQ3AS05F7BB/$file/HVRSD_5639_CommGrpPres_06.16.25_Final.pdf)

For more about the Bond Referendum, visit the district's Bond Referendum website at <https://sites.google.com/hvr/d/org/hvr/d-vote?usp=sharing>.

Other Updates

Celebrating America's 250th Birthday

During public comment, community member Sylvia Kocsis asked what the district had planned for America's 250th birthday celebration, which is happening in 2026. She emphasized the need for greater civic knowledge and engagement to help our students improve civil discourse. Dr. Treece said that the district has been planning with local historians and organization in the community since last fall and they have a lot of things in the works for the students of all grade levels.

District Looking Into Facilities Costs for Community Group Rentals

The district is looking into what it costs for them to rent their facilities for community events such as the Children's Theater and Music and Dance recitals because the district can't afford to absorb any additional costs. An example of the costs they are referring to are facility costs, wear and tear, and air conditioning use after normal hours. They will be presenting their findings in the coming months.

District In Process of Updating High School Graduation Requirement

Changes to policy 5460, which outlines our High School Graduation Requirements, was up for first reading. The board wants to add a requirement that students must take 2.5 credit hours that promotes intercultural sensitivity and competence or service learning. This requirement would take effect for the class of 2030 and still requires a second reading before passing.

Remember: Hopewell Valley School Bond Referendum Defeated In Special Election

By Mary Galioto originally published in MercerMe (September 18, 2024)

In a special election on Tuesday, September 17, the Hopewell Valley Regional School District's bond referendum was decisively rejected, with nearly 69% of voters casting "No" ballots. Of the 2,877 residents who showed up to the Pennington Fire House (and 1,800 who voted by mail), 3,204 voted against the referendum, while 1,473 voted in favor — a voter turnout of nearly 24%.

The bond referendum aimed to fund a range of facility updates and improvements across the district. These included expanding instructional space at two elementary schools, replacing aging infrastructure such as leaky roofs and inefficient HVAC systems, upgrading safety features to meet modern standards, and addressing critical needs like a new sewer pumping station, backup wells, and accessible restrooms.

Access the full article: <https://mercerme.com/hopewell-valley-school-bond-referendum-defeated-in-special-election/>

Cancel Culture Alive And Well In Hopewell

September 5 2025:
Post in a local social media site.

The author's name has been redacted. The post has been subsequently deleted.

Given the continued efforts from some of the most established business & farm owners in the community concerning the attempts to derail the needs of our schools to further a purely political agenda, I am personally boycotting Rosedale Mills, Needle Creek Brewing, and any other affiliated businesses. I urge any other like minded residents who care about the continued strength of our school district to consider doing the same.

👍👍 8

30 comments

👍 Like

💬 Comment

✉️ Send

There's Too Much Doom And Gloom In The Classroom

By Robert Pondiscio originally published in National Review (August 21 2025)

Let's cultivate resiliency and hope instead.

Maya is 13 years old and in eighth grade.

First period is English, where her class is reading a young adult novel about a teenage girl who self-harms, spirals into depression, and eventually attempts suicide. Her teacher praises the book for its honesty and "unflinching emotional truth." After a brief discussion, the class writes about how trauma shapes identity.

Second period is social studies. Today's reading assignment comes from the 1619 Project, followed by a worksheet asking students to reflect on how racism is "baked into the structure of American life." Last week, students read a chapter from *A People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn, and discussed whether the U.S. was founded to protect the wealthy at the expense of everyone else. Maya takes notes quietly, worried she might say the wrong thing.

In science, the class is studying climate change. The teacher plays a documentary that includes images of wildfires, melting glaciers, and disappearing coastal towns. Maya learns that humanity will face catastrophic collapse if global carbon emissions do not reach "net zero" by the time she's in her thirties. During lunch, she tells a friend she's not sure she wants to have kids someday.

In the afternoon, Maya joins her "action civics" project group. Their capstone project is about gun violence. They're creating a slide deck and organizing a letter-writing campaign. The project guidelines encourage students to "identify a systemic injustice" and "propose a structural solution." Her group adviser urges them to "center" their personal stories.

Tomorrow is a half day. Teachers will spend the afternoon in professional-development workshops on "trauma-informed pedagogy," where they'll learn to spot signs of anxiety, disengagement, and despair in students — and to treat these as evidence of trauma.

Almost no one will consider the possibility that we are the ones traumatizing students.

If you spend time in American classrooms today, especially in schools shaped by the dominant ideas of social and emotional learning (SEL) and trauma-informed pedagogy (TIP), you might get the impression that the world is a broken and dangerous place — and that wise and loving adults equip children to navigate it successfully by making them aware of just how bad things are.

We think we're helping them. But what if we're not?

That question lies at the heart of a compelling and underappreciated body of research led by Jeremy Clifton, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania. Clifton studies "primal world beliefs," or "primals" — deep, often unconscious assumptions about the nature of the world. Is it safe or dangerous? Enticing or dull? Alive or mechanistic? His work suggests that these

beliefs shape everything: our sense of well-being, our resilience, our openness to experience, even our mental health outcomes.

Clifton's research has not made its way into teacher-training programs, education-policy debates, or district SEL initiatives. The only mention I've found of it in a publication aimed at teachers is a 2022 Education Week interview in which Clifton offered a quiet warning: "Don't assume teaching young people that the world is bad will help them. Do know that how you see the world matters." This quiet warning, if heeded, could spark a revolutionary change in American education. It could also guide those seeking to respond more productively to the mental health crisis afflicting America's children.

That crisis is no longer abstract or emerging — it is measurable, visible, and urgent. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 40 percent of high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless in 2021, up from 28 percent a decade earlier. Nearly one in five seriously considered suicide. Among girls, the numbers are even more dire: Nearly 60 percent reported persistent sadness or hopelessness, and 30 percent said they had considered suicide. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association have jointly declared this a national emergency.

Schools are at the front lines of this crisis. Yet our default response — more SEL, more trauma awareness, more therapeutic intervention — may be managing the symptoms while reinforcing the cause. If, as Clifton's research suggests, children's most fundamental beliefs about the world influence their resilience and well-being, then shaping those beliefs must be a core goal rather than a peripheral task.

Instead of reflexively pathologizing behavior or redefining adversity as trauma, educators might begin by asking a more foundational question: What kind of world are we describing to our students, day after day? And what are they coming to believe because of it?

Primal beliefs are, as Clifton describes them, "the lenses through which we interpret everything." They act as default assumptions — about the world, not about ourselves. And they are stable, subconscious, and consequential. Clifton and his colleagues have identified 26 such beliefs, organized into clusters, with three especially predictive of life outcomes: whether the world is (1) safe or dangerous, (2) enticing or dull, and (3) alive or mechanistic.

What's most fascinating and counterintuitive is that our primal beliefs aren't shaped by life experience so much as they shape our experience of life. For example, Clifton's research found that people who work in high-risk professions such as law enforcement — who routinely encounter danger — are more likely than the general population to believe that the world is safe. It's not that they've been shielded from harm; it's that their belief in a fundamentally safe world appears to shape how they interpret risk, navigate uncertainty, and process adversity. In other words, it's not life events that determine primal beliefs; it's primal beliefs that determine how we process life events, how we understand and absorb them.

And they matter. In studies published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* and other journals, Clifton and co-author Peter Meindl found that negative primal beliefs were strongly associated with anxiety, cynicism, depression, suicidal ideation, and less life satisfaction. By contrast, people with sunnier beliefs — those who saw the world as safe and enticing — tended to report dramatically better outcomes across the board, including greater life satisfaction, more emotional resilience, better physical health, stronger interpersonal relationships, and lower levels of anxiety and depression. The widespread belief that viewing the world as dangerous fosters vigilance and success is, Clifton and Meindl found, unsupported.

If you work in education — or have a child in school — you've probably encountered the growing emphasis on trauma-informed pedagogy. This approach, born of legitimate concern for children who've experienced adversity, encourages teachers to consider trauma as a key explanation for misbehavior or disengagement. In practice, it can lead to lower expectations, less structure, and a default posture of therapeutic intervention rather than academic instruction.

Social and emotional learning, too, has evolved far from its original goal of helping children navigate their emotions. In many schools, SEL has become the central organizing principle of classroom culture: "emotional check-ins," "restorative circles," "safe spaces," and constant reminders that children are "not okay" — that they carry trauma, or live in an unjust world, or must always be on guard against microaggressions and existential threats.

The problem with all of this is not just ideological. It's psychological.

In a 2021 paper, Clifton and Meindl reported that 53 percent of parents prefer beliefs that the world is dangerous for their children, based on the notion that this mindset prepares young people for life's hardships. Summarizing their work, Arthur Brooks wrote in *The Atlantic*, "No doubt these beliefs come from the best of intentions. If you want children to be safe (and thus, happy), you should teach them that the world is dangerous — that way, they will be more vigilant and careful. But in fact, teaching them that the world is dangerous is bad for their health, happiness, and success."

The same mistaken logic pervades schools, from the classroom to the school library to civics curricula that frame America as irredeemably unjust and democracy as hanging by a thread. We marinate children in bleak narratives, assuming, wrongly, that this will inoculate them against disappointment or failure. As Clifton has found, these beliefs are not protective — they're harmful. Children raised to see the world as declining, unjust, barren, or full of threat are more likely to suffer anxiety, depression, and a diminished sense of possibility.

We tell ourselves that presenting children with a stark and unsparing view of the world is a form of honesty — that by confronting them with injustice, danger, and decline, we’re preparing them to be thoughtful, engaged citizens. But what we may actually be doing is fostering despair. When students are repeatedly exposed to narratives of systemic failure, moral decay, and looming disaster, they may come to believe that the world is not just flawed but fundamentally broken — and that they are powerless to change it. Instead of cultivating resilience or agency, we risk producing paralysis, cynicism, and a diminished sense of possibility.

Clifton’s research, if it gains traction in K–12, could force a rethinking of this approach.

When I described TIP to Clifton, he offered a gentle but devastating critique, which suggests his academic credentials mask the heart of an elementary school teacher. “The enemy of learning is not danger but expectation that there is little worthwhile to be learned,” he told me. “What stops great quests to discover buried treasure is not the snakes and the pirates — it is the expectation that there is little to nothing of value that is probably buried out there in the sand.”

This observation is more than a metaphor. Clifton’s research identifies what he calls the “explore desire” — a core trait linked to the belief that the world is enticing. It’s the foundation of curiosity, resilience, and grit. And it’s something we risk extinguishing when we surround children with a steady diet of darkness, grievance, and doom.

This parallels the argument made by Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff in *The Coddling of the American Mind*, which warns of a new cultural “safetyism” that treats discomfort as trauma and ideas as threats. But Clifton’s work adds something empirical — and actionable. If we are indeed shaping children’s primal beliefs through our curriculum choices and classroom cultures, then we bear a moral and professional responsibility to examine what kind of world we’re portraying to them.

The longer we portray the world as dangerous and depleted, the more likely children are to believe that it is — and to suffer the psychological consequences.

In a 2021 report for the American Enterprise Institute, where I work, I described what I called the “unexamined rise of therapeutic education.” We have normalized the idea that school is primarily a place to process trauma and tend to emotional wounds. But this well-meaning impulse now dominates education reform, training programs, professional development, and policy.

In pursuing this, we risk installing what might be called institutional primals: an unspoken, reflexive consensus that the world is unjust, broken, and full of harm — and that the teacher’s job is to help students survive it rather than flourish in spite of it.

To be clear, none of this is an argument for rose-colored glasses. Children need to know that the world contains hardship, injustice, and danger. But they also need to know that it contains beauty, opportunity, and meaning — and that history contains a record of genuine progress and that further progress remains possible. And only one of those orientations leads reliably to flourishing.

As Clifton puts it, “There’s beauty everywhere — we have only to open our eyes to see it.” But someone must show children how.

Perhaps the most remarkable and underreported aspect of primal world beliefs is that they’re not fixed. They’re beliefs, not traits. They can be influenced by what we emphasize, what we model, and what we direct children’s attention toward.

Every day in school, children like Maya learn math, reading, science, and history. But they also learn — through countless implicit and explicit signals — what kind of world they live in. That world, they learn, might be a battleground and a graveyard. Or it might be a treasure map.

The question is: Which signal are we giving them?

Access the article: <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2025/10/theres-too-much-doom-and-gloom-in-the-classroom/>

Local News

Hopewell Harvest Fair’s Misguided Policy On Political Free Speech

A Letter from Hopewell Valley Republican Association to Hopewell Harvest Fair (September 7 2025)

Dear Hopewell Harvest Fair,

On June 21, 2025, the Hopewell Valley Republican Association (HVRA) Civics Education Committee completed an on-line registration form to participate in the Town Square area of the Hopewell Harvest Fair (HHF) that is scheduled for Saturday, September 20, 2025, at the Hopewell Elementary School grounds. The HVRA received a “thank you for registering” e-mail in response.

The HVRA received no response about our request to participate at the fair, so a follow-up e-mail was sent to the HHF committee on July 29, 2025.

On August 17, 2025, the HVRA received an e-mail from the President of the HHF, Scott Fulmer, apologizing for the delay in responding to our inquiry. The e-mail states:

“Our bylaws were updated not long ago regarding Town Square guidelines. The Board (of the Hopewell Harvest Fair) felt it was best to keep the Fair from becoming a politically-charged event, deciding to limit political candidates and political party presence. Unfortunately, that means we can’t invite the HVRA to participate in Town Square this year. For the record we also turned away other politically-affiliated organizations that applied.

According to the HHF website in August these bylaws are only available for review at the Hopewell Public Library. A member of the HVRA visited the library on August 18, 2025, but was informed that no HHF bylaws are kept there.

HVRA was concerned about this “lack of transparency” and e-mailed HHF committee. On September 3, 2025, the HHF contacted the HVRA to confirm that the bylaws were no longer available at the library but that they will be digitally published and linked to the HHF website.

The bylaws state in Section III Part D:

“Participation via exhibits, displays or dissemination of promotional information by partisan political groups or parties, businesses, religious organizations or other groups or individuals will be restricted at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.”

While the lack of transparency is concerning, the restriction at the discretion of the Board of Trustees of the HHF on political groups is very troubling and in the opinion of the HVRA very misguided.

Statistics and surveys consistently show that the younger generations in our country have a woefully inadequate knowledge about civics and are less involved in civic practices such as voting. According to the Annenberg Public Policy Center at UPenn in 2022 only 47% of US adults could name the three branches of government. Voter participation in the 2024 general election by those between the ages of 18 to 24 years old was 47.7%. This affects the health of our nation and our democracy. It is vitally important that members of our community understand how governments and political systems function, know the rights and responsibilities of citizens and the importance of civic engagement.

Instead of limiting political expression and civics education, the HHF should welcome this opportunity to allow the public to meet candidates who are running for local races and learn about their policies and platforms. This is an opportunity for children to see the politicians and government officials who have the awesome responsibility of providing us with good governance and to recognize their positive contributions to our democracy. Our community needs to encourage and not discourage discussions and conversations about politics and government so we can find common ground to move forward in solving societal problems. Participation by political parties provides opportunities to engage in civil discourse and interact with members of the community who have different perspectives.

The Hopewell Valley Republican Association and the Hopewell Valley Democrats were both welcome to participate at Pennington Day this past May. At that event, the HVRA provided an opportunity for children and adults to take a 10 question “Civics Knowledge” test based on the 100 question US Naturalization test. 12 adults and 33 children responded. These local results confirmed that younger generations have a lack of knowledge about our Constitution and appreciation for our democratic republic. The HVRA hoped to promote the same “Civics Education” program at the Hopewell Harvest Fair.

Hopewell Borough has welcomed weekly gatherings of “Democracy on the Corner” every Thursday from 5:30 pm-6:30 pm for those who want to promote a visible demonstration of resistance against the actions of the current federal government. These demonstrations expose families and children in our community to a weekly politically-charged event. Our community and those from other communities were exposed to politically-charged gatherings this summer if they drove on Route 31 by Pennington Shopping Center. Neither of these events allow for opportunities for civil discourse or the appreciation of different perspectives through face-to-face communication. The Hopewell Harvest Fair does.

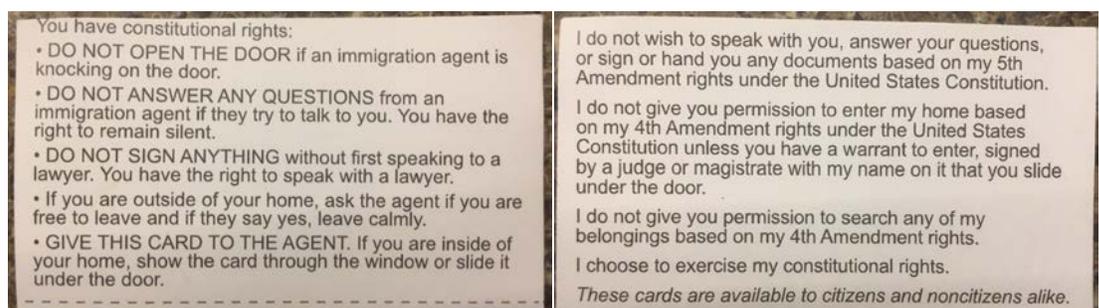
We encourage the HHF Committee to re-evaluate their position of restricting participation of political groups from the Fair. Please allow those political organizations that completed an application to participate in this community event.

Activists Provide Support For Lawlessness

Cards with below information were found at the Mercer County Library - Hopewell Branch.

Here’s some additional information that can be included:

Link to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Self-Deportation website
<https://www.ice.gov/self-deportation>



Election Integrity

Persistent Election Integrity Issues In Mercer County Deepen With Latest Title 19 Violation

Statement on Election Law Violations and Ongoing Failures in Mercer County

The people of Mercer County deserve better. Since 2022, they have endured one flawed election after another, each one further eroding public trust. This must stop. Our residents are losing faith — faith that their votes count, faith that their voices matter. And when trust in the process is broken, participation suffers. This cannot continue.

Today, New Jersey Election Law, Title 19, was once again ignored. County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello, Esq., permitted the lawful process to be bypassed — not for the first time, but as part of an ongoing pattern of disregard. The entire process failed from beginning to end. Even when confronted with clear mistakes, the Clerk chose to ignore them and proceed.

Violation of Title 19 Procedure

Title 19:134-12 – Procedure for determining position on ballot states:

The manner of drawing the lots shall be as follows: paper slips with the names of each political party written thereon shall be placed in capsules of the same size, shape, color, and substance, and then placed in a covered box with an aperture in the top large enough to admit a man's hand and to allow the capsules to be drawn therefrom. The box shall be well shaken and turned over to thoroughly intermingle the capsules. The county clerk or his/her deputy shall, at his office, draw from the box each capsule separately without knowledge on his part as to which capsule he is drawing.

This is not optional — it is the law.

Instead, the names were placed in small, transparent amber-tinted pill bottles with white tops. Each bottle contained a slip of paper, approximately ½" x 5¾", with the candidate's name typed in bold lettering. The paper was bent in half, causing it to spread open inside the bottle, clearly displaying the name. Only two bottles were used — one for each candidate.

During the draw, the first bottle (Mikie Sherrill) was placed in the Clerk's right hand, and the second bottle (Jack Ciattarelli) in the left. The names were plainly visible when the bottles were placed into the draw apparatus. The box was rotated three times, but the bottles' positions did not change. The Deputy Clerk stood looking into the box for 30 seconds to a full minute — ample time to see which bottle was which. I could see the draw because both myself and another observer were standing approximately the same distance from the box as the individual making the draw.

Challenge Ignored

At that moment, I publicly challenged the draw and requested the process be stopped. My request was ignored. The Clerk proceeded to assign Mikie Sherrill to Line A with her full team, and Jack Ciattarelli and his team to Line B. I repeated my request multiple times; all were denied.

When the Assistant County Attorney approached and asked if I wanted my objection on record, I said yes. A call was placed to Paul Pietrini, and on his advice, I formally requested a redraw. That request was denied.

The Clerk's office continued with the ballot placement for the remaining candidates, disregarding my objection and failing to correct the clear procedural violations.

Admission of Fault

In the subsequent draws for other candidates, the slips of paper were folded differently — into thirds, with the crease pinched shut — to prevent the names from being visible. When I questioned the change, the Clerk's office admitted it was done because of my complaint. This admission confirms that the original method was improper.

The bottom line:

This was not a small mistake. This was a violation of the law, carried out in plain view, and it fits into a larger pattern of repeated failures in Mercer County elections. The people of this county have been subjected to flawed elections since 2022. They are losing trust in the process, and that trust will not be restored until our elections are conducted with full transparency, integrity, and strict adherence to the law.



The Following Is The Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Date: August 13, 2025

Contact: Patricia Johnson, Chairwoman, Mercer County Republican Committee

Email: patjohnson4nj@gmail.com PHONE [609-577-5008]

Mercer County Ballot Draw Violates State Election Law

Mercer County, NJ — Mercer County voters have endured repeated election failures since 2022, and yesterday's ballot draw was yet another violation of public trust. County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello, Esq., ignored New Jersey Election Law — not for the first time, but as part of a troubling pattern that undermines the integrity of our elections.

Under Title 19:134-12 – **Procedure for determining position on ballot**, the law clearly states:

“The manner of drawing the lots shall be as follows: paper slips with the names of each political party written thereon shall be placed in capsules of the same size, shape, color, and substance, and then placed in a covered box with an aperture in the top large enough to admit a man's hand and to allow the capsules to be drawn therefrom. The box shall be well shaken and turned over to thoroughly intermingle the capsules. The county clerk or his/her deputy shall, at his office, draw from the box each capsule separately without knowledge on his part as to which capsule he is drawing.”

This procedure is not optional — it is the law.

Instead, the Clerk's office used small, transparent amber-tinted pill bottles with white tops. Each contained a slip of paper, approximately ½" x 5¾", typed in bold lettering. The paper was bent in half so that the name spread open inside the bottle, making it visible. Only two bottles were used — one for Mikie Sherrill, one for Jack Ciattarelli.

During the draw, the first bottle (Sherrill) was placed in the Clerk's right hand and the second (Ciattarelli) in her left. The names were plainly visible before placement in the apparatus. The box was rotated three times, but the bottles never changed position.

The Deputy Clerk looked into the box for 30 seconds to a full minute — ample time to identify the bottles. “I could see the draw because both myself and another observer were standing approximately the same distance from the box as the individual making the draw,” said Patricia Johnson.

When Johnson formally challenged the process and requested a redraw, the request was denied. The Clerk proceeded to assign Sherrill to Line A with her full team and Ciattarelli to Line B. Multiple objections were ignored.

In subsequent draws for other candidates, the papers were folded differently — into thirds, with the crease pinched shut — to hide the names. The Clerk's office admitted this change was made because of Johnson's complaint, confirming the original method was improper.

“This was not a small mistake,” Johnson stated. “It was a clear violation of the law, carried out in plain view, and part of a larger pattern of failures. Mercer County voters deserve elections that are lawful, transparent, and trustworthy — and they are not getting that under the current leadership.”

Link to Statement: <https://mailchi.mp/8e095cee33cf/rider-debate-rsvp-13831422?e=3eee7d18f1>

Court Issues Order In Mercer County Election Dispute From November 2022, Setting Discovery And Compelling Depositions

By Mark Demo

In the voter disenfranchise case before the Mercer County Superior Court, numerous Mercer County voters have alleged significant voting rights violations during the November 2022 General Election. The plaintiffs contend that their rights were infringed when the Mercer County Board of Elections and associated officials implemented policies that forced qualified voters to use provisional ballots after voting machines malfunctioned. They further allege improper ballot adjudication, rejection of valid votes, and breaches in ballot chain-of-custody procedures. Plaintiffs also assert violations of their statutory rights, such as the prevention of duly-appointed challengers from observing ballot counting and failures in conducting mandated logic and accuracy testing on voting machines.

Throughout the litigation, plaintiffs argued that defendants' discovery demands were excessive and intrusive, potentially violating privacy and First Amendment rights. The defendants, in response, argued that plaintiffs had inadequately addressed their discovery requests.

On July 18, 2025, after negotiations, the court issued an order setting specific guidelines for depositions and discovery. Depositions are set to begin the week of August 18, 2025, with plaintiffs first deposing the defendants. Importantly, in the most recent order issued on August 15, 2025, Judge William Anklowitz reaffirmed and compelled that these depositions must commence as scheduled, with plaintiffs' counsel reissuing formal notices and choosing the order in which defendants appear.



The dates and order for Defendants' depositions are as follows:

8/21: Martin Jennings 2pm, Chuck Farina 10am
8/22: Jill Moyer 10am
8/26: Walker Worthy 10am
8/26: Mary Corrigan 2pm.
8/27: Nathaniel Walker 10am

The court also required plaintiffs to respond in writing to the defendants' first set of interrogatories by August 4, 2025. In a win for the Plaintiffs, the scope of electronically stored information (ESI) and other communications was narrowed to include only those directly related to plaintiffs' personal voting experiences in the 2022, 2023, and 2024 General Elections. Communications unrelated to these elections or purely political expression are excluded from production. Plaintiffs must also provide certifications confirming their thorough search and production of relevant materials.

The discovery deadline has been extended by thirty days, moving from September 4 to October 4, 2025. The judge's supplemental opinion also clarified that attorney's fees were not awarded, despite earlier disputes over competing proposed orders.

This latest order reflects the court's determination to move the case forward, ensuring that depositions begin without further delay.

Trump Signals Next Phase In Election Integrity Fight: Mail-In Ballots, Voting Machines, And The SAVE Act

By Mark Demo

Executive Orders on Election Integrity

Since returning to office, President Trump has used executive authority to reshape federal election standards. On January 20, 2025, he signed Executive Order 14148, which revoked President Biden's EO 14019 on "Promoting Access to Voting" and replaced it with a directive focused on **national eligibility**

rules, ballot deadlines, and federal oversight of state election equipment. The order also reinforced that states must maintain accurate voter rolls and adhere to uniform federal standards for ballot counting and tabulation.

This move signaled Trump's determination to centralize federal authority over election administration, framing the states as "agents" of the federal government when conducting federal elections—a theme he echoed strongly in his latest Truth Social post.

The SAVE Act and Congressional Action

In parallel with the executive order, Congress passed the SAVE Act (Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act), requiring states to verify citizenship before adding an individual to the voter rolls. This legislation represents a significant policy win for Trump and congressional Republicans, who argued that closing gaps in registration procedures is essential for ensuring election integrity.

The SAVE Act which is currently stalled in the Senate was hailed by Trump as a first step, but his latest statements suggest that he sees it as part of a broader restructuring of how Americans vote.

Trump's Latest Announcement: Ending Mail-In Ballots and Voting Machines

In his Truth Social post, Trump pledged to lead a **"movement to get rid of mail-in ballots"** and to phase out electronic voting machines, calling them "Highly Inaccurate, Very Expensive, and Seriously Controversial." He endorsed **watermarked paper ballots**, arguing they are faster, more reliable, and leave no doubt about election outcomes.

Trump promised to back these changes with a new **executive order aimed at shaping the 2026 midterm elections**, underscoring that, in his view, states must comply with federal directives for the sake of national election integrity.

State Pushback and Legal Battles Ahead

Trump's assertion—that states are federal "agents" in elections—has already sparked **pushback from left leaning governors, secretaries of state, and state legislatures.** Election officials in states such as California, New York, and Colorado argue that the Constitution gives states primary authority over election administration, except where explicitly preempted by federal law.

Several blue states are preparing legal challenges, claiming Trump's planned federal mandates infringe on state sovereignty. Expect lawsuits to move quickly through federal courts, with potential showdowns at the Supreme Court over the scope of presidential authority in election regulation.

Meanwhile, Republican-led states have signaled they are more likely to comply—or even move proactively toward the paper-ballot model Trump endorses. This divergence points to a **patchwork of compliance and resistance**, which could create uncertainty heading into the 2026 elections.



Photo Courtesy of AP Images

What Comes Next

Looking forward, Trump and his allies are expected to push for:

- **Federal standards requiring paper ballots with security features**
- **Severe restrictions—or outright bans—on mail-in voting**
- **National uniformity in ballot counting deadlines**
- **Enhanced federal monitoring of voter roll maintenance**

Democrats and voting rights groups are preparing countermeasures, including state legislation, lawsuits, and public campaigns warning of voter suppression.

The stage is set for a historic confrontation between federal authority and state control of elections. With the SAVE Act already passed by the House and pending in the Senate, Trump's next executive orders could fundamentally reshape the landscape of American voting before the 2026 midterms.

About Citizens for NJ Election Integrity

Citizens for NJ Election Integrity is a non-partisan organization dedicated to ensuring fair and transparent elections in New Jersey. The group advocates for electoral reforms, improved voter verification processes, and public education on election integrity. For more information, please visit <http://www.citizens4njei.org/>.

Media Contact: Mark Flaherty, Communications Director, Citizens for NJ Election Integrity
914-473-2038 • Mark.Flaherty@citizens4njei.org

For further inquiries or to schedule an interview, please contact C4NJEI at the information provided above.

ICYMI

An Underlying Disease: The Spiritual And Social Roots Of Washington DC's Crime Problem

By Tony Perkins originally published in Harbinger's Daily (August 18 2025)

As a former police officer, I've seen firsthand how both crime and criminals have changed since my days on the beat. Today, drugs, untreated mental illness, and a wholesale devaluing of human life drive the violence we see in our cities. But these social pathologies are symptoms of something deeper.

President Trump has once again drawn the ire of the Left and the legacy media for exercising his statutory authority to federalize the Metropolitan Police Department in response to Washington, D.C.'s dangerously high crime rate. In the nation's capital, you are 52 times more likely to be the victim of a crime than you are to win the D.C. Pick 3 lottery's \$500 top prize.

Critics argue that because crime has declined since 2023, this action was unnecessary. What they fail to mention is that 2023 marked a decade-high crime rate. Even after the recent drop, D.C. residents still face a **one in 19** probability of being a crime victim each year. That's 5.3% — double the 2.5% risk in Chicago. By any objective measure, our nation's capital remains one of the riskiest cities in America.

President Trump's move was neither arbitrary nor unnecessary. But here's the reality: taking control of a police department that city leaders have pressured to coddle criminals rather than enforce the law may address the symptoms — but it won't cure the underlying disease.

That deeper problem is rooted in the breakdown of the family. D.C. not only has one of the highest crime rates in the nation — it also has one of the highest percentages of children under 18 living in single-parent homes, most without a father. Roughly 53% of children in D.C. grow up in single-parent households — double the national average.

Federal studies and decades of social science research confirm what common sense tells us: father absence is linked to lower self-esteem, higher anxiety, identity struggles, and greater aggression — including criminal behavior. And beyond the social science, there are spiritual consequences. Many who grow up without a father struggle to relate to the very concept of God as a loving, heavenly Father. That loss of connection has ripple effects on how we treat one another. As Jesus said, the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love your neighbor — and the two are inseparable.

Yes, D.C. needs police who enforce the law and prosecutors who prosecute criminals. But the city named for our Founding Father needs fathers — fathers in the home, fathers in schools, fathers invested in the lives of children. I'm not calling for another federal program. I'm calling for a national awakening to the spiritual and social roots of our crime problem. Because until we restore fathers to their rightful place in the family, no amount of policing will bring lasting peace to our streets.

Access the article: <https://harbingersdaily.com/an-underlying-disease-the-spiritual-and-social-roots-of-washington-dcs-crime-problem/>

Rep. Smith On Putin–Xi Organ Transplant Revelation: ‘Cruelty Knows No Bounds’

The Chinese regime is ‘committing genocide’ to sustain its made-to-order organ transplant industry, the congressman says.

By Eva Fu originally published in The Epoch Times (September 4 2025)

The hot mic moment during which China’s and Russia’s leaders were musing about increased longevity through organ transplants speaks to more than their mutual desire to stay in power. It touches on a sensitive topic for the regime—forced organ harvesting—the very mention of which Beijing has striven to erase, even in the West.

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), a lawmaker who monitors human rights abuses abroad, said that the off-the-cuff exchange—and the casual way organ transplants came up—was unsettling.

“It shows how cruelty knows no bounds,” Smith told The Epoch Times.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, while walking together before a military parade on Sept. 3, discussed becoming younger with continued organ transplants. Xi suggested the possibility of living to 150 years old in this century.

The conversation signals a seeming abundance of organs for China’s top political echelon, known for extravagant privileges inaccessible to the Chinese public. How and where to source the organs seemed an afterthought.

Independent investigations from the London-based China Tribunal and others have found the killing-for-organs scheme to be widespread in China, with the principal source of organs being detained practitioners of Falun Gong, who have been a target of brutal persecution by the regime since 1999.

That Beijing has no desire for the publicity of the conversation was clear. Chinese media outlets have taken down videos containing the clip or covered the sound with music in replays.

But Putin confirmed the talk quickly later in the day.

“The modern means of health support, medicine, even some surgeries involving organ transplantation, allow humanity to hope that the active life span will not be like today,” he told reporters, adding that “it differs from country to country.”

Smith said the message that came across in these remarks seems to be “I don’t care.”

“My own argument has been that from Xi Jinping on down, anybody in the higher echelon, especially in the Chinese Communist Party, will look to steal somebody else’s internal organs, through coercion, through death, to extend their life. I can’t think of a more selfish and barbaric act to do that,” Smith said.

“They’re so brazen about abusing other people for their own will and for their own longevity.

“They have secret police and the ability to jail anybody they want.”

Putin, the congressman said, “may or may not be in ill health, so he’ll want to have any new organ that he thinks he requires.”

Smith said that voluntary organ transplantation is completely ethical, but that “there’s nothing voluntary” about what is happening under the communist regime.

A Genocide

Smith said it first came to his attention that the Chinese regime was taking organs from executed prisoners in about 1998, before the organ trade grew to what he called “industrial size.” The organ transplant industry has since experienced a boom, paralleling the expansion of the persecution of Falun Gong that began in 1999. Hospitals in China have advertised waiting times as short as days, a major draw for tourists from countries with developed organ donation systems, such as the United States, where getting an organ could take much longer.

“You can get an organ in a week, because they go and they kill somebody who matches up with your antigens and everything else, so that there’s no or less likely to be a rejection of the organ,” Smith said. “I’ve never seen anything like it, except in Nazi Germany, and I think that’s what we’re talking about here—it’s Nazi-like.”

The “most perverse thing,” he said, is that the persecutors will turn to the persecuted to help extend their lives. And Falun Gong practitioners’ healthy lifestyle—meditating, not smoking or drinking, and adhering to their practice’s tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance—makes them an ideal target for organ procurement.

“It’s a genocide against the Falun Gong, like it’s a genocide against the Uyghurs,” he said. “There are so many horrible human rights abuses in the world today. This is right at the top.”

While hospitalized three years ago for some ailments, Smith thought about the contrast between the role of the doctors treating him and those in China.

In China, doctors could become an “oppressor,” stealing one’s organs under state order, he said.

Five U.S. states have passed laws to stop health insurance coverage of organ transplants linked to China. Smith sponsored the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act, which aims to punish “end game abusers,” brokers, and others implicated in forced organ harvesting or organ trafficking schemes. The bipartisan bill passed 406–1 in the House in May.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) said on Sept. 3 that the overheard remarks have brought new urgency to addressing the Chinese regime’s organ transplant abuses. He suggested putting relevant legislation “at the top of the priority list.”

Smith, likewise, called for the Senate to “act fast” and move the bill up.

Access the article: https://www.theepochtimes.com/us/rep-smith-on-putin-xi-organ-transplant-revelation-cruelty-knows-no-bounds-5910258?ea_src=frontpage&ea_med=section-1

Special Report: Persecution Of The Century

July 19 2023 – With the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) growing its power in America, understanding its goals couldn’t be more important than it is today.

Few events in recent Chinese history have had as profound an impact on a country as what happened on July 20, 1999. It was the day on which the CCP launched a campaign meant to crush a domestic spiritual revival and force the free world to look the other way.

July 20, 2023, marks 24 years since the regime launched its unprecedented persecution of Falun Gong, severely impacting the lives of the Chinese people and the course of their nation’s history.

And this is only what the surface reveals. **Behind it all is an evil never before seen in human history—state-sponsored forced organ harvesting.**

What role has the free world played in the persecution of the century?

If it continues, what’s at stake for America?

NTD, The Epoch Times’ sister media, will premiere a special report on the CCP’s persecution of Falun Gong. NTD correspondent Steve Lance sits down with insiders and explores the questions: Why is the CCP afraid of people of faith? Why did the free world let this happen while growing deeper relations with communist China? What price is America paying for soft-pedaling on the CCP?

Watch the video (42 minutes):

https://link.theepochtimes.com/mkt_app/epochtv/premiering-7-20-special-report-the-persecution-of-the-century-5386206?utm_medium=app&c=share_pos3&pid=iOS_app_share&utm_source=iOS_app_share

More Recent News:

U.S. House Passes Falun Gong Protection Act Unanimously to Counter CCP Atrocities (By Faluninfo.net May 6 2025)

Congressional Condemnation of CCP’s Global Campaign Against Falun Gong Amid 26th Anniversary Observance (By James Carter originally published in Archyde July 28 2025)

Study: ‘No Global Acceleration of Sea Level Rise’

By Mark Swanson originally published in Newsmax (September 4 2025)

A new study conducted by a Dutch engineering consultant found that the average sea level rise in 2020 was around 1.5 millimeters per year, “significantly lower” than the 3 to 4 millimeters often projected by climate scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Hessel Voortman and researcher Rob de Vos checked actual observations of more than 200 tide stations against projections and models.

“It is crazy that it had not been done. I started doing this research in 2021 by doing the literature review. ‘Who has done the comparison of the projections with the observations?’ And there were none,” Voortman told independent journalist Michael Shellenberger.

Voortman and de Vos published their peer-reviewed article this week in the Journal of Marine Science and Engineering.

The United Nations’ IPCC issued a report in 2021 projecting much higher rates of sea level rise. However, Voortman and de Vos found that “on average, the rate of rise projected by the IPCC is biased upward with approximately 2 mm per year in comparison with the observed rate.”

In a press release, the pair said the IPCC “significantly overestimate local sea level rise in 2020,” the New York Post reported.

Voortman, who works in flood protection and coastal infrastructure projects, expanded his research after publishing results in 2023 that showed “sea level projections were exceeding sea level observations” across the Dutch coast.

“When designing coastal infrastructure, engineers have long accounted for sea level rise. Both measurements and projections are important sources of information. Understanding the differences between them is crucial for practical applications,” Voortman said.

That led to their conclusion published this week: “Our analysis of more than 200 tide gauge stations around the world shows that there is no global acceleration of sea level rise. The research also shows that IPCC models overestimate local sea level rise in 2020.”

In a post on X, Shellenberger wrote, “Climate change will make oceans rise 3 - 10 feet by the end of this century, said scientists and the media. Nonsense. A new, first-ever global study of real world data, not models, finds no evidence climate change accelerated sea level rise. This is a massive scientific scandal.”

Access the article: <https://www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/study-sea-level-rise-data/2025/09/04/id/1225159/>

Trump Astride At Seven Months

By Victor Davis Hanson originally published in The Blade of Perseus (September 4 2025)

Trump’s greatest achievement within six months was simply ending illegal immigration as we had once known it—without “comprehensive immigration reform” or any other rhetorical trickery.

It remains difficult to find, much less deport, the 10 to 12 million illegal aliens who entered in the last four years.

Those who helped break the law, by design or indifference, now believe it was moral to destroy federal immigration law but immoral to uphold it.

And it is still unclear whether Joe Biden’s handlers deliberately sabotaged their own border for political and demographic purposes out of sheer orneriness or utter incompetence.

Many of the left’s cherished totems—massive Green New Deal subsidies, the diversity/equity/inclusion industry, biological males competing in women’s sports, and the USAID revolving door—are either comatose or in their death throes.

The historic drop-off in military recruitment reversed shortly after Trump took office.

Republican voter registration is up, and Democratic registration is down.

Abroad, Trump finds remarkable successes.

For now, there are pauses in the fighting between India and Pakistan, Egypt and Somalia, Cambodia and Thailand, Rwanda and Congo, Serbia and Kosovo, and Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Much credit is due to Trump for brokering ceasefires.

Iran will not get a bomb in the next four years—as seemed likely when Biden left office.

The Middle East’s current most grotesque terrorist cadres and states—Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis—are far weaker than they were when Trump entered office in January.

There is at least some engagement in envisioning the outlines of a ceasefire in Trump’s inherited Ukraine War.

The rub is finding the degree of ordnance necessary to convince Putin that increasing Russia’s casualties to more than one million will endanger his own dictatorship sooner than destroy Ukraine.

Breaking up the new three-billion-person China/India/Russia nexus hinges on ending the war.

The economy is still strong. Gas prices are at historic lows. Increases in all types of energy production proceed full bore.

Current GDP, inflation, unemployment, and the stock market—all at one time or another said to be in a crisis state—remain strong. Talk of an impending recession or hyperinflation is mostly muted.

No one quite knows either the full effects of Trump’s tariffs—especially given the injunctions issued by left-wing district justices—or of the promised over \$10 trillion in foreign investments.

Much of Trump’s agenda will hinge on whether interest rates are lowered, Republicans survive the midterms, and the degree to which unelected left-wing lower-court justices can be stopped from hijacking the Constitution and de facto running the country.

As for the Democrat opposition, there is no counter agenda, no shadow government responsible leadership, and no willingness to craft bipartisan legislation.

Instead, the left’s strategy is that of the kamikaze: to destroy Trump at the cost of destroying the Democrat Party.

Otherwise, Democrats seek to prove so obnoxious in demonizing Trump that they create such mass hysteria that the weary electorate figuratively lies down, closes its eyes, covers its ears, and screams nonstop, “Make them all go away!”

Former foul-mouthed vice presidential candidate Tim Walz is now reduced to a ghoulish status. He recently boasted to an audience that rumors of Trump’s death—who survived two assassination attempts last summer—will thankfully one day prove true.

The top of the failed ticket, Kamala Harris, wanders aimlessly without an office, constituency, audience, or ideas.

To remain viable, she knows she must continue touring and speaking. But Harris accepts that the more anyone hears her word salads, the more they will remember her 2024 train wreck.

Head of the Democrat Party, Ken Martin, now screams that Trump is a fascist.

But by what standards does he judge?

Did Trump try to take his rivals off state ballots?

Does he advocate for destroying the filibuster, the Electoral College, and the 156-year-old nine-justice Supreme Court, or packing the Senate by admitting two new states?

Are local, state, and federal prosecutors—à la Bragg, James, Smith, and Willis—coordinating with the White House and DOJ to indict Trump's current chief adversaries, such as Gavin Newsom, Kamala Harris, or Josh Shapiro?

Did Trumpers hire a foreign spy to concoct a fake hit dossier on Democrat grandees?

Are his subordinates now spreading it to the media?

Are 51 conservative former CIA contractors and retired spooks swearing that Newsom or Harris is working with the Russians, Chinese, or any of our enemies?

The greatest Democrat fear?

That it has so institutionalized excessive executive orders, ad hominem lawfare, lower-court usurpation, state nullification of federal law, and federal intervention in higher education, the energy industry, and the nation's open spaces that their own legacies empowered Trump and now will boomerang upon themselves—as the public applauds the karma.

Access the article: <https://victorhanson.com/trump-astride-at-seven-months/>

Public Corner

Public Local Meetings

Interested in attending public meetings? Here are a few in your area for this month.

<https://www.mercercounty.org/i-want-to/calendar-meeting-list>

HVRSD School Board Meeting

Monday September 15, 2025 - Central High School at 6:30 PM

Or Livestream on YouTube

Municipal Township Meetings

<https://www.hopewelltpw.org/calendar.aspx?CID=32>

Monday, September 8, 2025 6:30 PM

Meetings are in hybrid format- Township Municipal Building & Zoom

Township meetings will be held at HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL SERVICES BUILDING 201 Washington Crossing - Pennington Road, Titusville, NJ 08560

In case you are unable to attend Township Committee mtgs, the recordings are available. Per the township clerk's office Kathy, they are "usually," available within a few days of the meeting.

Happy viewing click here:

https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/k83q0qZsxB_6dlk4EjvYfv9xDQOqNH9z/videos?autostart=true&showtabssearch=true

Or: <https://www.hopewelltpw.org/> select bottom right "Township Video Channel" link.

Board of Elections Meeting

Tuesday September 9, 2025 at 12:00 PM

Board of Elections Meetings will be at 930 Spruce St., Lawrence, NJ 08648

Mercer County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Schedule -- September 2025

Tuesday September 9, 2025 6:00 PM Agenda Meeting

Thursday September 11, 2025 6:00 PM Formal Meeting

Tuesday September 23, 2025 6:00 PM Agenda Meeting

Thursday September 25, 2025 6:00 PM Formal Meeting

Agenda and Formal Meetings will take place at the Mercer County Administration Building, Room 211, 640 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ unless otherwise stated.

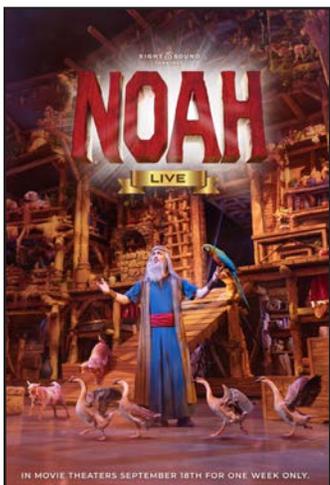
In order to encourage full participation of these meetings, please submit any requests for accommodations of people with disabilities to the Clerk to the Board, Mercer County Administration Building, PO Box 8068, Trenton, NJ 08650 (609) 989-6584 {V/TTY} {Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 101-336}

TruthBTold



At the Movies, Bookstores

Sight & Sound Presents: Noah - Live! (2025)



Noah - Live!

IN MOVIE THEATERS SEPTEMBER 18TH FOR ONE WEEK ONLY.

2h 45m

Sight & Sound's flagship production, NOAH, is setting sail for movie theaters nationwide! Join us for a special 30th anniversary celebration as this extraordinary production goes from the big stage to the big screen.

With a catastrophic storm on its way, Noah is given a monumental task: build a boat big enough to save his family - and two of every kind - from a flood that will cover the entire earth. As Noah endeavors to live faithfully in the midst of an increasingly chaotic world, can he trust that God's promises run deeper than the rising waters around him?

Filmed in front of a live audience, this special event invites you to gather your crew two by two and join us onboard the ark for an unforgettable adventure — in movie theaters one week only, starting September 18th.

Tickets will be available for NOAH—Live! <https://www.noahevent.com/tickets/>

Watch trailer: <https://www.noahevent.com/videos/>

For further details: <https://www.noahevent.com/>

Sight & Sound is a storytelling company passionate about bringing true stories to life on stage and on screen that reveal the power of the Gospel. Since its beginning as a traveling multi-media show in 1976, Sight & Sound has inspired over 30 million people with stories from the pages of scripture and history. Today, Sight & Sound operates two live-theater venues, immersing over a million people each year in state-of-the-art original productions. In 2020, Sight & Sound launched an online streaming platform, welcoming a new global audience from over 175 countries around the world. Most recently, Sight & Sound expanded into feature films, debuting at #2 in movie theaters across the nation. Sight & Sound is headquartered in Lancaster, PA with over 800 employees companywide. For more information, visit <http://www.sight-sound.com>.

A Bible Story Comes To Life On Stage And On The Big Screen

'Noah Live!' sails across America in a special theatrical engagement.

By Gayle Jo Carter originally published in *The Epoch Times* (August 30 2025)

In 1976, when Glenn Eshelman traded his life as a dairy farmer in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to follow his calling of bringing the gospel to life, even the trusty *Old Farmer's Almanac* couldn't predict the success he and his wife Shirley—as founders of Sight & Sound—would find producing entertainment with a purpose.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of "Noah"—the first show to take the stage at Sight & Sound's current state-of-the-art theater in Lancaster, which features a 300-foot wrap-around panoramic stage and the space to house sets four stories tall—a September production of "Noah" will be captured on film to roll out in theaters the week of Sept. 18.

"We know that not everyone is going to be able to come visit us at one of our two locations," explained Katie Miller, Eshelman's granddaughter and Sight & Sound's Director of Brand Development, in a recent interview with *The Epoch Times*.

Miller explained their innovative idea to reach more people with "the messages of these stories" through a filming of "Noah" on stage.

Recorded in front of a live audience, "Noah Live!" is a new production of the "Noah" tale that takes audiences on board one of the world's best-known voyages.

With a catastrophic storm on its way, Noah is given a monumental task: build a boat big enough to save his family from a flood that will cover the entire earth. But as Noah endeavors to live faithfully in the midst of an increasingly chaotic world, can he trust that God's promises run deeper than the rising waters around him?

Any "Noah" production, naturally, is going to require a lot of animals, and Miller is "grateful to be right in the middle of farm country," to keep them happy.

"We have over 40 acres that includes vast pasture land that they are in when they're not on stage," said Miller.

"We have three different teams that care for the animals. We have a caretaking team that cares for their daily needs. We have a trainer team that helps them learn their tricks and their patterns for the upcoming shows. And then we have a handler team that's actually with them on stage, dressed in costume, making sure they're always safe and right where they need to be."

Getting the Good Word Out

From those early days, Eshelman's vision of spreading the Bible's message through storytelling productions has expanded from one stage in Lancaster to a second theater in Branson, Missouri, in 2008.

"It really is our second home," said Miller of the near identical Sight & Sound theater that is currently showing a production of "David."

"We love being a part of the thriving entertainment community that's there in the Midwest."

Their newest ventures include an online streaming platform that has a global virtual audience from over 175 countries, and a leap into the filmmaking world with their first full-length feature, "I Heard the Bells," which debuted in theaters in December 2022.

"It was a learning experience," said Miller about that venture.

"But honestly, we were so overwhelmed with the response that what was supposed to be a four-day special event in movie theaters turned into a full six-week run. We were so grateful."

All eyes are on their upcoming second feature.

"We really just can't wait," said Miller of their next movie, "A Great Awakening," that is planned for a spring 2026 release.

The movie, she explained, "will tell the story of George Whitefield and Ben Franklin, who were unlikely friends during the First Great Awakening, which led to the revolution. It's a story that many people are not super familiar with, and we're really excited to tell it."

It's a Family Affair

The constant through all this growth for Sight & Sound is that their core mission of spreading the Bible's message has stayed true. And just like Sight & Sound at its heart has remained a family business, with new generations of the Eshelman family, the same is true for their audience members.



A scene from "Noah Live!" in 2024. The stage show celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2026. Courtesy of Sight & Sound.

The visitors, who come from all 50 states and 75 to 100 countries, often come back year after year, bringing the next generation of family members into the fandom.

“One of the things that’s risen to the top with ‘Noah’ being in its 30th anniversary this year, is so many families reaching out to us saying, ‘I came to Noah as a kid and now I’m bringing my children,’ or ‘I remember my grandparents bringing me and now I’m bringing my grandkids,’” Miller said.

“We feel very humbled by it to realize that Sight & Sound at times gets the opportunity to be a part of these special memories that these families are making together.”

What does Miller, having worked in the family business since she started on stage as a child and worked her way through concessions, ticketing, ushering, backstage, etc., think makes these Sight & Sound biblical productions so special?

“One of the things we are most passionate about is being able to transport audiences back in time into the heart of the story,” she replied.

“The thing that we hear [from audience members is], ‘I felt like I was there... It’s happening all around me. I saw myself reflected in this character or that character and left feeling hopeful for my own life, that if God was present for them, he’s present for me.’ And that’s what our hope is. I think that’s why people feel so connected. It’s not us. We always say, ‘These stories have been changing lives for thousands of years. We just get the opportunity to tell them.’”

Access the article: https://www.theepochtimes.com/entertainment/a-bible-story-comes-to-life-on-stage-and-on-the-big-screen-5908038?ea_src=frontpage&ea_med=section-4

We the People of Interest

V-J Day Celebration Honors Veterans At National World War II Memorial

By Eric Kayne originally published in STARS AND STRIPES (September 2 2025)

WASHINGTON — Veterans, families and the public gathered Tuesday at the National World War II Memorial to mark the 80th anniversary of V-J Day, the formal surrender of Japan to the allies aboard the USS Missouri and the official end of World War II.

The Friends of the National World War II Memorial and the National Park Service cohosted the observance, which included remarks from park leaders, wreath-laying and a performance by the Marine Band performance.

Surviving veterans, some more than 100 years old, were honored for their service, sacrifice and enduring legacy.

Access the article: <https://www.stripes.com/history/2025-09-02/v-j-day-national-wwii-memorial-18954915.html>

Related Information:

V-J Day: The Surrender of Japan (The National WWII Museum website)

What (and When) Is V-J Day? Victory over Japan Day was and is celebrated on different dates around the world. Why? (The National WWII Museum website, August 12 2025)

America Must Never Apologize for Dropping the Bombs on Japan (Opinion, By Josh Hammer originally published in Newsweek August 8 2025)

Remembering The Iconic V-J Day Kissing Photograph

Originally published by CBS News (August 15 2015)

Britain’s Queen Elizabeth joined the celebrations in London Saturday in observance of the 70th anniversary of V-J Day. That was the day in 1945 when Japan announced it was surrendering to the Allies, ending World War II.

In the U.S., V-J Day is officially observed on Sept. 2, the day Japan actually signed its unconditional surrender. But the anniversary was marked Friday in New York as couples gathered in Times Square at a 25-foot statue of a sailor kissing a nurse, based on the iconic photograph taken all those years ago.



WWII veterans and supporters salute during the playing of taps on the 80th anniversary of V-J Day on Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025, at the National World War II Memorial in Washington. (Eric Kayne/Stars and Stripes)

CBS News' Michelle Miller spoke with the original couple in 2012, who told her all about that kiss.

It is one of the most famous pictures of the 20th century, the moment Americans learned of a Japanese surrender.

George Mendonsa said he's the sailor in the photograph that would come to symbolize the end of World War II and Greta Friedman the "nurse" in white.

"It was the moment that you come back from the Pacific, and finally the war ends," Mendonsa said.

"I did not see him approaching, and before I know it I was in this vice grip," Friedman said.

But Mendonsa said he didn't kiss her for long.

As the perfect strangers locked lips, world famous photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt snapped four pictures in just 10 seconds. CBS News reunited George and Greta three years ago at the spot of their kiss for just the second time since that day in 1945.

"The excitement of the war bein' over, plus I had a few drinks," Mendonsa said. "So when I saw the nurse I grabbed her, and I kissed her."

George did not know the picture had been taken, but Greta recognized herself.

Greta was a dental assistant on break, heading to Times Square to verify rumors of the war's end. George, a first class sailor in the Navy, was on a date with another woman.

They went their separate ways, not formally meeting again until 1980, when Life magazine asked the previously unknown pair to come forward. George's friend noticed the picture in the magazine.

George saw the picture for the first time in 1980, 35 years after the war ended.

But they weren't the only ones claiming credit. For more than 30 years, others claimed to be the ones in the photo. And for just as long, George has fought to set the record straight.

He found an ally in Lawrence Verria, a Rhode Island history teacher turned author. In his 2012 book, "The Kissing Sailor," Verria argues the evidence rules out everyone but the retired fisherman from Middletown, Rhode Island.

"It's a story about our nation and World War II," Verria said. "It's a story about a kiss. It's a story about a place. It's a story about a publication. But at the end it's a story about two national treasures, who for 60-some years never got the due that was theirs."

"The best proof there is is my date," Mendonsa said. "Her face is seen over the sailor's right shoulder."

In fact, his date, Rita Petrie, can be seen in the background, smiling from ear to ear.

The kiss must not have bothered Rita. She's been married to George for the last 69 years.

She said women still come up to George. "It'll come up that he's the kissing sailor," Petrie said. "So the kissing sailor has to think he's got to kiss everybody, so he does. Everybody gets his kiss."

People still write to George, asking for autographs and offering words of encouragement. He described a letter with CBS News.

"He states something like, 'It must be something great to be involved in a photo that means the end of World War II,'" Mendonsa said. "Well I'm proud of that."

And so is a nation that 70 years later is still mesmerized by that timeless kiss.

Access the article: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/remembering-the-iconic-vj-day-kissing-photograph/>

More From the Scene of That Famous V-J Day Kiss in Times Square (By Eliza Berman originally published in LIFE August 14 1945)



A jubilant American sailor clutched a dental assistant in a back-bending kiss at a moment of spontaneous joy about the long awaited WWII victory over Japan. Taken on V-J Day, 1945, as thousands jammed Times Square. Photo By Alfred Eisenstaedt, The LIFE Picture Collection/ Shutterstock.

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