



**NEWSLETTER**  
October 2025 ISSUE#: HV020

**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](mailto: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](mailto:info@mercervethepeople.com)

### "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." Nathan Hale



Nathan Hale's last words are among the most famous in American history. As he stood before the British gallows on September 22, 1776 (249 years ago), he is reported to have said:

"I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

That single sentence, delivered with composure and conviction, instantly immortalized him. It wasn't just a farewell—it was a declaration of undying patriotism.



Nathan Hale was just 21 years old when he was executed. Let that sink in—barely into adulthood, he volunteered for a mission that most seasoned soldiers wouldn't dare accept. He didn't have to. No one forced him. He did it because he believed America deserved to be free.

Learn more at: <https://historytimemachine.com/the-real-story-of-nathan-hale-in-the-american-revolution/>

Photos courtesy of <https://www.cia.gov/>. Nathan Hale was the first American executed for spying for his country. This statue is a copy of the original work created in 1914 for Yale University, Nathan Hale's alma mater. ... The statue captures the spirit of the moment before his execution – a 21-year-old man prepared to meet his death for honor and country, hands and feet bound, face resolute, and his eyes on the horizon. ... He stands vigilant guard on the Agency and is a continuing reminder to its employees of the duties and sacrifices of an intelligence officer.

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## ELECTION 2025

### Interviews With Hopewell Township Committee Candidates

*By Hopewell Valley League of Women Voters (September 2025)*

Interviews with Steven Niederer, Courtney Peters-Manning and David Chait

Watch interviews at: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7B-7DZ7tWzDC\\_M-aKeIEqvxK7k5\\_9crO](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7B-7DZ7tWzDC_M-aKeIEqvxK7k5_9crO)

### Hopewell Express Q&A: Hopewell Township Council Candidates

*By Steven Niederer and Ed Jackowski (September 2025)*

Here are the bios and responses submitted by Republican candidates to Hopewell Express Q&A for Hopewell Township Council Candidates.

#### Ed Jackowski

**Q. Age:** 56

**Q. Years lived in Hopewell Twp:** 51 years.

**Q. Occupation outside of elected office:** A successful small business owner of Jack’s Greenhouse & Farm for 30 years. Served as an officer of the Trenton Cyrus lodge #5 for 10 years.

**Q. Family details that you wish to share:** My wife, Anita, who is 1st generation in the US from parents who immigrated from Rajisthan, India and I have 2 beautiful daughters; one studying abroad in France pursuing an art fashion degree, the other patient advocacy for a pharmaceutical company. My father was a professor of Finance at Rider University. My mother was an accountant for the State of NJ.

**Q. Please detail your history as an elected official or candidate:** No previous elected official history.

**Q. Tell us about the moment that you decided to run, or run again for Township committee (75 words):** I decided to run for Township Committee because I’ve seen firsthand how overdevelopment is impacting our community — from increased traffic and strain on infrastructure to the loss of open space that makes our town special. Growth is inevitable, but it must be managed responsibly. I want to be part of ensuring that development is balanced, thoughtful, and aligned with what residents truly want for the future of our township.

**Q. Name two issues of vital importance in the Twp right now and explain how, as a member of the council, you would address these issues going forward (150 words max).**

Transparency is one of the most important responsibilities of a Township Committee. Residents deserve to know the full impact of decisions—especially those involving high-density housing that can reshape a community. When leadership fails to

disclose the outcomes of such projects, people are left in the dark about how new development will affect our roads, schools, emergency services, and overall quality of life. Without open communication, decisions feel imposed rather than collaborative, and that erodes confidence in local government. My goal is to rebuild that confidence.

As our township continues to face the pressures of new development, it's critical that we make sure the benefits are shared fairly across the community. That's why I support directing PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) funds toward the growing needs of our schools and public safety. If we don't allocate resources properly, taxpayers are left carrying the burden while vital services become strained. By using PILOT revenues to strengthen our schools and support public safety, we can balance growth with responsibility. This approach not only protects taxpayers, it also invests in the quality of life that makes our community such a desirable place to live.

**Q. For incumbents: what are your top 2 or 3 accomplishments. (150 words max):** N/A

**Q. For challengers: What makes you the most qualified candidate currently running for HT committee? What skills and experience do you have that makes you the right choice to serve the community for the next 3 years? (150 words max)**

My experience as a Non-Commissioned Officer in the Marines taught me leadership, accountability, and how to make decisions under pressure with the good of the team always in mind. I learned the value of service, discipline, and putting others before myself—qualities that are essential in public office.

As a small business owner for over 30 years, I've also gained firsthand understanding of what it takes to manage budgets, solve problems, and adapt to challenges while staying focused on long-term goals.

Together, these experiences make me uniquely qualified to serve on the Township Committee. I know how to lead, how to listen, and how to work hard to deliver results.

**Q. What is going well, and/or what could be going better, in terms of economic development in the Twp? Is HT a good place to do business? What could you do to make it better? Please explain your answer (150 words max):**

Preserving the rural character of our community while creating new business opportunities requires thoughtful planning and clear priorities. My approach would focus on three key areas:

1. Targeted Economic Development: Encourage businesses that align with our rural identity; such as ventures that support local farmers, create jobs and bring visitors who strengthen our economy without overwhelming our infrastructure.
2. Zoning and Land Use Planning: Use zoning tools to guide growth in a way that protects open space and farmland while designating appropriate areas for commercial development to ensure businesses complement our community rather than change its character.
3. Tax Relief Through Diversification: Expanding the commercial tax base means homeowners shoulder less of the tax burden. By responsibly growing local business activity, we can generate new revenue streams that fund schools, public safety, and infrastructure without constant increases on residents.

With a balanced strategy, we can protect what makes our township special while building a stronger, more sustainable economy that benefits everyone.

**Steven Niederer**

**Q. Age:** 37

**Q. Years lived in Hopewell Township:** 37

**Q. Occupation outside of elected office (if retired, most recent occupation):**

Retired Mercer County Sheriff's Officer. Current Owner Operator of The Valley Butcher-Meat Processing. Small local business in Pennington.

**Q. Family details that you wish to share (partners, children, parents; 50 words max):**

I am part of a fourth-generation farming family in Hopewell Township and the youngest of three siblings. My sisters both inspire me with their dedication; one as a teacher in the Hopewell Valley Regional School District, the other as a local organic farmer, both contributing greatly to our community's strength and well-being.

**Q. Please detail your history as an elected official or candidate: offices held, years elected (or appointed) and terms completed, years in which you have run for elected office and what office it was. You can list in bullets:**

No Previous elected official history.

**Q. Tell us about the moment that you decided to run, or run again, for township committee (75 words):**

I've always had a public servant mindset, but a close friend recently encouraged me to consider a leadership role in Hopewell Township. He shared that the committee could benefit from more diversity and youth voices, and that resonated with me. After reflection, I chose to commit myself to serving and strengthening our community.

**Q. What makes Hopewell Township a great place to live? (100 words max)**

Hopewell Township is a great place to live because it balances community, convenience, and character. Strong connections among residents create a welcoming, safe atmosphere. The township offers excellent schools and reliable services that support everyday well-being. Green spaces for hiking and ample recreational opportunities encourage active, healthy lifestyles. Local farms and markets provide fresh food, jobs, and a lasting connection to the land, enriching community life. Businesses and events foster pride and togetherness, while diverse housing options ensure inclusivity. Hopewell Township truly offers a place where people feel supported, engaged, and proud to call home.

**Q. Name two issues of vital importance in the township right now and explain how, as a member of the council, you would address these issues going forward (150 words max).**

As our community grows, development brings both opportunities and challenges. A major concern is land being developed faster than infrastructure can keep up. Schools, emergency services, and roads may become strained, and without proper planning, the quality of life we value in Hopewell Township could be at risk. Infrastructure projects are also expensive, and limited funding makes it difficult to provide the services residents expect and deserve. Left unchecked, the imbalance between growth and resources can create lasting problems.

As a member of the Hopewell Township Committee, I am committed to ensuring our community is prepared. That's why I will make sure all PILOT funding is directed toward supporting education and public safety; the two areas most impacted by development. By doing so, we can manage growth responsibly, protect residents, and preserve the strong, vibrant community we all cherish.

**Q. For incumbents: What are your top 2 or 3 accomplishments during your time in office? Why are you proud of these accomplishments? (150 words max) N/A**

**Q. For challengers: What makes you the most qualified candidate currently running for Hopewell Township Committee? What skills and experience do you have that makes you the right choice to serve the community for the next three years? (150 words max)**

I am running for Hopewell Township Committee to bring my experience, dedication, and accountability to our community. My background in public safety and business has equipped me with strong skills in problem-solving, budgeting, and collaboration. For the past 12 years, I have worked in roles that directly serve Hopewell Township and surrounding communities, giving me firsthand knowledge of both our needs and our strengths. I am committed to transparent communication, responsible development, and ensuring that education and public safety remain top priorities. With a focus on preserving Hopewell's unique character while planning responsibly for the future, I will work hard to represent all residents and ensure our community continues to thrive.

**Q. What is going well, and/or what could be going better, in terms of economic development in the township? Is Hopewell Township a good place to do business? What could you do to make it better? Please explain your answer (150 words max):**

Hopewell Township has many strengths. Its location, quality of life, and strong sense of identity make it an attractive place to live and work. Local businesses add character and provide vital services, but sustaining economic development can be challenging. Infrastructure needs, regulations, and balancing growth with open space can make it harder for businesses to thrive. As a Township Committee member, I would support smart, responsible development by exploring incentives to retrofit infrastructure and repurpose unused land, ensuring growth without straining our community. Equally important is maintaining open communication with business owners, listening to their needs, and fostering partnerships that encourage collaboration. By streamlining processes, improving infrastructure, and supporting both new and established businesses, we can create a more cohesive, business-friendly town while preserving the character that makes Hopewell special.

Access the full article in Hopewell Express October 2025 online issue at: [https://issuu.com/communitynewsservice/docs/10-25\\_he](https://issuu.com/communitynewsservice/docs/10-25_he)

Restore Balance and Common Ground in the HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

**Steven  
NIEDERER**



- ★ 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

**Ed  
JACKOWSKI**



- ★ 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

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, vote for **COMMUNITY** ★ **SERVICE** ★ **SAFETY**

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

Restore Balance and Common Ground in the HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

**Steven  
NIEDERER**

**Ed  
JACKOWSKI**



- ★ Demanding that all PILOT payments be dedicated to schools and public safety
- ★ Preserving Hopewell's rural character and supporting local agriculture
- ★ Fostering a community that works for all residents
- ★ Ensuring responsible development
- ★ Restoring open public meetings

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, vote for **COMMUNITY** ★ **SERVICE** ★ **SAFETY**

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

**★ COMMON SENSE SOLUTIONS ★**

At a time when Hopewell is considering another \$80+ million dollar referendum, our town is receiving millions of dollars from the five PILOT projects approved by the Township Committee. This unrestricted funding, if mismanaged, could have a devastating impact on our community – affecting education, public safety, affordability, and our overall quality of life.

Now is the time to demand that every dollar of these funds is invested where it matters most: **Education and Public Safety**. Our children – and our entire community – deserve the highest standards of safety and educational opportunity.

**Elect** **Steven NIEDERER** **Ed JACKOWSKI**  
For Hopewell Township Committee

A team committed to protecting taxpayers and ensuring responsible, inclusive, and transparent spending that benefits us all.

Paid for by Friends of Ed and Steve, 91 Tibbas Mill Road, Pennington, NJ 08634



**BIRTHDAY GALA**

**Shaolin Brown**  
Candidate for Mercer County Clerk



**Billy Prempeh, District 9**  
Congressional candidate  
& special guests

**Tuesday, October 14, 2025**  
**5:00 PM - 9:00PM**  
Columbus Hall  
1451 Klockner Road, Hamilton, NJ

Elegant Evening \* Jazz Musicians \* Sponsorships Available

**RSVP by Oct 9th**



**\$55**  
Per person

Paid for by ShaolinBrown4MercerCountyClerk, P.O.Box 8222, Trenton NJ 08650

## We Need Your Help With The November 4th Election

By Hopewell Valley Republican Association

Interested in seeing the election process firsthand? Please consider becoming a poll worker or poll challenger on election day.

**Poll Workers:** Mercer County Board of Elections is very short on Republican poll workers, there should be at least two R's and two D's at each polling location. Hours are full day (5:00am to 8:15pm) and there are half day shifts available.

**Poll Challengers:** Challengers observe the voting process and are appointed by the Republican County Committee. It is a volunteer position but has more flexibility with the schedule. Training provided for both options.

Please contact [info@hvrageop.org](mailto:info@hvrageop.org) for more information.

## NJ Is Selecting A New Governor This Year

By Hopewell Valley Republican Association

We need you to make sure you have a plan on how you're going to vote in the upcoming November 4th election. Not only are we selecting a new governor this year, but in Hopewell Valley, citizens are focused on the repercussions of over development, rising taxes, unfair PILOT programs and the lack of transparency by a one party led Township Committee.

The Hopewell Valley Regional School District has an \$84 Million two-part bond referendum question on the ballot, after last year's failed. Please visit the district's website at [hvrsd.org/vote](http://hvrsd.org/vote). The district is hosting a virtual town hall on Thursday, October 9th at 6pm.

For all these reasons it's imperative that every registered voter exercise their right to vote and have their voices heard. Don't be discouraged, your vote does matter.

Visit <https://mercernjgop.com/candidates> to learn more about the candidates who are running.

## Missed the First Gubernatorial Debate?

On Sunday, September 21st, Sherril and Ciattarelli faced off in the first debate of NJ's 2025 gubernatorial race. Watch the replay here and start at the 2 hour 9 minute mark: <https://youtu.be/EkwRQXskiVY>

## Two more debates are scheduled before election day:

**Lieutenant Governor Debate:** Tuesday, Sep 30, 2025, from 7–8pm

**Second Gubernatorial Debate:** Wednesday, Oct 8, 2025, from 7–8pm

## There are three ways you can vote in Mercer County

If you have trouble getting to the poll on election day there are several options available to you for casting your ballot. Never before has it been this easy to cast your ballot.

**Vote By Mail:** Any voter may apply for a VBM by completing the Application for Vote-By-Mail and returning the application to the Mercer County Clerk. Remember, VBM ballots can be mailed or deposited in Vote By Mail drop boxes located at the Mercer County Board of Elections office at 930 Spruce St, Lawrence NJ 08648, in Hopewell at the Township Administration building at 201 Washington Crossing-Pennington Rd, Titusville NJ 08560 or any other drop box location within Mercer County. Please visit the Clerk's website for an online application and for more information: <https://www.mercercounty.org/government/county-clerk/elections/vote-by-mail-drop-box-location>

**In-Person Early Voting Runs Saturday October 25th to Sunday, November 2nd:** This option enables registered voters to vote in person, using a voting machine for 9 days prior to election day at a time and place that is most convenient for you. There are 8 early voting locations available for all voters registered in Mercer County. The closest location in Hopewell Valley is at the Pennington Fire Co at 120 Broemel Place. You can find the list of locations and Dates & Times here [Early Voting Information | Mercer County, NJ](#) Early votes cast are not counted until election day, so this is a very safe and secure method of voting.

**Day of Voting:** You can always choose to vote on the day of at your polling location from 6am to 8pm on Election Day, November 4th 2025. Be sure to verify your polling location, as some have shifted in recent years. You can find your election district on your sample ballot or by entering your address here <https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/polling-place-search>.

## It's Not too Late to Register to Vote

For those of you who are not registered to vote, the Voter Registration deadline is October 14, 2025. If you are a US citizen 18 years of age or older and have been a resident of the County for 30 days prior to the election, you can register to vote online by following this link <https://nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml>

## Release The Records, Mikie! The FACTS About Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill & The U.S. Naval Academy Cheating And Honor Concept Scandal

*Official Campaign Statement by NJGOP (September 29 2025)*

"[Last week], when confronted with irrefutable evidence of her name not appearing in the 1994 US Naval Academy Commencement Ceremony program, Mikie Sherrill was forced to admit she was implicated and punished as part of the massive cheating and honor concept scandal that involved her graduating class, and has since tried to distract attention away from that fact with false accusations about what amounts to a clerical error by the National Archives which they took responsibility for and apologized for publicly.

The real issue at hand is exactly why Congresswoman Sherrill was barred from walking at her graduation? What specific honor concept violations was she punished for? How did Naval investigators determine her guilt? Did she lie to Naval investigators and how many times? What were those lies? The only way to determine any of these answers is through her authorizing full and immediate release of all academic, disciplinary, and investigatory records related to her time at the Academy and the scandal itself. The New Jersey and national press corps have an obligation to demand and pressure Congresswoman Sherrill – who recently pledged to run the most transparent government in state history - to release her records so the truth can be known by all New Jerseyans."

## Summary of the Case

- In 1994, Rebecca Michelle "Mikie" Sherrill was 1 of 88 Navy Midshipmen (out of a class of 934) to be significantly punished as part of what the New York Times, Washington Post and others called the "**largest cheating and honor concept scandal in the history of the United States Naval Academy**". Twenty-four midshipmen were expelled and 64 others (including Sherrill) faced severe punishment. Based on available reports, approximately 42 others admitted some level of involvement / made inculpatory statements, but appeared to have received little to no punishment, including Rep. Sherrill's husband.

**GOVERNOR JACK CIATTARELLI**

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- Violating the Honor Concept at the Naval Academy is a HUGE DEAL. Attempts by Mikie Sherrill and her allies to diminish its seriousness are frankly shocking.
- In 2018, Sherrill was asked whether she was involved in the scandal and denied her involvement to the New Jersey Globe. She has maintained that lie for 7 years.
- Sherrill was barred from walking at graduation with her class. She claims that she did not cheat and that her punishment was because she didn't rat out her friends. There is no way to prove either claim absent her authorizing full and immediate release of her academic, disciplinary, and investigatory records.
- **The documents released in error by the National Archives (Sherrill's unredacted military records) were obtained through a legal public request** by a friend of the campaign (US Marine Corps Combat Veteran Nick De Gregorio). **The National Archives apologized to De Gregorio for their error and took full responsibility for the mistake. Neither De Gregorio nor the campaign did anything wrong.**
- Mikie Sherrill's claim that the records released by the National Archives contained information about her role in the cheating scandal is FALSE. Those records contained no information about the scandal and were never used by the campaign. She is attempting to conflate the two and has alleged wrongdoing by President Trump and the Ciattarelli campaign. There is no evidence to support that charge and Democrats have been advised that they risk defamation claims if they persist.
- Sherrill admitted her role in the scandal to the NJGlobe when confronted with a verified copy of the 1994 Commencement Ceremony program, where her name was not listed.
- As noted earlier, Mikie Sherrill's husband, Jason Hedberg, made inculpatory statements in court documents, admitting his involvement. It is unknown whether Sherrill and Hedberg had any relationship at the time, or if they even knew each other.

## The Message

- Mikie Sherrill suggested she would run the most transparent administration in New Jersey history. Mikie Sherrill demanded Jack Ciattarelli release his tax returns. Mikie Sherrill supports forcing police officers' disciplinary records to be released to the public. Mikie Sherrill has strongly advocated for release of the Epstein Files. Despite all of that, she refuses to authorize release of **her own disciplinary records**.
- Mikie Sherrill's claims that she didn't cheat as part of the Naval Academy scandal are unfounded. Likewise, claims she was punished and barred from graduation because she didn't rat out her friends are unfounded. The only way the truth can be known is if she authorizes the full and immediate release of academic, disciplinary, and investigatory records, allowing for public review.
- While we cannot know for sure until she releases her records, it is likely that Sherrill lied (once or multiple times) to Naval investigators about her role and/or the role of others. Sherrill's oft-repeated claim that she never ratted out her friends is likely false. In fact, if she did not tell the whole truth to investigators and identify others who were known to be involved, she would have been expelled from the Academy, not just punished severely.

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## Education

### What's Happening In HVRSD Schools? HVRSD Board Of Education Meeting September 15, 2025

*By The Wall of Ed*

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

Meeting Recording: [https://www.youtube.com/live/aDNzwygHT6g?si=KzSPogolZv\\_xa8Ry](https://www.youtube.com/live/aDNzwygHT6g?si=KzSPogolZv_xa8Ry)

Next Meeting October 13th at 6:30pm at the HVRSD Board Office, 425 Main St, Pennington, NJ

### \$84 Million Bond Referendum with Two-Part Question

Dr Treece gave an overview of the 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.

### HVRSD Bond Referendum Virtual Town Hall on October 9th

HVRSD is holding a Virtual Town Hall on Thursday, Oct. 9, from 6-7:30 p.m. You can join using this link. If you are unable to log on, you can watch a recording that will be posted on [hvrsd.org/vote](http://hvrsd.org/vote).

The Town Hall will offer the chance to hear from the district's architects and financial advisors, as well as school principals who deal directly with the impact of aging buildings and space shortages. Attendees can submit questions through the Zoom chat feature.

## State and Local Aid and Expected Property Tax Increases

HVRSD tried to pass an \$89 bond referendum last September, but voters rejected it. They removed the turf fields and bathroom/concession building, but since last year 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.

## 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/home>.

## Demographic Survey Flawed

In 2022, the Hopewell Township Community Development Department provided demographic information to the Board of Education about the Estimated Number of Students expected to enroll in our regional schools from the three residential PILOT developments (Hopewell PARC, Woodmont and The Collection) that are currently under construction. The demographer projected that, at full occupancy in 2039, 447 new students would be enrolled from these developments. When a member of the public asked how many students have actually enrolled from the three developments as of September 1, 2025 Mr. Bob Colavita, Board Secretary, stated that 278 new students have already moved into these 3 developments and enrolled in our schools. Questions were raised about why this demographic study was so flawed? With additional residential PILOTs being planned in all three municipalities the district needs to assure the public that future demographic enrollment projections are more accurate and reliable. When PILOT projects generate more students and the school district does not receive a portion of the PILOT money or a fair share the school taxes for the other taxpayers in the municipalities will go up to pay for educating the additional students. Precise and valid demographic projections are critically important.

## Other Updates: HVRSD Mandates High School Students to Take Class in Intercultural Sensitivity and Competence or Service Learning in Order to Graduate

Changes to policy 5460, which outlines our High School Graduation Requirements, was up, passed and adopted with the board adding a requirement that students must take 2.5 credit hours that promotes intercultural sensitivity and competence or service learning. A community member asked for more information about the change, as a new added required class seems like the same thing as adding a program. Since the district has repeatedly stated that programs are going to need to be cut in order to meet our budgeting needs, this seems counterintuitive at a time when we are struggling and in the process of increasing our already high tax burden through a bond referendum. This concern was dismissed and the new graduation requirement passed unanimously. This requirement would take effect for the class of 2030.

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

Proposed Question 2 – Preliminary Total Cost \$25.8 M	
4	<b>Space For Students</b> 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)

## Referendum Questions

By The Wall of Ed

### Proposed Question 1: Building Needs

- **Replace** roofing to eliminate leaks that disrupt instruction  
In 2017, we spent \$7m on roofing. What roofs are currently requiring replacement and what is their current age?
- **Replace** aging, inefficient HVAC systems district-wide  
Can you explain what aging means if some HVAC systems have 15-year shelf life? Can you also explain what efficient savings we have bolstered from past HVAC replacement projects that totaled \$9m?

- **Replace** deteriorated exterior doors

Can you explain the deterioration in aggregate?

- **Add** air conditioning to Timberlane MS gym, replace floor

What will the additional operating cost be annually?

- Install new classroom doors with enhanced fire resistance and security features

Can you explain how replacing fire efficient doors will stop or slow fires from classroom spread and what specific security features will they have that will make the classrooms safer?

- **Renovate/add** bathrooms at Bear Tavern and Hopewell

Bear tavern bathrooms were renovated back in 2017. What are the additional renovations and why are they required?

- **Renovate** Bear Tavern cafeteria

Is this necessary to renovate this area and what is the purpose of renovating?

- **Install** backup well systems at Bear Tavern and Timberlane

What is the purpose of the backup well systems, how often will they be used and what is the additional operational cost to have and maintain multiple well systems?

### References:

Reference from Mark Peters: <https://mercerme.com/school-referendum-addresses-school-needs-and-ensures-safe-schools/>

### Additional References from 2016 Referendum: Sound familiar?

[https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded\\_file/734318/Referendum\\_Information\\_Flyer.pdf](https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/734318/Referendum_Information_Flyer.pdf)

[https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded\\_file/740146/Referendum\\_Discussion\\_\\_Jan\\_11\\_\\_2016\\_.pdf](https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/740146/Referendum_Discussion__Jan_11__2016_.pdf)

### HVRSD Bond Referendum Virtual Town Hall on October 9th

HVRSD is holding a Virtual Town Hall on Thursday, Oct. 9, from 6-7:30 p.m. You can join using this link. If you are unable to log on, you can watch a recording that will be posted on [hvrtd.org/vote](https://www.hvrtd.org/vote).

The Town Hall will offer the chance to hear from the district's architects and financial advisors, as well as school principals who deal directly with the impact of aging buildings and space shortages. Attendees can submit questions through the Zoom chat feature.

## Why Are Religious Teens Happier Than Their Secular Peers?

### Here's what we can learn from the way faith communities stay rooted in the real world — and diminish the harms of the virtual one.

By Zach Rausch originally published in *The Boston Globe* (Updated June 6, 2024)

Seth Kaplan, an author and lecturer, spent more than two decades traveling the world. He lived or worked in 75 countries before settling down in a small Orthodox Jewish community about an hour north of Washington, D.C. Although he was raised Jewish, Kaplan told me the faith wasn't a central part of his identity while growing up. In fact, it isn't even the reason he now lives in an Orthodox community. "I moved here for the lifestyle," he says.

**Hopewell Valley Regional School District**

**Bond Referendum 2016**

*"It is The Smart Time for Needed Building Improvements in HVRSD"*

<b>WHAT:</b>	<b>WHY:</b>	<b>TAX IMPACT:</b>	<b>PROJECTS:</b>
The \$36 Million Bond Referendum will allow the district to fix leaky roofs, improve safety, security, and access, install contemporary HVAC systems and tackle a number of important projects <b>with the assistance of up to 40% State aid.</b>	In 2016, a number of positive financial factors are lining up—including the retirement of debt from the Stony Brook and Timberlane projects - making it the sensible time to address infrastructure challenges in the school district through a Bond Referendum.	A small initial increase of \$13 per \$100k of assessed value to the debt service portion of your property tax bill for approximately 3 years. Due to retiring debt in August 2021, the total Debt Service portion of the school budget will then decrease substantially.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Roofs</li><li>o HVAC</li><li>o Building Envelope: Windows/Doors/Brick</li><li>o Life/Safety: Fire Alarms/Intercoms</li><li>o Renovation: CHS Entrance and Office Reconfiguration</li><li>o CHS Lighting/Ceiling</li><li>o Renovation: CHS Kitchen/Cafeteria</li><li>o Addition: CHS Arts and Wellness space</li><li>o Renovation: Playgrounds/ Restrooms/Media Center</li></ul>

**VOTE | Sept. 27 6:00 AM - 8:00 PM |** Help meet the needs of our students in HVRSD!

Questions? Email us at [hvrtdreferendum@hvrtd.org](mailto:hvrtdreferendum@hvrtd.org) / For more information, visit [www.hvrtd.org/referendum](http://www.hvrtd.org/referendum)

I laughed. I've always been resistant to the idea of living a religious life. It feels constraining, with too many rigid and seemingly arbitrary rules. The idea that someone would move to an Orthodox community for the lifestyle sounded, well, crazy. But as Kaplan explained his story in more detail, it began to make more sense — and it resonated with my research.

I've spent much of the last few years as the lead researcher for Jonathan Haidt's recently published book "The Anxious Generation," which explains how we've inadvertently deprived Gen Z (those born after 1995) of real-world community, independence, and free play, and replaced those things with smartphones and social media, contributing to a precipitous decline in their mental health. Kaplan isn't part of the generation we're most concerned about, but as sociologist Robert Putnam observed in his 2001 book "Bowling Alone," the disintegration of communal life in the United States began in the 1960s as fewer adults attended religious services and civic engagement fell. The introduction of the smartphone and digital life has only exacerbated these existing problems: loneliness, lack of civic engagement, and the erosion of local communities.

But this disintegration of community did not happen as significantly for one subset of Americans: Religious conservatives continued attending faith services, and those adults and teens continued to engage in civic activities like volunteering and youth groups at higher rates than others. It seems that kids from conservative religious communities may have been less likely to lose their community- and free-play-based childhoods. This is the kind of childhood Kaplan wanted for his kids.

Kemp Mill, Md., where Kaplan lives, is not exclusively religious or Jewish, but its 1,200 Orthodox Jewish families (which are politically diverse) are especially focused on community building. The community is small enough for everyone to know one another but big enough to make sure all the amenities are there: schools, restaurants, supermarkets, synagogues, and community centers. "People are constantly doing things for each other: delivering groceries to the elderly, mentoring youth, joining park cleanups," he says. "I wouldn't call it volunteering. . . . It's just what's expected."

His three kids live near their classmates, and there's no shortage of neighborhood-based camps and after-school activities. He says because the neighbors trust one another, the kids go freely between houses, to the parks, or to the pizza parlor without adult supervision. The children are also expected to be contributing members of the community from an early age, from babysitting to tutoring and becoming camp counselors. "Everyone has a role."

Kaplan's description of his kids' lives in their religious community strongly reflected what Haidt and I found likely to help solve the nation's youth mental health crisis: real-world community.

Kaplan believes, more than anyone I have ever met, in the power of strong, tight-knit communities to solve our personal and social ills. In fact, Kaplan has become one of the world's leading experts on what makes some societies and communities thrive and others not. He has come to believe that many of the crises we face today — the youth mental health crisis, the loneliness epidemic, the drug overdose crisis, and political polarization — can be traced back to the deterioration of local communities.

The more I have talked with him and members of other religious communities, and the more I have dug into the research, the more I think he might be onto something.

## Religion protects young people's mental health

That today's youths are experiencing a mental health crisis is now common knowledge. Young people are struggling with higher rates of mental illness than any previous generation on record. Concerned parents, educators, politicians, and others are desperately seeking explanations and solutions.

Teens without a religious affiliation across the political spectrum started reporting that they felt lonely, worthless, anxious, and depressed at much higher rates starting in the early 2010s. However, religious teens, especially those who report being more conservative, did not.

How did this one group of young people manage to mostly buck the trend?

At first, I thought the differences could be a result of self-reporting. Perhaps religious conservatives were as distressed as others but less likely to admit it. However, the data consistently show that this is unlikely to be the explanation. Social scientists have shown — for as long as we have been collecting data — that conservatives have better mental health than liberals, and religious people have better mental health than their secular peers. People who are religious have lower rates of depression,



Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) "See You At The Pole" at Hopewell Valley Central High School September 26 2025. Photo courtesy and permission by a contributor.

anxiety, drug addiction, and suicide (for both men and women). We see this around the world: Nations where a larger percentage of people identify as religious tend to have lower suicide rates. This protective effect appears to be even stronger for those who are both conservative and religious.

Haidt and I took a look at how these trends apply to Gen Z. We used data from Monitoring the Future, a yearly survey conducted among thousands of American high school students since 1977. The survey asks students how much they agree with these statements: “I feel I do not have much to be proud of”; “Sometimes I think I am no good at all”; “I feel that I can’t do anything right”; and “I feel that my life is not very useful.”

Before 2010, teens agreed with those statements at similar rates across political and religious divides, with religious conservatives slightly less likely to agree. But after 2010, the gap between religious conservatives and everyone else grew rapidly. By 2019, it became clear that secular liberals were the most likely to agree with these self-disparaging statements.

In “The Anxious Generation” and our related posts on our Substack newsletter, After Babel, Haidt and I argue that much of the decline in mental health among adolescents since 2010 can be tied to the rapid transformation of childhood between 2010 and 2015. Adolescents traded their flip phones for smartphones loaded with social media apps, and their play-based childhoods became disembodied and placeless phone-based childhoods. The new phone-based childhood pushes out most of teens’ real-world play and social interaction and brings young people a variety of harms, from loneliness and anxiety to attention fragmentation and sleep deprivation. The transformation of childhood has made many kids more anxious, more depressed, and more likely to self-harm, especially adolescent girls.

So, what are religious conservative teens doing differently?

## **What religious communities are getting right**

The secret is likely not any particular belief system itself but the way organized religion and shared beliefs bind communities together.

As Haidt describes in his 2012 book “The Righteous Mind,” conservatives typically value loyalty, authority, and sanctity, which tend to foster openness to religion and its traditions and structure. In contrast, liberals generally prioritize individual rights and freedoms, which can lead to a rejection of organized religion.

We see this in the data: The percentage of liberal teens who report that religion is important in their lives and who regularly attend religious services has dropped from 40 percent in 1979 to 14 percent in 2019. In comparison, those numbers have changed much less for conservative teens, from 50 percent in 1979 to 42 percent in 2019.

These value differences often play out in the home. I’m making some broad generalizations here, but research shows that conservative (and religious) families tend to emphasize structure and duty, providing children with clear boundaries and roles to play in the home and community. Liberal (and secular) families, however, tend to emphasize personal expression and exploration, encouraging children to discover diverse aspects of their identities. Each approach has strengths — secular liberals foster more self-expression, while religious conservatives offer more structure. Of course, either approach can go too far, leading to challenges like rigid and authoritarian parenting in conservative families or boundary-less parenting in liberal families.

These dynamics can play out with technology, too. Liberal and secular parents tend to be less restrictive about technology use than conservative and religious parents, and liberal and secular teens report spending more time on social media. At the same time, conservative teens report spending more time engaging in their local community — attending religious services, working, spending more time with trusted adults, and spending more time with their friends in person.

The difference in how teens spend their time matters. Experts have extensively documented the mental health and social benefits of strong real-world communities and the unique contribution of religion in binding such communities together (partly due to the collective rituals that are key components of religious life). As Kaplan explained to me, based on his own research, real-world communities help foster social trust, social capital, and social support. Any developmental psychology textbook will tell you that healthy child development requires these features.

Although most of us understand that community is beneficial, many have not experienced the kinds of tight-knit local communities that Kaplan describes. We often mistake social networks for communities. As he noted in an email to me, “An understanding of what community is has been lost to . . . people who have never experienced it. . . . Until very recently, human communities were always rooted in specific places — places imbued with meaning, places with history and a shared identity. Such communities may have constrained their members in various ways — limiting, as [author Alan] Ehrenhalt writes in ‘The Lost City,’ ‘privacy, individuality, and choice’ — but they provided ‘some anchors of stability to help us through times of . . . unsettling change.’”

Tight-knit communities provide a stable network of peers and adults (not just parents!) whom children can trust, collaborate with, and learn skills from. They also offer connections with supportive, trusted adults who act as guardians and mentors and can help a child through hard times during adolescence. The community features that help children thrive are much more difficult to build into the virtual world.

This can help us understand — beyond differences in parenting — why most secular teens across the political spectrum raced into the virtual world more quickly and stayed online longer than their religious conservative peers: They were searching for a community many felt was missing from their lives. Religious conservative teens, on the other hand, were more likely to be rooted in their real-world communities and less likely to move their lives so deeply into the virtual world, and thus less likely to have been harmed by a phone-based childhood.

This is the key point: Virtual networks are not sufficient replacements for real-world communities.

### **What about kids who don't have a real-world community?**

One common objection to the claim that real-world communities are better than virtual networks is that social media platforms offer marginalized youth many social benefits — they can find the like-minded peers they don't have in their real-world communities.

Of course, that's a good thing. This is a major advantage of the internet and, sometimes, of social media, too. However, kids from marginalized groups are also far more likely to experience the risks of the phone-based childhood — from cyberbullying and predation from peers and strangers to being fed self-harm content by the platforms' algorithms. Until some guardrails are put in place, I worry that this solution may, at times, be worse than the problem it is trying to solve. These online networks are often unstable, transient, and full of unknown people — and they are embedded within platforms designed to fuel outrage and keep their users online much longer than they intend. Giving our most vulnerable teens unfettered access to an unregulated world with no guardrails or support does not outweigh the meager social benefits. We can do better than this.

When Kaplan told me he moved into an Orthodox Jewish community “for the lifestyle,” he helped me see that there is more to religious life than faith itself. He showed me that even if we're lucky enough not to suffer from economic poverty, we often suffer from social poverty, with frail and shallow social ties to friends, family, and the local community.

Now, I personally don't want to live in a highly religious community, and I don't expect to move into one “for the lifestyle.” At the same time, I want to give my kids — when I have them — the kind of community that Kaplan is able to provide his children.

This is the challenge of our time: How do we balance the desire to give kids individual freedom and new digital technologies with our desire to give them a stable, tight-knit community? It's a difficult question to answer, though many organizations, like Outward Bound, Block Party USA, and the Girl Scouts, are creatively trying to do just this. My hope is that we can learn from the communities that have done this best and work together to end phone-based childhood, restore play-based childhood, and give all kids more deeply rooted, tight-knit, and loving communities in the real world.

Access the article: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2024/06/06/opinion/religious-teens-mental-health/>

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## **Local News**

### **“The Venue” And The SUNOCO Jet Fuel Pipeline Issue**

*By James Burd (Letter provided September 21 2025)*

Please forward this email out to everyone in Hopewell Township and Ewing Township about this important point. On Thursday September 25 at 7:00pm there will be a Planning Board meeting regarding “The Venue” please go on Zoom to be involved in this important issue.

Sen. Santarsiero and Rep. Warren letter to PHMSA 9-15-2025 CORRECTED.pdf

Good afternoon,

Hopewell Township is confronted with a major issue regarding “The Venue” development on Nursery Road and Scotch Road. On this property there is a jet fuel pipeline which is owned by SUNOCO. This pipeline was installed on this farm in 1957 and is now 68 years old. I found that a steel pipeline life expectancy is 50 years. This pipeline runs from Twin Oaks, PA through Upper Makefield Twp and Bucks County in PA, under the Delaware river through Hopewell Township to Newark, NJ.

For two years Pennsylvania citizens living near this pipeline were smelling petroleum and tasting petroleum in their well water. They contacted SUNOCO and were told that there were no problems detected. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), who oversees pipelines federally, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) were contacted to investigate and mediate this problem. They found that leaking petroleum was causing problems for the residents in the Bucks County, Upper Makefield area.

At this time SUNOCO is supplying bottled water for these residents. They are having Point of Entry Treatments (POET) installed in at least 199 homes. This is why there was a meeting at Upper Makefield Township on September 15 at 7:00pm where individuals came and asked questions about the problems they are experiencing from the pipeline leaks. Since the pipeline also runs through Hopewell Township, I attended this meeting.

The citizens were told that there was a “sleeve” placed around the area of the pipeline that was leaking, and the soil from the contaminated area was removed. The company that is inspecting this problem said that in time they may have to install more POET systems at other homes. The major questions were about each person’s health due to petroleum exposure, and the financial impact that homeowners will have when they try to sell their homes.

At the meeting I asked why SUNOCO had replaced the pipeline under the Delaware River, but was not replacing all of the pipeline from Twin Oaks, PA to Newark, NJ. I did not receive an answer. I explained that there is a proposed development “The Venue” in Hopewell Township, NJ and the jet fuel pipeline runs through that property. I said that Hopewell Township is primarily well water and if there is a leak the petroleum will immediately affect a large number of homes in our community. I asked how property values will be protected for those moving to this new development as well as those already living near the pipeline.

On September 18 I went to Upper Makefield Township and spoke to the Township Manager about what has taken place with this leak issue. He said that recovery wells have been installed all over the area of the leak. SUNOCO and the company inspecting this leak are looking for other ways to get the oil out of the soil. It looks like homes in the leak area have already lost financial value.

It is time for the Hopewell Township Planning Board to stop discussion on the approval of “The Venue” development. It is time for Hopewell Township to demand that SUNOCO replace the aging jet fuel pipeline running through our community, and contact state officials to have the entire pipeline replaced in NJ. The other alternative is for SUNOCO to permanently shut down the pipeline. The Hopewell Township Planning Board and the Township Committee must keep the health and financial security of our citizens as a priority.

Please review the link above to a letter from Pennsylvania legislators about what Pennsylvania is going through with this pipeline. This is what we will face in New Jersey if action is not taken now.

Please contact our township officials to let them know that this problem must be addressed by them before any families in our community are endangered.

Feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

James Burd

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## Election Integrity

### Same-Day Provisional Registrations Raise Questions In New Jersey’s 2024 General Election

By Mark Demo

New Jersey law is clear on the matter of voter registration deadlines. Under **N.J.S.A. 19:31-6**, a person must be registered **at least 21 days prior to an election** in order to be eligible to vote. Yet, data from the November 5, 2024 General Election shows that **1,250 provisional ballots were cast by individuals who registered on the very same day that they voted**. This phenomenon raises important questions about election procedures, compliance with statutory deadlines, and the integrity of the voter registration process.

#### County-by-County Breakdown

The figures reveal significant disparities across New Jersey’s 21 counties. The largest concentrations occurred in **Essex County (432 voters)** and **Hudson County (427 voters)**—together making up nearly 70% of all same-day provisional registrations statewide. Burlington County followed with 198 voters, while Camden reported 41. Several other counties recorded modest numbers, including Mercer (30), Union (32), and Middlesex (11).

By contrast, a number of counties reported either **zero** same-day provisional registrations (Cape May, Hunterdon, Sussex, Warren) or just a handful, such as Bergen (2), Cumberland (2), and Salem (1).

#### Legal and Procedural Concerns

The statutory requirement exists to give election officials time to verify the eligibility of new registrants, prevent duplicate registrations, and ensure the accuracy of voter rolls. When individuals both **register and vote on the same day**, their eligibility cannot be fully verified before ballots are cast. For this reason, such voters are typically required to use **provisional ballots** pending review by county election boards.



While provisional ballots serve as a safeguard, the sheer scale of same-day registrants in Essex, Hudson, and Burlington raises concerns. Did these counties apply different standards than others? Were late registrations improperly processed as valid for Election Day? Or do these figures reflect systemic issues with how voter registration cutoffs are enforced across New Jersey?

## Attorney General Referral

Adding to the seriousness of the issue, the clusters of same-day provisional registrations in **Essex, Hudson, and Burlington Counties**—together accounting for more than 1,000 cases—have been **referred to the New Jersey Attorney General's Office for further investigation**. The referral underscores the possibility of statutory violations and highlights the need for greater oversight of voter registration practices in high-volume counties.

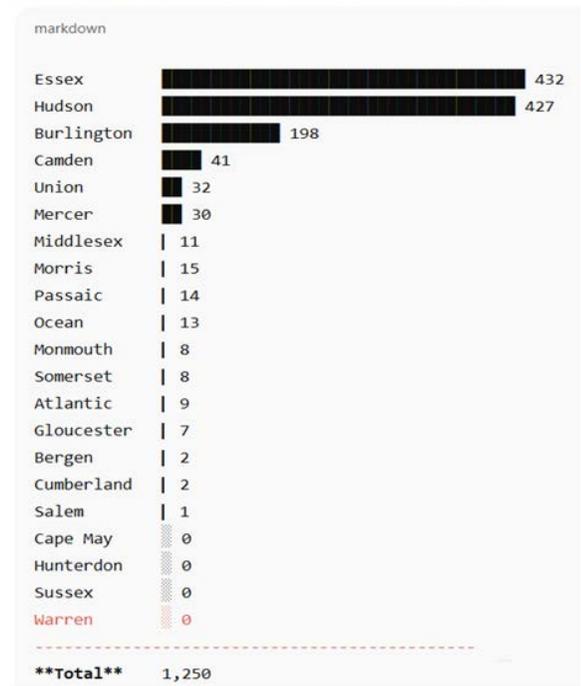
## Disparities Across Counties

The county disparities are striking. Essex and Hudson together reported **859 provisional voters registered on Election Day**, compared to just **nine in Atlantic County** or **fewer than 15** in most other counties. Such uneven distribution suggests either differences in election administration or demographic patterns that disproportionately produced last-minute registrants.

## Looking Ahead

These findings underscore the importance of transparency in how provisional ballots are handled and how county boards reconcile voter registration cutoffs with real-world voting activity. With more than twelve hundred voters statewide registering and voting on the same day—despite the statutory **21-day deadline**—and the Attorney General's office now investigating, lawmakers and election officials may need to revisit both enforcement mechanisms and reporting requirements to ensure public confidence in New Jersey's elections.

Provisional Same-Day Registrations by County



## Sharp Drop In New Jersey's Vote-By-Mail List Observed

By Mark Demo

**When comparing New Jersey's vote-by-mail (VBM) list from November 2024 to today, the numbers tell a striking story.**

- **As of November 2024**, the New Jersey VBM list contained **1.11 million voters**.
- **As of today**, the same list shows only **895,000 voters**.
- That means **257,000 names are missing** from the list compared to just ten months ago.

This reduction is not explained by the usual voter-file maintenance alone. In February 2025, the state did conduct a cleanup of **239,000 inactive confirmation voters**—people already flagged as maintaining a bad address and also not having voted in two consecutive federal elections - but the discrepancy in the VBM list goes beyond that.

The key question is: **what happened to the voters who were removed? Were they stripped entirely from the rolls, or merely shifted back to in-person voting?**

## Legislative Context: A "Use It or Lose It" Rule

The answer lies in recent legislative changes. In 2018 and again in 2022, New Jersey lawmakers updated **N.J.S.A. 19:63-3**, which governs permanent mail-in ballot status. Under these provisions:

- Any voter may choose to receive mail-in ballots for all future elections.
- However, **if a voter does not cast a mail-in ballot in four consecutive years, their automatic VBM status is discontinued**.
- County clerks are required to notify such voters that they will no longer automatically receive mail ballots, though they remain eligible to vote in person or re-apply for mail-in status.

This means that the sharp reduction on the list does not necessarily signal widespread registration purges. Instead, it reflects the **automatic removal of voters who have not consistently used their VBM option over the past four years**.



## What This Means for Voters

Practically, many of the 257,000 “missing” voters may still be fully registered and eligible—they have just been shifted back to the default status of in-person voters. Unless they reapply, they will not automatically receive a ballot in the mail for upcoming elections.

For election administrators, this marks a significant recalibration of the VBM universe in New Jersey. For voters, it underscores the importance of checking their registration and mail-in status well ahead of election deadlines.

## The Bottom Line

The drop from **1.11 million to 895,000 permanent mail-in voters** represents one of the most significant shifts in New Jersey’s voting landscape since VBM expanded in 2020. While the 239,000 inactive removals in February grabbed headlines, the larger story is the impact of state law: the built-in requirement to remove voters from the permanent VBM list after four years of non-participation.

The impact of this drop is likely minimal on the upcoming election as none of these voters actually voted in the last 4 years.

## 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](mailto:Mark.Flaherty@citizens4njei.org)

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

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## ICYMI

### Sen. Kaine Finds Our Founding Documents ‘Troubling’

*OPINION by Terence P. Jeffrey originally published in Newsmax (September 12 2025)*

President Donald Trump recently nominated Riley Barnes to serve as the assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, which is dedicated to helping “advance individual liberty and democratic freedoms around the world.”

At his confirmation hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Barnes delivered a brilliant opening statement.

He started by quoting a speech given by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. “In his first remarks to State Department employees,” said Barnes, “Secretary Rubio emphasized that, ‘We are a nation founded on a powerful principle, and that powerful principle is that all men are created equal, because our rights come from God our Creator — not from our laws, not from our governments.’”

“They are the historic, natural rights that we have as individuals, pursuing life, liberty, and happiness in this world,” said Barnes.

“For rights to be untethered from this core principle is to make them mere sentiments, easily manipulated by authoritarians and bad actors. Natural rights are a blessing and an immutable reality.”

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., ridiculed Barnes for embracing Rubio’s statement that “our rights come from God our Creator — not from our laws, not from our governments.”

“I find that very, very troubling,” Kaine said at the hearing.

“I am a devout person. I was a missionary in Honduras. We’ve got other devout folks in this room, Christian, Jewish, Muslim American.

“The notion that rights don’t come from laws and don’t come from the government, but come from the Creator, that’s what the Iranian government believes.

“It is a theocratic regime that bases its rule on Shia law and targets Sunnis, Baha’is, Jews, Christians and other religious minorities; and they do it because they believe that they understand what natural rights are from their Creator.

“So, the statement that our rights do not come from our laws or our governments is extremely troubling,” said Kaine.

In fact, what’s extremely troubling is the mindset of this senator.

Cicero, the Roman senator assassinated in 43 B.C., explained the source of just laws and human rights more than 2,000 years

ago.

He would have agreed with Barnes.

"There is a true law, a right reason, conformable to nature, universal, unchangeable, eternal, whose commands urge us to duty, and whose prohibitions restrain us from evil," wrote Cicero.

"This law cannot be contradicted by any other law, and is not liable either to derogation or abrogation. Neither the senate nor the people can give us any dispensation for not obeying this universal law of justice.

"It needs no other expositor and interpreter than our own conscience. It is not one thing at Rome and another at Athens; one thing today and another tomorrow; but in all times and nations this universal law must forever reign, eternal and imperishable."

"God himself is its author — its promulgator — its enforcer," said Cicero.

"He who obeys it not, flies from himself, and does violence to the very nature of man."

There is no doubt Cicero served as a philosophical role model for this nation's founders.

John Adams and Benjamin Rush both signed the Declaration of Independence, which states that all men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights."

In 1805, Adams wrote a letter to Rush in which he said he had just re-read a biography of Cicero that he had first read almost a half century earlier.

Cicero, said Adams, had "the most constant as well as the wisest and most persevering Attachment to the Republick."

As this column has noted before, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to Henry Lee in 1825 in which he specifically cited Cicero as an inspiration for the Declaration.

"(A)ll it's authority," he said, "rests then on the harmonising sentiments of the day, whether expressed, in conversations, in letters, printed essays or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney Etc."

While unjustly held in a Birmingham jail in 1963 — because he had peacefully protested that city's evil segregation laws — the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. explained the difference between just and unjust laws.

"I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all,'" he wrote in the "Letter From a Birmingham Jail."

"A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God," he said. "An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law.

To put it in terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law."

"Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here," said King. "We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands."

At his confirmation hearing, Barnes expressed the same understanding of human rights that has been held by the greatest defenders of freedom from Cicero to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

And Sen. Kaine found this "troubling."

Speaking at the Museum of the Bible on Monday, President Trump responded: "It's this Declaration of Independence that proclaims we're endowed by our Creator with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The senator from Virginia should be ashamed of himself."

Access the article: <https://www.newsmax.com/terencejjeffrey/adams-jefferson-creator/2025/09/12/id/1226186/>

## **The Barbarians Within**

*By Ben Shapiro originally published on Creators Syndicate (September 3 2025)*

This week, anti-American and pro-Hamas advocates gathered in Detroit at a "People's Conference for Palestine." There, they expressed radical solidarity with terrorism, celebrated the achievements of Hamas and denigrated the United States. "The average American will never understand the plight of the Palestinian person because the state of Israel is a carbon copy of the United States," said one speaker. "And, therefore, the thing to do is to destroy the idea of America in Americans' heads so that they can see the humanity of everybody outside the warping of American exceptionalism and imperialism and all these evil things."

Points for honesty.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., also showed up to express her raging hatred against the West. "They thought they could kill us, rape us, imprison us, violently uproot us from our olive tree farms, starve our children to death, and we would disappear," she intoned. "Well, guess what? Now we're in Congress."

Putting aside Tlaib's obvious lies — the only genocidal force in the Israeli-Arab conflict is Israel's enemies — she is right about one thing: the Barbarians have entered Congress. As I write in my new book, "Lions and Scavengers," "The Barbarian is an outsider to Western civilization who believes that all of his own maladies and ills can be laid at the feet of the 'colonizers' of the West. In fact, the Barbarian argues, only violence against his purported victimizers can free him of the servile mentality that these very colonizers have instilled in him. ... The Barbarians never posit a moral justification for the destruction of the Western order at their hands. They never explain just how, for example, a Palestinian state is somehow a burgeoning wellspring of human rights, or how an America without American values would make the world a better place. The only thing that matters is the destruction of the West — for in that destruction lies the supposed reclamation of the Barbarian identity."

And herein lies the reality of the West's decline: We have ushered in the Barbarians. We have done so out of a misguided sense of guilt; we have done so because we have swallowed whole the lie that those who are successful are exploitative, and those who are unsuccessful are inherently victimized. We have opened our doors to those who despise our civilization, and who seek to tear it down out of a sense of envy and grievance. The West has not merely gone soft on the scavengers who would destroy it; we have allowed them to cultivate an entire generation of our children. According to a new Harvard-Harris poll, some 60% of Americans aged 18-24 favor Hamas — not the Palestinians, Hamas — over Israel. That's not because young Americans know a thing about the Israel-Hamas conflict. It's because they have bought wholesale the notion that the civilization that has given them everything is uniquely horrifying, and that the only way to expiate that horror is to join those who would destroy the civilization.

Now, perhaps they will grow out of all of this. They're not the first generation of Americans to turn against the country, only to age out of their ignorance and stupidity as reality took hold. But older generations didn't have to grapple with a social media infrastructure that celebrates ignorance and performative breast-beating over understanding and moral clarity; older generations still had some leaders in the idea space willing to speak hard truths rather than perform for clicks.

The real question, then, isn't whether the Barbarians can threaten the existing order. It's whether we turn over our own children to them, sowing the seeds of our destruction. And that question has yet to be answered.

Access the article: <https://www.creators.com/read/ben-shapiro/09/25/the-barbarians-within>

## **Megyn Kelly Plays The Full Charlotte Stabbing Video And Explains Why We All MUST Watch The Horror**

September 10 2025

Megyn Kelly opens her show by playing and reacting to the full Charlotte stabbing video that was put out, explains why we must all watch the horror, breaks down why this is a "tipping point," and more.

**WARNING: CONTAINS SCENES THAT SOME VIEWERS MAY FIND DISTURBING**

[https://rumble.com/v6yrb9u-megyn-kelly-plays-the-full-charlotte-stabbing-video-and-explains-why-we-all.html?e9s=src\\_v1\\_sa%2Csrc\\_v1\\_sa\\_m%2Csrc\\_v1\\_ucp\\_v](https://rumble.com/v6yrb9u-megyn-kelly-plays-the-full-charlotte-stabbing-video-and-explains-why-we-all.html?e9s=src_v1_sa%2Csrc_v1_sa_m%2Csrc_v1_ucp_v)

## **Was The Current Madness Birthed In The University?**

*By Victor Davis Hanson originally published in The Blade of Perseus (September 15 2025)*

America is currently sick.

The young conservative organizer and media personality Charlie Kirk was just murdered in a political assassination by a 22-year-old 'anti-fascist' and trans advocate, Tyler Robinson. As planned, he eliminated the most astute and successful political activist in a generation. Indeed, Kirk may well have ensured that Donald Trump won the 2024 election by not just increasing his youth vote by 6 percent since 2020 but, more importantly, by margins in the swing states of 15-24 percent, ensuring Trump's victory.

No sooner was he killed than thousands on left-wing social media erupted in celebration—among them scores of teachers and professors. Their venom was eerily reminiscent of their earlier canonization of left-wing murderer Luigi Mangione. Recall, Mangione was the spoiled nepo baby who lethally ambushed UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson. Thereby, he became an icon to the Left as a social justice warrior fighting the evil capitalist system, which had so enriched himself and his own family.

Such utter moral bankruptcy was on display as well by the social media praise of Palestinian activist Elias Rodriguez ("Free Palestine"), after he brutally murdered a young Jewish couple at the Jewish museum in Washington, D.C. Rodriguez supposedly showed the world how to deal with Zionists—reifying the hateful rhetoric that pervades the modern campus.

Was that ghoulishness confined to such anonymous left-wing nuts and fringe trolls?

Not really.

MSNBC's guest "analyst," Matthew Dowd, casually raised an asinine suggestion that the lethal shot came from a Kirk supporter firing off a round. And then, in Pavlovian fashion, he blamed the assassination of Kirk—on Kirk himself—for being an unapologetic "divisive" activist.

Dowd, who was subsequently fired by an embarrassed MSNBC president, only took his cue from anchorwoman, the untouchable Katy Tur, who first editorialized Kirk as a "divisive" figure. By her logic, would that mean that, say, a Bernie Sanders or Zohran Mamdani would also be divisive? What does Joe Biden, by Tur's logic, deserve after labeling half the country as "semi-fascists" or reducing them to "garbage," "chumps," and "dregs"—or boasting he'd like to take Trump behind the gym and beat him up?

Does Tur mean that anyone deemed "divisive" then should naturally expect what befell Charlie Kirk?

Yet, in truth, Charlie Kirk was an upbeat, happy warrior not unlike William F. Buckley in his youth, willing to politely debate political opponents without anger and bias.

The multimillionaire socialist Rep. Ilhan Omar, who once claimed that the Trump "dictatorship" was worse than what she had fled from in her native Somalia, claimed the slain Kirk mourners were "full of sh-t" in a long, incoherent rant. Such creepy examples could be easily multiplied, such as the accustomed lunacy of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. She now claimed that those who block gun control legislation could not blame others for inciting the violence: i.e., Charlie Kirk should have expected to reap what he sowed.

A dense AOC seems clueless that not even her fellow leftists seriously advocate confiscating bolt-action .30-06 hunting rifles of the sort that the assassin used to kill Kirk. Perhaps it might be wiser not to try to hunt down and round up 500 million guns in America, but rather to enforce existing unenforced gun laws that prohibit felons, the mentally ill, and domestic terrorists ("anti-fascists") from possessing them.

Just prior to the murder of Charlie Kirk, a video had been issued of a 23-year-old Ukrainian immigrant, Iryna Zarutka, brutally murdered on public transit in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her throat was slashed by one Decarlos Brown, an African-American, 14-time felon, recently and prematurely released from custody.

The horror followed the now familiar left-wing script. The left-wing mayor, Vi Lyles, immediately tried to stop the release of the transit video, lest it cause anyone or anything to be blamed. Then she followed with the usual DEI boilerplate that excuses evil: do not judge the homeless, arresting people solves nothing, and the murder was merely "tragic," as if there is no culpability, just bad luck or fate.

As expected, most of the media suffocated the murder story. After all, it upset the dominant racial narrative that must remain unquestioned. We have been told for decades that systemically racist Americans prey on victimized blacks, and thus, Ibram X. Kendi-style antiracism—de facto stigmatizing and demonizing whites—is needed to stop racism.

The left knows that black males, age 15-40, commit well over 50 percent of the most violent crimes in America, while comprising about 3 percent of the population. They know it and privately navigate accordingly, but few speak of it, and none seem to have answers to it. So the topic remains taboo.

Any "tragedy" that highlights that fact—such as the murder of Ms. Zarutka or the recent brutal strangling of Auburn retired professor Julie Schnuelle by a young black man with a felony record who was released back into the public—must be suppressed. So too we rarely hear of the recent murder of the elderly Queens couple by the alleged career felon and released criminal Jamel McGriff. He robbed them, he tied them up, he murdered them, and then he torched their home. And on and on the crime continues, the narrative continues, and we dare not say a word.

In our post-Daniel Penny world, three young black people, sitting just feet away from Zarutka, witnessed Decarlos Brown slit her throat—and did nothing. Perhaps they were afraid, we were told. Perhaps, we were advised, no first aid could have staunched such horrific wounds. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps...

Nonetheless, when Zarutka was staring out at eternity in her death throes, bewildered that someone or something had just ended her life, none of the three lifted a finger to help her—or even console her in her final moments. Instead, the killer, blood dripping from his person, calmly walked off the train unmolested. And even then, in his absence, there was no effort of any of the nearby witnesses to tend to the dying Zarutka. Instead, they sidestepped her and left her behind on the train as she lay gasping her last breaths.

The killer, Decarlos Brown? He can be heard on the video mumbling twice, "I got that white girl." Yet we were told either that the video was doctored, or too unclear, or irrelevant. If accurate, it demolished the media elite's insistence that Decarlos Brown had not a racial thought in his mind.

Instead, we were to listen to media analyst Van Jones pontificate that the late Charlie Kirk should have been ashamed for connecting Decarlos Brown to racist hatred. Perhaps Van Jones should reconsider. He should review the entire narrative of how Zarutka found herself a target of a killer. Brown was a 14-time felon. He was out on cashless bail. The magistrate Teresa Stokes, who freed him, had no law degree. Such a "judge" had never taken, much less passed, a bar exam.

She owned an out-of-state alternative treatment center and was involved in another local one. In a prior sane world,

magistrates had law degrees. They had been certified as competent by the bar exams. They followed conflict-of-interest protocols that prohibited them from even indirectly profiting from their judicial decisions.

But again, that narrative too is passé, given the power of diversity, equity, and inclusion to exempt norms and protocols for the supposed greater collective good.

From where does all this hatred, violence, and moral vacuity arise? Why did the shooter inscribe his bullets with “anti-fascist” messaging, cruel taunts, and trans jargon?

Is the hatred caused by the media, who talk about toxic “whiteness” nonstop? Is it the collateral damage from the racial obsessions of a Jasmine Crockett, Joy Reid, and septuagenarian Al Sharpton, now ending his racist career where he started it?

Or is the promulgator the Democratic Party and the Left, out of power, impotent, and angry that their superior intelligence and morality are not properly appreciated by 51 percent of the people? Who put a photoshopped Trump on a New Republic cover as Hitler?

If a General Milley (“now I realize he’s a total fascist”) or a General Kelly (“certainly falls into the general definition of fascist, for sure”) calls a current or ex-president a fascist, and presidential candidate Kamala Harris agrees (“a president...who admires dictators and is a fascist”), then does an unhinged 22-year-old “anti-fascist” college student feel the popular culture might approve of his own efforts in dealing with “fascist” Trump supporters?

Milley, Kelly, Harris, and the rest can call anyone a fascist but without ever defining the term. Did Trump suspend immigration law to let in 12 million illegals? Did he invite into the DOJ or White House the prosecutors Nathan Wade, Jack Smith, and the revolving door Michael Colangelo to coordinate lawfare against an ex-president?

Is Trump ignoring the improper usurpation of executive power by left-wing lower-court judges or instead appealing their decisions through lawful channels?

Did he hire a foreign national to undermine his presidential rival with a fake dossier?

Did he round up “51 former intelligence officials” to lie to the American people to warp the election?

Did he pardon his entire criminally minded family and then cover it up by in absentia outsourcing to his aides the pardoning of hundreds of criminals through an autopen? So please define fascism before smearing a president and lowering the bar of the acceptable.

What is the point of the past violent braggadocio of Hakeem Jeffries, the House Minority Leader, posing with a baseball bat, or huffing that he will take the “fight” against the Trump agenda “to the streets?” Was he merely following on the earlier example of Rep. Maxine Waters, who urged supporters to whip up a crowd and physically confront Trump officials in stores and restaurants?

Why are congresswomen kickboxing and punching the screen as they video their seriousness to assault Trump?

What does now-campaigning California Governor Gavin Newsom mean when he promises, “It’s not about whether we play hardball anymore—it’s about how we play hardball. We are going to fight back, and we’re going to punch this bully in the mouth.” What would a potential third assassin think of that promise?

If the governor of the largest state in the union wants to bloody the face of the President of the United States or physically attack his opponents (“We’re gonna punch these sons of b---es in the mouth”), then might lesser underlings and sympathizers try to outdo that?

Or, finally, is the culprit for the madness found ultimately in the elite university? Who, after all, mainstreamed the idea of racial re-segregation in dorms and graduation ceremonies and taught America that racial essentialism is part of the new tribal America?

Who ignored court rulings and civil rights legislation in their arrogance to recalibrate admissions by race? Who taught the anti-Jewish assassin Elias Rodriguez his hatred of Israel and his pro-Hamas zealotry, and who influenced Luigi Mangione, an honors graduate, to despise “capitalist” CEOs?

Where did the practice of identifying one’s pronouns at the end of memos start, or demanding that biological males could compete in women’s sports, and demonizing anyone who objected that there were still two, not three, biological sexes?

Where did the critical race theory and critical legal theory that empowered Black Lives Matter, Defund the Police, Cashless Bail, and all the laws that assured the public that thefts less than \$950 were not really thefts?

From where did the new anti-Semitism come, and so strangely after the slaughter of October 7—if not from the campus?

Where else in America were young Jews fleeing to a library with the mob pounding on the windows? Where else are Jews roughed up by a thug who is subsequently given an award by their university? Where did demonstrations arise on behalf of those who murdered 1,200 on October 7?

Why, in the aftermath of the murder of Charlie Kirk, are so many teachers, professors, and college-graduate bureaucrats so eager to gloat over and cheer his death? Who taught them that?

Are universities critical to America's prosperity and security now only in terms of the sciences, math, engineering, and medical schools?

As for the humanities? They scarcely exist at the elite universities as we once knew them. Either de facto or literally, they have been overwhelmed and distorted by endless studies-courses, DEI radicalism, 90 percent leftist faculties, and suppression of free thought and free expression.

Where did the envisioning of violent crime as the fault of a flawed society, the institutionalization of modern racialism, chauvinism, and essentialism, and the empowerment of militant transgenderism that in so many insidious ways has filtered throughout society—if not originally birthed in the university—come from?

Those sins of commission are force-multiplied by those of omission. Hundreds of thousands of students emerge from campuses not just indoctrinated with contempt for the Western tradition and American exceptionalism, and not just often thousands of dollars in debt from inflated tuition, but also poorly educated by the standards that once defined education.

The working classes and high school graduates, supposedly the losers of our society, are not those who are dividing the country. They are not often advocating violence or trying to use any means necessary to overturn the established order. But so often the products of the modern university are doing just that.

Sadly, in all these recent horrors, the ideology behind them—the premise that either birthed or appeased them—was birthed in modern higher education.

Access the article: <https://victorhanson.com/was-the-current-madness-birthed-in-the-university/>

## Presidential Message On The Feast Of Saint Michael The Archangel

*The White House | September 29, 2025*

Today, I salute the millions of Christian believers in the United States and around the world observing the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel.

According to sacred Scripture, when the Devil rebelled against God in Heaven, Saint Michael and his legion of angels cast Satan down to Earth—triumphantly reasserting God's sovereignty over all creation. For 2,000 years, Christians have looked to Saint Michael the Archangel for protection, strength, and courage in times of conflict, distress, and doubt.

In 1886, nearly 140 years ago, Pope Leo XIII, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, fearing for the future of the western world, introduced the legendary Prayer to Saint Michael, which is still recited to this day in churches and homes all across our Nation and throughout the world:

**Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.**

Access the President's Message: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/09/presidential-message-on-the-feast-of-saint-michael-the-archangel/>

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## 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 October 13, 2025 - 6:30 PM - 425 S Main St. Pennington, NJ 08534 or Livestream on YouTube

### Municipal Township Meetings

Monday, October 6, 2025 6:30 PM

Monday, October 20, 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](https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/k83q0qZsxB_6dlk4EjvYfv9xDQOqNH9z/videos?autostart=true&showtabssearch=true)

Or: [https://www.hopewelltp.org/ select How Do I.../ bottom right View/ Video Library](https://www.hopewelltp.org/select%20How%20Do%20I.../bottom%20right%20View/Video%20Library)

## Board of Elections Meeting

Tuesday October 14, 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 -- October 2025

Tuesday October 7, 2025 6:00 PM Agenda Meeting

Thursday October 9, 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}

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## TruthBTold



## **Comey Faces Indictment, But His Real Crimes Remain Untouched**

*By Victor Davis Hanson originally published in The Blade of Perseus (September 29 2025)*

We have no idea whether the current DOJ indictments will lead to a conviction of James Comey, namely that he authorized FBI subordinates to leak to the media and then lied about it, obstructing Congress in the process.

It may come down to the word of Comey, a known fabricator, against the testimony of his former subordinate, Andrew McCabe, an admitted liar. Take your pick.

We know, however, that Comey is not facing a Trumpian \$500 million in potential fines, nor 93 indictments, nor the scrutiny of five different local, state, and federal prosecutors. Nor, like some of the J6 arrested, will he be sent to solitary confinement to await a trial in a year or two or be charged with “illegal parading.”

We also know of the crimes or unethical conduct for which James Comey is not currently being indicted or investigated.

He is not being charged with pleading amnesia or ignorance in 2018—e.g., “I didn’t know,” “I couldn’t recall,” “I didn’t remember”—a reported 245 times while under oath to House investigators and misleading them.

He is not being charged with leaking in 2017 a confidential FBI memo of a conversation with then President Trump—which he improperly stored in his personal safe, in violation of FBI protocols—to the New York Times via a third-party Columbia professor.

He is not being charged for falsely assuring the President of the United States in 2017 that he was not the object of the current Crossfire Hurricane “Russian collusion” investigation—when, in fact, Trump, as the Mueller investigation revealed, was the real target of almost that entire ruse.

He is not being charged for deliberately leaking an FBI memo of a conversation with President Trump for the purpose of injuring him by prompting the appointment of his friend and predecessor, Robert Mueller, as a special counsel to investigate the supposed crimes of Donald Trump. Comey’s gambit resulted in a 22-month and \$30 million administration hiatus, only to find no actionable wrongdoing by Trump.

He is not being investigated for usurping the role of the DOJ in 2016 when, as an FBI investigator, he served simultaneously as investigator and prosecutor, creating a conflict of interest.

He was tasked with both finding evidence of Hillary Clinton’s alleged wrongdoing and also making the federal prosecutorial decision whether to indict her for transmitting classified material over an unsecured email server. And after finding evidence of her culpability, he chose not to indict her on the grounds that her candidacy at the time meant no reasonable prosecutor (of which he was then not supposed to be one) would bring such a case against her.

He is not being investigated for improperly disclosing his newly reopened investigative case against Hillary Clinton on the eve of the 2016 election. Nor is he being investigated for predetermining that Hillary Clinton was innocent of the charges of unlawfully transmitting confidential material before his own FBI investigation was complete—and before Comey’s FBI had even interviewed her.

He is not being investigated for tasking Peter Strzok to alter his own original condemnation of Clinton’s conduct by replacing the initial and correct term “gross negligence,” a phrase that denotes a federal crime, with “extreme carelessness,” which involves no criminal liability.

He is not being investigated for, nor charged with, birthing the entire governmental role in the Russian collusion hoax that warped the 2016 presidential election and transition by his use of the discredited Christopher Steele as an FBI confidant/ source.

He is not being investigated for using the fraudulent Steele dossier as a “central and essential” document to obtain a FISA court writ to improperly surveil Carter Page—an act that even he later admitted was wrong.

He is not being investigated for stumbling upon a rock mosaic on a beach arranged to read “8647” (“get rid of/remove Trump”) and then on social media nonchalantly posting that clear threat to injure/remove/eject the current president.

He is not being investigated for stating to the country that it was unclear whether Trump did or did not cavort with Moscow prostitutes—as alleged solely by the discredited, spurious Steele dossier, which he, as FBI director, knowingly helped disseminate and knew was bogus.

Under Comey, the FBI used the fabulist Steele as a “confidential human source” to produce his fantasies before firing him—only to later offer him a reported “up to \$1 million” to confirm anything in his dossier, in a vain bid to salvage the FBI’s rapidly eroding reputation.

He is not being charged with or investigated for not acting in 2016 on Hillary Clinton’s overt use of fabricated material to mask her own criminal exposure and siccing the FBI on her political opponent. Or, as the FBI itself put it of Clinton’s ruse: “US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s approval of a plan concerning US presidential candidate Donald Trump and Russian hackers hampering US elections as a means of distracting the public from her use of a private email server.”

He is not being investigated for attempting in 2017 to entrap or ambush then-National Security Advisor designate retired Gen. Michael Flynn by sending two FBI agents (including the ubiquitous Peter Strzok) to interview him—in expectation—after Comey subordinate Andrew McCabe's disingenuous call to mislead Flynn into thinking he need not have a lawyer present—that Flynn would likely be naive and vulnerable without counsel.

Or, as Comey later bragged publicly about his gambit:

"We did not tell the White House, 'Hey, we're going to come talk to your guy.' In a more organized administration, or a more experienced administration, they would not have let that happen."

So Comey's problem is not really legal, at least not entirely.

It is moral and ethical. It is no exaggeration that no single person has been more responsible than Comey for tarnishing the reputation of the FBI between 2015 and 2017—and with it the Washington administrative establishment itself.

Comey is not the victim of an arbitrary grand jury indictment.

Instead, he is fortunate that he does not face both more legal jeopardy and social ostracism for all the harm he has done his country, mostly to please the powers that be in the Obama administration, the media, the liberal bipartisan Washington establishment—and his own exaggerated sense of self.

In the weeks to come, we may see more indictments of many Washington grandees. The media will allege Trump "revenge," but the legal system will adjudicate—not the New York Times, NPR, or the DNC—whether any of these indictments are proper and lead to convictions.

We do not know whether John Bolton transmitted classified information improperly that was intercepted by foreign intelligence agencies.

But we do know that Bolton was chastised by a federal judge for including information in his campaign-cycle memoir that was either likely classified or confidential and whose publication was injurious to his nation's security. In the judge's own words, Bolton "gambled with the national security of the United States," and he "exposed his country to harm and himself to civil and potentially criminal liability."

We do not know whether former Interim FBI Director Andrew McCabe or FBI Director James Comey was lying when Comey denied he greenlighted subordinates like McCabe to leak confidential FBI information to the media.

But we do know that McCabe did confess that he lied on four occasions to federal investigators and was not prosecuted by then Attorney General Bill Barr—and not because McCabe did not lie under oath, but because Barr thought he could not convince a Washington jury to convict a high-ranking FBI official. And so he never even made the effort.

We do not know whether former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper improperly rejected intelligence reports finding no Trump-Russian collusion, but pressed ahead to spread that Russian collusion ruse at the prompt of then-President Barack Obama.

But we do know that James Clapper lied under oath, with impunity, to the US Congress—and did admit that he did ("least untruthful" answer) when he swore that the NSA did not spy on American citizens. And he likely lied again when he swore that he did not leak elements of the dossier to CNN.

We do not know whether former CIA Director John Brennan, like Clapper and Comey, ignored intelligence reports finding no basis for Russian-Trump collusion and yet went ahead to use the CIA to help promote that fabrication to injure 2016 candidate Trump.

But we do know that Brennan lied under oath to the U.S. Congress, and with impunity, when he swore that the CIA did not surveil Senate staffers' computers. He lied again with impunity when he claimed that Obama's predator drone targeted assassinations had not killed any collateral civilians.

All of these officials—well, aside from the Alvin Bragg, Letitia James, Jack Smith, and Fani Willis lawfare circus—have so far faced no consequences for their lies and impropriety.

Indeed, some of them are more likely to have profited from lying by being hired as MSNBC or CNN analysts, where they 'analyzed' the very hoaxes they helped birth. By such exemptions, they have sent the message over the last decade that the elite Washington administrative class is a law unto itself and without any moral bearings whatsoever.

The final irony? All of them have posed as our moral censors, whether peddling the Russian collusion hoax, the laptop disinformation caper, or the lawfare walls-are-closing-in-on-Trump farces.

Does it really constitute a "revenge tour" belatedly to seek some sort of legal accounting for these alleged crimes?

Or over the last decade, has it not been both immoral and injurious to the American sense of equality under the law not to treat these officials as any other American—without their money and connections—would be treated?

Access the article: <https://victorhanson.com/comey-faces-indictment-but-his-real-crimes-remain-untouched/>

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## At the Movies, Bookstores

### The Dragon's Prophecy (2025)

In Theaters October 6 & 8 – Watch on SalemNOW October 9

By Dinesh D'Souza

Based on the #1 International Bestseller by Jonathan Cahn

#### What is this film about?

October 7 unleashed a new war in the Middle East, a place where nothing ever seems to be solved, or resolved. Whose land is it really? Who is good and who is evil? How can good prevail over evil without becoming evil itself? Could the fate of the world, of humanity itself, be tied to this conflict? And how does America fit into the picture?

Based on Jonathan Cahn's #1 international bestseller, *The Dragon's Prophecy*, this film provides a secret key to unlock the problem and the solution. Cahn reveals that October 7 and today's conflicts in the Middle East are an eerie revival of ancient battles described in the early books of the Bible, suggesting that we may be living in the end times of humanity itself.

The film offers dramatic, never-before-seen live footage of October 7, together with on-site reporting and interviews with major figures like Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee. It also reveals the astonishing discoveries of biblical archeology confirming the historic events recorded in the Bible and the ancient presence of the Jews in the land of Israel.

Dinesh D'Souza brings history, current events and bible prophecy together in a stunning and original film to illustrate the true meaning of October 7, anti-Semitism, terrorism, and the hidden forces that battle endlessly for the ultimate prize, which is the human soul – your soul. The film ends with an inspiring call to action to Jews and Christians to return to their roots and stand up for good and resist evil.

Cast: Dinesh D'Souza, Jonathan Cahn, Benjamin Netanyahu, Mike Huckabee, Erick Stakelbeck, Eric Metaxas

**Content Advisory:** this film may contain graphic news footage.

Get tickets. Watch trailer. Pre-Order Streaming. Pre-Order DVD. Further details: <https://thedragonsprophecy.com/>



### 'Dragon's Prophecy': New D'Souza Film Chronicles Israel's October 7th Horrors Through Bible Lens

By Chris Mitchell originally published in *The Christian Broadcasting Network* (September 26 2025)

JERUSALEM, Israel – U.S commentator and filmmaker Dinesh D'Souza has just completed a new film in collaboration with author Jonathan Cahn, who wrote the book, *The Dragon's Prophecy*. The film, with the same title, is set for theatrical release just before October 7th, the second anniversary of the brutal Hamas murders and kidnappings that triggered Israel's seven-front war.

D'Souza was in Jerusalem recently and came to our studios to talk about the film. He told us, "It's about October 7th. It's about Israel. Radical Islam, Hamas, biblical archaeology, and a hint of biblical prophecy."

He added, "It's an attempt to give a kind of new light on what's going on in the world, but do it through the lens of the Bible."

To watch our interview with Dinesh D'Souza (5mins 26secs): <https://cbn.com/news/israel/dragons-prophecy-new-dsouza-film-chronicles-israels-october-7th-horrors-through-bible>

## We the People of Interest

Charlie Kirk Assassinated September 10 2025



# CHARLIE KIRK

1993 - 2025

Every one of us at Turning Point USA is crushed and devastated by the hateful murder of our founder and guiding light, Charlie Kirk. All of us have lost a leader, a mentor, and a friend. Above all, our hearts are with Erika and their two children. Charlie was the ideal husband and the perfect father. Above all else, we ask you to pray for the Kirks after the incomprehensible loss they have suffered.

More than anyone, Charlie believed in the power of argument and good-faith debate to find the truth and guide people towards, if not agreement, then at least mutual understanding. Charlie was no stranger to threats. He received thousands throughout his life. But he always prioritized reaching as many young Americans as possible over his own personal safety. Now, Charlie has become America's greatest martyr to the freedom of speech he so adored.

In his thirty-one years, Charlie lived more than any of us will in a hundred. He had an overwhelming passion for life and a deep belief in his power as an individual to make a difference. With the spirit of a pioneer, Charlie launched Turning Point out of his parents' garage as an 18-year-old with no money, no name recognition, only a dream. His energy and drive were awe-inspiring, without equal and deeply infectious. Charlie refused to squander a single day of his life. He was a natural builder and problem solver, who loved a challenge and saw every setback as a chance to learn, grow, pray, and try again. He was fundamentally decent, always eager to make new friends and allies and to support and defend the ones he had already made. His values were timeless American ones: Honesty, forthrightness, duty, loyalty, and fair play.

Charlie loved America, its people, its Constitution, its freedom, and the limitless good all of them have done for the world. But above all, Charlie lived every day with an overflowing love of the Christ he knew he would one day get to see. When asked, Charlie said that above all he wished to be remembered for his faith. Far more than any political victory, Charlie wanted to see a spiritual revival among America's youth. He wanted a nation of happy, thriving families who loved God and each other. At his final public speech, just days before his murder, Charlie witnessed to Christ to an audience of non-believers. Even in his very last moments, Charlie was professing the Gospel. He ran his race well all the way to the end. Now, he goes to his heavenly reward.

Although Charlie is gone, his legacy will endure. He shall not grow old; age shall not weary him. For all time, he will remain the brave young man who inspired tens of millions of Americans to better themselves and take action to better America. All of us will miss Charlie. None of us will ever forget him.

  **THE CHARLIE KIRK SHOW**

### Prove Charlie Right

*COMMENTARY by David DesRosiers originally published in RealClearPolitics (September 16 2025)*

On Sept. 10, 2025, Charlie Kirk was assassinated for the political sin of showing up on college campuses across our country and taking and answering questions. These queries came from students and guests whether they were allies or adversaries – or simply curious-minded Americans engaging in their unalienable birthright to engage in civics openly.

Charlie Kirk was martyred for the free exercise of his First Amendment rights. And the right to free speech, which he championed, was critically wounded in the attack.

The aftermath marks a turning point in our nation's "house divided" future.

Let's do as Charlie did masterfully and probe the mindset of the other – in this case his assassin's and that of his like-minded enablers. It was Charlie's way. It is the Socratic way. It is the Western Civ, the American way.

Who will rid us of this meddlesome apostle of free expression?

Progressives don't like to think of themselves as King Henry, the man who uttered the fateful words that caused four loyalists to murder Thomas Becket. But where else can their constant denunciations of Republicans as "Nazis" or "fascists" lead?

A young man, who was being groomed to be a moral monster by our culture and the passions it unleashes, heard the dog whistle call to arms, seized the opportunity of a public event in his home state, and did what was collectively seen by his ilk as necessary and proper.

To do so, he suspended morality, the rule of law, and human decency in order to serve what he and too many others see as a higher political purpose. Sadly, this moral madness is what is taught in our nation's colleges. This is the ethic that guided the global left – paired now with America's identitarian vanguard – to fundamentally remake America.

Their immoral reasoning not only led to the killing of Charlie Kirk, but it is also the rationale of messianic monsters through the ages. In the 20th century alone, under the guise of National Socialism and global communism, it led to the murder of a hundred million souls. Social media has given it another Great Leap Forward. It is the justification for the show trials, the guillotine, the oven, the suicide vest, and the lone sniper.

This assassin's creed is not for everyone. Only a few have the wherewithal to take this beyond-good-and-evil step. But those who do take things to their evil conclusion do so knowing that those with less nerve but shared adjacency on the ends will find in their partisan hearts that what they did was needed and therefore good, if not praiseworthy.

This is the recipe for political madness and incompatible with our venerable experiment in self-government that we must now defend in common.

What does Charlie Kirk's assassination portend for our country?

I see the potential of a natural turning point towards the good, the restoration of the First Amendment's spirit, and a return of political, civic, cultural, religious, and economic toleration. That would be a big rainbow following a storm.

So far, there has been little call for retaliatory violence. So much for the "Hitler Youth" handwringing. There have only been completely peaceful prayer vigils. Unlike this assassin's creed and its enablers, Charlie Kirk's soul and mind would not allow such a demonic transvaluation of value. His true followers share that moral position. On this point, the partisan calls for moral equivalence don't hold.

The good news for us, the living, is that Charlie is being honored in death by his followers in a way that gives us all a new political lease on life.

I first heard of his shooting from my 28-year-old son and 18-year-old nephew. They saw Charlie's execution with their own eyes within moments of it happening and captured the core un-American inhumanity of it all. "A man is gunned down for the thought crime of debating on a college campus."

"This guy is a family man," they said. "He has a wife and two young children."

What happens going forward?

Charlie's influence was huge before he was shot. It appears to be growing by the day in death. I hope something good is happening in real time. I believe you can see, hear, and feel it.

It turns out that when a public figure with 35 million followers gets assassinated for the whole world to see for simply speaking on a college campus, those who never heard of him – or heard something, good or bad – will naturally check it out themselves.

A national re-examination may be happening. The curious are finding an immediate and growing corpus, which is deconstructing the demonic caricature made of him, and are standing up for this smart, fast-talking, civil, happy man in the prime of this life.

Charlie's wife Erika gave a speech full of love and principle that brought tears to those with open hearts. This organization Charlie dedicated half of his life to is not going anywhere but onward and upward.

Since his assassination, Turning Point USA has received tens of thousands of applications to set up TPP college chapters. College Mandarins in charge of green-lighting or gaslighting student organizations and regulating speech to their Orwellian liking should tread lightly going forward. The Justice Department will be watching.

Charlie is dead but not gone. His happy warrior spirit and first-rate mind are already immortalized in the cloud. TPP should enlist the help of AI to give Charlie's mind and his "Prove Me Wrong" method a second lease on life for our collective sake.

To the legion of young people whose hearts are broken and want to do more, you know that Charlie would want you to follow in his footsteps. The time for being a spectator was canceled with an assassin's bullet. Today, it is time to stand up, show up, and be like Charlie. You know his mind and his method.

From heaven, Charlie is saying to all those who love him, "Prove Me Right."

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

## **Nathan Hale, Charlie Kirk, And Us**

*By Christopher Flannery originally published in The American Mind (September 22 2025)*

### **We must keep America worthy of their sacrifices.**

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." – Isaiah 5:20

On September 17, America celebrated its 238th Constitution Day—the day the framers of the Constitution signed the document destined to become "the supreme law of the land." Today, September 22, we honor the 249th anniversary of the death of the young American hero Nathan Hale, who gave his life for his country in the early months of the American

Revolution. These anniversaries have an especially poignant connection this year in light of the political assassination of Charlie Kirk, another young American hero who, like Nathan Hale, will be an inspiration to generations of Americans to come.

From all I have seen and heard, Charlie bore the same attitude that 21-year-old Nathan Hale made famous as he faced death at the hands of his British captors and said, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." America will always need its Nathan Hales and its Charlie Kirks—heroes willing to give "the last full measure of devotion" for their country's cause. We can't get on without them.

Though not every citizen will rise to the level of Hale or Kirk, we are equally held to high standards of citizenship, as seen in the oath of naturalization that every immigrant to the United States must take to become a citizen:

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.

This year especially, it is a good idea for all Americans to read this oath and to remind ourselves that native-born citizens live under the obligation of the same oath, even if we don't explicitly take it. Each of us is pledged to all, and all are pledged to each to support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States, and to bear arms on behalf of our country when needed.

Everyone has seen the shocking spectacle of tens of thousands of people demoniacally celebrating the political murder of Charlie Kirk. These are people we had every reason to think were law-abiding citizens and trustworthy neighbors: teachers, nurses, government officials, and members of the armed services. This evil reminds us of a critical difference between Charlie Kirk and Nathan Hale. Nathan Hale was a soldier in a war. Charlie Kirk was talking on a college campus when he was assassinated. The street thugs and hit men of the murderous Left—egged on by depraved politicians and excused and justified by media monsters—have turned college campuses, churches, schools, and subways into war zones. Faced with this evil, we should carry on Charlie's heroic, peaceful work and speak the truth with courage, goodwill, and integrity.

But we must also, with due responsibility, and with all necessary urgency, be preparing and equipping ourselves to support the Constitution and laws of the United States and to come to the defense of our fellow citizens against the very real and increasing threats of the murderous Left. Their insistent shrieking violence is no longer marginal; it is mainstream. Just a few days ago, at a county fair in a small town in Ohio, the Democratic Party booth was displaying and giving away "8647" buttons asking, "Is he dead yet?" In this case, the County Fair Board had the courage and good sense to require the Democrats to close their booth. But that there should have even been such a booth, and that it should have taken any courage to close down, is a sign of very dark times.

The young Abraham Lincoln, seeing violence and lawlessness spreading in the America of his day, expressed memorably the civic disposition we must have: "As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor." To honor the memories of Charlie Kirk and Nathan Hale, and to serve their noble cause, we must do all in our power to keep America worthy of their sacrifices.

Access the article: <https://americanmind.org/salvo/nathan-hale-charlie-kirk-and-us/>

## Who Were The Knights Templar?

Information from Bible Hub: [https://biblehub.com/q/who\\_were\\_the\\_knights\\_templar.htm](https://biblehub.com/q/who_were_the_knights_templar.htm)

### Origins and Establishment

The Knights Templar, formally known as the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, arose in the early 12th century during the Crusades. Though they do not appear in the biblical narrative (which is complete prior to their founding), their origin is closely tied to the aftermath of the First Crusade (1096-1099). Around 1119, a small group of knights-led by Hugues de Payens-pledged themselves to protect pilgrims traveling to and from holy sites in Jerusalem. Their official recognition came in 1129 at the Council of Troyes, where prominent church leaders sanctioned their mission.



The order derived its name from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, believed to stand on the site of the ancient Temple of Solomon. This location gave both a spiritual and symbolic foundation for their early community. Historical documents such as the "Latin Rule" (the official code governing the Templars) reveal the depth of their devotion, merging traditional monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience with the rigors of knighthood.

## Mission and Role During the Crusades

Principal to the Knights Templar was the dual identity of monk and knight—one that set them apart from many other monastic orders of the era. While typical monasteries emphasized withdrawal from the secular world, the Templars engaged actively in military and protective roles. They guarded roads used by pilgrims, fortified cities, and served in battles to secure the realms under Crusader rule.

Beyond battlefield duties, the Templars managed financial and administrative networks throughout Europe and the Middle East. They established an early form of banking, enabling pilgrims to deposit money in one location and withdraw it in another. This function grew substantially, and Templar houses became known for their efficient economic systems, which at times brought them considerable influence.

## Spiritual Life and Organizational Structure

Though their primary purpose was military, the Templars were explicitly religious in their daily life. They followed a rule modeled on Cistercian practices, influenced by Bernard of Clairvaux's treatise, "De Laude Novae Militiae" ("In Praise of the New Knighthood"). Prayer and study were integral, with communal worship marking the rhythm of each day. Their vow of poverty directed that every possession be held in common.

The order had a Grand Master at its apex, overseeing various ranks such as knights, sergeants (lower-ranking fighting men), and chaplains (ordained priests who provided spiritual care). Templar houses, known as commanderies, were spread across Europe and the Holy Land, each reporting up a centralized hierarchy. Archaeological remains of commanderies in places like Acre and London testify to the sophisticated infrastructure they maintained.

## The Templar Emblem

The Templars wore a white mantle adorned with a red cross, a distinguishing symbol that became recognized across Christendom. While Scripture does not legislate specific symbolism for orders emerging in later centuries, the red cross, for the Templars, visibly affirmed their self-understanding as "Crusaders for Christ." Although not part of the biblical text, it was nevertheless a reminder of passages such as Ephesians 6:13: **"Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground..."**

## Trials and Dissolution

The Templars' immense wealth and influential connections eventually drew scrutiny and hostility, particularly from King Philip IV of France. In 1307, many Templars were arrested, and under charges that ranged from heresy to financial corruption, they were subjected to harsh interrogations. Critiques of their secret rites fueled rumors and suspicion, though historians note that much evidence appears to have been elicited under torture.

In 1312, Pope Clement V officially dissolved the order through the papal bull *Vox in Excelso*. Templar properties were transferred mainly to the Knights Hospitaller, and some Templars sought to assimilate into other orders or secular life. The Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was executed in 1314, marking a final end to the public face of the Templar fraternity.

## Legacy and Modern Interest

Despite their dissolution, the knights' reputation grew into legend over ensuing centuries. Various later groups claimed or borrowed their name, adopting Templar-like symbols. Myths have circulated about hidden treasures and secret knowledge, contributing to modern fascination with this medieval order. Historians and archaeologists, however, rely on surviving documents—such as trial records and administrative charters—as well as site excavations of Templar fortifications in the Holy Land and Europe to form a more accurate picture.

## Biblical Reflections

While the Templars do not appear in Scripture, their existence raises reflections on Christian responsibility toward pilgrimage and protection, qualities that mirror certain biblical principles. Psalm 82:3 exhorts, "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; uphold the rights of the afflicted and oppressed." In taking up arms to safeguard travelers, the Templar knights believed they were fulfilling a mandate to defend those in peril.

Yet the broader Christian teaching, exemplified by Jesus' own words in Matthew 26:52, "All who draw the sword will die by the sword," underscores that earthly warfare is never the ultimate solution in God's plan. The Templars, therefore, stand as a medieval example of believers wrestling with the tension between spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-17) and physical conflicts of their day.

## Conclusion

The Knights Templar were a distinct medieval phenomenon: devout monastics identified as warriors, entrusted with protecting pilgrims and creating a formidable network across Europe and the Middle East. Their dramatic rise in influence, coupled with a sudden downfall, has fueled centuries of speculation and elaboration. Yet from preserved Templar regulations to archaeological findings in former commanderies, a more grounded historical perspective emerges.

Though not a biblical institution, the Templars' embodiment of idealized Christian knighthood and their role in Christendom's history shed light on the complexity of faith expressed in diverse ways across centuries. Their famed exploits, devotion, and final tragic dissolution all contribute to one of medieval history's most enduring narratives.

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**Ephesians 6:13: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."** – King James Version (KJV)

The verse Ephesians 6:13 emphasizes the importance of being equipped for spiritual warfare. The Apostle Paul encourages us to wear the whole armor of God, which is a metaphor for the spiritual resources we can use to protect ourselves against evil and temptation. Paul uses the image of a soldier getting ready for battle to illustrate that our life as Christians involves a continuous struggle against spiritual adversaries. We are not simply passive observers in this fight; rather, we are active participants who must gear up and be prepared for the challenges we may face.

This call to action serves to remind us that we must recognize our vulnerability. The phrase "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day" suggests that there will be difficult times. There is a need to be strong and to have resilience in the face of trials and tribulations. It's reassuring to know that while we will encounter hardships, we are not alone. God provides us with the equipment we need, if we choose to accept it.

Reference: <https://christianitypath.com/ephesians-6-13/>

## **Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley Newsletters:**

Access previous issues at: <https://hvrageop.org/mercere-we-the-people/>

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PO Box 332, Titusville NJ 08560  
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