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75 cents

Van Huss: Vets pawns in tax battle

Lawmaker wants to remove tax credit from gas tax hike

By NATHAN BAKER
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Some former military members in the state legislature are bristling at what they say is using veterans as pawns to try to pass the first fuel tax increase in the state in 28 years.

Rep. Micah Van Huss, R-Jonesborough, successfully brought a statement to the

'They'll never say it publicly, but they want to make it seem like if you don't vote for the IMPROVE Act, then you don't like veterans.'

— State Rep. Micah Van Huss, R-Jonesborough

15-member Legislative Veterans Caucus Wednesday opposing the addition of a measure aimed at giving disabled veterans property tax relief to a bill seeking to fund the state's backlog of transportation projects by increasing the fuel tax, called the IMPROVE Act.

Van Huss, a Marine Corps veteran, said bills increasing the

amount disabled veteran homeowners can be reimbursed for property taxes were already filed in the House and Senate and were working their ways through the General Assembly. Adding the rider to the governor's transportation funding plan, which some legislators, including Van Huss, oppose, is using veterans to extort

votes for the bill, he said.

"They'll never say it publicly, but they want to make it seem like if you don't vote for the IMPROVE Act, then you don't like veterans," Van Huss said Friday.

The Jonesborough lawmaker said he intends to lead an effort to remove the veterans property tax amendment from the bill in the House, and he plans to vote against the IMPROVE Act, whether or not the amendment is attached to it.

"Our county government just raised property taxes 40 cents, and the city raised theirs 23 cents," he said. "There is no way I could do



Contributed

State Rep. Micah Van Huss is shown during his days as a military sniper.

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Interested in geology? The Natural History Museum is offering the chance to

dig in

By JESSICA FULLER
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Warmer months are bringing a slew of events around to the East Tennessee State University and General Shale Brick Natural History Museum in the next couple of weeks.

The site's Geology Rocks month kicks off Tuesday in honor of Geology Day on April 2. Programming begins Tuesday for museum guests to explore the science of geology through the museum's collection of rock and mineral specimens.

Kids will have the chance to learn about geology through a special junior geologist workshop on April 7 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Junior geologists will be able to make their own quicksand and a sinkhole in a cup while learning the difference between rocks and minerals.

A snack is included in the workshop, and parents may register kids from ages 5-13 through March 29. Registration is \$12 for members and \$15 for nonmembers and can be made by calling 434-4263 ext. 104 or by emailing reservations@handson-



Zach Vance/Johnson City Press

Nixon and Spencer Nowiski create plaster molds of fossils during a recent visit to the Gray fossil site for Darwin Day. The site will be offering lots of activities for children in the upcoming months.

museum.org.

Scientists will be on hand April 25 for another fossil and artifact ID night to identify any fossils that visitors wish to bring in to be identified. An archaeologist, a paleontologist and a geologist will be on site to study samples from 4-6 p.m. While the event is free and open to the public, there will be no admission to exhibits.

Kids can learn what owls eat during an owl pellet dissection lab May 19 from 9:30-11 a.m. Each child will receive an owl pellet and reconstruct the skeleton of the animal inside it. Registration for kids ages 5 through 13 is \$8 for members and

\$10 for nonmembers. Call the museum for more information.

Tapir Days begins next month as the fossil site takes a month to celebrate — which is appropriate as the Gray Fossil Site is the home of the largest collection of tapir fossils in the world. Programming will be announced periodically.

The fossil site will also be hosting several weeks of Paleo camp throughout the summer where junior scientists can dig for fossils, wet-screen micro-fossils and get a behind-the-scenes tour of the fossil site. Half-day and full-day options



Dr. Steven Wallace holds a baby tapir fossil.

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JONESBOROUGH

Lawsuit alleges '16 arrest malicious

Mayor, police officer, citizen, town named as defendants

By BECKY CAMPBELL
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A Jonesborough man's federal lawsuit against the town, a private citizen, Mayor Kelly Wolfe and a town police officer claims he was maliciously arrested with enough force to damage his wrist tendons and require surgery.

Dwayne Cochran, of Jonesborough, filed the lawsuit against the town of Jonesborough, Officer Jonathan Peace and Wolfe in their individual and official capacities and Derrick Summer, the citizen whose call to 911 led to Cochran's arrest.

The document was filed in U.S. District Court in Greenville last week, a year after the incident

▶ See **ARREST**, Page 2A



Wolfe

Milligan's Robinson engineers career on, off basketball court

By DAVE ONGIE
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Ever since she was a small child, Sarah Robinson has enjoyed taking things apart and putting them back together.

So it should come as no surprise that Robinson spent this past winter dismantling opposing defenses while using her leadership skills to help pull together members of the Milligan women's basketball team. Her efforts helped the Buffs advance to their second straight NAIA Division II National Tournament and earned the sophomore second-team All-American honors.

For Robinson, who won a state championship at Elizabethton High School in 2014, accolades have become commonplace. She was the Appalachian Athletic Conference freshman of the year in her first year at Milligan before being named the AAC player of the year and defensive player of the year

Meet your neighbors

this past season.

Still, she wasn't even thinking about being named an All-American when her father, Milligan men's basketball coach Bill Robinson, sent her a congratulatory text message back on March 16.

"I was pretty shocked actually," Robinson said. "My dad texted me and said, 'Congrats,' and I didn't know what he was talking about. I didn't even know that was a possibility, so I was shocked."

Robinson's statistics paint a picture of a hard-working, well-rounded basketball player. She averaged 14.8 points, 9.9

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Contributed

Milligan College All-American basketball player Sarah Robinson, center, has always been fascinated by how things are put together.

WEATHER/2A

High 74
Low 56



WWW



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DEATHS/3A

JOHNSON CITY
Lee Johnson

CHUCKEY
Cecil "David" Callahan Sr.

NASCAR/1B

Kyle Larson got the chance to ring El Camino Bell as the winner of NASCAR's race in his home state of California on Sunday. But it didn't come easy, as Larson had to hold on through four late restarts.



LOCAL/5A



Rapper Tyrique Shahmir is preparing for the release of his first album.

INSIDE

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Front Page Design/Robert Pierce	

Indiana ready to vote on Trump Carrier deal

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS — The deal brokered by President Donald Trump to stem job losses at a Carrier Corp. factory in Indianapolis is unusual for the state of Indiana as it offers \$7 million of incentives to a company still planning to cut about a third of its some 1,600 jobs.

A state economic development board is scheduled to vote Tuesday on endorsing the package nearly four months after Trump celebrated his role in the negotiations with a visit to the plant, which makes furnaces.

Most of the scant details that Indiana officials have released came on a one-page handout distributed by then-Gov. Mike Pence's staff when he and Trump traveled to the Carrier factory on Dec. 1. Trump, who during the presidential campaign had often criticized Carrier's plans to shutter the factory and shift production to Mexico, declared that the company's reversal would be the first of many such decisions with him as president.

Many states offer tax breaks and training grants for companies to retain jobs, but that hasn't been the case in Indiana over the last 12 years, when Republicans have held the governor's office. During that time, the state has typically demanded companies receiving such economic development deals promise to create new jobs.

Carrier announced last February that it would close the Indianapolis factory and cut about 1,400 production jobs in a move expected to save \$65 million annually. The deal with the state saves about 800 of those jobs, but about 550 of them are still being

eliminated. Carrier also promises to keep 250 headquarters and engineering staff positions in Indianapolis that the company had said all along would stay in the state.

Indiana Secretary of Commerce Jim Schellinger said he wishes jobs weren't being eliminated at the factory, but is happy it is staying open.

"This was not a threat; they'd left," he said. Only 11 state incentive deals since 2005 have involved a fund for job retention, making up less than 0.5 percent of the 2,570 agreements during that time, according to Indiana Economic Development Corp. reports. Retention deals are smaller than many job creation packages, such as an \$18 million offer last year to business software company Salesforce for adding up to 800 positions in Indianapolis.

The \$7 million over a decade that Carrier will receive pales in comparison with the \$57 billion in sales reported by parent company United Technologies for last year. Trump had leverage because United Technologies also owns Pratt & Whitney, which has billions in contracts to produce fighter jet engines for the U.S. military.

Schellinger acknowledged that more than state incentives were involved in Carrier's decision. The company previously had rebuffed negotiation attempts by Pence, who is now Trump's vice president.

"Then Donald Trump picks up the phone on Nov. 15 and makes a phone call and reminds the CEO of United Technologies that 10 percent of their revenues come from the federal government, which could all change on Jan. 21," Schellinger told The Associated Press. "Game, set, match."

5-DAY FORECAST FOR JOHNSON CITY

Weather forecast table showing Today (74°), Tonight (56°), Tuesday (72°/51°), Wednesday (72°/53°), Thursday (71°/56°), and Friday (70°/51°).

ALMANAC

Almanac statistics including Temperature, Precipitation, and Snow for the past 24 hours and seasonal averages.

REAL FEEL TEMPERATURE

RealFeel Temperature table showing perceived temperatures for today through Friday.

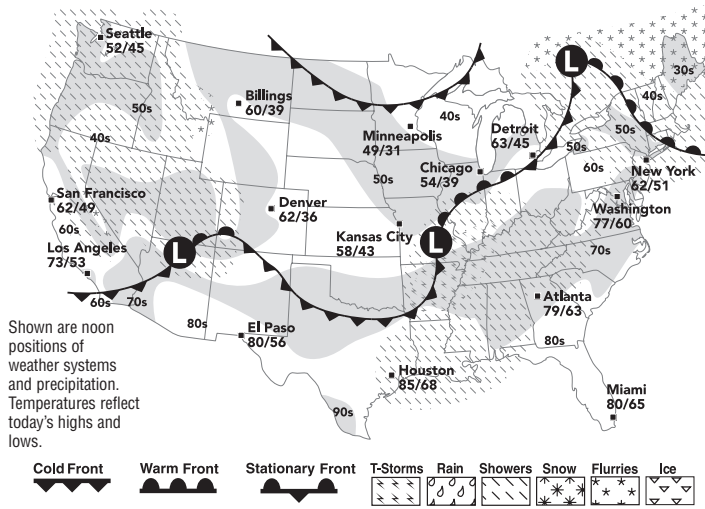
LAKE LEVELS

Lake levels table listing water levels for lakes like Boone, Cherokee, Douglas, Henry, Holston, Norris, and Watauga.

SUN AND MOON

Sun and Moon schedule table showing rise and set times for today and tomorrow.

NATIONAL WEATHER FOR MARCH 27, 2017



KID'S WEATHER

Children's weather forecast graphic featuring a cartoon landscape and the name 'Gideon, Fairmont'.

Floating home case heads back to court

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RIVIERA BEACH, Fla. — Four years ago, Fane Lozman won an improbable longshot victory when the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with him that his floating home was a house, not a vessel subject to seizure by a Florida city.

The justices set a new national legal standard: Not everything that floats is a boat.

It was far from certain that the nation's highest court would even take his case, and the verdict in January 2013 seemed a resounding victory for the little guy in battle with local officials. Now Lozman is asking the justices to enforce their ruling by forcing the city pay him legal fees and reimburse him for the home's value after it was seized and destroyed.

Lozman's 60-by-12-foot floating home had no engines, sails or rudder. It had to be towed to a Riviera Beach marina where Lozman took up residence in 2006 before becoming embroiled in a fight with that Florida city over its plans to turn the marina over to a developer. Lozman said the city's actions were in retaliation for his vocal opposition.

The city sought to evict him and, when that failed, sued under maritime law in federal court to have the floating home seized as a vessel. After a federal judge sided with the city in 2010, it had the home destroyed — launching the

legal battle all the way to the Supreme Court.

Lozman contends in new filings that the city should reimburse him the estimated \$165,000 value of the floating home destroyed, plus \$200,000 in legal fees. The same district judge and appeals court whose rulings were overturned by the Supreme Court justices have essentially told Lozman to take a long walk on a short pier.

To Lozman, the rulings rejecting reimbursement fly in the face of the original Supreme Court decision, forcing him to return for a second shot.

"When the Supreme Court says something, it's not for the lower courts to blow off their mandate," said Lozman, 55, a former Marine Corps aviator and commodity trading entrepreneur. "That's what is happening. The lower courts are punishing me for winning the case."

"I think I've got a wonderful shot for the Supreme Court to say, 'you know what, we're going to make things right.'"

Any case faces long odds to reach the Supreme Court, which hears only a fraction of the thousands of petitions it receives each year. Lozman is representing himself and wrote his own filing with the court, which might increase his odds, some legal experts say.

"The Supreme Court takes very few cases. The court is looking for important cases involving key legal issues," said

Michael Allan Wolf, a University of Florida law professor. But because Lozman has been before the high court before, "it might give him an advantage."

The case has become famous, in part because of the colorful language Justice Stephen Breyer used in the 7-2 majority ruling in 2013.

"Not every floating structure is a 'vessel,'" Breyer wrote. "To state the obvious, a wooden washtub, a plastic dishpan, a swimming platform on pontoons, a large fishing net, a door taken off its hinges, or Pinocchio (when inside the whale) are not 'vessels.'"

The decision meant that federal maritime law could not be applied in disputes involving the estimated 10,000 floating homes nationwide plus hundreds of larger waterborne structures such as gambling casinos docked along rivers. Instead, such structures must be governed by state law that offers greater protection to homeowners and businesses, the Supreme Court ruled.

Riviera Beach officials didn't respond to emails seeking comment. In court papers, they have successfully argued that the city doesn't owe Lozman any money because it was not acting in "bad faith" when the home was seized and destroyed under the law at the time.

"Lozman has failed to prove even a shred of bad faith on the city's part," its attorneys wrote in one filing.

PAWNS

Continued from Page 1A

this to my constituents."

Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris added the amendment to the gas tax bill as passed through the committee process. The House Transportation Committee adopted the amendment with the companion bill last week.

Norris, chairman of the Veterans Oversight Committee, told the Memphis Daily News he was not attempting to use vet-

erans as pawns.

"What we're trying to do is get veterans tax relief. That's why it's in the bill. And it's ironic that they would find the rendering of the tax relief they seek despicable," Norris told the news outlet.

The statement unanimously adopted by the Legislative Veterans Caucus quotes Concerned Veterans for America Executive Director Mark Lucas' condemnation of the amendment, in which he calls it "unconscionable."

"The truth is that this gas tax will hurt families and veterans alike who rely on affordable transportation in the state," Lucas continued. "Veterans deserve property tax relief, but not as part of a glaringly obvious ploy to increase taxes across the board."

The current Senate version of the IMPROVE Act incrementally increases the tax on gas by 6 cents per gallon and the tax on diesel by 10 cents per gallon. Sales tax on groceries will be

immediately decreased to 4 percent if the bill is enacted.

Senators removed a widely opposed plan to tie future gas tax increases to changes in the Consumer Price Index.

The separate bills aimed at providing tax relief to disabled veterans were filed by Reps. Timothy Hill, R-Blountville; John Ragan, R-Oak Ridge; and Joe Pitts, D-Clarksville. Sen. Mark Green, R-Clarksville, filed their companions. None have been through the committee process yet.

ENGINEER

Continued from Page 1A

rebounds, 2.4 assists, 1.5 steals and 1 block per game. But her coach, Rich Aubrey, said that numbers alone can't come close to painting an accurate picture of just how special Robinson is.

"Sarah puts up good stats, but I don't think statistics can tell the story of how important she is to our team," Aubrey said.

When Aubrey speaks of Robinson, he describes a player with great talent who maximizes that gift through a relentless drive for perfection.

Although Robinson, who stands 5-foot-10, is often out-sized by her opponents, she almost always manages to find ways to erase any physical disadvantage she may have on a given night.

"She's going to find a way, and that has definitely shown up in her rebounding and her growing ability to score," Aubrey said.

Robinson's resolve was put to the test late this past season when she sprained both feet and played through the pain to help Milligan secure a spot in the national tournament. When the training staff didn't clear

her to practice, Aubrey had to keep a close eye on Robinson to ensure his hyper-competitive sophomore stayed out of the action during practice sessions as she rested up for the next game.

Robinson was frustrated to be sidelined for the first time in her playing career, but she used the opportunity to gain a greater perspective of the game of basketball.

"Nobody likes sitting out and watching, but I did get a different perspective," Robinson said. "I definitely looked at the game a lot differently the last couple weeks, being able to watch from the sideline and see how I fit in and how my team works together."

That lifelong fascination with how things fit together has led Robinson to study engineering. In fact, she's the first engineering major Aubrey has ever coached.

While Robinson's mind is mechanically inclined, her heart is in the mission field. During a recent mission trip to Belize, Robinson found a way to blend her talents with her passion for mission work.

"This past summer we saw a family digging a well,"

Robinson said. "Both parents worked all day, and then they had to come home and work on digging their well at night. Just to see how they can work for hours and hours and not make much progress at all, we don't have to worry about that here."

"It's just eye-opening to see how much they have to work just to get something as simple as water that we take for granted. So I always wanted to see what I could maybe do to help make things easier for people in other countries."

After another summer in

FOSSILS

Continued from Page 1A

allow a full schedule of activities for kids ages 5 through 12 like science-based art projects, dissecting an owl pellet and tie-dying. Available weeks for Paleo camp are June 12-16, June

Belize, Robinson will be back in the gym looking to help the Buffs make another step forward during her junior season.

Two straight losses in the first round of the national tournament have Robinson more determined than ever to help the Buffs win a game on the national stage next spring.

And if history is any indication, that is bad news for everyone in the AAC. Because when Robinson sets her mind on something and rolls up her sleeves, she usually gets the job done.

Follow Jessica Fuller on Twitter @fullerj91. Like her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/jfullerJCP

TENNESSEE LOTTERY

Tennessee Lottery table showing SUNDAY CASH 3 (3-6-9) and SUNDAY CASH 4 (2-0-6-0).

ARREST

Continued from Page 1A

occurred in 2016. According to the filing, Cochran believes he was targeted for supporting an opposition candidate to Wolfe during his elections to office.

Cochran has asked for \$1 million in compensatory damages and \$1 million in punitive damages against the mayor, Peace and Summer.

According to the lawsuit, the incident in question happened March 17, 2016, on property Cochran owns at 220 Old State Route 34. He was hauling dirt with his own dump truck to that property, but the truck became stuck in the mud as Cochran tried to pull out and away from where he had dumped the dirt.

The dump truck wouldn't budge and the tires were spinning. Cochran called his father to help him, but they couldn't dig it out. According to the lawsuit, "traffic was very light and there were no problems at all regarding traffic moving."

While they were working to free the truck, Peace arrived at the scene to see what was going on. Police were called by a man who rents the property beside the Cochran land, reportedly because the dump truck was blocking both lanes.

Cochran's father went to get his pickup truck to pull the dump truck out of the mud as Peace stood by, but after the truck was freed, Cochran was arrested. According to his lawsuit, Cochran was handcuffed "in a very aggressive manner," and "immediately felt pain due to the handcuffs that were cutting into his wrists."

Cochran was put in the back of Peace's patrol car with the windows rolled up and no air conditioning running. The outside temperature that day, according to the lawsuit, was approximately 78 degrees. Cochran said he was in the back of the patrol car in those conditions for an extended period of time and felt as if he was going to pass out.

Cochran was eventually taken to the Washington

County Detention Center, where according to the suit, a jail officer verbally expressed his relief they hadn't caused the injury to Cochran's wrists allegedly caused by the too-tight handcuffs.

Cochran said in the suit that Wolfe was actively involved in the arrest and "malicious prosecution ... because he directed, controlled and caused the unlawful arrest and malicious prosecution."

After Cochran was release from jail on bond, he said he sought medical treatment for being exposed to heat for an extended period of time as well as for the cuts in his wrists caused by the handcuffs. He said the handcuffs caused permanent nerve damage and he had to undergo carpal tunnel surgery.

And at his trial in the case in General Sessions Court on June 8, 2016, Cochran documented in the filing that Judge Don Arnold dismissed the case outright after hearing Peace testify. Cochran's attorney didn't even cross examine Peace before Arnold made his ruling, according to the lawsuit.

Cochran also said in the filing that much of the incident was captured on audio and/or video recordings and support his claims.

The lawsuit has been served on the defendants, but there has been no answer. A federal judge ordered the parties to meet for a conference before any motion to dismiss can be filed.

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CONTACT US

Contact information table with sections for MAIN SWITCHBOARD (929-3111), CIRCULATION (722-1330), ADVERTISING (929-7355), and BUSINESS OFFICE (722-1323).

CORRECTION

The Johnson City Press strives for accuracy in all its reports. Readers who notice factual errors in the newspaper should call News Editor Sam Watson or Night Editor Robert Pierce at 929-3111.

Marquee Cinemas advertisement listing movies like Beauty and the Beast and The Lego Batman Movie.