



2 FACE MORE THAN 100 CHARGES IN SKIMMING CASE

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DEAN'S 50 LEADS GATE CITY PAST JOHN BATTLE

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BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

SATURDAY, February 9, 2019

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Russia Probe

Acting AG overseeing probe says he's not interfered

BY ERIC TUCKER and MARY CLARE JALONICK

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker said on Friday that he has “not interfered in any way” in the special counsel’s Russia investigation as he faced a contentious and partisan congressional hearing in his waning days on the job.



Whitaker

The hearing before the House Judiciary Committee was the first, and likely only, chance for newly empowered Democrats in the majority to grill an attorney general they perceive as a Donald Trump loyalist and whose appointment they suspect was aimed at suppressing investigations of the Republican president. They confronted Whitaker on his past criticism of special counsel Robert Mueller’s work and his refusal to recuse himself from overseeing it, attacked him over his prior business dealings and sneeringly challenged his credentials as the country’s chief law enforcement officer.

“We’re all trying to figure out: Who are you, where did you come from and how the heck did you become the head of the Department of Justice,” said Rep. Hakeem Jeffries. When Whitaker tried to respond, the New York Democrat interrupted, “Mr. Whitaker, that was a statement, not a question. I assume you know the difference.”

See WHITAKER, Page A12

CANE AND ABLE



PHOTOS BY ANDRE TEAGUE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABOVE: Van Pelt Elementary fifth-grader Aubry Shelton resists the urge to remove her blindfold as she navigates a course with a cane under the directions of Trish Roe during the Camp Compassion event Friday. BELOW: Students paint by holding brushes in their mouths. The fifth grade was selected with the hope that students will increase their compassion for differently abled persons as they transition to middle school.



Virginia

Backers demand Fairfax resign

2nd woman accuses lieutenant governor; Northam defies calls for him to step down

BY ALAN SUDERMAN

The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia’s state government seemed to come unglued Friday as an embattled Gov. Ralph Northam made it clear he won’t resign, and the man in line to succeed him was hit with another sexual assault accusation and barraged with demands that he step down, too.



Fairfax



Northam

Top Democrats, including a number of presidential hopefuls and most of Virginia’s congressional delegation, swiftly and decisively turned against Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, who stands to become the state’s second black governor if Northam quits. “Fairfax can no longer fulfill his duties,” the Democratic caucuses of both the state House and Senate said in a joint statement calling on him to resign.

The twin developments came at the end of an astonishing week that saw all three of Virginia’s top elected officials — all Democrats — embroiled in potentially

See VIRGINIA, Page A2

First day of American Merchant job fair draws solid turnout



ANDRE TEAGUE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

The first day of a two-day job fair brought a steady stream of job seekers to American Merchant on Friday. The company plans a second session on March 1-2, according to the company chairman.

BY DAVID MCGEE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — The first day of a two-day job fair brought a steady stream of job seekers to American Merchant on Friday, as the advanced manufacturer tries to secure its first round of production employees.



Burton

“We’ve gotten a lot of candidates. The response

has been so good that we’re going to have another session; we’re planning it on March 1-2. We want to be fair — we don’t really want to make it first-come, first-served,” said company Chairman Rob-

ert Burton. “We’ll continue the process, have some interviews on the first and second and make some decisions after that.”

The company set up a website for people to register for a time slot for an interview on Monday, and all of this week’s slots were filled by Tuesday. People

See JOB, Page A3



Thank you, Rusty Stewart, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.



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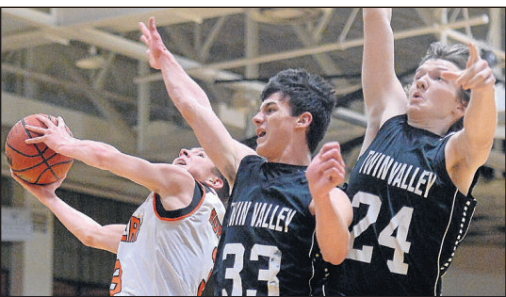
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J.I. BURTON TOPS TWIN VALLEY IN REGION 1D SEMIS

SPORTS » B1



HONAKER, PH PUNCH TICKETS TO STATE

SPORTS » B1

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

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MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN



PHOTOS BY EARL NEIKIRK/SPECIAL TO THE BRISTOL HERALD COURIER



ABOVE: Avoca Elementary School Principal Vonda Beavers cheers as the school was announced this month's winner of the Bristol Tennessee City Schools Be Present! Attendance Challenge. More than 500 students and staff met in the gym for a celebration led by Prize Patrol personalities Dr. Roy G. Biv (King University coach Desmond Pierce) and Dude (King coach Ryan Booher). The school was awarded a check for \$100, a traveling attendance trophy, roses and a large bouquet of balloons. LEFT: Students celebrate with Pierce.

Report: Net loss in BVU sale of OptiNet

Bristol, Va., may receive no money

BY DAVID MCGEE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — A new report shows net proceeds from BVU's sale of its OptiNet division generated a \$2.9 million loss, meaning the city may receive no money from the \$50 million transaction.

On Friday, accountants from Blackburn Childers & Steagall — BVU's contracted audit firm — presented their findings to the BVU Authority board in a five-page report. Mayor and BVU board member Kevin Mumpower requested the report last fall, and BCS was selected in December to review all financial aspects of BVU's sale of its telecommunications division to Sunset Digital of Duffield. The deal required 2 1/2 years to complete and closed last August.

City officials expected — once it was done — to share in some

See **BVU**, Page A11

Bristol Sessions marker back up as criminal case continues

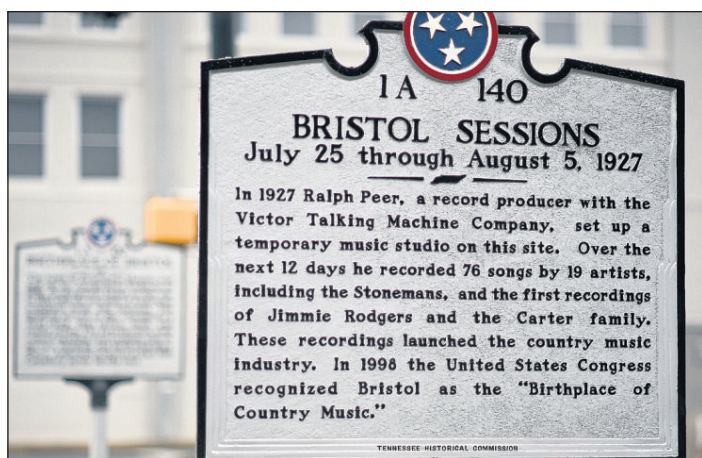
BY ROBERT SORRELL
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — A new historic marker recognizing the Bristol Sessions has been installed along State Street after it was destroyed last month.

Bristol Tennessee Parks and Recreation Director Terry Napier said the city paid \$1,450 for a new marker from the Tennessee Historical Commission. It was installed Wednesday near the intersection of State Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Sullivan County Assistant District Attorney General Josh Rose is prosecuting a theft over \$1,000 case against 21-year-old Lawton Ruiz of Bristol, Virginia. Ruiz is

See **MARKER**, Page A11



ANDRE TEAGUE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

The Bristol Sessions marker is back up along State Street after being installed on Wednesday. The historic marker was destroyed last month.

Trump vows veto as Democrats try to block emergency order

BY ANDREW TAYLOR
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats controlling the House have teed up a vote next week to block President Donald Trump from using a national emergency declaration to fund a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, accelerating a showdown in Congress that could divide Republicans and lead to Trump's first veto.

The Democrats introduced a resolution Friday

to block Trump's declaration, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the House would vote on the measure Tuesday. It is sure to pass, and the GOP-run Senate may adopt it as well. Trump quickly promised a veto.

"Will I veto it? 100 percent," Trump told reporters at the White House.

Any Trump veto would likely be sustained, but the upcoming battle will test

See **BORDER**, Page A11



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BriBucs roll
» B1



MONSTER MASH

Wright's 'Hooked' a truck to watch at BMS tonight

SPORTS » B1

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A patient gets their vision checked at the Remote Area Medical Clinic at the Wise County Fairgrounds.

RAM to step away from Wise clinic

BY TIM DODSON
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

After providing free health care services in Wise County for 20 years, Remote Area Medical announced Friday that it's discontinuing its leadership in organizing a free clinic in Wise next year.

Moving forward, it will focus on areas that lack the health care provided by the kinds of organizations

and nonprofits that have been active in Wise in recent years, RAM said in a news release.

Although RAM will pull out of Wise, a free clinic will continue to be organized by The Health Wagon, a nonprofit that provides mobile health services to medically underserved communities in Southwest Virginia.

See **RAM**, Page A10

More Information

» Volunteers who worked at the Wise clinic are invited to assist with other RAM clinics. More information can be found at ramusa.org. Locally, RAM will hold clinics in Lee County in Virginia on Sept. 21-22 and Gray, Tennessee, on Nov. 1-3.
» Those interested in helping with next year's Move Mountains Medical Mission event can contact the Health Wagon at 276-328-8850.

BOYCE COX FIELD

Bleacher bummed



DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Bristol, Virginia, is awaiting an engineering study regarding damaged seating at Boyce Cox Field that is affecting the Bristol Pirates baseball seating.

City working to resolve stadium seating issue

BY DAVID MCGEE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — Two sections of bleacher seating at Boyce Cox Field will remain closed for the immediate future, pending the results of an engineering study.

On Tuesday, Bristol, Virginia, officials closed the section behind home plate that is behind reserved seating and the section along the first-base side after the failure of one pre-cast concrete lintel — a horizontal structural support.

City Manager Randy Eads said the city hopes to get the study findings soon.

"A couple weeks ago, we had one of the concrete lintels break during the middle of a game so we immediately shut that section down. On Monday, we reviewed it with our

structural engineers," Eads said. "Preliminarily, they advised we needed to shut those first-base seats down and the seats behind home plate. We're expecting to have the full report back within the next week to 10 days."

Engineers looked at all seating, and only those two areas were of concern, Eads said.

The closure affects about 350 total seats, according to Mahlon Luttrell, president and general manager of Bristol Baseball Inc. The park seats about 2,200, including berm areas where fans can bring lawn chairs.

Eads suspects the failure is due to water freezing and expanding the concrete pieces over time.

"Obviously, we are going to fix it. It's a matter of what will be the best solution for those

stands," Eads said. "Ideally, we can open it back up. It just depends on what that final report says we need to do as to whether it can be completed for this season."

The Pirates have 20 remaining home games and their final regular season home game is scheduled Aug. 28.

Luttrell believes the closings have impacted attendance.

"I think it possibly has hurt the attendance a little bit," Luttrell said. "Before this occurred, and earlier in the season, our attendance has been pretty good. I can't swear to it but, coincidentally, it looks that way."

The Pirates played before the smallest home crowd of the season on Thursday, Luttrell said, adding that people have called asking about the availability of seating.

See **SEATING**, Page A4

Blackjewel

Response team to help impacted workers

W.Va.-based coal company filed for bankruptcy July 1

BY TIM DODSON
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

After a number of Southwest Virginia miners found themselves out of work with bounced paychecks, state officials are starting to mobilize resources to help those impacted by coal company Blackjewel LLC's bankruptcy.

Gov. Ralph Northam said he's "deeply concerned" about the impact the company's woes are having on more than 450 Virginians.

"I have directed my administration to provide additional resources and support for displaced employees, and my team continues to closely monitor the situation. We stand ready to assist in any way possible," Northam said in a news release.

The Virginia Employment Commission will waive the standard weeklong waiting period for unemployment benefits for affected employees, the release states. Overtime pay for Virginia Career Works representatives, who can help connect

See **BLACKJEWEL**, Page A5

Rapid Response Events

» **Tuesday:** 9-11 a.m., Norton, Virginia Career Works – Norton Center, 1725 Park Ave., NW
» **Tuesday:** 2-4 p.m., St. Charles, Former St. Charles Water Authority building, 190 Monarch St.
» **Wednesday:** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Richlands, Virginia Career Works/Appalachian One-Stop Workforce Center, 1928 Front St.

Thank you, **G.J. Butcher Jr.**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

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INSIDE

FTC approves roughly \$5B fine for Facebook » B5

'Powerful' tropical storm starts lashing Louisiana

The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Homeowners sandbagged their doors and tourists trying to get out of town jammed the airport Friday as Tropical Storm Barry began rolling in, threatening an epic drenching that could test how well New Orleans has strengthened

its flood protections in the 14 years since Hurricane Katrina.

With the storm expected to blow ashore early Saturday near Morgan City as the first hurricane of the season, authorities rushed to close floodgates and raise the barriers

See **STORM**, Page A5

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