



BY THE NUMBERS » A3

Northwood thrashes  
Holston to set up  
district playoff

SPORTS » B1



# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

FRIDAY, February 14, 2020

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## Bristol Tennessee City Schools

# Director's credentials in question

### Tom Sisk responds to concerns over doctorate from non-accredited institution

BY LEIF GREISS  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Bristol Tennessee's director of schools acquired a doctorate in the study of coins and currency from an online university that is not recognized as an accredited institution by the U.S. Department of Education.

Questions about whether Di-

rector of Schools Tom Sisk has the academic credentials he claims and whether his use of the title "doctor" is appropriate have been raised by Sullivan County Commissioner Mark Hutton, who said he's heard complaints from parents of students and other community members.

Sisk, who was hired last September, is referred to as "Dr. Tom



Sisk



Sisk" on the school system website.

He has signed his name as "Tom Sisk, Ph.D., NCCS" in letters obtained by the Bristol Herald Courier.

His LinkedIn profile states that

he earned a doctoral degree in numismatic studies, but it does not state the name of the institution. However, the resume Sisk submitted to the school division when applying for the job lists no doctoral degree.

A public records request for Sisk's personnel file when he was superintendent for the Limestone County Schools in Alabama reveals that it states he got his doctoral degree in numismatic studies in 2004 from Ashwood University. According to Alberto

Betancourt, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of Education, Ashwood is not accredited through any agency recognized by the department.

Ashwood offers everything from high school diplomas to doctoral degrees based on "life experience." Its website's homepage states: "No Need to Take Admission Exams, No Need To Study, Get Life Experience College Degree for What You Already Know!"

See **QUESTION**, Page A9

### General Assembly

## A look at next steps for casino measure

### Bill resolution likely near end of session

BY DAVID MCGEE  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Differences in House and Senate bills to legalize casinos by referendum may not be resolved until the final days of the current legislative session, local Virginia lawmakers said Thursday.

House Bill 4 and Senate Bill 36 advanced out of each respective chamber Tuesday and will now go through the other chamber's legislative committees. But resolving stark differences in proposed gaming tax rates and other issues may take until March, according to state Del. Terry Kilgore, R-Gate City.

Kilgore, Sen. Todd Pillion, R-Abingdon, and Sen. Ben Chafin, R-Lebanon, participated in a conference call with the news media Thursday. They also discussed legislation to increase

See **CASINO**, Page A7

## VALENTINE'S DAY

# A DAY FOR LOVE

Romantics rely on traditional gifts, and last-minute presents still available



PHOTOS BY DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**ABOVE:** Euclid Avenue Food City Floral Manager Tammy Russell places a vase of roses on a table Thursday morning. **RIGHT:** Candy bouquets and balloons, like these at the Euclid Avenue Food City, are an alternative to flowers.

BY DAVID MCGEE | BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — Tammy Russell isn't cupid, but she's spending this week helping others express their romantic feelings for Valentine's Day.

Russell is the floral manager of the Food City store at 1320 Euclid Ave., and her department is awash in shades of red and pink. From flowers and floral arrangements to heart-shaped balloons, stuffed animals, cards and all manner of sweets, the store is stocked with the traditional necessities for romance.

"Valentine's is one of our biggest days of the year," Russell said. "People take time out to get flowers for their loved ones, treat them to something special they don't normally treat them to. It's fun, and it's busy."

See **LOVE**, Page A2



## AG Barr swipes at Trump for tweets

BY MICHAEL BALSAMO  
AND ZEKE MILLER  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General William Barr took a public swipe at President Donald Trump on Thursday, saying that the president's tweets about Justice Department prosecutors and cases "make it impossible for me to do my job."

Barr made the comment during an interview with ABC News just days after his Justice Department overruled its own prosecutors — who had recommended in a court filing that Trump's longtime ally and confidant Roger Stone be sentenced to 7 to 9 years in prison — and took the extraordinary step of lowering the amount of prison time it would seek. The department didn't offer an amended number.

Barr himself has been under fire for the Justice Department action, and Thursday's comment served as a defense of his own integrity. He is a Trump loyalist who shares the president's views on expansive executive powers.

The remarks, made so quickly after the decision to back away from the sentencing, suggested that Barr was aware the reversal had chipped away at the department's historic reputation for independence from political sway. But he stopped short of acknowledging wrongdoing by anyone.

Barr said that Trump's tweets created perception problems for the department that called

See **BARR**, Page A10

### INSIDE

» Senate moves to limit Trump on military force against Iran. **A10**

Thank you, **William Woods**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

**37/19**  
Weather » A10



INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B8-10 | COMICS B6 | DEATHS A4-5, 7 | OPINION A8 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B7

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### Ashwood University

» Its website states it offers various degrees and diplomas at prices that range from \$299 to \$1,325, based on "life experience," and it advertises "You DO NOT need to study, attend classes or give exams." This comes with a 100% money back guarantee if the applicant is not approved for their degree.

» The website also states "Ashwood University is an accredited online university that offers a wide range of non-fake degrees program to suit the needs of any seeker of non-fake college degrees worldwide."

» The university states it is accredited by the Global Accreditation Board for Distance Education and International Accreditation Association for Online Schools, neither of which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

» It is not listed in the Department of Education's database of accredited post-secondary institutions and programs.

### Education specialist degree

An education specialist degree is a type of post-graduate degree that is more advanced than a master's degree but requires less coursework than a doctorate. It's abbreviated as Ed.S. as opposed to the abbreviations for doctorate of education, Ed.D., or doctorate of philosophy Ph.D.

## Question

From Page A1

Sisk told the Bristol Herald Courier on Thursday that he sought the degree from Ashwood because he was then a coin appraiser. He said he's had no contact with Ashwood since 2004, and he now wonders whether he was "tricked."



### ONLINE

View Sisk's Limestone County Schools personnel file at **Herald Courier.com**

"In many ways, I feel I've been a victim," he said.

The schools director said he didn't include the Ashwood doctorate on his resume because it's not relevant to the position, and he added that he has never represented himself as having a doctorate in education.

His hesitancy to respond to community concerns, he said, was because he did not want to give credence to any claims that he was not qualified as director of schools.

"I have tremendous respect for individuals who go for a doctorate in a regionally accredited program," Sisk said. "I apologize

if they feel I have belittled them." He added that questions about his doctorate have been a tremendous distraction from his work for the school system. He also said if the problem is the way he signs his name, he'll stop doing it.

Sisk's resume on file with Bristol Tennessee City Schools states that he has an education specialist degree, a type of postgraduate degree that is more advanced than a master's degree but requires less coursework than a doctorate, from the University of South Alabama. It also says he has a master's degree in special education from West Virginia University, as well as other degrees and qualifications, but no doctoral degree is mentioned.

The Bristol Herald Courier confirmed with representatives from the University of South Alabama and West Virginia University that Sisk earned the degrees included on his resume.

Hutton, the county commissioner, said he was contacted by a constituent Jan. 30, and he reached out to Nelson Pyle, the chairman of the Bristol Tennessee Board of Education, and Sisk the same day. But he added that he didn't receive any clear answers.

He said Pyle told him Feb. 7 that he saw Sisk's credentials, but he could not remember where he got his doctorate.

Pyle gave the Herald Courier a similar statement.

Hutton said community members have told him they are concerned about integrity and honesty. As a product of the city school system and the parent of a student, he said he shares those concerns.

"I believe that an error has been made in our community; it is an error that impacts our community; it is an error that impacts our teachers; it impacts our parents; most of all, it impacts our students," Hutton said. "Because of that, Bristol as a community is impacted. I believe it is my role to bring attention to this."

Hutton said he has heard from more concerned parents and community members in the past several days, but as of Thursday afternoon had not received any official answers from school officials. He said the Bristol community deserves better.

Wayne Qualls, owner of Tennessee Education and Management Services who scouted Sisk for the Bristol job, said in an email to the Herald Courier he

did not look closely at Sisk's qualifications outside of his success as a school leader in Limestone County since he was hired there in 2012 and elsewhere. Qualls said that Sisk "NEVER represented himself as a 'doctor.'"

The board hired Qualls in June at a cost of up to \$7,000, plus expenses. Based on his recommendation, private one-on-one interviews between Sisk and board members as well as a public interview, the board hired Sisk at an annual salary of \$135,000, with an \$8,000 annual automobile allowance and benefits. Sisk was the only candidate the board publicly interviewed.

Rebecca Craddock, communications coordinator for the school division, said Sisk will address the questions at the Bristol Tennessee Board of Education meeting at 6 p.m. Monday in the Bristol Tennessee Schools Administration Building.

School board member Eric Cuddy said Thursday the board members have heard concerns from the community, they are listening and will address them once they have all the facts.

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# Love Notes For Valentine's Day

*Happy 3rd Wedding Anniversary to my wonderful husband Jeff Arant. Flash and I love you very much!*

*Love, Nikki*

*Happy Valentine's Day to Kay and Joe Cunningham, and Kenny Toth.*

*Love you, Mom*

*Happy Valentine's Day Julie Lynn!*

*Love you, David*

*Ben,*

*My forever soul mate and best friend,*

*I love you!*

*Happy Valentine's Day!*

*Michele*

*To my wonderful husband Brent Alliss who always supports me, encourages me and listens to me better than anyone.*

*You are truly the best thing that has ever happened to me!*

*I love you! Kelly*

*Dear Lee,*

*Thanks for 58 great years, God knew we would need each other.*

*He will never forget or forsake us.*

*Love Always, Dennis*

*Dear Mr. Sorah,*

*I must be the luckiest woman in the world. Every day I wake up with you, my dreams come true!*

*Bet, I love you the most!*

*Love Always and Forever,*

*Mrs. Sorah*





**Man threatens to jump from State Street roof**  
**REGION » A3**



**DAYTONA CRASH**  
**Ryan Newman suffers non-life threatening injuries**  
**SPORTS » B1**

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

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DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Members of the Washington County Sheriff's Office and the Virginia State Police look over the surrounding area of Campground Road in Washington County Virginia where a body was found in the middle of the road on Monday morning.

## Johnson City man charged with murder in shooting death

Man's body found in road Monday

BY DAVID MCGEE and JOE TENNIS

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABINGDON, Va. — A Johnson City man has been charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of a Bristol man whose body was found in the middle of Campground Road near Bristol early Monday.



Aviles

Angelo Aviles, 27, has been charged in the death of Anthony James Pickle, 34, of Emmett Road, whose body was found by a motorist just after 3:30 a.m., Washington County Sheriff Blake Andis announced during a news conference Monday night.

Aviles was captured in an apartment in Bristol, Tennessee at 5:45 p.m. Monday by the Bristol Tennessee Police Department. Aviles previously lived in New Jersey, where he had a violent criminal history, including armed robberies, Andis said.

Pickle died from "multiple gunshot wounds" to the back and chest, according to Andis.

A motive is still being investigated, the sheriff said.

Andis said a caller told 911 operators there was a body in the road, near the intersection with Cowan Road, about a mile north

of the Bristol, Virginia city limits. Deputies found the body and called for the Virginia Department of Transportation to block a segment of the road to preserve the scene.

Pickle's body has been sent to Roanoke for an autopsy.

Aviles has also been charged with use of a firearm in the commission of a felony and possession of a firearm after being a convicted felon.

He was being held in Bristol, Tennessee late Monday and was expected to be extradited back to Virginia.

According to Andis, Pickle had no criminal history.

Pickle's death marks the third homicide in the county so far this year. On Jan. 16, the body of 79-year-old Alberta Susan Warren was found in her vehicle, and a woman was charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death. On Jan. 18, the body of Walter Lampkins, 46, was found at a storage facility fire in Glade Spring, and a woman was charged with abduction and manslaughter in the case.

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## BRISTOL TENN. DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS

# Credentials crisis



ANDRE TEAGUE/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Tom Sisk, the director of Bristol Tennessee City Schools, stands for the Pledge of Allegiance on Monday night before facing questions from the public concerning his academic credentials.

## Probe of Bristol Tenn. school director's credentials underway

BY LEIF GREISS  
 BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — An investigation of concerns raised about the Bristol Tennessee director of schools' academic credentials and whether he was properly vetted before he was hired is being conducted by the school board's attorney, the chairman of the board said Monday.

"Once the board has the attorney's investigative report and recommendation, we will reconvene and address the director's future with [Bristol Tennessee City Schools]," board Chairman Nelson Pyle said.

Questions about whether Director of Schools Tom Sisk has the academic credentials he claims and whether his use of the title "doctor" is appropriate have been raised by Sullivan County Commissioner Mark Hutton.

Hutton and more than 70 community members, students and city school employees attended the meeting, when Sisk was set to address the concerns that surfaced last week.

Sisk, 54, who was hired in September, has signed his name as "Tom Sisk, Ph.D., NCSS," and his LinkedIn states he has a doctorate in numismatics, the study of coins and currency. However, the resume on file with the school system does not state that he has a doctorate.

“Even today, I can get a high school diploma for less than \$300, I can get a Ph.D. for \$1,500, which is less than our early college program — that's what concerns me. Seeing something like this and watching it be called a distraction ...”

— Bridget Matthews, sophomore class president of Tennessee High School and a member of the student senate recently formed by Sisk

The Bristol Herald Courier revealed last week that Sisk's doctorate is from Ashwood University, an online school that is not accredited through any agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Pyle added that the board was advised by its attorney, Lewis Thomason, not to make any further public comments about concerns surrounding Sisk.

Hutton, who is a city school system alumnus and

See **PROBE**, Page A5

## Va. lawmakers reject assault weapon ban

BY ALAN SUDERMAN  
 The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's push to ban the sale of assault weapons failed on Monday after some of his fellow Democrats balked at the proposal.

Senators voted to shelve the bill for the year and ask the state crime commission to study the issue, an outcome that drew cheers from a committee room packed with gun advocates.

Four Democrats — most of them moderates — joined Republicans in Monday's committee vote, rejecting legislation that would have prohibited the sale of certain semiautomatic firearms, including popular AR-15 style rifles, and

banned the possession of magazines that hold more than 12 rounds.

The bill was a top priority for Northam, who has campaigned heavily for a broad package of gun control measures. The governor's spokeswoman, Alena Yarmosky, said he's disappointed with the result but determined to continue to press for the measure.

"We will be back next year," she said. David Majure, a gun rights supporter who attended the committee hearing, said he's glad about Monday's results but not convinced the bill is dead for the year.

"I'm happy about it, but I don't trust them," he said.

Virginia is the current epicenter

of the country's heated debate over guns, as a new Democratic majority seeks to enact strict new limits.

Democrats ran heavily on gun control during last year's legislative elections when they flipped control of the General Assembly for the first time in more than two decades.

But gun owners, especially in rural communities, have pushed back hard. Last month, tens of thousands of gun rights activists from around the country flooded the Capitol and surrounding area in protest, some donning tactical gear and carrying military-style rifles. And more than 100 counties, cities and towns have declared themselves Second Amendment sanctuaries.

Thank you, **Michael Parkulo**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier. **Weather » A8**

### INSIDE



**GM plans to pull out of Australia, New Zealand and Thailand » A6**



INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B6-8 | COMICS B4 | DEATHS A4-5 | OPINION A7 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B5

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# Obituaries

From Page A4

## Wanda Lou McGlothlin

Wanda Lou McGlothlin, age 77, of Atkins, Va., entered into eternal rest on Saturday, February 15, 2020, at the home of her daughter in Marion, Va. Wanda was born on June 8, 1942, in Buchanan County, Va., to the late Robert Howard and Rosella Hagerman Pruitt.

She was retired from the Smyth County Health Department and had lived in Atkins for the last 30 years. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her sister, Thelma Justice; and her brothers, Curtis Pruitt, Elmer Bud Pruitt, and Delmar Pruitt.

Those left to cherish her memory include her daughters, Monica Serpa of Mesa, Ariz., and Crystal Walk and husband, Randy of Marion, Va.; son, Gregory McGlothlin of Bland, Va.; the father of her children, Grady McGlothlin of Richlands, Va.; sister, Joyce Rampley of Meadowview, Va.; brother, Estil Carl "E.C." Pruitt of Tazewell, Va.; companion and best friend, Noah Wallace; special friend, Lisa Davis; grandchildren, Lindsey Brook Blankenship, Corey Dean Royal, and Hunter Gerald Royal; great-grandchildren, Marley Raylin McKnight, Colton Levi Royal, and Lincoln Elisha Royal.

The family would like to extend gratitude to the Staff of Hospice and Palliative Care of Virginia for the care they provided to Wanda during her illness.

Funeral services for Wanda Lou McGlothlin will be conducted on Wednesday, February 19, 2020, at 7 p.m. at the Hurst-Scott Funeral Home in Richlands, Virginia, with the Reverend Charlie McGlothlin, the Reverend Grady McGlothlin, Corey Royal, and the Reverend Greg Carico officiating. Interment will follow at Greenhills Memory Gardens in Claypool Hill, Virginia, on Thursday at 11 a.m. Those wishing to attend are asked to meet at the funeral home by 10:30 a.m. Pallbearers will be Steve Pruitt, Randy Pruitt, Jackie Dye, Randy Keen, John Atkins, Charlie Aten, Bryan Perkins, and Stoney Hale. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. until the time of the funeral on Wednesday evening.

Memorial contributions may be made to Calvary Temple - PO Box 297 - Richlands, VA 24641. Hurst-Scott Funeral Home in Richlands, Virginia is in charge of arrangements and those wishing to express sympathy online may do so at [www.hurstscottfuneralhomes.com](http://www.hurstscottfuneralhomes.com).



## Kimberly Sue Smith

**BROADFORD, Va.**  
Kimberly Sue Smith, age 38, passed away on February 16, 2020, at the Tazewell Community Hospital.

Kimberly was adventurous and loved to travel. She traveled all over the United States, Canada, Eastern Europe and even to Morocco and the Sahara Desert, where she rode a camel. She also swam with the dolphins in Hawaii. She was a graduate of Virginia Tech with a Major in sociology and a Masters degree from Lindsey Wilson College in counseling. She was a registered C.N.A and worked for Virginia Home Health and Hospice. Kimberly was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents, Howard and Dorothy Taylor; paternal grandparents, Tivis and Ruth Hall Smith; her aunt, Joyce Taylor Mitchell; and her three uncles, L.C. Smith, David Smith, and Howard Smith.

She is survived by her mother, Brenda T. Smith and father, Earl C. Smith of Broadford, Va.; three aunts, Evelyn (David) Crabtree, Mildred (Charles) Surber, and Marilyn (Dave) Armstrong; and two uncles, Don (Judy) Smith, and Ed (Girthe) Smith.

She had very many loving friends Laura, Chandra, Donna, Veronica, Brandon, Russell, Amanda, and Ryan to name a few. She is loved and will be missed by her many friends and cousins.

The family would like to thank the Tannersville Fire and Rescue Squad and Tazewell County Rescue Squad for their services.

She loved flowers and they will be accepted, but donations may also be made to Roberts Chapel United Methodist Church, 3877 Bluegrass Trail, Broadford, VA 24316.

Funeral services will be conducted at 7 p.m. on Thursday, February 20, 2020, at the Henderson Funeral Home with Pastor Melvin Penland, Pastor Donnie Bailey, and Pastor Mike Andrews officiating. The family will be receiving friends from 5 until 7 p.m. prior to the service. The graveside service will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, February 21, 2020, at the Mount Rose Cemetery

Online condolences may be made at [drhendersonfuneralhome.com](http://drhendersonfuneralhome.com). The Henderson Funeral Home is honored to be serving the Kimberly Sue Smith family.

# Probe

From Page A1

has children in the system, told the board he believes many in the community have lost faith and confidence in the board, and it's directly linked to the board's failure to thoroughly vet Sisk's credentials prior to his hiring. A consultant hired by the board to help with the search told the Herald Courier last week that he did not look closely at Sisk's qualifications other than his success as a school leader in Alabama and elsewhere.

Hutton also said that some members of the board waved away his concerns about Sisk as unimportant and a distraction when he brought them to their attention.

"It matters a great deal when a person who is asked where they earned their doctorate doesn't answer the question. It matters a lot when someone puts credentials down as a part of their signature," Hutton said.

He asked why the community should trust the board to do due diligence on an investigation when it didn't appear to have done so during the hiring process. He also questioned why Sisk is still referred to as Dr. Sisk on the board's agenda.

Bridget Matthews, the sophomore class president of Tennessee High School and a member of the student senate recently formed by Sisk, said she was appalled by the ethical issues at play. She said she used the Internet Archive to see that even in 2004, when Sisk got his doctorate, Ashwood University's website was selling degrees based on "life experience."

"Even today, I can get a high school diploma for less than \$300, I can get a

Ph.D. for \$1,500, which is less than our early college program — that's what concerns me," Matthews said. "Seeing something like this and watching it be called a distraction, well, I won't be here next week — I'll get my diploma tomorrow, I'll get my Ph.D. tomorrow, I'll get my everything tomorrow, and we'll all be good."

Christopher "C.J." Manahan, a teacher at Vance Middle School, coach and president of the local teachers union, said that it is not the community's responsibility to embrace its leadership; it is the job of leaders to earn the trust and respect of the community. He said Bristol values integrity and truth, and if leaders don't represent themselves properly, why should the community expect they will represent them properly?

Sisk, who was superintendent of Limestone County Schools in Alabama from 2012 through most of 2019, responded that he has not purposely tried to mislead anyone, and he's in Bristol because he believes it's ripe for expansion.

Sisk also said that his work with coins has no bearing on his ability to be director of schools, but his experience and qualifications in education should not be in question. New initiatives under his direction, such as a new early college program, demonstrate his competence, he added.

He said he understands that when people feel they have been purposefully misled, it takes time to earn back their trust — if it can be earned back.

"All I can tell you is I want to roll up my sleeves and work with you to continue to move the district forward," Sisk said.

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## Owen Bieber, 90

### Former UAW President who led union to mid-1990s prosperity

The Associated Press

Owen Bieber, who led the United Auto Workers union from the auto industry's dark days of the early 1980s to mid-1990s prosperity, has died. He was 90.

The low-key Bieber had an easy-going manner that belied his 6-foot-4, 265-pound frame and the results he produced at the bargaining table.

Taking over as its president in 1983, Bieber shepherded the UAW through a recession, the Reagan era, industry downsizing and rapidly expanding global competition.

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Sanders faces attacks in Dems' debate-stage clash

NATION » A6

Carter sets scoring record in Abingdon win

SPORTS » B1



# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

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## 1st US soldier infected with new virus

S. Korean cases jump again; CDC warns of virus's spread in US

BY KIM TONG-HYUNG  
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The number of new virus infections in South Korea jumped again Wednesday, and the U.S. military reported its first case among its soldiers based in the Asian country, with his case and many others connected to a southeastern city with an illness cluster.

South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 134 of the 169 new cases were confirmed in Daegu, where the government has been mobilizing public health tools to contain the virus. Another 19 cases were in neighboring North Gyeongsang province towns.

A U.S. military statement said the 23-year-old soldier was in self-quarantine at his off-base residence. He had been based in Camp Carroll in a town near Daegu and visited both Carroll and nearby Camp Walker in recent days, according to the statement.

South Korean authorities and U.S. military health professionals were tracing his contacts to determine if other people may have been exposed.

About 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea as deterrence against potential aggression from North Korea. United States Forces Korea previously said a widowed dependent had the

See **VIRUS**, Page A9

## SISK CONTROVERSY



DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

The Bristol Tennessee Board of Education's attorney Chris McCarty (right) goes over the buyout agreement reached with Director of Schools Tom Sisk. Sisk will be paid more than \$76,000 under the agreement.

# \$76K+ buyout

Bristol Tennessee schools director resigns after deal reached

BY LEIF GREISS  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — The Bristol Tennessee Board of Education voted to accept the resignation of Tom Sisk as director of schools Tuesday under a "buyout"



Sisk



Tudor

of his contract that will pay Sisk more than \$76,000 in severance.

During the heavily attended meeting, the board also appointed Annette Tudor, the school system's supervisor of secondary curriculum and instruction, as interim director of schools. Tudor received a standing ovation.

The controversy surrounding Sisk started two weeks ago, when concerns surfaced about Sisk's academic credentials and whether his use of the title "doctor" is appropriate. Sisk, 54, who was hired in September, signed his name "Tom Sisk, Ph.D.," although his resume on file with the school system listed no doctoral degree.

His LinkedIn profile states that he has a doctorate in the study of coins and currency but doesn't say from what university. The Bristol



DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Bristol Tennessee Director of Schools Tom Sisk did not attend the meeting on Tuesday. The Board of Education accepted his buyout.

Herald Courier revealed that Sisk has a doctorate from Ashwood University, an online school that's not accredited through any agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

The vote to accept the resignation was 4-0, with Vice Chairman Jim Butcher absent. Sisk did not attend the meeting.

Prior to the votes, the board's attorney, Chris McCarty, of the Knoxville firm Lewis Thomason, talked about the severance agreement he worked out with Sisk's attorney.

McCarty said the board originally asked the firm to conduct an investigation into the concerns about Sisk's doctorate and internal complaints filed against Sisk, but it was put on hold after he was contacted by Sisk's lawyer early last week about negotiating a buyout. Sisk signed the severance agreement on Feb. 19.

McCarty told the board that the resignation

See **SISK**, Page A7

## Mother of missing toddler arrested

Woman charged with filing false report over conflicting statements

BY TIM DODSON, SARAH WADE and ROBERT SORRELL  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BLOUNTVILLE, Tenn. — The mother of a missing Blountville toddler was arrested late Tuesday after investigators said she provided conflicting statements.

Megan "Maggie" Boswell, 18, has been charged with filing a false report, according to the Sullivan County Sheriff's Office.

Last week, the Sheriff's Office received a Tennessee Department of Children's Services referral in reference to 15-month-old Evelyn Mae Boswell, who had not been seen by family members in about two months.

During the investigation, Megan Boswell provided detectives and agents with a number of conflicting statements, the Sheriff's Office said in a news release. Further investigation revealed that some of the information provided was false, the release adds.

Megan Boswell was taken into custody and is being held in the Sullivan County jail on \$25,000

See **MISSING**, Page A7



M. Boswell



E. Boswell

Anyone with information should call 1-800-TBI-FIND

### INSIDE

» Mendota community holds vigil for missing Blountville girl. **A7**

### ONLINE

Listen to audio of the interview with David Jones at [HeraldCourier.com](http://HeraldCourier.com).



## Bloomberg to hold rally Friday at Tri-Cities Airport

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BLOUNTVILLE, Tenn. — Democratic presidential candidate Mike Bloomberg is scheduled to attend a rally Friday at Tri-Cities Airport in Blountville.

Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor, is scheduled to speak during the 6:30 p.m. rally at Tri-City Aviation, 350 Aviation Drive, a campaign of-



Bloomberg

March 3 Super Tuesday Democratic primary.

ficial confirmed Tuesday.

The event will open to the public at 5:45 p.m.

It is to be one of three stops across Tennessee in advance of the

"Tennessee is often ignored by Democratic presidential contenders, so we couldn't be more excited to welcome Mike back for his fourth trip to the state," said Mike Bloomberg 2020 Tennessee State Director Courtney Wheeler in a written statement. "Our field team connects with voters every day, and it's clear that they want a

president who is committed to working with our local leaders to solve our biggest challenges. It is also clear that Mike is the only candidate with a proven track record of uniting people with differing views and delivering results."

Bloomberg is scheduled to appear at Memphis at 9 a.m. and Clarksville at 1:30 p.m.

Thank you, **Bill Hill**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

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Weather » A10



INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B8-10 | COMICS B8 | DEATHS A4-5 | OPINION A8 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B7

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# Missing

From Page A1  
 bail. She had been at the Sheriff's Office most of the day.

The Sheriff's Office said detectives continue to work alongside the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the FBI in an effort to locate Evelyn.

Megan Boswell's grandfather, David Jones, 68, told the Bristol Herald Courier on Tuesday that he thinks she has more information than she's shared about Evelyn's disappearance.

"When they do find out the truth, Megan will be at the bottom of it," Jones said.

And he said he saw Megan Boswell and her former boyfriend give his daughter, Angela Boswell, the child's grandmother, a car as a gift earlier this month. Angela Boswell and her boyfriend, William McCloud, were charged last week with stealing the same vehicle, which was sought in connection to last week's Amber Alert for 15-month-old Evelyn.

"The last time we saw [Evelyn] was about a week before Thanksgiving," Jones said in an interview on his front porch in a mobile home park near Kingsport. Jones lives with his wife, Wanda, 69.

Jones' daughter, Angela Boswell, 42, was charged last week with theft over \$2,500. She and McCloud, 33, were arrested in Wilkes County, North Carolina, on Friday, and they both waived extradition Monday. Boswell was transferred across the state border to the Sullivan County jail Monday night, and she also has a violation of probation warrant out of Kingsport.

Boswell and McCloud were taken into custody after they were found driving a 2007 BMW, which became part of the search into Evelyn's disappearance when authorities announced they wanted to question the vehicle's occupants for information about the toddler's whereabouts. Neither Boswell nor McCloud have been charged in connection with the child's disappearance.

Evelyn has not been seen since December, but she was not officially reported missing to police until last week.

An affidavit filed in Bristol General Sessions Court on Feb. 21 by Detective Robert Clemons of the Sullivan County Sheriff's Office states that a woman named Melissa Wood reported that Angela Boswell stole a 2007 BMW.

Megan Boswell, who is Angela Boswell's daughter and Evelyn's mother, was buying the vehicle from Wood, but no purchase

# Mendota community holds vigil for girl

BY SARAH WADE  
 BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

MENDOTA, Va. — The sun had already descended below the neon-pink horizon Tuesday evening when a handful of people gathered in the basketball court of the Mendota Community Center.

Nobody among them seemed to know Evelyn Boswell, the Blountville toddler who's been missing for more than two months but whose disappearance was just reported a week ago. But they gathered to pray for her safe return.

As the night cold set in and spring peepers thrummed in the surrounding woods, the attendees — including a number of children — gazed in silence at photos of the 15-month-old on a poster. Four candles flickered below it. More candles were passed out and lit until everyone held one.

Jimmy Darnell, a 51-year-old pastor of Stoney Point Independent Church in Hiltons, eventually began to speak.

"Let's pray for the safety of Evelyn back home and all the family. God knows their status, I don't know," he said. "Let's pray that the Lord will help them and bring her safely back home."

Darnell prayed at length for the "little baby" and then his community and country, his voice growing louder and more fervent with each sentence. Other community members then had the chance to add their own thoughts and feelings. Some suggested additional people to pray for, including the investigators and law enforcement officers searching for Evelyn.

"Even if it's very few [who came], it matters that we were here for Evelyn and praying for her," said Joshua Scalf, Darnell's stepson.

Less than a 30 minutes later, now in the dark, the group surrounded the poster of the blond, blue-eyed child. They murmured and whispered as



DALENA ADAMS/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**Amanda Jenkins and Zada Cox, of Hiltons, light candles along a table to begin the Mendota vigil for missing Blountville toddler Evelyn Boswell.**

they blew out all the candles for her.

Amanda Jenkins, a 29-year-old Hiltons resident, brought three of her four children to the vigil.

"We got together because the last spotting [of Evelyn] was in Mendota," Jenkins said as her kids bounded around the basketball court. "We thought that if they last spotted her here, it would be good to bring prayer. If it was one of mine, I'd want someone to be there and pray."

Zada Cox, a Hiltons resident who is 52, said Evelyn's disappearance made her hold her seven grandchildren closer.

"What would I do if one of my grandkids went missing?" she said, her voice more a declaration than a question. "I sure wouldn't wait two months."

Was she hopeful that Evelyn is still alive and well?

"I am," Cox said. "I try to keep the faith and prayers going. It's never too late for hope, I guess," she said, squeezing her hands together as if in prayer, or worry, or both.

agreement had been finalized, and no money had changed hands, according to the affidavit. Megan Boswell was purchasing the vehicle for her mother, the affidavit states, but Wood was unable to make contact with Angela, and the car had not been returned.

Although authorities charged Angela Boswell with theft, Jones said he saw Megan Boswell and her boyfriend at the time, Hunter Wood, give the vehicle in question to Angela Boswell at his home in recent weeks.

"They pulled the car up in the yard, shut it off, it wouldn't start. They asked me to come out and see if I could help them get it started, which I did," Jones said.

Jones said Hunter Wood told Angela Boswell that they would put the title in her name within a few days.

Angela Boswell lived with her parents for about two weeks earlier this month, Jones said. Megan Boswell and Wood visited her mother almost daily at his home, he added.

Megan Boswell told a local TV station Monday that her mother, Angela, had taken Evelyn to a campground in Mendota and

that Angela Boswell threatened her to stay silent. But Jones questioned the validity of the claim that her mother took the child, given that they were frequently in contact at his home.

"They were hanging with my daughter every day for two weeks. Why would you hang with somebody that took your child?" he said, referring to his granddaughter and Wood.

Before her arrest, Megan Boswell had not returned inquiries about the case from the Bristol Herald Courier.

For his part, Hunter Wood clarified Tuesday that he is Boswell's ex-boyfriend but didn't offer specific comments on the case when approached by a reporter Tuesday afternoon.

"I can't talk to anybody," he said.

It was not immediately clear Tuesday whether Hunter Wood is related to Melissa Wood, the woman named as the victim of the reported car theft in the court filing.

Jones cautioned that he could only speak to what he personally witnessed but said he doesn't think his granddaughter was honest about what happened to Evelyn.

Asked about his own contact with Evelyn, Jones said, he and his wife only saw the baby twice since she was born.

His wife kept asking Megan to bring Evelyn over, "and she just never would," he said.

Sullivan County Sheriff's Office Capt. Andy Seabolt confirmed Tuesday that upon receiving a tip that the child was taken to Mendota, the agency "immediately made contact" with the Washington County Sheriff's Office and U.S. Marshals. Both agencies checked every campground in Mendota and did not locate anything, Seabolt said.

"She made the claim [during an interview with local media] that the child was in a camper in Mendota, Virginia," Seabolt said. "Megan stated in her interview that the TBI would not take her seriously, that she had been telling them to check. We also received a tip prior to her interview stating that the child was in a camper at a campground in Mendota."

Seabolt said the claim that authorities would not address the tip is "absurd."

"From the beginning, our main goal has been to locate Evelyn,"

Seabolt said. "Although Megan's story has changed multiple times, we have continued to work with her and try to obtain information from her that will lead to finding Evelyn."

Multiple members of the Boswell family, as well as Angela Boswell's boyfriend, William McCloud, have had run-ins with the law, according to bail bond documents shared with the Bristol Herald Courier.

Angela Boswell has been a repeated client at A-Hood Bonding, a bail bonds company based in Kingsport. Bonding records show that the woman posted bail for two charges of improperly restraining a child (between the ages of 4 and 8) in a car; one charge of leaving a child unattended in a car; four counts of failing to appear in court; one count of driving with a suspended license; and one count of driving a vehicle with an expired registration.

According to Sullivan County court records, Boswell pleaded guilty to the improper safety restraint charges, driving with a suspended license and violating probation.

"You're dealing with a hardened criminal, somebody who has been in the system their whole adult life," said Jon Reed, an A-Hood employee, of Angela Boswell.

Reed said he has served the bonding documents for Boswell several times.

McCloud also has a history of violence, according to documents and interviews with A-Hood staff.

A June 2019 bonding document shows that McCloud posted bail for a charge of aggravated assault. The assault was against his ex-girlfriend, who is the mother of McCloud's two young sons, according to A-Hood employee Derek Bishop.

Bishop also said that McCloud contacted the company in December 2019 for help with posting bail for a different charge of aggravated assault.

The TBI reported Tuesday that it has received more than 500 tips since the Amber Alert for Evelyn was issued last week.

"There have been no credible sightings," the TBI said in a statement. "Agents and detectives continue to pursue leads in the case."

Angela Boswell, who was arraigned by video Tuesday in Bristol General Sessions Court, is currently being held on \$5,000 bond on the theft charge while McCloud remained in jail in North Carolina Tuesday.

Anyone with information about Evelyn's whereabouts is asked to call 1-800-TBI-FIND.

# Sisk

From Page A1

and buyout would save the school system from undergoing a lengthy investigation and drawn out litigation that could take two to three years and easily cost the system a total of \$600,000-\$700,000.

Nelson Pyle, chairman of the board, said he appreciated Sisk's decision to resign because it will allow the school district to move on and get closure in a timely matter.

"One of the reasons why we have a quick settlement is because Tom Sisk had told me 'it's a no-win situation, no matter what happens I've lost any respect or control from the community,' you know, he can't get it back," Pyle said. "I think that was a wise position, I respect that decision."

After the votes, Sullivan County Commissioner Mark Hutton of Bristol, who was the first to publicly raise concerns about Sisk, thanked the board for moving forward quickly. But he added that Pyle and Butcher, as former educators and administrators in BTCS, should have worked harder to research Sisk before hiring him. He added that when he originally contacted Pyle about his concerns, Pyle told him it was just a distraction.

Pyle responded that they hired Sisk on the basis of his employment history as well as his credentials. Sisk's background was checked, and the doctorate was not part of why they hired him, he said. He also said that when Hutton first reached out to him, he said he had the news media involved, and Hutton did not give the board time to

look into his concerns.

After the vote, board member Eric Cuddy said that as a father of daughters in the school system and a product of the school system himself, he would never make a decision he thought might harm BTCS, and he knew his fellow board members wouldn't either.

Sisk was superintendent of Limestone County Schools from 2012-2019. He was scouted and recommended to the board by Wayne Qualls, the owner

of Tennessee Education and Management Services. Based on his recommendation, private one-on-one interviews between Sisk and board members, as well as a public interview, the board hired Sisk at an annual salary of \$135,000.

Sisk was the only candidate who was publicly interviewed, though the members of the board individually interviewed a total of seven candidates privately, McCarty said.

Qualls' services cost the

school system \$7,432.

Board member Derek Linkous said, though the ultimate responsibility for hiring Sisk falls on the board, he was disappointed in Qualls and questioned whether he did the job he was hired to do by verifying Sisk's credentials and standing.

Prior to the meeting and the vote to appoint Tudor interim director of schools, the BTCS website already showed Tudor as interim director of schools. McCarty

and Rebecca Craddock, communications coordinator for BTCS, told the Bristol Herald Courier that she was working on the webpage in advance of the board meeting, and it was not meant to be publicly viewable. She said the board was not involved in the decision to change the webpage, and she did not know for sure that Tudor would be named interim director.

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SPORTS

Northwood boys surprise Eastside, will play Grundy for Region 1D title » B1



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Conference committee to begin work on casino bills

BY DAVID MCGEE BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

A 10-member Virginia General Assembly conference committee, that includes one Southwest Virginia lawmaker, is expected to begin work soon to resolve differences in two casino bills.



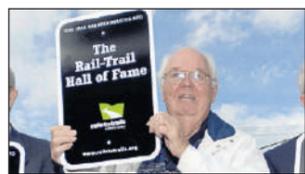
Sen. Todd Pillion, R-Abingdon, is the region's only lawmaker named Wednesday to a conference committee for House Bill 4 and Senate Bill 36. Both reenact legislation approved last year and would permit one casino to operate in each of five cities — Bristol, Danville, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Richmond — if approved by voters in each city. It would also empower the Virginia Lottery Board to oversee casino gaming.

With the exception of the city of Richmond, the bill would direct that each referendum be held during the November 2020 general election.

Pillion is one of five Senate

See CASINO, Page A9

INSIDE



Ex-mayor who helped create trail dies » A3

Thank you, Richard Dolinger, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier. Weather » A10



FORMER SCHOOLS DIRECTOR

'Stay white'

BTCS internal complaints accuse Sisk of racist remarks

The first incident happened December 18th, 2019. I was in a meeting with Tom Sisk, [redacted] and three other BTCS employees in room 213 at Central Office. The meeting was about the First District Consortium that was being proposed to superintendents. We were discussing whether this would be something Bristol was interested in when Mr. Sisk said that we didn't have to participate; he was open to the idea of not participating. He then said, in what seemed to be his way of emphasizing this point, "We don't have to do it. All we have to do is pay taxes, stay white, and die." I was shocked and in a bit of disbelief of what I had just heard. I wasn't sure if everyone else had heard what he said, or if perhaps I had heard him wrong, but after the meeting I asked a couple of the people in there if he really said that. They heard the same thing I heard and were equally surprised to hear that from him. I felt very uncomfortable as this was totally inappropriate.



was making small talk with people as he waited. At some point he engaged [redacted] and me in a discussion about how things were going. We talked about the construction, and I asked whether the middle school was still on schedule. From that conversation, he began to talk about the bids that had gone out to repair the roof of Tennessee High School. He was complaining that all of the bids were over the \$95,000 budgeted amount and that he was not going to accept that. He said he had sat with all of them (contractors who had bid, I assumed) around a table and he said, "I'm not paying more than \$95,000 for this job. I'll go to Montgomery County (Alabama) and hire a pick-up load of Mexicans, bring them back and put them up in a hotel for two weeks before I pay more..." He reiterated that he had already checked on that option and it would be cheaper to do. I was again caught off guard by his comment, made in the middle of the [redacted] School office where parents and students could come in at any time. When he makes comments such as these I am very uncomfortable. I think that they are inappropriate, distasteful, and embarrassing. Thankfully, a few moments later Dr. Scott arrived and he left the office for the building tour.

the information he had gathered and outlined a number of levels on which we could be involved, including full involvement, partial involvement, and no involvement at all. I assume that the following comment was a way to emphasize that he was not pressuring us nor did he feel pressure to join the consortium. He said, "All we have to do is pay taxes, stay white, and die." He continued with a few closing remarks before the end of the meeting.

After this meeting, I talked with [redacted] and confirmed that [redacted] heard the same words. Within two days, I confirmed with more of the people present in this meeting that they heard the same thing. The



ONLINE Read the full documents by going to this story at HeraldCourier.com.

I have had two occasions where I have been in a group setting with Tom Sisk. One instance was when the staff at the administration building welcomed Mr. Sisk to our district in the board room, and the other occasion was a meeting about a proposed First District Consortium that could impact our district. This meeting was held on December 18, 2019 in room 213 at the administration building. While discussing whether our district was interested in joining this effort, Mr. Sisk made the following comment, "All we have to do is pay taxes, stay white, and die." I assumed this was his way of telling us we had a choice of whether to join or not.

BY LEIF GREISS BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — While Tom Sisk was still Bristol Tennessee director of schools, four complaints were filed against him by staff members, three accusing him of making one racist remark and one saying they heard two racist comments.

The Bristol Tennessee Board of Education accepted Sisk's resignation at a called meeting Tuesday in a buyout of his contract that netted him \$76,000 in severance pay. The resignation came after concerns were raised earlier this month about his academic credentials, he holds a doctorate in the study of coins from an online, unaccredited university, and his use of the title "doctor."

The complaints, filed Feb. 13-17 with the district's human resources department, were obtained by the Bristol Herald Courier through an open records request. The complaints,

See SISK, Page A9



BHC FILE PHOTO

The Bristol Tennessee Board of Education accepted Tom Sisk's resignation at a called meeting Tuesday in a buyout of his contract that netted him \$76,000.

Virus anxiety triggers biggest 1-day market drop since 2011

BY STAN CHOE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

Worldwide markets plummeted again Thursday, deepening a weeklong rout triggered by growing anxiety that the coronavirus will wreak havoc on the global economy. The sweeping selloff gave U.S. stocks their worst one-day drop since 2011.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average tumbled nearly 1,200 points.

INSIDE

» World scrambles to get on top of new coronavirus outbreak. A7

The S&P 500 has now plunged 12% from the all-time high it set just a week ago. That puts the index in what market watchers call a "correction," which some

See MARKET, Page A9



AP PHOTO/CRAIG RUTTLE

Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on Thursday.

Anyone with information should call 1-800-TBI-FIND

BY ROBERT SORRELL BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Nearly 700 tips — including a possible sighting earlier this month at a Yadkinville, North Carolina restaurant — have led investigators in multiple states to search for missing Blountville toddler Evelyn Boswell, according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.



E. Boswell

Authorities continue to look for the 15-month-old, who was last seen in Sullivan County in December. By Thursday afternoon, the TBI had received about 690 tips since an Amber Alert was issued Feb. 19.

Yadkinville Police Chief Dawn Pardue said her agency was following up a tip that Wilkes County authorities received about a possible sighting in the past couple of weeks. Pardue confirmed the tip was in regard to Evelyn possibly being seen with her grandmother at a Yadkinville restaurant.

"Surveillance video has been reviewed almost daily at a variety of locations during the last week," said TBI spokeswoman Leslie Earhart.

See TIPS, Page A9

INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B8-10 | COMICS B6 | DEATHS A4-5 | OPINION A8 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B7

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# Casino

From Page A1

conferees and a co-patron of Senate Bill 36. Other Senate conferees include chief bill patron Sen. Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth; Sen. Tommy Norment, R-James City; Sen. Jeremy McPike, D-Dale City; and Sen. Jennifer McClellan, D-Petersburg.

House conferees include chief patron Del. Barry Knight, R-Virginia Beach; Del. Barry Austin, R-Richmond; Del. Betsy Carr, D-Buchanan; Del. Jay Jones, D-Norfolk and Del. Paul Krizen, D-Fairfax.

Danville is the only city eligible for a casino not represented on the committee.

The primary differences between the bills includes the proposed tax rates on casino gaming revenue and the cost of a casino license.

Senate Bill 36 originally matched the House version but, late in the approval process, it was amended to propose taxing casinos at rates of 27% on the first \$150 million in net revenues, 31% on the second \$150 million and 40% on revenues above \$300 million.

House Bill 4 proposes tax rates of 15%, 20% and 28%, with a two-tiered system based on investments in those casinos.

The Senate bill would impose a \$15 million fee for a casino license while the House proposes a \$5 million fee.

Late Tuesday, the Senate voted 40-0 to reject a substitute House bill that would amend the Senate bill to conform to the House bill's language.

The bills would also require the Virginia Racing Commission to authorize an additional 600 historical horse racing terminals each time a local referendum held by an eligible host city is approved, with the total limited to 2,500 new machines statewide.

The session wraps up March 7. [dmcgee@bristolnews.com](mailto:dmcgee@bristolnews.com)  
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# Sisk

From Page A1

made by employees whose names were redacted, referred to remarks they said Sisk made on Dec. 18 and Jan. 16.

The remarks were called "insensitive," "offensive," and one referred to them as "corrosive thinking."

Three complaints state that on Dec. 18, Sisk said: "We don't have to do it. All we have to do is pay taxes, stay white, and die" in reference to whether the school system had to participate in a proposed program that could affect the curriculum.

Another complaint claims that on Jan. 16, Sisk complained about bids coming in for a project to repair the roof of Tennessee High School, which was budgeted for \$95,000. According to the complaint, Sisk said: "I'm not paying more than \$95,000 for this job. I'll go to Montgomery County (Alabama) and hire a pick-up load of Mexicans, bring them back and put them up in a hotel for two weeks before I pay more..."

Gloria Sweet-Love, president of the Tennessee Conference of the NAACP, said Thursday that like the employees who filed complaints against Sisk, she was appalled by the comments attributed to him.

She added that it's her hope people of conscience in the "Bristol - Tri City area and around the nation who are aware of the inner thoughts of Mr. Sisk will make sure that his statements are known to any potential employers."

Nelson Pyle, chairman of the Bristol Tennessee Board of Education, said he did not think he should comment on the complaints due to a non-disparagement clause in the severance agreement with Sisk.

Chris McCarty, the board of education's attorney, said the board originally asked the firm he works for, Lewis Thomason, to conduct an investigation into the concerns about Sisk's doctorate and the internal complaints. The probe was put on hold after he was contacted by Sisk's lawyer early last week about negotiating a buyout. The investigation was not completed,

and Sisk signed the severance agreement Feb. 19.

This is not the first time Sisk has been accused of racism. While he was superintendent of Limestone County Schools in Alabama, Sisk and the county school board were accused of racist hiring and firing practices by the Alabama Conference of the NAACP and members of the Limestone County community.

Benard Simelton, president of the Alabama Conference of the NAACP, said he wasn't surprised by the Bristol complaints because they are in line with the way Sisk treated African American principals in Limestone County.

"I think both statements exemplify what the NAACP thought his character was when he was superintendent of Limestone County," Simelton said.

He added that Bristol school officials were quick to sever ties with Sisk, but he's not sure why Limestone County never did.

Wilbert Woodruff, president of the Limestone County branch of the NAACP, said he was not aware of any racist statements made by Sisk while he was in Limestone County, but he also wasn't surprised by the statements attributed to him.

Woodruff and Simelton pointed to the firing of two black principals in the district in 2012 and 2018 as evidence of bias on the parts of Sisk and the Limestone County board.

Sisk was not immediately available for comment about the Bristol complaints Thursday.

Previously, he told the Bristol Herald Courier the NAACP's accusations of racism in Alabama weren't based in fact. He said that Limestone County Schools had more diverse employees under his direction and as evidence pointed to a commendation the school system received during the last school year from the Alabama Association of School Boards for its efforts to recruit future teachers, particularly teachers of color and male teachers, from the existing student population.

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# Tips

From Page A1

The agency has received tips from multiple states, including in North Carolina.

"We did receive a tip pertaining to a possible sighting from earlier in the month at a restaurant in North Carolina," said Earhart, responding to a question about the Yadkinville tip. "When we receive a tip that involves another state, we ask authorities in the appropriate jurisdiction for assistance in following up on the information. As always, during an Amber Alert, if we determine there is a credible sighting, we will make the public aware."

The Yadkinville tip follows one in nearby Wilkes County, where authorities searched a pond in the Traphill area Wednesday. Nothing was found, according to Wilkes County Sheriff's Office Capt. Logan Kerr.

Last week, the WCSO arrested Angela Boswell, 42, and her boyfriend, William McCloud, 33, on theft charges stemming from the Tennessee Amber Alert. A detective spotted McCloud and Boswell in a BMW that was being sought in the investigation. Both were

charged with theft over \$2,500 in Sullivan County and were extradited from North Carolina to Tennessee, where they are being held at the Sullivan County jail.

Neither McCloud nor Angela Boswell has been charged in the child's disappearance.

McCloud was arraigned in Bristol General Sessions Court on Thursday. If he posts \$10,000 bail, he will be required to wear an ankle monitor, according to the clerk's office. His next court date is set for March 4 in Bristol General Sessions Court.

Evelyn's mother, Megan Boswell, 18, was charged earlier this week with filing a false report. She is currently being held on \$25,000 bail at the Sullivan County jail.

Sullivan County Sheriff Jeff Cassidy said at a news briefing Wednesday that Megan Boswell has provided false information that delayed and impeded law enforcement's investigation.

Anyone with information about the child's whereabouts is asked to call 1-800-TBI-FIND.

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# Market

From Page A1

analysts have said was long overdue in this bull market, the longest in history.

Stocks are now headed for their worst week since October 2008, during the global financial crisis.

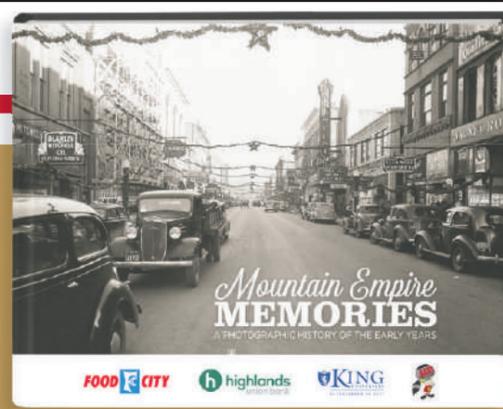
The losses extended a slide that has wiped out the solid gains major indexes posted early this year. Investors came into 2020 feeling confident that the Federal Reserve would keep interest rates at low levels and the U.S.-China trade war posed less of a threat to company profits after the two sides reached a preliminary agreement in

January. Even in the early days of the outbreak, markets took things in stride.

But over the past two weeks, a growing list of major companies issued warnings that profits could suffer as factory shutdowns across China disrupt supply chains and consumers there refrain from shopping. Travel to and from China is severely restricted, and shares of airlines, hotels and cruise operators have been punished in stock markets. As the virus spread beyond China, markets feared the economic issues in China could escalate globally.

One sign of that is the big decline in oil prices, which slumped on expectations that demand will tail off sharply.

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