

# Unemployment benefits go to the dogs

Saugatuck, Mich., attorney Michael Haddock's dog, Ryder, probably gave the mail carrier a day off after receiving an unexpected letter Jan. 27 from the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency. According to WZZM TV, Haddock opened the envelope addressed to Ryder and found a letter saying that Ryder is eligible for \$360 per week in unemployment benefits. "I knew he was clever," Haddock said of Ryder, "but he surprised me this time." The UIA admitted that its computer did send the notice to Ryder, but it was later flagged as suspicious, and the German shepherd won't receive any benefits after all.

• In New Hampshire, the state legislature is considering a bill that would hold owners of poultry responsible for the birds' trespassing. According to the proposal, reported by the Associated Press, "anyone who knowingly, recklessly or negligently allows their domestic fowl to enter someone else's property without permission" can be convicted if the birds damage crops or property. Rep. Michael Moffett, a Loudon Republican, told a committee Jan. 30 that one man told him his neighbor was using chickens as a "form of harassment and provocation."

But Earl Tuson, a local vegetable farmer, opposed the bill, noting, "Everyone loves eating bacon until they move in next to the pig farm."

#### NAMES IN THE NEWS

Police in Logansport, Indiana, finally caught up with the thief who had been targeting churches in the area since Jan. 16: Christian J. Alter, 22, of Kewanee, was charged with breaking into five houses of worship and

## NEWS OF THE WEIRD

stealing cash, according to the Logansport Pharos-Tribune. Alter was apprehended Jan. 23 just moments before the fifth burglary, at Rehoboth Christian Church, was discovered by police.

#### ARMED AND NAKED

In Texas, game wardens came across an arresting sight in Gregg County last November: an unnamed Upshur County man hunting in the nude along a state highway. The Houston Chronicle reported the hunter, who is a well-known nudist and activist in the area, contested his arrest on charges including hunting without a license, but one look in court at the warden's body cam footage undermined his case. The man then dropped his appeals and settled the citations.

#### YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT

Vincente Rodrigues-Ortiz, 22, was arrested on Jan. 24 in Grand Rapids, Mich., for the assault and murder of Andre Hawkins, 17, the day before. But when Rodrigues-Ortiz appeared in court Jan. 25 for arraignment, he questioned the judge about his "other murder case." WWMT TV reported his query led prosecutors to interview and then swiftly charge him with the March 2017 homicide of Laurie Kay Lundeberg, and Rodrigues-Ortiz now awaits arraignment in that case as well.

#### TOILET GHOST

Homeowners in Noosa, Queensland, Australia, were perplexed about why their toilet kept randomly flushing, so on Jan. 28, they looked into the flush mechanism embedded in the

wall behind the toilet. Then they summoned Luke Huntley, a local snake catcher. Huntley found a 13-foot brown tree snake in the niche, according to the Daily Mail, resting on the flush mechanism. "Hopefully, he's going to be able to come straight out," Huntley said on a video of the capture, "but he's a little grumpy."

#### BRIGHT IDEA

A landlord in Cardiff, Wales, was caught in a compromising position when he

offered a special rent deal to an ITV Wales reporter with a hidden camera. The unnamed man posted an ad on Craigslist offering a 650-pound-per-month home with the option of a "reduced deposit/rent arrangement" for "alternative payments." When he met reporter Sian Thomas at a restaurant to discuss the property, he said, "I don't know if you have heard of a sort of 'friends with benefits' sort of arrangement," reported Metro News on Jan. 30.

He went on to say that if a once-a-week sex arrangement could be struck, "then I wouldn't be interested in any rent from you at all."

The ITV Wales report was part of an investigation into "sex for rent" arrangements, which apparently are not uncommon in Wales, judging from other advertisements.

#### AWESOME!

Rookie metal detectors Andy Sampson and Paul Adams were out looking for treasure along the Suffolk/Essex border in England when they came across more than 50 gold coins and pottery. Sampson said Adams started "shouting and jumping around and dancing." As for himself, Sampson immediately started figuring out how he would spend the money,

which the pair thought might amount to 250,000 pounds or more.

Alas, when Sampson showed the coins to his neighbor, he said, "They're not real -- there's something wrong with them." Sure enough, when the treasure hunters made inquiries, they found that the coins and pottery were props for a BBC TV show, "Detectorists." Sampson and Adams told the BBC on Jan. 31 they have "got over" their huge disappointment and will continue to metal detect.

Send your weird news items with subject line WEIRD NEWS to [WeirdNewsTips@amuniversal.com](mailto:WeirdNewsTips@amuniversal.com).



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## Military to get biggest ever budget of \$700B

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — It's the biggest budget the Pentagon has ever seen: \$700 billion. That's far more in defense spending than America's two nearest competitors, China and Russia, and will mean the military can foot the bill for thousands more troops, more training, more ships and a lot else.

And next year it would rise to \$716 billion. Together, the two-year deal provides what Defense Secretary Jim Mattis says is needed to pull the military out of a slump in combat readiness at a time of renewed focus on the stalemated conflict in Afghanistan and the threat of war on the Korean peninsula.

The budget bill that President Donald Trump signed Friday includes huge spending increases for the military: The

Pentagon will get \$94 billion more this budget year than last -- a 15.5 percent jump. It's the biggest year-over-year windfall since the budget soared by 26.6 percent, from \$345 billion in 2002 to \$437 billion the year after, when the nation was fighting in Afghanistan, invading Iraq and expanding national defense after the 9/11 attacks.

The extra money is not targeted at countering a new enemy or a singular threat like al-Qaida extremists or the former Soviet Union. Instead the infusion is being sold as a fix for a broader set of problems, including a deficit of training, a need for more hi-tech missile defenses, and the start of a complete recapitalization of the nuclear weapons arsenal.

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