

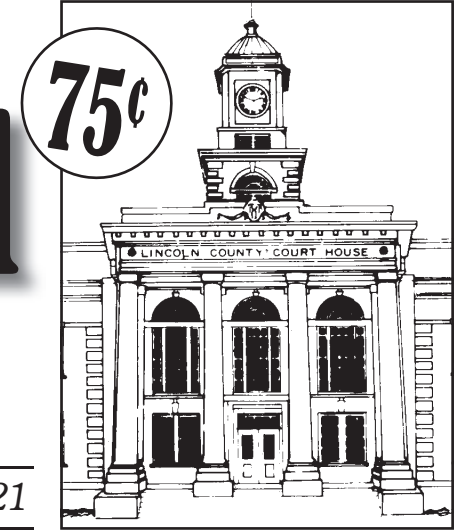
The Lincoln Journal

"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

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Clearing underway for road widening, passing lanes

Work has begun on clearing the approximately 1.875 miles of roadway on State Route 43. The \$3.6 million project to widen and reconstruct passing lanes was awarded to C&H Paving by the Georgia Department of Transportation in December 2020. The project begins at mile post 0.95 and ends at mile post 2.84 which is just past the crossroads of Amity Woodlawn/Greenwood Church Road and State Route 43. The project completion date is set at April 30, 2022, according to the contract.

All Georgians age 16 and older now eligible for COVID vaccine

By BEAU EVANS
Capital News Beat Service

The long winter of COVID-19 looks to be coming to an end in Georgia.

All Georgians age 16 and older became eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine starting last Thursday, according to Georgia Governor Brian Kemp.

The long-awaited expansion came as Georgia was set to receive another boost in the weekly shipment of vaccines, largely due to the single-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine that increased the state's allotment this week to 450,000 doses, the governor said.

"This is our ticket back to normal," Kemp said. "We're getting closer to that point every single day."

Residents can sign up at myvaccinegeorgia.com to schedule a vaccine appointment.

Speaking at a news conference, Kemp said Georgia expects to gain another bump in vaccine doses this week from the federal government — though he was not sure yet how much more the state will receive.

So far, Georgia has distributed roughly 3.2 million vaccine doses to groups that have gradually become eligible since mid-December, including all residents ages 55 and older, health-care workers, nursing home residents and staff, first responders, judges, courtroom staff, and people with physical, mental, or behavioral health conditions.

The vaccine rollout has seen nearly 75 percent of the state's residents ages 65 and older receive at least their first dose, setting Georgia on a path to having its most vulnerable population inoculated in the coming weeks.

Still, state officials continue to see "vaccine hesitancy" in rural areas, particularly parts of Georgia south of the Columbus-Macon-Augusta line.

In a show of confidence, Kemp said he was scheduled to get his first vaccine dose on Friday and has been talking with former University of Georgia football star Champ Bailey to spread awareness in Georgia about the efficacy — and importance — of receiving the vaccine.

"I just want to encourage everybody to get the vaccine," Kemp

said. "We're seeing this across the country, but especially in the South, we're seeing vaccine hesitancy."

"There should not be hesitancy. This is a medical miracle."

Amid hesitancy in rural Georgia, Kemp said Tuesday officials last week sent 70 percent of the state's weekly vaccine doses to sites in metro Atlanta, where demand has been consistently higher.

The governor said many providers in the Atlanta area currently have appointments available for the shots, including a mass site downtown run by the federal government at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

"If you're in the metro where demand continues to be high, we've got great options," Kemp said.

Georgians can pre-register for a vaccine appointment at myvaccinegeorgia.com even if they do not yet qualify under the governor's eligibility criteria. They will be notified once they qualify and scheduled for an appointment.

State officials have opened nine mass vaccination sites in Atlanta, Macon, Albany, Savannah, Columbus, Waycross and Bartow, Washington and Habersham counties

Georgia absentee, early voting changes clear General Assembly, signed into law

By BEAU EVANS
Capitol Beat News Service

Sweeping legislation to overhaul voting by mail, advance voting and state oversight of Georgia elections passed the Georgia General Assembly Thursday, March 25, and was promptly signed by Gov. Brian Kemp after months of intense debate at the state Capitol.

The 95-page bill contains dozens of proposals pitched by Republicans that would require stricter voter ID rules for mail-in ballots, ban people from handing out food and drink to voters waiting in line outside polling places, and halt absentee ballot applications from being accepted within 11 days of an election.

It cleared the state House of Representatives by a 100-75 vote along party lines Thursday before gaining final passage a few hours later in the state Senate, also by a party-line vote. Kemp signed the bill into law about an hour after its passage in the Senate.

The bill, sponsored by state Sen. Max Burns, R-Sylvania, absorbed proposals from several other election-focused measures on its way to passing the state legislature, swelling to nearly 100 pages from an original two-page bill last week in a process that drew concerns over transparency.

Beyond absentee and early voting changes, Burns' bill would also allow state officials to take over county election boards for poor performance, which Democratic leaders and voting-rights advocates argue could give Republicans a back door to influence local election operations in many counties.

The bill also dropped a prior effort by Republican state lawmakers to shrink early voting on Sundays in Georgia. It instead would require two Saturdays of early voting and give counties the option to hold poll hours on two Sundays.

Among the bill's most contentious changes to survive final passage is a requirement that registered Georgia voters provide the number on their driver's license or state ID card to request and cast absentee ballots. If they do not have those ID forms, voters instead would have to send in a copy of their passport, em-

ployee ID card, utility bill or bank statement.

"Our goal is to ensure election integrity and to restore or confirm confidence in the election process," Burns said from the Senate floor shortly before the bill's passage.

Georgia Democratic leaders have long condemned the changes pushed by Republicans, characterizing them as targeted at minority and low-income voters to curb election turnout in communities where Democrats tend to draw strong support.

"Make no mistake: This is democracy in reverse," said Minority Leader Gloria Butler, D-Stone Mountain. "We are witnessing right now a massive and unabashed assault on voting rights unlike anything we've seen since the Jim Crow era."

Election bills that have sparked intense debate in the General Assembly come after former President Donald Trump and his allies sowed doubts over Georgia's election system, calling it fraught with fraud despite the repeated rejection of Trump's claims by state officials and federal courts in recent months.

Speaking from the House floor Thursday, Rep. Barry Fleming, R-Harlem, who has spearheaded the push for election changes in the House, framed the bill as an expansion of voter access and tighter oversight of local election officials as he presented the bill before the vote.

"The bill greatly expands accessibility of voters in Georgia and greatly improves the process of administration of elections, while at the same time providing more accountability to ensure the integrity that the vote is properly preserved," said Fleming, who chairs the House Special Committee on Election Integrity.

Democrats in the General Assembly have devoted much of this year's legislative session to condemning moves by Fleming, Burns, and top Republicans in both chambers to overhaul voting by mail and limit access to the polls, calling their measures attempts at voter suppression reminiscent of the Jim Crow era of racial segregation.

Opposition from Democrats along with some by Republican leaders including Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan and House Speaker David Ralston, R-Blue Ridge, prompted bill drafters to scrap a controversial proposal that would have repealed no-excuse absentee voting.

Still, Democratic lawmakers view the bill overall as harmful to Georgians' voting rights, particularly for minority communities that helped boost mail-in voting to record numbers in the 2020 election cycle amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You are changing the rules, cutting the polling hours and making more requirements to vote," said Rep. Erica Thomas, D-Austell. "That's not right, that's not fair and that's not just. ... Too many people fought, bled, and died for our right

to vote." Republican leaders such as Dugan have bristled at that characterization, dismissing accusations that their bills aim to dampen Black and minority voters from casting ballots in Georgia.

"I think it's demeaning to all those people who came before who actually had to work their tails off to get those repealed," Dugan said earlier this week. "The hyperbole is unfortunate."

Democratic leaders have also sought to paint the Republican-led election bills as an effort to halt momentum following the 2020 elections that saw Democrats carry Georgia in the presidential race and flip both of the state's U.S. Senate seats for the first time in decades.

Rep. Calvin Smyre, D-Columbus, the legislature's longest-serving member, said earlier this week Democrats will continue to oppose the bills even with some concessions such as ditching the repeal on no-excuse absentee voting and more weekend poll hours.

"As state legislators, our aim is to ensure that all voters, particularly voters of color, have full, meaningful and non-burdensome access to the one fundamental right, and that is the preservation of all other rights, and that is the right to vote," Smyre said.



Newspaper seeks spring break and Masters photos

As a part of the fast approaching spring break and Masters Week, observed by the Lincoln County School District April 5-9, The Lincoln Journal, thought it would be fun to document the various places people choose to go and/or the different activities in which they participate during this annual time of rest, relaxation, and for some, recreation.

To accomplish this, the newspaper is asking local residents to send a variety of photos depicting them at their vacation destinations or at home enjoying their spring break.

We are also asking parents attending sporting events whether school related or Little League to send game or practice photos.

Please email photos to journal@nu-z.net and include the names of the people in the picture, left to right, as well as where the photo was taken, what was going on, and a contact number.

We will print as many of the photos as we can in the coming issues of the newspaper.

For more information, call 706-359-3229.

Prescription Drug Take-Back Day to be held at Bell's on April 24

The Lincoln County Community Partnership (LCCP) has teamed up with the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office to host a Prescription Drug Take-Back Day to be held from 9 a.m.-noon, on Saturday, April 24, at Bell's Food Market.

"Anything we can do to make a difference is important. It is better to make a difference than to make a case. We are happy to partner with LCCP to provide a safe disposal site for unused or expired prescription medications," Sheriff Paul Reviere said.

Residents should know that any unused or expired prescription medications are a public safety issue, leading to potential accidental poisoning, misuse, and overdose. Proper disposal of unused drugs saves lives and protects the environment.

This service is free and anonymous, no questions asked. Liquids, needles, or sharps cannot be accepted, only pills or patches will be taken. The drop-off site is located at 110 N. Peachtree Street.

Pastors share messages for 'Holy Week'

The Lincoln Journal has traditionally published the Holy Week service schedule, but with the mandates for social distancing to keep the exposure to COVID-19 on its downward trend, Holy Week services have been canceled.

With that in mind, the newspaper asked Lincoln County Ministerial Association President Keith Etheridge to reach out to local pastors and ask them to submit brief messages to celebrate Holy Week in a different way — in print.

It is The Journal's desire that while some residents cannot celebrate this occasion together, they can, through the most powerful means society has, the written word, find comfort and hope in the submissions that follow:

By Rev. Keith Etheridge
Double Branches
Baptist Church

Millions will gather this Easter morning (some in-person and some online) to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we celebrate our Savior's resurrection, we must remember His crucifixion. It is not possible to have the resurrection without the crucifixion. It distorts the entire gospel if we separate the cross from the resurrection. The road to the empty tomb will forever pass by the old rugged cross. The prophet Isaiah shared why Je-

sus was crucified: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6)

The Apostle Paul shared it this way: "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remains to the present, but some have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:1-6)

Author Nicholas Best wrote a book entitled, "The Greatest Day in History." I was rather surprised that the author believed that day was November 11, 1918, the day that World War I ended. The end



of that war was something to celebrate, but the greatest day in history was the day that Jesus rose from the grave. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ those who believe in Him are free from the penalty and power of sin, and one day we shall be free from the

presence of sin in Heaven. That is something to celebrate!

By Rev. Dr. Randy Kanipe
Lincolnton United Methodist
Decision Point

Jesus said: "Enter through the

(continued on page 10)