



MEMORIES MUSINGS

By Cheri Sims

Cheri lives, writes and gardens in Charleston.

So what does one do on a cold winter's night when all the Christmas decorations are dismantled and packed away, the Hallmark Channel is airing reruns again and most of the rest of the TV channels have boring content? There will be no more baking for a while, it is too cold to garden (although I did rearrange some concrete pieces when I unplugged some of the Christmas lights) and too cold to work in the attic. Late at night time is not a great time to start a house project either. I have also already reorganized two closets which were a mess from the moving process and just were not working for in the convenience sense. This was quite a conundrum last week so I took a page out of Hub-

by's book and turned on the basketball channel, (yes, I am writing about basketball again). Hubby always said he could do anything and watch basketball so I decided to try it. I have discovered that I, too, can work around the house and still hear the announcers call the plays. I have mentioned a couple times that watching Michael Jordan's "Last Dance" series interested me and that I have watched a little of last years' basketball in the bubble but I think that current basketball is a bit dull and boring. Well, let me tell you; I have found a new player to make the game interesting and more like the rough and tumble basketball I was used to when I was a kid. His name is Steven Adams, he is

from New Zealand and last year he played for Oklahoma. He is 6'11 and looks just like the actor Jason Momoa who starred in "Game of Thrones" and "Aquaman". Not only is Mr. Adams easy to look at, he is a great player and from some of the videos I watched, he is well liked by his teammates. As I did a bit of research on this new guy (new to me) I immediately discovered that I would not like to be the player he was guarding. He just plants his feet and the opposing player runs into him and lands on the floor. From my inexperienced mind I thought that was a real hoot. He was traded to the Pelicans this year so now I have a new team with which to be interested. So with watching basketball and doing research on the new guy and his team I shall not be bored for a while. Hubby would be so proud. Back on the house front, the rooms look pretty bare with all the decorations down but now I can restart the renovations seriously. I have curtains to hem, if I can find the sewing machine, there are drapes to steam, my steamer

went on the fritz and had to be taken to the fixit shop. I still have a couple wallpaper areas to complete but luckily the Christmas decorations covered them. The kitchen backsplash tile is being installed and I really like the tile I chose. It blends beautifully with the countertop and tones down the blue of the wall paint. I really should not be bored there is still much to be done and I am glad to have this project with all the home time we are experiencing. My girlfriend called at Christmas and told me to re-plan our Quebec trip for this summer. She was being positive and cheerful and I did not want to burst her bubble but I have a feeling that is a moot point, again, for the coming summer. I have planned that trip so many times that I could do it at a minutes' notice so I won't get too excited for a few months. I am thrilled to finally have birds to feed and for the cats to watch. I planted the feeder post in the summer and my friend attached the feeder to the post when I moved but the birds have taken their own sweet time

finding me. It did not take the squirrels as long to notice the new feeder and I encourage them to partake as well. It is a good way to get rid of leftovers without throwing them away. I put the feeder outside my office window next to the small fenced in garden area I have started and it is fun to look out the window, while I am typing, and have something interesting to watch. I believe in creating garden vistas out each window but I am limited on two sides of this house; the yard is smaller and there is not much to see on the south and west side; hence my herb and veggie container gardening this past summer. The NFL playoffs are in swing so I am offering an easy game day recipe for those of you who will be watching and like to snack along with the game. Hubby was not fond of pizza crust but he liked tortilla chips so I developed a pizza nacho and we made them for many years. This is a basic recipe you can use or change to your liking. I like to make our sauce ahead of time, with all

my dried herbs, and on game day it is easier to make the nachos. Enjoy.
Pizza Nachos
Ingredients
 * 1 bag Tortilla chips
 * 2 c. pizza sauce
 * 3 c. shredded mozzarella
 * 1 Green Bell Pepper, chopped
 * 1 c. mini pepperoni
 * 1/2 c. sliced black olives
 * 1/2 c. freshly grated Parmesan
 * Chopped parsley, for garnish
Directions
 1. Preheat oven to 375°. Line a large baking sheet with foil.
 2. On the prepared baking sheet, add about half of the chips. Drizzle about half the pizza sauce over the chips, then top with half of the mozzarella, half the pepperoni, bell pepper, black olives, and Parmesan. Repeat to make another layer with remaining ingredients.
 3. Bake until the cheese is melted, about 15 minutes.
 4. Garnish with parsley and serve immediately.

More information on guidelines for various cancer screenings

Screenings are vital components of preventive health care. Much like healthy diets and routine exercise can reduce a person's risk for various diseases, early screenings can reduce the likelihood that diseases like cancer will prove fatal. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of life, including preventive care. Data from the medical records vendor Epic revealed that, between March 2020,

when COVID-19 was first declared a pandemic, and early fall 2020 screenings for cancers of the breast, cervix and colon had declined by 86 to 94 percent. Patients' hesitation to schedule screenings during the pandemic is understandable. However, medical professionals continue to urge men and women, particularly those who are vulnerable to certain cancers, to schedule screenings. Doctors' offices and hospitals have adjusted

their protocols during the pandemic in an effort to keep patients safe, so adults should not hesitate to schedule screenings. **The following guidelines can help patients determine if the time is right for them to be screened for various cancers:**
Breast: Hackensack Meridian Health notes that mammograms have reduced breast cancer mortality in the United States by 40 percent since 1990.

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network, Society of Breast Imaging, American Society of Breast Surgeons, and American College of Radiology recommend that women begin receiving annual mammograms at age 40.
Lung: Low-dose computed tomography, often referred to as low-dose CT scans, are noninvasive, simple tests that have helped increase lung cancer survival rates consider-

ably. Hackensack Meridian Health notes that only 15 percent of lung cancers are diagnosed early, so it's imperative that vulnerable adults prioritize screening (nonsmokers and people who have never smoked are typically not referred for screening). Annual screening is recommended for current smokers or anyone who has smoked in the past 15 years, though doctors may recommend less frequent testing depending on the results of

past screenings.
Cervical: Cervical cancer screenings, whether it's a Pap test or an HPV test, can be conducted during women's health screenings. Death rates for cervical cancer have dropped considerably thanks to increased screening, so it's important that women discuss their risk with their physicians. The American College of Ob-

See SCREENINGS page 5

Black Caucus introduces sweeping police legislation, faces opposition

Massive bill ends qualified immunity, collective bargaining for unions and eliminates cash bail

By Raymon Troncoso

Capitol News Illinois
 The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus has introduced a sweeping criminal justice omnibus bill that aims to heavily alter the state of policing in Illinois.

Sen. Elgie Sims, D-Chicago, introduced a 611-page amendment to House Bill 163 Tuesday in the state Senate, a move that would allow the bill to move during the General Assembly's upcoming lame duck session scheduled from Jan. 8 to Jan. 13.

While the bill has been introduced on short notice, it is the result of over 100 hours of hearings held by the Black Caucus over fall and winter months as part of their legislative agenda "to end systemic racism in Illinois." Criminal justice reform and police accountability made up the first of four pillars in that agenda.

The bill has seen intense pushback from Republican lawmakers and groups representing law enforcement. The Illinois



Photo credit: Blueroomstream.com

State Sen. Elgie Sims, D-Chicago, speaks at a police virtual committee hearing last year as part of a series of hearings to promote the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' legislative agenda. Sims introduced a major police reform bill Thursday, a day before lawmakers were set to reconvene for legislative session.

Fraternal Order of Police called it "the worst thing to happen to our profession" and "the end of the law enforcement profession as we know it" in a statement released Tuesday.

In a Wednesday notice, the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police wrote "it

might as well be a crime to be a law enforcement officer in Illinois."

State Rep. David Allen Welter, R-Morris, and state Sen. John Curran, R-Lemont, both released statements opposing HB163, with Welter calling it anti-police.

In response, the Senate Black Caucus distributed their own release Wednesday, saying "From our perspective, our communities know what they need in order to be kept safe. We come from the communities we represent. Our experiences, combined with our understanding of policy, have shaped our legislative approach, and they cannot be dismissed when it comes to determining what our communities need."

The legislation has also received support from criminal justice reform groups such as the Illinois Justice Project and the Building a Safe Illinois Coalition.

HB163 contains several articles that would stand as their own new laws while also amending key components of state law already on the books. While most of the legislation per-

tains to law enforcement, there are sections devoted to altering other aspects of the criminal justice system, such as pre-trial detention, sentencing laws and prison diversion.

Here's a look at what's in the bill:

Use of force

A number of provisions within HB163 alter use of force guidelines for officers, something that is usually a mix of state law, municipal ordinance and departmental procedure.

Many of the changes come in response to the death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police and other high-profile cases that resulted in massive protests across the country over the summer. Many restrictions to use-of-force in the bill reflect testimonies from hearings held in the fall regarding how officers used force in response to those protests.

Article 3 of HB163, referred to in the legislation as the "Statewide Use of Force Standardization Act," establishes guidelines for use of force that all law enforcement agencies in Illinois would be required to follow starting

Jan. 1, 2022.

Law enforcement must identify themselves as peace officers and warn that deadly force will be used before use of force. Officers are not allowed to use force on a fleeing suspect unless that person has just harmed or tried to harm another person, is in possession of a deadly weapon, is considered an active threat to human life or is unable to be apprehended safely at another date.

Officers cannot use deadly force against someone who is considered a threat to themselves and not others, or someone who is committing a property crime, unless the crime is terrorism or in conjunction with another crime where deadly force is authorized.

In general terms, HB163 mandates peace officers "use deadly force only when reasonably necessary in defense of human life." It establishes that the legal authority to use physical force "is a serious responsibility" that should be used by officers "with respect for human rights and dignity and for the sanctity of ever human life."

The bill would also amend the acceptable forms of force, banning chokeholds and any restraints on an individual above their shoulders that can potentially limit their ability to breathe.

Officers may not use force as punishment or retaliation, cannot use non-lethal projectiles to target a person's head, groin or back or fire them indiscriminately into a crowd. Officers are also prevented from using tear gas or pepper spray without first issuing a warning and allowing "sufficient time and space" to follow the order.

HB163 will require officers to render medical aid to an injured person, regardless of whether or not they were hurt by an officer's use of force or other

means. It also requires officers to prevent another officer's illegal use of force in their presence regardless of the chain of command and requires that they report the offending officer, with provisions that make it an offense to retaliate against any officer who files a report.

The bill also requires that any time a person dies in police custody or as a result of an officer's use of force, the associated law enforcement agency must investigate and file a complete report in writing to the Illinois Attorney General within 30 days.

The AG is then required to make these reports publicly available on their website and issue an annual report on information and trends in use-of-force and in-custody deaths.

Qualified immunity

Article 5 of HB163, referred to as the "Police Integrity and Accountability Act," makes police officers individually liable for lawsuits if they violate the rights of a person guaranteed under the Illinois Constitution. The law explicitly states that qualified immunity is not a defense to liability.

Qualified immunity is not a law or statute, but a legal doctrine established by the U.S. Supreme Court which grants government officials immunity from civil suits in the course of their duties. It's most often used in cases of alleged police misconduct or brutality and in some cases shields officers who have been found to have violated an individual's constitutional rights from being sued by that person.

The Police Integrity and Accountability Act would remove that protection under Illinois law for acts that violate rights granted in the Illinois Constitution.

See CAUCUS page 3

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