

WELCH

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ing served in the post since 2013, said he did not “have anything positive to say” about Madigan, calling government institutions “better off” with him out of leadership.

Welch was more laudatory, although he later alluded to potential changes to the committee process and leadership from the previous practices of Madigan’s administration.

“While our state has many problems, our schools are better, more children have access to health care, and our working class families can more easily live the American dream thanks to the strong leadership of Speaker Madigan,” he said.

The new speaker and minority leader will also have to get past their disagreements with how the process played out over the previous six days in the General Assembly – Democrats frequently cut off floor debate in an effort to pass a sweeping Black

Caucus agenda and other major reforms before the clock ran out and new lawmakers were seated.

“Speaker Madigan ran through a number of bills that were not well thought out,” Durkin said. “Despite the statements on the floor that these issues have been around for a long time, every one of these major bills that were passed have a cost tag to them, ... and many of them were dropped on us last night without any negotiation.”

Both suggested they are willing to move forward more collaboratively.

“I’m hopeful that he will see by my actions that today is a new day, a new opportunity to develop a new relationship in this space and we’ll go from there,” Welch said of his relationship with Durkin.

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Photo: Justin L. Fowler of The State Journal-Register

Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch, D-Hillside, takes the Oath of Office to become the House speaker for the 102nd General Assembly for the Illinois House of Representatives on Wednesday at the Bank of Springfield Center.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program back at the LifeSpan Center

For some people, the thought of tax season or completing their 1040 makes their spine tingle. With that said, completing your 1040 online yourself or paying an Accountant are options, but how about a free option?

Your LifeSpan Center’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) is designed to help low - and moderate - income taxpayers complete their annual tax returns at no cost! This is the 42nd year that the Coles County Council on Aging has provided this program.

When you make your appointment you will receive instructions as to how to receive a pre-assembled packet of information. This can be picked up outside the LifeSpan Center Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. or we can email it to you. The documents inside the packet must be completed and signed as appropriate and returned to the LifeSpan facility secure drop-box with all necessary requested documents at least one week prior to your appointment. The packet will

also include detailed instructions on what to expect when you arrive for your appointment.

If you are not feeling well the day of your appointment, please do not come, but call and we will reschedule your appointment.

IRS-certified LifeSpan Center volunteers will provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.

Your LifeSpan Center will begin scheduling appointments Monday, Jan. 18,

2020. The dates VITA Program will run at your LifeSpan Center are Monday, Feb. 1 through Monday, April 15. However, there are no appointments on Friday, April 2.

Please note that this service is designed to help low and moderate - income tax who generally make less than \$57,000 per year, older adults, persons with disabilities, Native Americans, rural taxpayers, and those with limited English proficiency.

With your safety in mind, we are following the

CDC’s guidelines for COVID-19, so the number of appointments will be limited. During your scheduled appointment you will sit six feet away from the VITA professional, a clear plastic shield will be placed on the table, and wearing a face covering is mandatory during your time at the facility.

When meeting with a VITA volunteer for your appointment you must have the following items in order for your return to be processed:

* Photo ID for yourself and spouse

* Social Security Card for you, your spouse, and ALL dependents you will be claiming

* Your spouse! If filing jointly, you and your spouse must be present to sign the required forms

* Bank routing and account numbers if you want direct-deposit of your refund (voided check)

For more information about your LifeSpan’s VITA program, go to <http://lifespanspancenter.org/volunteer-income-tax-asst.html>.

Tips for busy professionals to be more efficient with their personal time

A time crunch is no stranger to many adults. Busy professionals balancing work and their personal lives often wish there was more time in the day. Though it might be impossible to create more minutes in the day, adults can take steps to be more efficient with their time. The more efficient people can be with their time, the more that time should begin to feel like their own.

Audit yourself. It’s hard to be more efficient with

your time if you’re not certain about where you’re being inefficient. Audit how you’re spending time each day, jotting down everything you do during the day and how much time you spend on each individual task. Audits can be made easier by utilizing time tracking apps on a smartphone, some of which are free. The app need not provide a bunch of bells and whistles (such apps are generally designed to help businesses track employees’

production). A simple app that lets you track each activity and the time it takes to perform it is all you need to conduct a successful audit.

Categorize tasks. Tasks can be categorized so those that are absolutely necessary are never given a lower priority than nonessential tasks. In addition, tasks can be categorized according to how much time each one figures to take. Once tasks have been categorized, choose distraction-free times of day

to perform high-priority, time-consuming tasks. The ability to focus on such tasks free from distraction should cut down on the time it takes to complete them, potentially freeing up more time in your day.

Don’t hesitate to delegate. When categorizing tasks, create a category for tasks that can be delegated. Parents may want to delegate meal prep to children who are old enough to hold their own in the kitchen, while

adult partners can divide up household chores so no one person is doing the bulk of the work around the house.

Turn devices off. Devices are distracting, and various surveys and studies have proven that. Research from RescueTime, an iOS- and Android-supported app created to monitor phone use, found that people spend an average of three hours and 15 minutes per day on their phones. Adults who are pressed for time may benefit

by turning their devices off during the work day and/or when trying to tackle tasks at home. In fact, turning a smartphone or other device off when you don’t need it to perform a given task may be the simplest and most effective way to make more efficient use of your time.

Finding a 25th hour in the day may not be possible, but people can try various strategies to make more efficient use of the 24 hours they do have each day.

Sanitize your cell phone and remove the potentially harmful microbes

Researchers at the University of Arizona found that cell phones carry 10 times more bacteria than many toilet seats, and there may be as many as 17,000 bacterial gene copies on the average high-schooler’s phone.

While cell phone safety often focuses on protecting data, smartphone users also should consider keeping their phones clean to remove the potentially harmful microbes that accumulate on phones every day.

Avoid excess moisture when cleaning cell phones, advises the home and lifestyle experts at The Spruce as moisture can damage internal components. Most cell phone screens have an oleophobic coating that repels oils from hands and fingers. Harsh cleansers or abrasive materials on the glass can prematurely remove this coating and/or scratch the surface.

While you clean at your own risk, many tech experts suggest a spray mixture of distilled water and isopropyl alcohol applied to a microfi-



ber cloth to remove surface contaminants. Don’t directly wet the phone. There also are pre-packaged cleansers sold for electronics usage. Invest in an antimicrobial cover to provide an added layer of

protection for the phone.

Other ways to keep a phone clean are to wash your hands before use and to try to keep the phone away from areas that may be vulnerable to germs, such as bathrooms.

Simple tricks to extend the life of your smartphone battery power

At one point or another, all smartphone users have reached for their phones to look up directions or use an app only to find the phone’s battery power is very low or completely wiped out. Such incidences play out each day, frustrating smartphone users, especially on those occasions when they haven’t used their phones enough to seemingly merit a drained battery.

Some smartphone battery issues can only be remedied by replacing the battery or even the phone itself. But many issues can be addressed with a few simple tricks designed to ensure phones aren’t needlessly consuming battery power.

Set up quicker timeouts. Screen timeouts refer to how long a screen stays lit after receiving input. A lit screen is consuming battery power even if the phone’s user isn’t using the phone. Choosing the shortest available screen timeout time, which is 15

seconds on many smartphones, reduces the amount of time the screen is lit and using battery power. Go into your phone’s settings to adjust the screen timeout duration.

Dim the screen brightness. An especially bright smartphone screen also consumes significant battery power. If your phone has it, utilize the auto-brightness feature, which automatically adjusts the brightness of the screen based on the lighting in the room you happen to be in when using your phone. This ensures your screen isn’t needlessly bright in rooms with adequate ambient lighting, saving battery power as a result.

Disable and/or delete apps you don’t use. Chances are strong that right now your smartphone is running apps you aren’t using and aren’t even aware are on your phone. Access the device maintenance menu on your phone to see which apps

are currently running and consuming battery power, and turn off any you aren’t using, even deleting those you never use. In addition, access the settings menu on your phone and make sure that background apps aren’t automatically running each time you turn the phone on.

Turn off wireless services. Wireless services, including Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and GPS, consume a lot of battery power, even when you aren’t using them. That’s because, unless they’re turned off, they’re constantly looking to connect. By turning them off when you aren’t using them, you can extend your smartphone’s battery power by a significant margin each day.

No one wants to deal with a drained smartphone battery. Thankfully, a few simple steps can reduce the likelihood that smartphone batteries needlessly consume power throughout the day.



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