

# HILLBROOK HILITES



Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Civic Association (HTOCA) Newsletter

March 2024

## CHILDREN'S CARNIVAL, SATURDAY, APRIL 20 KICKS OFF THE 2024 EVENTS SEASON

Hello neighbors!

We're so excited to host our first **Children's Carnival** on **April 20<sup>th</sup>** at the Montessori School of Northern Virginia–Hillbrook Campus, which is located right here in our neighborhood on Pacific Lane.

This kid-focused, outdoor event will have:

**Carnival food and games, face painting, balloon twisting, treat bags, our headline performer—The Great Zucchini—and more!**

**When:** 4/20/24 (11 a.m.–2 p.m.)

**Where:** 6820 Pacific Lane (playground of MSNV–Hillbrook Campus)

**RSVP:** [HERE](#) or with the QR code below.

**Please RSVP right away, but no later than April 13!** If you have any questions or if you have a teenager interested in being a paid volunteer, please contact [hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com](mailto:hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com).

This event would not have been possible without the generosity of our Gold Sponsors—Earle Whitmore, Gilligan Contractors, NOVA Home Renovations, and Patient First—and our Bronze Sponsors—Deba Daycare, Louise Del Maestro, Denise Vu, and DemiGoddessCreates.

Hope to see you all there.  
—HTOCA Board



The Great Zucchini

### Also In This Issue...

- 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Charity Drive for AHS Food Pantry
  - Mulch Madness!
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Earth Day Cleanup
  - Back to the Garden
  - A Sidewalk on Hillbrook?
  - Fairfax County News
- ... and More!



## SPRING CHARITY DRIVE

**For the Annandale High School Food Pantry—March 24–April 6**

This spring marks Hillbrook-Tall Oaks' fourth annual charity event benefiting the Annandale High School (AHS) Food Pantry. Last year our neighborhood donated nearly 800 items to the Food Pantry, and we would love to do as well again this year.

It's been a tough year for many families in the area. Eliminating food insecurity is the first goal of the food pantry, but any basic necessities that we can contribute—cleaning supplies, household goods, and many other items—will help families stretch their tight budgets.

### Top 10 Needs

Dish/dishwasher detergent  
Disinfectant wipes  
Hand soap  
Laundry detergent  
Multipurpose spray  
Paper towels  
Sponges  
Tissues  
Toilet paper  
Non-perishable food

### Drop-off Locations

Families around the neighborhood have volunteered to be drop-off locations for donations, so there's probably one near you.  
6814 Cherry Lane  
4910 Dodson Drive  
4905 Kingston Drive  
6832 Pacific Lane  
6821 Winter Lane

If you would like more information about the Food Pantry or would like to sign up to assist during distribution days, check them out at: <https://annandalehsptsa.membershiptoolkit.com/ahspantry>

## MULCH MADNESS!

**It's time for the annual Annandale High School PTSA Mulch Madness Sale.**

Mulch Madness is the Parent Teacher Student Association's largest fundraiser each year and provides critical funds to support the PTSA's All-Night Graduation Celebration and college scholarships.

Mulch orders will be accepted until March 27 and mulch orders can be picked up at AHS on Saturday, April 6 from 8 a.m.–12 noon, or you can have it delivered. Each mulch bag covers 3 cubic feet and weighs about 50 lbs. For self pick-up, each bag is \$5.50. For delivery, each bag is \$6.50 (10 bag minimum and within a five-mile radius of AHS).

To purchase, visit <https://annandalehsptsa.membershiptoolkit.com/packet/77777152>

The All-Night Graduation Celebration provides an alcohol and drug-free, parent-chaperoned celebration that is safe and fun for graduating seniors.

For additional information, please email [ptsaprograms@gmail.com](mailto:ptsaprograms@gmail.com).

For volunteer opportunities, go to:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0849A8A62CA0F49-48274967-ahsmulch#/>



**MULCH  
MADNESS**  
Benefits All Night Grad Celebration

## BACK TO THE GARDEN!

The Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Garden Club meets regularly on the second Wednesday evening of every month to discuss successes and challenges, plans and ideas, trips and projects. The next meeting is almost here: Wednesday, March 13.

Interested? Contact [Betsy Martin](mailto:betsybmartin@gmail.com) at [betsybmartin@gmail.com](mailto:betsybmartin@gmail.com) for more details.

## EARTH DAY NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP

Saturday, April 27—10 a.m.–12 p.m.

**4901 Kingston Drive (the corner of Kingston Drive and Silver Lane)**

Join us for our third annual neighborhood litter clean-up! Volunteers will meet Joanna Edie in the driveway to get supplies and an assigned section of the neighborhood. We will have garbage bags, gloves, vests, and grabbers for your use, but if you are able to bring your own supplies, please do. Come anytime during the two-hour window or try to pick up litter on your own schedule. Every bit helps!

## GREATER DC DIAPER BANK

**Did you know you can donate to a good cause right in our own neighborhood?**

Danielle Brosious's house at 6816 Colburn Drive is an official drop-off location for the Greater DC Diaper Bank. The Diaper Bank is a local organization that helps get basic baby and personal hygiene products into the hands of struggling families throughout our region. We accept open packages of diapers, and so much more! See the full list of accepted items at: [greaterdcdiaperbank.org/the-baby-pantry](http://greaterdcdiaperbank.org/the-baby-pantry)

Drop your donations on Danielle's porch and she will take care of the rest. Tax receipts are available upon request. Email [daniellebrosious@gmail.com](mailto:daniellebrosious@gmail.com) with questions.



*Photo courtesy of Danielle Brosious*

Questions?

Need to Pay Your  
Annual \$25 Dues?

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## KNOW THY NEIGHBORS: MEET JOE AND MICHELLE KENNEDY

Joe Kennedy is a new HTOCA board member and a lifelong resident.



Michelle and Joe Kennedy

**Who is in your household?** Joe, Michelle, Joe Jr., Kieran (both in college). My oldest, Mairead, is married living in Fredericksburg, Celia and Fiona are out on their own but come home frequently.

**How long have you lived in the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks neighborhood?** My parents moved into the current house in June 1962 shortly after I was born. My wife and I bought the home from them in March 2001

**Where are you originally from?** Here...

**Any interesting memories from living here?** I have two sets of cousins living in the neighborhood, the DiGiulians on Kingston, and the Burkes on Dodson. All related on my mother's side of the family.

**What changes have you seen since you've moved here?** The new houses on Winter Lane used to be an Apple Orchard. That was fun to have nearby as a child.

**What has (mostly) stayed the same since you moved here?** Just about everything else.

**What's your favorite part of living in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks?** Its home. I was one of five raised in this house and my wife and I were able to raise five children here as well.

**What advice do you have for your fellow residents?** Enjoy it. Most people don't realize that we have such a great neighborhood here. How many areas are inside the beltway with this much land?

## GET TO KNOW YOUR NEW SUPERVISOR ANDRES JIMENEZ

Andres Jimenez was sworn in as the new Mason District Supervisor on December 13, 2023, at the Fairfax County Government Center, and took office on January 1, 2024. He replaced long-time supervisor Penny Gross, who retired after 27 years on the Board of Supervisors.

Jimenez held a well-attended open house for district residents at the Mason District Government Center on February 2, 2024. At the event, he said he planned to embrace the diversity of Mason District and highlight the area as "the cultural hub of Fairfax County." You can learn more about Jimenez's vision for the district in a podcast here: [https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/discussing-vision-mason-district-supervisor-andres-jimenez?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/discussing-vision-mason-district-supervisor-andres-jimenez?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

For more information, you can also subscribe to Mason District's regular newsletter, *Mason Matters* at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mason/home>. Look for the box with the heading Email Updates.

## A SIDEWALK ON HILLBROOK?

Hillbrook Drive is a dangerous stretch of roadway. Cars, trucks, school buses, and pedestrians of all ages—some with baby strollers—navigate a steep, narrow, winding thoroughfare with no sidewalks. I believe the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks community should enhance the safety and connectivity of its neighborhood by proposing to Fairfax County the construction of a new sidewalk along Hillbrook Drive. This might be the right time: newly elected Mason District Supervisor Andres Jimenez has declared pedestrian safety one of his highest priorities.

**A Focus on Safety for All Ages:** The uneven pavement and winding, hilly route of Hillbrook Drive poses a risk to the most vulnerable among us, particularly senior citizens and children. The lack of a proper sidewalk has made it difficult for seniors to navigate the area without fear of falls. Every school day, children face the same rough terrain and an increasing number of cars and buses as they get closer to Poe Middle School. And a trip to George Mason Regional Library—for students and all other residents—is far riskier than it should be. This project seeks to eliminate these hazards by providing a stable, flat, walking path that ensures the well-being of our community members of all ages.

**Improving Nighttime Safety:** The proposed sidewalk will also feature streetlights and possibly other enhanced lighting. By illuminating the path, we can create a safer environment for evening walkers, ensuring that they can see and be seen, and reducing the risk of accidents.

**Community Connectivity and Participation:** The sidewalk project is also a step towards knitting our community closer together. Easier and safer access across the neighborhood will encourage residents to visit each other, participate in community events, and enjoy the outdoors more frequently, fostering a sense of belonging and communal support.

**Welcoming All Ideas:** To move this project forward, I have contacted the Fairfax County Department of Transportation at 703-877-5600 and requested that they visit the area for their opinion of the project. The more they hear from neighbors the better. I welcome all suggestions to help find the most feasible and effective solutions to make sure that the project not only meets the community's needs but also reflects its values and priorities.

In conclusion, the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks sidewalk project can become a community-driven effort to enhance the safety, connectivity, and well-being of all residents. By focusing on the needs of our senior citizens and young students, and welcoming diverse budgeting ideas, we can work together to create a safer, more inclusive community for everyone.

To make your voice heard call the Fairfax department of transportation DOT (Ervin) at 703-877-5600.

Or email Mohamed [Mohamed@hmemsa.net](mailto:Mohamed@hmemsa.net) (house adjacent to Poe Middle School)

Or email HTOCA at [hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com](mailto:hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com)

—Mohamed Belkhat

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## GRASS, BRANCHES, TWIGS, LEAVES— IT'S SPRING AGAIN

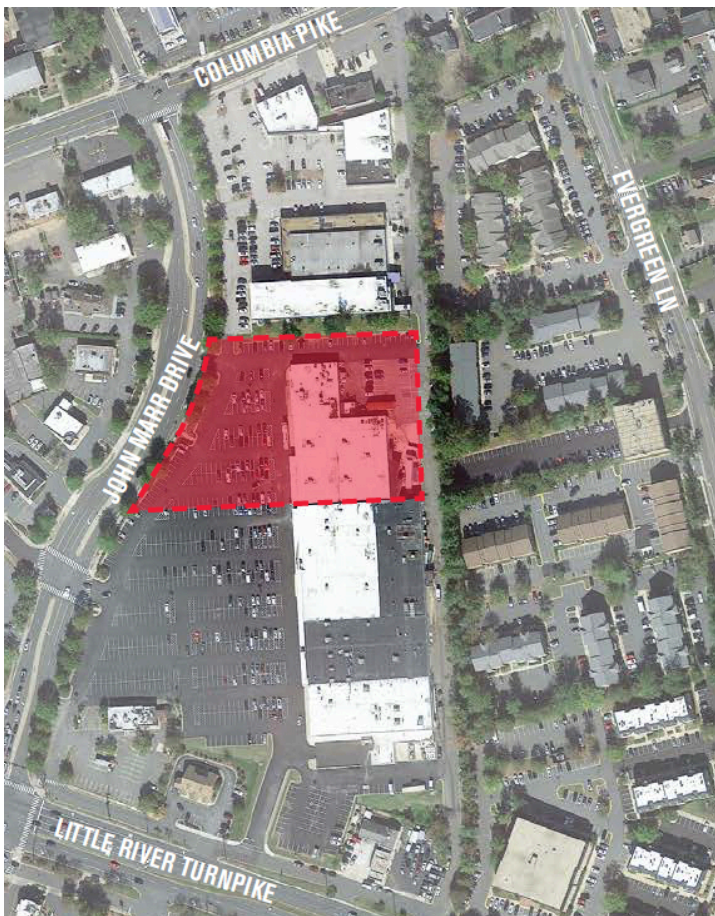
Beginning March 1, Fairfax County resumed picking up yard waste at the curb. The county accepts grass clippings, leaves, and tree and shrub trimmings in compostable paper bags or rigid containers—up to 10 per week. The county asks that you have the bags and containers curbside by 6 a.m. on your regular trash collection day.

In the weekly pickups, the county does not accept soil, mulch, whole trees, and large branches or limbs. If you have big branches and a larger pile of brush, you can schedule a special brush pickup—every resident is allowed five per year. But don't bag the brush. Make a pile no larger than about 6 feet wide by 3 feet deep by 3 feet high. The truck uses a large claw on a long mechanical arm to pick up the brush, and it will puncture bags or containers. You can learn a lot more about the rules here:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/county-collection-customers>

It is also worth remembering that the county's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services plans to end vacuum leaf pickup after the 2024–25 season. The issue is not decided yet, and we will keep you posted on developments and public hearings.

## UPDATE ON THE EASTGATE APARTMENT PROJECT



Planning for the construction of the 272-unit mixed use apartment complex at the north end of the Eastgate shopping center (former K-Mart shopping center) is proceeding. The project developer, Insight Property Group, based in Raleigh N.C., had not yet submitted the site plan for construction as of February 23.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the project in October 2023. In addition to building 272 apartments, the project would have retail operations on the first floor. The project will be sited on land now occupied by the following businesses at the north end of the shopping center: *Thrift Store*, *The Block*, *Pelicano Chicken*, and *Kimin*. These buildings will be demolished *The Block* may relocate to the new retail space once it is constructed.

Once the plan is submitted, Fairfax County planning staff has 60 days for review to determine whether the project conforms to development conditions set by county. Construction can proceed once necessary building permits have been obtained.

Proposed location of the Eastgate Apartment Project

## A DATA CENTER FOR EDSALL ROAD?

If you are wondering where the Smoot Lumber Company of Alexandria has relocated, it has not. Smoot's owners, TW Perry, decided to close the business—apparently because its landlord, the Starwood Capital Group, wants to use the industrial site for a large data center. The operations of Smoot, renowned for its inventory of building materials, are being folded into suppliers operating as *Builders FirstSource* and *TW Perry*.

The plan to build a data center on the 34-acre "Plaza 500" industrial site on Edsall is being met with protests from residential neighbors. The property is located on the eastern edge of Fairfax County adjacent to the Bren Pointe community. The data center is surrounded residential properties, whose owners are concerned about nonstop noise associated with that data center's operation—caused by 24-7 cooling fans and intermittent backup diesel power generators. This would be the only large-scale data center located inside the beltway in Virginia.



Smoot Lumber on Edsall Road, now closed.

The 461,444-square-foot, 70-foot-tall industrial data center would sit within 260 feet of residential properties. A large electrical substation would be located 100 feet away. City of Alexandria officials reportedly are not happy about the data center project, wondering about the project's impact on nearby residential properties located within the city's boundaries. Other observers have noted that there may be a better use for the property. The 34-acre site may be the only piece of land left in eastern Fairfax County that would be suitable for constructing a new high school.

Will the Board of Supervisors intervene? It was not clear as this newsletter went to press. The development plan was submitted to Fairfax County on February 7. It appears that the property owner can proceed based on the site's current industrial zoning. It seems that Fairfax County staff need only approve the site plan—and can do so without the consent of the Board of Supervisors. Should the Board of Supervisors decide it wants to change the site's zoning to prohibit the establishment of a data center, it would have to act by April 7.

For more information, see: [Save Bren Mar \(google.com\) https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/virginia/alexandria-data-centers-neighbors-push-to-change-law/65-56616f41-0eb6-4d39-9630-2c028bfdd122%5C](https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/virginia/alexandria-data-centers-neighbors-push-to-change-law/65-56616f41-0eb6-4d39-9630-2c028bfdd122%5C)

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## TAX HIKES AHEAD?

It appears that many homeowners across Fairfax County will face higher property tax bills. For fiscal year 2025, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has set a maximum tax rate of \$1.135 per \$100 of assessed value—a four-cent increase above the FY2024 tax rate. This could result in an increase of \$524 for the average household.

Property tax bills have been rising significantly for many county homeowners in recent years due to higher residential assessments, according to Fairfax County budget documents. Average residential assessments rose 4.25% in 2022, 9.57% in 2023, 6.97% in 2024, and are projected climb 2.07% in 2025. Hearings on the FY 2025 budget will be held in March and April—and then the Board of Supervisors will make a final decision on the tax rate.

For more information on Fairfax County property tax trends, see:

- [FY 2025 Advertised Budget Presentation \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)
- [FY 2025 Joint Fiscal Forecast \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)
- [Budget Process Timeline | Management and Budget \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)
- [fcta.org](#)

## INVASIVE VINES THREATEN HILLBROOK-TALL OAKS TREES

Spring is almost upon us, and it's time to attack the creeping English ivy climbing up your trees. Also, cut off innocent looking vines—their weight can bend or even pull down trees. This threat to trees is a growing problem across Fairfax County in residential areas as well as county parks and other forested properties.

On February 22, the Mason District Council, an organization of civic and homeowner associations, heard a presentation by the newly formed Fairfax Invasive Removal Alliance (FIRA) on the expanding threat posed by invasive plants. Non-native plants may look attractive, but they also can be vectors for deadly pathogens, such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses. Already, Hillbrook-Tall Oaks is seeing major tree loss in the past three years from invasive disease and insects.



Wendy Cohen of Sleepy Hollow Manor, who leads the group, says FIRA is inviting civic, condo, and homeowner associations to join the alliance. A prime goal is to influence the county Board of Supervisors and the state of Virginia's General Assembly to devote more resources to invasive removal.

Residents should not, however, wait for a government solution to protect the trees on their properties. Take a set of garden clippers and cut the vines and ivy at the base of the tree. Use a flat-bladed screwdriver to pry away ivy embedded in bark. After you cut the ivy and other vines on your trees, they will eventually fall off if you are not able to pull them off.

Is doing nothing an option? Failure to take action to control ivy and vines climbing up your trees could be very costly. The cost of having to remove dead trees can easily exceed \$1,000.



## INVASIVE VINES, continued

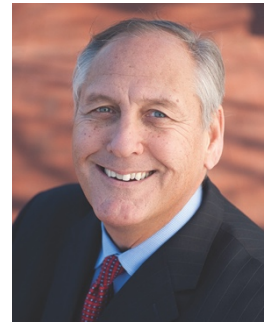
Fairfax County's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services has active programs trying to contain and eradicate invasive species. It relies on residents of Fairfax to identify and report invasive species. Its website contains extensive information on how to identify invasive species.

For more information, check out these links:

- [Invasive Species | Public Works and Environmental Services \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)
- <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/invasive-species/manage>
- [Home - Virginia Conservation Network \(vcnva.org\)](#)
- For information on the Fairfax Invasive Removal Alliance (FIRA), send an email to: [firaadvocacy@gmail.com](mailto:firaadvocacy@gmail.com)

## WILL GAMBLING HELP SOLVE FAIRFAX COUNTY'S FINANCIAL ILLS?

Casinos and gambling are in the news. A bill to legalize casino gambling is up for approval by the Virginia legislature. The effort is spearheaded by Virginia State Senator David W. Marsden (D-Fairfax), who introduced legislation (SB 675) to enable construction of a casino at Route 7 and Springhill Road in Tysons Corner—near the Silver Line metro rail station. The Virginia Senate Finance Committee voted to carry over the bill until 2025, meaning final legislative action is pending.



State Senator David Marsden

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, at this time, is divided on whether casino gambling in the county is a good idea. Citizens organizations in Reston, Tysons Corner, and McLean are opposed to casino gambling in the county. Another citizens group in Mount Vernon favors allowing gambling.

Marsden has been working with a Fairfax County development group, Comstock Holding Companies, Inc., to advance casino gambling in Fairfax County because it would generate new tax revenue. Marsden also has been the recipient of at least \$10,000 in financial contributions from Comstock Development Services LC, according to the online publication, PATCH (see link below). Marsden previously proposed legislation for siting a casino in Reston, VA, but withdrew it after encountering strong local opposition.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeffrey McKay has expressed opposition to the casino legislation, as initially drafted, because the county's share of tax revenues would be minuscule compared to what the State of Virginia would receive.

McKay has not said, however, that he is opposed to casino gambling. In fact, Comstock Development Services LC contributed \$10,000 to Chair Jeffrey McKay after the June 20, 2023, Democratic primary, according to PATCH (see link below). McKay said in February in a public meeting that he wanted a better revenue sharing formula with the State of Virginia.

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## GAMBLING, continued

Ultimately, Fairfax County supervisors may not be required to reveal their positions on whether a casino should be located in Tyson's Corner. As currently crafted, the legislation would allow registered voters in Fairfax County to vote on whether they want a casino or not.

There are a lot of unanswered questions about the impacts of casino gambling on Fairfax County. At this time, Fairfax County has not produced a detailed independent analysis on the net benefit of locating casinos in the county.

At a macro level, casinos are a mechanism for sucking wealth out of a community—wealth that often is transferred to out-of-state entities. The result can be a lower level of commerce across the area. However, if one assumes that a casino will ignite development fueled by a constant flow of out-of-state and out-of-region economic activity, expansion can occur. Given the presence of the MGM casino on the beltway in Maryland, and a casino in Charlestown, WV—it is not clear what net economic benefit would be created.

Marsden and other proponents of casino gambling in Fairfax County also have asserted that tax revenue extracted from casinos could be used to pump up spending on schools. Many view this as a ploy to win over resident support for casinos. There is no assurance, however, that casino tax revenue would become a net addition to money already provided for schools in Fairfax County's budget. Earmarking new casino tax revenues exclusively for schools could result in reductions in the county's allocation of funds for the school system. Recipients of funds for other county programs could argue that schools should receive a smaller share of the overall county budget because they get casino tax revenue.

As has been documented in other states where casino gambling exists, there are added costs and impacts that local government must address, such as: 1) crime in proximity to the casino location; 2) providing psychological services to county residents who become addicted to gambling; 3) supplying housing for individuals and families who find themselves in poverty because of new addictions to gambling; 4) additional highway infrastructure and maintenance; 5) impacts on Route 7 businesses due to casino-related traffic; 6) costs for ambulance and fire services; and 7) health department expenses for inspecting casino compliance with food service regulations.

Interested Hillbrook-Tall Oaks residents can express their views on whether they want casino gambling in Fairfax County at scheduled public Board of Supervisors meetings on the following dates:

- March 19
- May 21
- June 25
- July 30
- September 24

Note: only 10 people may speak at each Board of Supervisors session and testimony may not exceed three minutes. Once you have spoken at a session, you may not utilize Public Comment time for six months. You may speak in person, by phone, or via a YouTube video. To sign up to speak, go to: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form>. Alternatively, call 703-324-3151, and when prompted, indicate that your topic is "Casino."

—Mark Crawford

Links:

- <https://patch.com/virginia/reston/85k-donation-democratic-party-leader-made-casino-developer-pac>
- [Reston Casino: Developer CEO's Relative Donates \\$1M To VA Candidates | Reston, VA Patch](#)
- [Push to bring casino to Fairfax Co. may be set back a year after subcommittee recommendation—WTOP News](#)