



THE GREENWOOD Commonwealth

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LEGISLATURE 2016

Dissatisfied Dems force delays

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS and NASSIM BENCHABANE
Associated Press

JACKSON — A handful of Democrats on Wednesday showed dissatisfaction with Mississippi's Republican-dominated legislative process by conducting filibusters with long-winded readings of bills. One freshman Democrat got a temporary restraining order against Republican Speaker Philip Gunn after the House used a computerized voice for speed reading. Rep. Jay Hughes of Oxford said in his court complaint against Gunn that bills were being read "so quickly

that no human ear nor mind can comprehend the words." Hinds County Circuit Judge Winston Kidd issued a temporary order saying bills must be read "in a normal speed." Gunn criticized Hughes, a fellow attorney, and said any lawmaker who wants to read a bill can do so on a state-provided computer. "This whole stunt, the TR0, is simply an attempt to keep us from doing the work of the people," Gunn told reporters. "And I'm not going to

stand for it. We're going to do the work of the people." A few Democrats in the House and two in the Senate demanded to have bills read aloud as a delay tactic most of Wednesday, saying they think the Republican supermajority is ignoring Democrats' ideas. "Only those bills that have been blessed by the leadership are coming out of committees," Sen. Barbara



Gunn



Blackmon



Rep. Joel Borngar, R-Madison, left, and Rep. Kevin Horan, D-Grenada, confer as a machine reads a bill in chambers at the Capitol Wednesday.

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LEFLORE JOBLESS RATE

■ Here is Leflore County's rate of unemployment for February for the past five years:

2016	11.1 percent
2015	12.2 percent
2014	14.8 percent
2013	16.2 percent
2012	14.7 percent

Leflore jobless rate falls to 11.1%

Leflore County's jobless rate fell to 11.1 percent in February, according to figures released Wednesday by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. The unemployment rate was significantly better than January's revised rate of 12.5 percent. It was also the lowest rate posted for February since 2008, when 8.6 percent of the civilian labor force was unemployed. Compared to a year ago, the number of employed in Leflore County was up 190, while the number of unemployed was down 90. Statewide, the jobless rate was 6.2 percent in February, down from January's rate of 7.0 and also the best rate for February since 2008. The national jobless rate in February was 5.2 percent. Seventy of Mississippi's 82 counties had unemployment rates below 10 percent, three more than the month before. Rankin County had the lowest rate at 4.0 percent, and Issaquena had the highest at 21.2 percent. Leflore County tied with Sharkey County for the 73rd-best unemployment rate, two spots better than the month before.

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Power on



South Mississippi Electric General Manager Jim Compton, Public Service Commissioner Cecil Brown, Public Service Commission President Brandon Presley, Coahoma Electric General Manager Keith Hurt and Delta Electric General manager David O'Bryan prepare to cut the ribbon in Greenwood Wednesday at the dedication of Delta Electric's new solar power facilities.

New Delta solar facilities officially open

Community members, business leaders and elected officials gathered Wednesday afternoon on Stribling Avenue to mark the official opening of two new solar power facilities in the Delta. The facilities are located in Greenwood and Lyon and managed by Delta Electric and Coahoma Electric, respectively. The sites are part of a five-facility solar exploratory project by Hattiesburg-based power supplier South Mississippi Electric Coast Electric in Kiln and Singing River Electric in Lucedale held similar dedication ceremonies last week.



David O'Bryan, left, addresses the crowd at the dedication.

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VIKING HALF MARATHON AND 5K Nearly 400 set to run

By BOB DARDEN
Staff Writer

Nearly 400 people had registered for Saturday's Viking Half Marathon and 5K as of this morning, said Beth Stevens, executive director of the Greenwood-Leflore County Chamber of Commerce. The chamber is the facilitator of the annual event, which features a 13.1-mile half marathon and a 5K run. As of this morning, 260 runners — including one wheelchair participant — had signed up for the half marathon and 139 had opted for the 5-kilometer run, Stevens said.



Stevens

The numbers so far are down slightly from previous years because the event falls on Easter weekend, she said. The half marathon begins at 8 a.m., and the 5K run begins at 8:30 a.m. The starting line for both is on West Market Street, in front of the Leflore County Courthouse. Online registration can be made at www.vikinghalfmarathon.com through 11:59 tonight. Half marathon entries are \$65 and 5K tickets are \$35 in advance. Registration is available from 1 to 8 p.m. at The Alluvian Friday. A reception, featuring a cash bar, also will be

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City seeks state grant to improve Fulton Street

Greenwood Mayor Carolyn McAdams is hoping that the city will get state funding to improve downtown Fulton Street. If approved, the \$1.4 million TAP (Transportation Alternative Program) grant would be used to provide new sidewalks, historical street lighting and handicapped accessibility

to the historic thoroughfare, McAdams said. "We asked the council to give us permission to send the grant application to the Mississippi Department of Transportation," the mayor said Tuesday. The improvements will also require the "curbing up" of the street, reducing some driveway parking for businesses located along it. Last week, McAdams walked Ful-

ton Street with Mississippi Department of Transportation officials to answer questions about the grant request. TAP grants have been used in the past on Main Street, Johnson Street and the city's planned Rail Spike Park. A second round of improvements, specifically new sidewalks and lighting, will be made on Main Street shortly, McAdams said. Those were

initiated under the administration of former Mayor Harry Smith, she said. "You can only get the grants for a town, not a community. You're not going to get a grant to fix sidewalks in a specific community," she said. Fulton Street is a major artery into downtown and therefore worthy of consideration for a TAP grant. The mayor said she feels good about the state's interest in the project, although any given grant will likely

be less than what the city is seeking. Last week's tour is a hopeful sign that the grant is progressing, she said. "They wouldn't have come down here if they weren't interested." Contact Bob Darden at 581-7239 or bdarden@gwcommonwealth.com.



McAdams

N. Carrollton church to present Easter play

By RUTH JENSEN
For the Commonwealth

NORTH CARROLLTON — North Carrollton Baptist Church will present the Easter drama "A Fisherman's Story."

This year, the drama is "A Fisherman's Story," which will be presented at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday in the church sanctuary.

The public is invited to attend. There is no charge.

The cast is made up of members of North Carrollton Baptist Church, but there will also be cast members from other community churches. A guest member this year is Ben Beam, son of the Rev. Howard Beam, the church's transitional pastor.

"This year it is a family affair. We have grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren of families all participating — making memories

COMING UP

What: North Carrollton Baptist Church will present the Easter drama "A Fisherman's Story."

When: 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Where: North Carrollton Baptist Church, 203 Jackson St., North Carrollton

Details: The performances are free and open to the public

and sharing the gospel together," co-director Barbara Sheppard said.

Her co-director is Wilton Neal, music director at North Carrollton Baptist.

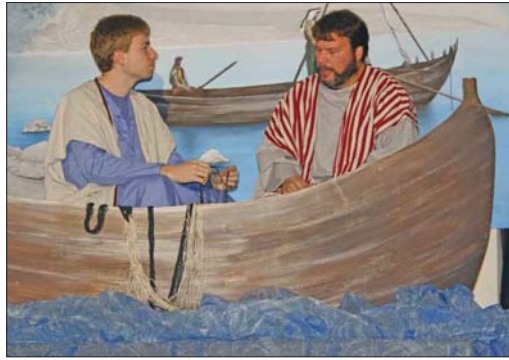
Each year, the theme of the drama is based on the life of Jesus, from birth to resurrection, Sheppard said. Each year, the story is told from a different view point. This year,

the story is based on the Apostle Peter, played by Kyle Adams, who shares Christ with fisherman Marcus, played by Wesley Davis.

"Ellen Barry has contributed to the script this year, especially in the scene relating to the Passover Supper," Sheppard said. "Support has been given by the Women on Missions Sewing Ministry, led by Denise Acey, which has created costumes for the cast members and refurbished past costumes."

Sheppard, who is Women on Missions director, said that an offering will be taken up after the presentation to support the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, which supports the Southern Baptist Convention's North American missions.

"The goal of the presentation is to reach the lost and encourage Christians to pursue a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ," Sheppard said.



Ruth Jensen
Kyle Adams, right, plays the Apostle Peter and Wesley Davis plays the fisherman Marcus in North Carrollton Baptist Church's Easter drama "A Fisherman's Story."

Holmes man charged in Carroll burglary

CARROLLTON — The Carroll County Sheriff's Department has arrested a Holmes County man now charged with burglary.

Earthe Washington was arrested March 17, and his bond was set at \$10,000, Sheriff Clint Walker said.

Walker said the arrest is the culmination of investigating a Jan. 7 burglary of the home of John Robinson on County Road 23. A television, an air compressor and other items

were stolen.

Washington is in custody at the Carroll-Montgomery County Regional Correctional Facility in Vaiden, he said.

Walker said he expects more arrests on similar charges to follow. He said Holmes County authorities have put a hold on Washington, so that if he bonds out of jail, they will pick him up.

"Holmes County is investigating other dwelling burglaries," he said.

Race

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held at the hotel from 4 to 8 p.m. Friday.

Prior to the race on Saturday, tickets for the half-marathon will cost \$75 and 5K tickets will run \$40.

Weather forecasts call for sunshine with daytime high temperatures reaching the low 70s.

A post-race party will be held in the 100 block of Main Street, where musicians Jon and Angela Byrd will perform. The party will not end until the last contestant crosses the finish line, usually between 12:30 p.m. and 1 p.m.

Stevens was busy this morning preparing goody bags for marathon participants, all of which contain Easter eggs.

"Some contain special gifts, such as a one-night stay at The Alluvium, while others contain restaurant certificates," she said.

The event seems to be growing in popularity, and it's because "we put on a great race," Stevens said.

Corporate sponsors include Wade Inc., Milwaukee Electric Tool Corp., Cannon Motors, Capital City Beverages, Greenwood Leflore Hospital, Double Quick and the city of Greenwood.

■ Contact Bob Darden at 581-7239 or bdarden@grecommonwealth.com.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Today	
11:59 p.m.	Online registration closes
Friday	
1-8 p.m.	Early packet pickup and registration at The Alluvium Create your own snack mix, Greenwood Convention and Visitors Bureau hospitality table at The Alluvium
4-8 p.m.	The Alluvium lobby bar will be open, complimentary hors d'oeuvres
Saturday	
6:30 a.m.	Packet pickup and registration opens
7:45 a.m.	Packet pickup and registration closes
7:50 a.m.	Runners make way to starting line
7:55 a.m.	National Anthem
7:55 a.m.	Half marathon pre-race announcements
8 a.m.	Half marathon race starts (promptly)
8:30 a.m.	5K race starts (promptly)
8:45 a.m.	Band begins to play
8:50 a.m.	Post-race activities begin
8:50 a.m.	Post-race food available
9 a.m.	Live entertainment
9:45 a.m.	5K awards ceremony
10:45 a.m.	Half marathon awards ceremony
11:15 a.m.	Half marathon course closes

Jobless

Continued from Page 1

The February rates and rankings for other nearby counties were:

■ Grenada, 5.6 percent, 15th (tie).

■ Montgomery, 7.7 percent, 54th (tie).

■ Tallahatchie, 8.6 percent, 67th (tie).

■ Carroll, 9.0 percent, 70th.

■ Sunflower, 12.0 percent, 77th.

■ Holmes, 12.7 percent, 79th (tie).

■ Humphreys, 14.4 percent, 80th.

Solar

Continued from Page 1

SMEL is a conglomerate made up of 11 electric power cooperatives throughout Mississippi.

"Solar will enable South Mississippi Electric to diversify their energy generation and lessen the impact to our members of a price increase from

any one source," said David O'Bryan, Delta Electric's general manager, in a prepared statement.

O'Bryan said that sunny Mississippi should prove to be a favorable location for solar projects.

The fifth facility will be located in Taylorsville and has not been completed yet.

The Greenwood facility was erected earlier this year and began supplying power to the

grid in late February.

Consisting of 360 panels, the sites each produce 100 kilowatts, approximately enough to power 14 average homes for one year.

These smaller facilities are part of a pilot program through which SME will learn about the stability and affordability of solar power in Mississippi.

The eventual goal of the program is the construction of a much larger facility in Lamar

County, which will be run by Origis Energy USA.

SME has agreed to purchase all power produced at the site.

All of the smaller sites were constructed by Atlanta-based Hannah Solar.

Delta Electric supplies power to 28,000 meters. Coahoma supplies power to 8,500 members in northwest Mississippi.

■ Contact Nick Rogers at 581-7235 or nrogers@grecommonwealth.com.

Delays

Continued from Page 1

Blackmon, D-Canton, told reporters to explain why she was having bills read in the Senate.

Blackmon said she believes the Senate Judiciary A Committee meeting was improperly called Tuesday. A schedule showed the committee was to meet after the Senate adjourned for the day, but the meeting was held when the Senate took a break. Blackmon made the same argument during the meeting Tuesday, R-Gulport, said he believed he had properly convened the meeting.

Senate Judiciary A passed a bill during that meeting that says state officials, private business owners and others who provide services to the public couldn't be punished for acting on religious beliefs that marriage should only be between a man and a woman. The bill, backed by religious conservatives and House Republican

House OKs Capitol-area repairs

JACKSON (AP) — The Mississippi House has voted to set aside \$21 million for improvements to parts of the capital city.

The House voted 113-7 Wednesday to pass Senate Bill 2525, which would create a regional board and an advisory committee to work with the city of Jackson on improvements.

The bill would also direct 12.5 percent of Jackson's monthly sales tax back to the

city but require 15 percent of that money go to police and fire departments.

The area runs from the Pearl River to Jackson State University and includes the Capitol and the Mississippi Coliseum.

House Ways and Means chairman Jeff Smith of Columbus says the proposal would give new life to areas that Jackson hasn't had money to maintain. The bill heads to back to the Senate.

leaders, was filed in response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision that made same-sex marriage legal nationwide. It is opposed by gay-rights groups, including Human Rights Campaign.

"People have the constitutional right to freely exercise their religion. But that does not, and never has been, an excuse to discriminate on the taxpayers' dime," Rob Hill, Human Rights Campaign's Mississippi director, said Wednesday.

Tindell said Tuesday that he

wanted the committee to pass the bill without changing it, and all amendments failed. If a bill passes both chambers in the same form, it goes to the governor. If one chamber changes a bill, the other must accept the changes or the bill goes into final negotiations, where it could stall.

Blackmon said it is unfair to legislators, and their constituents, for a chairman to try to block amendments to divisive legislation.

The House filibuster was to

protest a bill to widen control of the Jackson airport to a regional board. The fight over the airport bill was one thing that pushed the House to the February standoff, which ended with an agreement between Republican and Democratic leaders.

Rep. Christopher Bell, D-Jackson, said Democrats understood that Republican leaders would let the bill die as part of the agreement. Gunn said that was never part of the deal.

"The city of Jackson is under attack from individuals in Madison and Rankin counties," Bell said.

Jackson is majority-black and has a black mayor and majority-black City Council. Madison and Rankin counties, in the Jackson suburbs, are majority-white.

Rep. Ed Blackmon, D-Canton, said Democrats would fight the bill.

"This is just a land grab by the state of Mississippi," said Rep. Blackmon, the husband of Sen. Blackmon. "What state government tells a city that the elected officials are incapable of governing?"

Left to Right: Barry Bryant, LeDerrick Holden, Lesia Johnson, Angelia Taylor, Michael Joe Cannon
Lance Gregory, Tyler Cannon, Dorothy Baker, John Malouf, Mike Harris, Joshua Gregory

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