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THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

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2026 GRADUATION ISSUE

*"Keeping Our Citizens Informed
 on the Issues That Matter"*
 Grambling, LA

La Governor Postpones House Primary Elections for 6 Congressional Seats after Supreme Court Ruling

By Piper Hutchinson

(La Illuminator) Republican Gov. Jeff Landry suspended the May 16 primary elections for Louisiana's six U.S. House seats last Thursday, the day after the U.S. Supreme Court declared the state's existing congressional map unconstitutional. Absentee voting in the U.S. House races had already begun, and early voting was scheduled to start Saturday. But postponing the election allows Landry and the Louisiana Legislature to pass a new map that eliminates one or both of Louisiana's two majority-Black congressional districts. The Supreme Court struck down Louisiana's existing congressional map last Wednesday when it ruled that lawmakers had relied too heavily on the race

of voters to draw the district lines. Specifically, the court challenged the legality of an additional majority-Black congressional district held by U.S. Rep. Cleo Fields, a Black Democrat from Baton Rouge, that spans from Baton Rouge to Shreveport. The U.S. House elections are canceled. But all the other contests on the May 16 ballot will continue as scheduled, including those for U.S. Senate, Louisiana Supreme Court, Public Service Commission, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and five constitutional amendments. Secretary of State Nancy Landry has said that the U.S. House races will remain on voters' ballots in May, but any votes cast in those races will not be counted.

See *La Governor* Page 2



Uncle Nearest CEO and NY Times Best Selling Author To Speak at GSU Commencement

GRAMBLING, LA — Grambling State University has announced that Fawn Weaver, the visionary founder and CEO of Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey, will serve as the keynote speaker for the Spring 2026 Commencement ceremony. The ceremony is scheduled for Friday, May 15, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. in the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center. Weaver's selection brings one of the most successful contemporary business

leaders to the historic campus. As the head of Uncle Nearest, Inc., Weaver holds the distinction of being one of only five African American women in U.S. history to found and lead a company with a valuation exceeding \$1 billion. Under her leadership, Uncle Nearest has become the fastest-growing whiskey brand in American history. "We are honored to welcome Fawn Weaver to our campus during this milestone moment for our graduates," university officials

stated. "Her journey from a high school dropout to a global business mogul embodies the spirit of resilience and excellence that we instill in our students." Beyond her corporate success, Weaver is a New York Times best-selling author and a dedicated philanthropist. She is widely credited with bringing the story of Nathan "Nearest" Green—the enslaved man who taught Jack Daniel how to make whiskey—to the forefront of American history.

Her company's headquarters, the Nearest Green Distillery in Shelbyville, Tennessee, is the first distillery in the world to honor an African American. The 2026 graduating class will hear Weaver discuss her "Love and Whiskey" philosophy, focusing on how purpose-driven leadership and radical authenticity can redefine industries. University officials expect a capacity crowd for the event.

What Louisiana Voters Need to Know About the May 2026 Constitutional Amendments

Staff Report

Louisiana voters will be asked to decide five proposed constitutional amendments in the upcoming primary election. These amendments, if approved, would permanently change the state's Constitution—impacting everything from public education and taxes to government jobs and the court system. Here's a straightforward look at what each amendment would do, along with the potential benefits and drawbacks

according to PowerCoalition.org.

Amendment 1: Changes to State Civil Service

This amendment would shift more control over state government jobs from an independent civil service commission to the Louisiana Legislature. What it means: Lawmakers would gain authority to decide which state jobs are "classified" (protected from political influence) and which are "unclassified" (serve at will and can be replaced more easily). Pros:



Supporters say this gives elected officials more flexibility to manage state agencies and make changes more efficiently. It could also allow leaders to bring in new talent or restructure departments more quickly. Cons: Critics argue this could weaken job protections and open the door to political favoritism in hiring and firing. Civil service rules were originally designed to prevent exactly that kind of influence. **Amendment 2: St. George School System** This amendment centers

on the newly formed city of St. George in East Baton Rouge Parish and its effort to create its own independent school system. What it means: St. George would be allowed to operate its school system with the same authority as a parish system, including receiving state funding and raising local taxes for education. Pros: Supporters say a separate system would allow the community to better control its schools, funding, and educational outcomes. See *What* Page 3

BIG ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

Effective September 1, 2026, The Grambling Connection is transitioning to a PAID model. This means the paper will no longer be free but will be available as a paid product through select outlets, and will continue to be available through print and online subscriptions. This change will allow us to bring you even more stories that matter most to our community—while expanding and strengthening our staff and coverage. You will still be able to pick up free copies throughout the Summer. We will announce locations where it will be on sale over the next few months. Also, we are offering **EARLY BIRD DISCOUNTS** to new subscribers until August 1, 2026. We ask that you support us through this change so we can keep the paper strong and moving forward.





OPINION

Letter to the Editor

The Ruston Voters League strongly condemns the ongoing assault on the Voting Rights Act and the dangerous implications of the opinion rendered in Callais vs. Louisiana. At a time when voter access should be protected and expanded, we are instead witnessing calculated efforts to weaken and manipulate the democratic process.

Governor Landry's proposed response is not only reckless—it is wasteful and harmful. His actions would squander taxpayer dollars by disrupting an election process already underway. Thousands of citizens have already cast their mail-in ballots in good faith. To now introduce uncertainty and potential interference is an insult to those voters and a blatant disregard for responsible governance.

Let us be clear: this will create chaos. It will confuse voters. And most troubling, it will discourage participation—especially among seniors, working-class citizens, and marginalized communities who already face barriers to voting. When people begin to question whether their vote will count, democracy itself is weakened.

We are also calling out members of the Republican Legislature: stop blindly following politi-

cal talking points that undermine the rights of the people you were elected to serve. Stop embracing the divisive and misleading rhetoric coming from Governor Landry and Donald Trump. Louisiana deserves leadership—not loyalty to political “kool-aid” that erodes public trust and damages our democratic institutions.

This is bigger than politics. This is about right and wrong. This is about whether we honor the voices of our citizens or silence them through confusion, suppression, and neglect.

We urge every citizen to take action now. Contact your legislators and demand that they protect the integrity of our elections. Speak out in your communities, attend public meetings, and refuse to be silent while voting rights are threatened. Most importantly, remain engaged and committed to participating in every election—because the most powerful response to suppression is participation.

The Ruston Voters League will not be silent. We stand firmly in defense of free, fair, and accessible elections—and we call on all leaders of conscience to do the same.

Respectfully,
Veda B. Emerson,
President
Ruston Voters League

Publisher's Note: Changes Coming to The Grambling Connection

By Lena W. Clayton

Let me first say, this was not a decision that was made lightly. I am a Grambling native and when I first returned to Grambling from Los Angeles in 2012 after having spent over 20 years in the film and television industry, I was asked to teach Film Studies in the Mass Communications department at GSU. At the time, they were trying to get a film program set up at Grambling, so I taught for two semesters until we found out that the Board of Regents did not approve the application for the new program. At that time, the school still had a paper that was active, The Gramblinite, which had been around for years. I even worked on it when I was in school at Grambling 20 years earlier.

Although it was a campus paper, the community looked at it as its own. Also, because the community was so small and most of the residents were connected to the University in some way, they felt it covered them as well.

Fast forward, after I left again and returned in 2024, everything had changed. The Gramblinite was no longer

active and Grambling was considered a “news desert”. The definition of a news desert is simply a place where people don't have a dedicated local newspaper, newsroom, or journalist regularly reporting on what's happening in their own community. I realized after being back for a few months, that I wasn't getting any relevant or timely information on what was going on in my own town. I asked around and I found that others were feeling this way as well. That was the genesis of the idea for The Grambling Connection.

So, when we first began The Grambling Connection, our goals were to 1) provide the community with a way of knowing what was going on in their own community; 2) To give local businesses who up until then had to rely on word of mouth to get customers, an inexpensive way to reach new customers; and lastly, to provide the community with a platform to be able to share their stories and opinions regarding local and/or national issues that affected them.

It was also our intention to make it free to the community so that everyone would have ac-



Lena W. Clayton

cess to the stories and information we were providing... and we were able to do that for almost two years.

However, now, due to rising print and distribution costs, as well as the need to expand our staff and outreach, we are having to transition to a paid model. Although we know some of you will take issue with this change, we also have had those who've told us from the beginning that there should have been a cost but we resisted. Our reasoning was because we wanted to do something FOR the community, and we thought advertising revenue would be enough to keep us afloat. But the reality is, ad revenue, as all things in business, is cyclical -- sometimes it's up and sometimes it's down. Also, we want

to do more, at this point, than just stay afloat.

As we get more positive feedback from the community regarding the paper, it has motivated us to want to expand our staff so that we can bring you more timely information and more features. In the coming months, you will see more items added such as an events calendar, restaurant reviews, a lifestyle section and more news from surrounding towns as well. We have a lot coming down the pike that will make you even more proud of your community paper!

When all is said and done, we hope you will feel that the cost is well worth it. As always, we welcome feedback regarding this and all things we print in the paper. You can send your comments to gramblingconnection@gmail.com. Also, let us know what features you would like to see included.

We thank the community for your support up until now and we hope you will continue to support us through this transition and beyond. THANK YOU!

Lena W. Clayton
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

POTTER MOTIVATION

Think Big. Dream Bigger. Act Bold

By Rusty Potter

There was a time I didn't know what a 5k was. I remember hearing the distance and wondering whether it was miles, minutes, or something beyond my reach. At that point in my life, the idea of running a mile felt unrealistic. Not because I lacked the desire, but because I had never tried. And when you've never tried something, doubt has a way of speaking louder than possibility.

It's easy to quit something you've never started. It's even easier to convince yourself

that it's “not for you” before you take the first step. That was my thinking for a long time. I had dreams, but they were sitting on the shelf. I saw other people running races, setting goals, and pushing limits, but I quietly told myself, “That's for them, not for me.”

Fear has a loud voice, but so does purpose. And purpose doesn't require perfection - it requires action. So I decided to try. One step at a time. One mile at a time. I got out of my comfort zone.

The first time I committed to a 5k, I didn't feel ready. I didn't feel like a runner. I was



Rusty Potter

willing to put in the work. What started as doubt slowly turned into discipline. What once felt impossible became routine.

Today, I can say something I never imagined I would say: I have completed four marathons.

Not because I was the fastest. Not because it was easy. But because I refused to stop when it got difficult. Progress is built on persistence, not perfection. That pain is temporary, but quitting lasts forever. And I learned the body can go further when the mind stops limiting it.

Looking back, the biggest barrier was never the distance. It was the doubt. The moment I stopped asking “Can I?” and started saying “Let me try,” everything

changed.

People are reading this right now who are standing where I once stood - on the edge of a decision, wondering if they are capable. The truth is, you may not feel ready. You may not have done it before. But that does not mean you cannot get started.

Think big enough to see beyond your fears. Dream bigger than your current limitations. And then act boldly enough to take the first step.

The life you want is built on action. And sometimes, all it takes is one brave step to discover you were capable all along.

La Governor From Page 1

Democrats have already started filing legal challenges to the governor's decision that aim to put the House elections back on their previous schedule.

Lindsay Garcia, a Democratic candidate in the 5th Congressional District, filed a lawsuit last Thursday in the U.S. Middle District Court of Louisiana asking for an emergency order blocking Landry's election suspension.

Black plaintiffs from the 2022 congressional redistricting lawsuit Robinson v. Ardo have also asked the U.S. Supreme Court to wait to issue its certified judgment until after the 2026 midterms and allow the current map to be used during this cycle. This typically happens about a month after the opinion is released.

Landry's order pushes the primary elections to July 15 unless the Legislature deter-

mines a new date.

Assuming the elections remain suspended, the Louisiana Legislature will have to revert to the old “jungle” primary election system for the U.S. House races, Senate President Cameron Henry, R-Metairie, said in an interview Thursday. The state had been expected to use the new semi-closed partisan primary for these contests.

Under the semi-closed process, U.S. House candidates were running in Democratic-only and Republican-only elections, where voters could only cast ballots in the Democratic or Republican primary but not both.

Given the compressed timeline, however, the congressional elections will now likely be held through the jungle primary, where candidates of all parties run against each other in an initial contest. That system is both cheaper and less complicated to execute.

“Under the best of circumstances, the election cycle is going to be confusing,” Henry said. “But we are going to move forward with what we have to do.”

U.S. Rep. Troy Carter, a Black Democrat from New Orleans, faces a primary challenger and could be affected by both the Supreme Court ruling and the governor's decision to move the primary dates.

He said the cancellation of the primaries will have a “chilling effect” on voters such as military veterans who have already cast their ballots. The governor and Attorney General Liz Murrill argue moving the election is necessary because the court's ruling prohibits them from using the invalidated map.

At least one national election expert said Louisiana isn't required to stop the elections because of the Supreme Court ruling.

Michael Li, senior counsel for the Brennan Center for Jus-

tice, an organization that advocates for voting rights across the country, disagreed with Murrill and Landry's legal assessment that the primaries can't be held using the current congressional map.

The Supreme Court's ruling last Wednesday does not throw out Louisiana's existing congressional districts for the current cycle. A previous Supreme Court decision, Purcell v. Gonzales from 2006, prevents courts from ordering states to make major ballot changes too close to an election and would apply in this case, he said.

Louisiana had previously used maps for congressional elections after they were ruled unconstitutional in 2022 and 2024 on the basis of the court's Purcell ruling.

But at a press conference Wednesday, Murrill acknowledged the legal precedent set by the Purcell case, pointing out that courts would be pro-

hibited from ordering the state to do anything.

“The Purcell principle is a principle that says that courts, particularly federal courts, should not be monkeying with state election dates when it's too close to an election, but it doesn't stop the legislature from acting,” Murrill said. “So that's a restriction on the authority of courts, not legislatures.”

Lawyers for the NAACP and other organizations argued the Supreme Court was doing just that by striking down the maps after some votes had already been cast.

“Enjoining the primary after ballots have already been cast would cause chaos in the election process and leave voters and candidates hopelessly confused, in clear violation of the principles this court articulated in Purcell and subsequent decisions,” they argued in a filing last week with the U.S. Supreme Court.

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NEWS CONT'D

What does the US Supreme Court ruling that hammered voting rights mean and what happens now? A Deeper Look

By Jonathan Shorman

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision gutting the federal Voting Rights Act could upend American politics and trigger a new rush to redraw congressional districts.

The opinion released last Wednesday, in a case called *Louisiana v. Callais*, holds sweeping consequences for how states and local governments draw district lines at all levels of government, from Congress to school boards.

Louisiana, whose congressional map is at the center of the case, [has suspended] an upcoming primary election so state lawmakers can pass a new map. Other states are also weighing new gerrymanders, either this year or before the 2028 election.

Gerrymandering refers to drawing political maps for the purpose of gaining some form of unfair advantage — whether partisan or racial or to help or hurt an incumbent or candidate.

Following the decision, Democrats are calling for Congress to pass new federal voting rights legislation, but President Donald Trump would likely veto it. Others are urging more radical changes, including expanding the size of the Supreme Court.

What is *Louisiana v. Callais*?

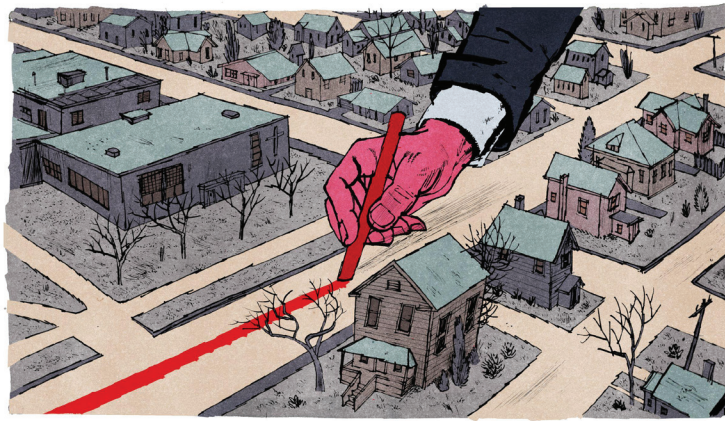
After the 2020 census, the Louisiana Legislature passed a congressional map that included one district where a majority of residents are Black. About a third of the state's population is Black.

States typically draw new congressional lines once a decade following the census, though several states have pushed through new maps this year after Trump called on Republicans to maximize their political advantage heading into the midterm elections this November.

Black voters challenged the Louisiana map and an appeals court ordered lawmakers to pass a new map. The legislature in 2024 approved a map that includes a second district where a majority of residents are Black, also called a majority-minority district.

In response, a group of white voters sued over the new map, claiming it violated the U.S. Constitution and was an unconstitutional racial gerrymander. The Constitution's 14th Amendment guarantees equal protection under the law and the 15th Amendment prohibits denying the right to vote on the basis of race.

The lead plaintiff in the case is Phillip Callais, hence the case's name. The New York Times reported last year that Callais is a veteran who lives



near Baton Rouge.

The Supreme Court held its first oral argument on the case in March 2025. But instead of issuing a decision later that spring, the court held a second round of oral argument in October.

At that time, comments by the conservative justices strongly suggested the court was interested in weakening the federal Voting Rights Act.

What is the Voting Rights Act and what role did it play in redistricting?

The Voting Rights Act, or VRA, is a 1965 federal law passed by Congress and signed by President Lyndon Johnson.

The law was designed to stop racial discrimination in voting and combat Jim Crow laws like literacy tests that Southern states used to prevent Black people from voting.

It contains several sections but the Supreme Court decision in *Callais* dealt with Section 2. That section prohibits voting practices or procedures that discriminate on the basis of race and other characteristics. In 1982, Congress expanded Section 2 to ban voting practices that have a discriminatory effect, whether or not the law was intended to discriminate.

Section 2 has acted as a ban on racial gerrymandering, or the practice of drawing districts to minimize the political influence of minority voters. Over time, that's led to the creation of numerous majority-minority congressional districts.

Many of these majority-minority districts are located in Republican-controlled Southern states but are held by Democrats. In the past, if states drew new maps to spread minority voters across several districts, they could face challenges in federal court under Section 2.

What did the Supreme Court decide?

The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that Louisiana's congressional map was an unconstitutional racial gerrymander.

The court found that because the Voting Rights Act didn't require Louisiana to create a second majority-minority district, the state didn't have a compelling reason to consider race when drawing its map.

Under the court's reasoning,

Section 2 only applies when evidence supports a strong inference that intentional discrimination occurred. In other words, lawmakers only violate Section 2 when they draw districts with the purpose of affording minority voters less opportunity because of their race.

The court's majority opinion says "none of the historical evidence presented by plaintiffs came close to showing an objective likelihood that the State's challenged map was the result of intentional racial discrimination."

Justice Samuel Alito wrote the majority opinion, which was joined by all of the court's conservatives: Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Clarence Thomas, Neal Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett.

The court's three liberal justices — Justices Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson — dissented.

Why is the decision a big deal?

The decision empowers states to gerrymander in ways that break apart districts where a majority of residents are Black, Hispanic or belong to another minority group.

In 2019 the Supreme Court ruled that federal courts would no longer take cases about partisan gerrymandering. That's where states draw maps to help a political party.

Because many majority-minority districts in the South are held by Democrats, the *Callais* decision gives Republican states the power to break apart these districts if they can show they are doing so for a partisan purpose.

"Under the Court's new view of Section 2, a State can, without legal consequence, systematically dilute minority citizens' voting power," Kagan wrote in a dissent.

In the short term, the decision means several Black Democrats in the U.S. House may lose their seats if states pass new maps either this year before the November midterm elections or before the 2028 election. At least one projection has pegged the potential losses as high as 19 seats.

The loss of even a few Black representatives would constitute the largest drop in Black representation in Congress

since Reconstruction following the Civil War, according to an NPR analysis.

In the long term, minority voters will have a more difficult time electing their preferred candidates if they are moved into majority-white districts. The decision also applies to state legislative districts, meaning the number of Black state lawmakers may drop as well.

What impact does the Voting Rights Act have after the ruling?

Not nearly as much.

The Supreme Court's decision didn't strike down Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. But Kagan and other critics of the opinion say the protections once extended by Section 2 are effectively dead.

To block a map under Section 2, challengers will now have to show states intentionally discriminated against minority voters, a very difficult standard when states can say they drew maps for partisan advantage.

In a series of decisions during the past 13 years, the Supreme Court has also weakened other elements of the Voting Rights Act.

In 2013, the court effectively blocked preclearance, another major portion of the law contained in Section 5. Preclearance required states and local governments with a history of discrimination to obtain federal permission before making voting changes.

Preclearance applied to most Southern states and a handful of others. The justices didn't strike down preclearance, but ruled that the criteria used to determine whether governments should be subject to preclearance was unconstitutional.

The law required districts that had voting tests in place in 1964 and had less than 50% turnout in the 1964 presidential election as eligible for preclearance. The court found that the criteria no longer made sense and were outdated.

In theory, Congress could pass new criteria that would restore preclearance.

How are Republicans responding?

Republicans in Southern states are pushing for new maps that could hand their party more seats in the November elections — but also oust Black Democratic members of Congress.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry, a Republican, announced last Thursday that the state's primary election, set for mid-May, would be paused. The suspension will give time for state lawmakers to redraw the state's congressional map to eliminate the state's second majority-minority district.

"We are working together with the Legislature and the Secretary of State's office to de-

velop a path forward," Landry said in a statement.

Florida lawmakers passed a new map hours after the court's decision that could provide Republicans with up to four additional seats. Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis had introduced the map earlier in the week and had cited Callais in urging lawmakers to act.

In Tennessee, Sen. Marsha Blackburn, a Republican running for governor, called on state lawmakers to pass a new map. Prominent Republicans in Georgia said the state should pass a new map.

How are Democrats responding?

Democrats have condemned the Supreme Court's opinion and say lawmakers and the public should fight back.

Many Democrats say Congress should pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, named after civil rights activist and Georgia Democratic Rep. John Lewis, who died in 2020. The legislation would set new criteria for preclearance, seeking to restore the practice after the Supreme Court stopped it in 2013.

The U.S. House passed the measure in 2021, but it didn't advance through the Senate.

Enacting the measure remains extremely difficult. If Democrats retake control of Congress in the November elections, Trump would almost certainly veto the measure. Republicans in the U.S. Senate would also likely block the bill, unless Democrats eliminate the filibuster.

Democrats are also weighing a new round of gerrymanders in blue states. While most attention has focused on Southern Republican states, Democrats can now also engage in racial vote dilution in states like California to secure additional U.S. House seats.

Some Democrats and opponents of the Supreme Court's decision are pushing for other responses.

They include expanding the size of the court from nine justices to dilute its conservative majority, implementing term limits for justices, banning mid-decade redistricting or requiring states to use independent commissions to draw congressional maps.

"We must continue to fight for a democracy in which every vote counts, and in which every vote holds equal power, starting by banning mid-decade gerrymanders nationwide and establishing fair redistricting criteria," Sen. Alex Padilla, a California Democrat, said in a statement.

But those changes would require federal legislation, giving Republicans the opportunity to stop the proposals through filibusters in the Senate or by Trump's veto.

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It could lead to improved performance in that area.

Cons:
Opponents worry it could create inequality. If wealthier communities separate, it could reduce funding and resources available to the remaining parish schools, widening the gap between districts.

Amendment 3: Teacher Pay Raises and Retirement Debt

This amendment proposes a pay raise for teachers and school support staff by restructuring how certain education funds are used.

What it means
Several existing education trust funds would be eliminated, and the money would be used to pay down teacher retirement debt. The savings from that would fund raises—\$2,250 for teachers and \$1,125 for support staff.

Pros:
The most immediate benefit is higher pay for educators, which could help recruit and retain teachers—something many school systems are struggling with.

Cons:
The trade-off is the loss of long-term education savings funds. Critics say this could reduce future investments in schools and create funding instability down the line. In short, it's a choice between immediate raises and long-term financial security for education.

Some critics say this is simply the Legislature repackaging the failed House Bill 7 (i.e., the former Proposed Amendment 2) from the March 29, 2025 election.

Locally, they argue that if the Proposed Amendment 3 were to pass, it would result in about a \$500,000 per year reduction in matching investment funding for GSU as well as proportional amounts at other 4-year and 2-year institutions of higher learning. It would also reduce funding for elementary and secondary schools in Louisiana.

To take it further, this could liquidate a 2 billion dollar investment fund that was established 40 years ago (1986) for the long-term improvement of educational quality in Louisiana. Sources say this is an attempt to partially address some short-term funding con-

cerns, which were arguably created by like-minded Legislators. With respect to the Proposed Amendment 3, they feel there is a better and more sustainable way to address the alleged funding concerns.

Amendment 4: Property Tax Exemption for Business Inventory

This amendment would allow local parishes to reduce or eliminate property taxes on business inventory.

What it means:
Parishes could choose to give businesses tax relief on inventory, with the state offering a one-time payment to help offset the initial loss in revenue.

Pros:
Supporters say this could encourage business growth, attract new companies, and ease financial burdens on local businesses—especially those that carry large inventories.

Cons:
Property taxes on inventory are a key funding source for schools, law enforcement, and other local services. Opponents warn that once the state's one-time payment runs out, parishes—especially smaller or rural ones—could face serious fund-

ing shortfalls. This could lead to cuts in services or increased inequality between wealthier and less wealthy areas.

Amendment 5: Judicial Retirement Age

This amendment would raise the mandatory retirement age for judges from 70 to 75.

What it means:
Judges would be allowed to serve longer, potentially staying on the bench for an additional five years.

Pros:
Supporters argue this keeps experienced judges in the system longer, which can benefit the courts through continuity and expertise.

Cons:
Opponents point out that fewer openings could slow down opportunities for new judges, including younger candidates and those from underrepresented communities. This could impact diversity on the bench and limit fresh perspectives in the judicial system.

Why These Amendments Matter

Each of these proposals represents a trade-off—whether it's flexibility versus oversight, short-term gains versus long-

term stability, or local control versus statewide equity.

Some amendments may have more direct impact on certain regions than others, but all five have the potential to shape Louisiana's future in meaningful ways.

As voters head to the polls, understanding not just what each amendment does—but how it could affect communities over time—is key to making an informed decision.



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COMMUNITY

NAACP Hosts Freedom Fund Scholarship Awards

By Joice M. Dunn

The Grambling National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Branch celebrated its Freedom Fund/Scholarship Awards Banquet Saturday, April 25 in the Black and Gold Room on the Grambling State University campus. Using as a theme: A Future Filled With Promise, honored both young and older members of the community.

Dr. Gloria George, assistant professor at GSU, served as mistress of ceremony and kept the program flowing smoothly. Greetings were extended to the packed room by Dr. Kenyatta Shamburger, GSU chief operation officer, standing in for GSU President Martin Lemelle. He let the group know that the banquet wasn't just a dinner, but it had a purpose for a moment of reflection and a moment of recommitment. Mayor Alvin Bradley acknowledged the dedicated work of the NAACP and encouraged them to further strive toward the future. The Mayor said achievements were being celebrated but also recognized the work that still remains.

Rashid Young, District 11 State Representative, updated those present on the legislative progress. He stated the legislature will be working until June dealing with State budget discussions, a task of balancing a \$40 plus billion-dollar budget and stressed that this year there will not be cuts to higher education.

He went on to say that another topic of discussion will be insurance affordability, along with teachers' pay. "Part of the discussion is trying to give educators a raise rather than a stipend which they've gotten for the



Member of the NAACP pose for picture

past few years which could be going away."

Banquet chairman of the Grambling branch NAACP, Doris Marzett, ensured those present that the event was to recognize the strengths, resilience and contributions of community, schools as well as our young people. Marzett said the theme upholds the power of unity, the importance of learning and the endless possibilities that arise when each is lifted up.

"We are not only reflecting on the remarkable accomplishments of the past and present, but we are also embracing our shared responsibilities to shape the future through education, empowerment and inspiration," Marzett said.

The crowd was entertained with a couple of poems by young, upcoming poet Kinsley Wimberly of Shreveport.

Several presentations were made by Dr. Beatrice Tatem, who introduced Lorine Bowman, over the Youth Council. Bowman serves on the Lincoln Parish NAACP Youth Council. She explained that the students take control of the meetings



Dr. Beatrice Tatem with scholarship winner, Juakera Kayshon Lowe

so they will have experience. The youth, along with adults attended a trip to Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. She encouraged the group to assist in supporting the youth.

The GSU NAACP president, Elijah Grayson and United African American Men (UAAM) president, Zhyimir Byrd talked about the knowledge they gained while working with campus

students on voter registration and informing them of their rights. UAAM told of their interchange with other organizations such as Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, lifting and encouraging others. They received Awards for their work.

Dr. Tatem sent out a word of encouragement to Grayson to continue in the field of psychology to devel-



Dr. Beatrice Tatem with scholarship winner, Morghan M'Niyah Hill

op knowledge and offered professional assistance.

An Unsung Hero award was presented by Lizzie White. The award was presented to Theron S. Dunn who she said lives by his principals, offering help to those who are committed to helping themselves and striving to do what is right. "His word is his bond, guiding and supporting his family through generations," she stated as she presented the award.

Dunn accepted his award saying he was raised in the community where everyone was family. "I am an American, not a Black American, but an American, you can stereotype us, but we are all Americans. I thank God and y'all for honoring me," Dunn said.

Scholarships for \$1,000 each were presented to Morghan M'Niyah Hill, a senior from Ruston High who plans to enter the medical field of plastic surgery and Juakera Kayshon Lowe, a senior at Simsboro High who plans to become a Teacher.

Veda B. Emerson, president of the Ruston Voters League, reminded those present that voting is one of

the most powerful tools we have to shape our communities and futures.

"When we vote, we not only honor those who have struggled and sacrificed for that right, but also building a stronger, just future for generations to come." Emerson said, "We are in a different time with the closed primaries, which means only democrats or republicans will be able to vote." She continued.

A membership appeal was made by Linda May. She quoted Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. saying, "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way." May encouraged everyone present to join the NAACP.

Letting the group know the mission of the NAACP, Dr. Iylon Collins, President of the Grambling chapter, ensured that the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons and the need to eliminate race-based discrimination still remain. She also presented a Shining Star presentation award to Miss Wimberly, the poet and offered a word of thanks to all who supported the event.

Local Sorority Leads Earth Day Efforts with Community Cleanup and Environmental Engagement

By Victoria Kent

In celebration of Earth Day, members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Epsilon Psi Omega Chapter came together for a day of service, collaboration, and environmental stewardship through two impactful events hosted by the Chapter's Enhance Our Environment Committee and Uplifting Our Local Community Committee.

On Saturday, April 18, 2026 sixty plus individuals

participated in the Epsilon Psi Omega Earth Day Initiative, which brought together the undergraduate sorority chapters in partnership with local fraternities as well. The alliance included the Alpha Theta and Theta Lambda Chapters of Grambling State and Louisiana Tech Universities respectively. In unwavering support the undergraduate Brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated; Delta Sigma and Epsilon Kappa Lambda Chapters, extended the friendship bonds in great



Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and participants at Earth Day Event

measure. The happening truly fostered a spirit of uni-

ty and shared responsibility, highlighting the importance

of collective action in protecting and preserving the environment.

In addition, the Epsilon Psi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated meticulously orchestrated its "Love the Boot" Campaign, a hands-on community cleanup effort held in partnership with New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. Volunteers gathered early Saturday morning to beautify the surrounding area, demonstrating a commitment to civic responsibility and community pride.

The aim of the action was to invigorate and uplift the local community while encouraging sustainable habits and environmental awareness. Through these events, the sorority continues to exemplify its dedication to service and its mission of enhancing the quality of life in the communities it serves. By engaging members, community partners, and fellow organizations, the chapter's Earth Day activities served as a powerful reminder that meaningful change begins with collective effort.

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COMMUNITY

Speaker enlightens LPRE members regarding STEM program

By Joice M. Dunn

The Lincoln Parish Retired Educators (LPRE) gathered at the Lincoln Parish Library in Ruston for its April meeting. After a brief welcome and expressions from President Liz White, Ethel Drayton, secretary, reminded the members of the organization's 2025-26 theme, "Learning Never Retires".

"Learning keeps our minds sharp, fosters social connections, and provides purpose. Retirement often offers opportunities to explore new experiences, develop new skills, and focus on health and wellness. LPRE has provided many opportunities through programs and activities to promote its theme this year," explained Drayton.

Dr. White introduced the speaker, Cathy Cox Boniol, as a lifelong res-

ident of Ruston. Boniol retired from the school system after about 40 years and now directs the SCILS Region 8 LASTEM Center at Louisiana Tech University.

Boniol told the group, according to the Louisiana STEM Advisory Council (LASTEM), STEM is an integrated approach to learning about scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematical concepts and processes, as well as their application in careers and in life. It emphasizes dynamic, hands-on, experiential learning across the STEM spectrum, enabling students to actively solve real-world problems through innovative design thinking.

She also had on hand to assist with her presentation, Tom Boniol, as she introduced STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathe-



Cathy Cox Boniol speaks before group

matics) and to engage the retirees in exploring its importance.

Boniol assigned the

group a simple challenge to complete that allowed them to exercise four critical components

to STEM experiences – creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Working in pairs, the members used small Lego blocks to create a tree, displaying the importance of working together while thinking outside the box, exercising their creative muscle, and solving problems.

She told the group that while 98% of 3-year-olds have a genius-level of creative thinking, by age 5, they use about 80% of their potential, and by age 12, creative potential has declined to 2%. In fact, less than 2% of the population retains a genius level of creativity by the time they are 25 years old.

Many present realized the use of STEM was already in motion. For White, it served as a call to action for the group. "I want to know how we can get involved and help support students with STEM.

This looks like something our group can support in a lot of different ways," said Dr. White. As the group partners with Cypress Springs Elementary School, the opportunity to connect with school leaders to understand the needs of its STEM program would be great, but also work with community groups such as 4-H, the Boys & Girls Club, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and other organizations where they are active.

As Drayton reflected on the program, she said that continuing to learn new things helps reinforce the group's purpose. "There is always a new way of thinking. We should always focus on our purpose and remember why we do what we do. We don't get burned out because of what we do. We get burned out because we forget why we do it."

Announcements

Line Dance class open to the Grambling area

A Line Dance Class with Yatta at Board & Bottle is now available for the Grambling area each Monday at 130 W. Park Ave. in Ruston and doors open at 5:30 p.m. The free class is being instructed by Kenyatta Collins.

For more information, please contact Collins at 832-891-7488 or WWW.REALLYGREATSITE.COM.

National Military Spouses Day is coming soon

National Military Spouses Day will be held Friday, May 8, from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. in the Lincoln Parish Library, Jack Beard Community Room.

Sponsors of the event are Partners LA VET CORPS NAVIGATORS: Virginia Scott, Grambling State University; Dwayne Stein, Louisiana Tech University; Ladaruis Chisley, Louisiana Delta Community College and Horacio Paredes, University Louisiana-Monroe.

For more information contact Virginia Scott, La Vet Corps Navigator, scottv@gram.edu or call Office: 318-274-6264 / Cell: 318-232-2202.

NAACP will hold monthly meetings on third Thursday

The Grambling Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) #6094B will host its Executive Committee

meeting at 11:30 a.m. and the regular monthly meeting at 12 noon on Thursday, May 21. The meetings will be held in the Grambling City Hall Community Room.

Annual Sugar Hill Reunion

The annual Sugar Hill Reunion will be held Friday, Saturday, Sunday, May 22-24, please may plans to be present.

A Meet and Greet Fish Fry will kick off the reunion Friday, a BBQ cookout will be held on Saturday and Fun Day will be Sunday. It is a BYOC Affair, meaning Bring Your Own Chair. Everyone must come down into the dead end. No one will be allowed to block driveways or hang out on Grant Street (Security will be enforced).

City of Grambling Water Department Issues Warning of 'Wrong' Sites for Paying Bills

The Water Department of Grambling wants Citizens to beware of paying their bills on the wrong sites online. Citizens should pay their water bills, property taxes and tickets at cityofgrambling.org ONLY. Once at the site, you will be directed to the payment page (ncount.com) where you can pay your bills. Several of these 'wrong' sites have cropped up lately according to the Water Department. One such site is doxo.com. DO NOT pay your bills on this site. Once your money is gone, the City has no way to retrieve it so BEWARE!

Councilwoman conducts 'Listening Post' for Grambling citizens

Grambling City Councilwoman DeLores Smith/Mayor Pro tem is available on the first Monday of each month, noon at Grambling's City Hall for what she calls a "Listening Post." Smith is available to listen to, or answer city-related issues citizens may have. The listening post is a designated place and time to visit with Smith to get questions or concerns heard.

Free food distribution set for Saturdays

The Lincoln United Community Coalition will be distributing free food for those who qualify each Saturday from 10 a.m. until noon. Food is distributed on first, third and fourth Saturdays from the Walmart retail store; second Saturday from the Northeast Louisiana Food Bank out of Monroe. Persons can come to the office at 407 N. Hazel in Ruston on distribution day at 9:30 to qualify. Plates are also sold for \$10 to help support the organization.

For more information, please contact Patricia Mims Brooks 318-265-2011 (office) or 214-662-5407.

Grambling Community Garden seek volunteers

Volunteers are needed for the Grambling Community Garden. If you are

interested in lending a hand, contact DeVaria Ponton, master gardener. The garden is managed by Grow Grambling, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Ponton can grant volunteers hours and service-learning hours. Volunteers may contact Ponton at 318-278-9892.

'No Limit' accepting registration for Spring 2026

The No Limit Soldiers Program is accepting registration and sign-ups. All area youth are encouraged to come out and take part. For more information, please contact Howard Kirkpatrick, 318-497-2978, Montez Moss, 318-243-7451 or Kelli Granger at 318-664-5435.

Parish public transportation available to Grambling

The Lincoln Parish Public Transportation System (LPPTS) is available to the public, including the Grambling area. The system currently provides demand-response, curb to curb, non-emergency service and operates on a first call/come first serve reservation schedule. The service is handicap accessible.

Reservations are required 24 hours in advance unless prepaid and cancellations must be made two hours prior to pick-up time. For additional information please contact Samantha Dimmer, transportation coordinator 318-251-5138.

In Remembrance

Reflections of Nancy R. Delafosse

Nancy R. Delafosse began her earthly journey in Hammond, LA on November 9, 1941. She was the third daughter born to her parents, the late Magnolia Robertson and the late Edward Dangerfield, Sr. She was raised by her mother, but lived with her Aunt Mandy for several years, in Zachary, LA.

She married the love of her life Mr. Vernell Delafosse. They chose Grambling, LA as their lifelong residence, where they raised two beautiful daughters, the late Dr. Nanvernette M. Delafosse and Dalien M. Delafosse Brooks. At an early age, Nancy was baptized at the Macedonia Baptist Church, in Hammond, LA. She converted to Catholicism after marrying Ver-

nell, joining the St. Benedict Catholic Church, in Grambling, LA.

Nancy received her formative education in the Tangipahoa Parish School System, graduating from Greenville Park High School, in Hammond. She received both her post-secondary education and postgraduate education from Grambling State University, earning the Bachelor of Science degree in 1972, the Master of Science in Early Childhood Education (Special Education, and the Plus Thirty in Early Childhood Education (Supervisory Specialization) in 1980.

Nancy loved the field of education. Teaching and spending time with students brought her tremendous joy – it was her lifelong profession. She served as a Kindergarten Teacher at Bernice El-

ementary (1973-1978), Glenview Elementary (1978-2001), Alma J. Brown Elementary (Supervising Teacher 2002-2007) and Bethel Christian School (2011-Present).

Nancy's professional and volunteer affiliations included the Louisiana Reading Association, the Parent-Teacher Association, the National Teachers Association, St. Benedict the Black Parishioner, Grambling State University Quarterback Club, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., and the Lincoln Parish Nursing Home Volunteer Group.

She leaves to cherish her memory her daughter, Dalien D. Brooks (George); granddaughter, Joia M. Emery (Edward); grandsons, Cameron Delafosse, Ananias Delafosse and Jaid-



Nancy Delafosse

en Young; great-granddaughters, Jrew and Jaicee Emery; sisters, Grace Embry and Sarah Dennis (Albert); brother, Eric Dangerfield (Cassandra); sister-in-law, Youlia Rabon (Bobby); brother-in-law, Robert Delafosse Sr. (Betty); Goddaughter, Dawn R. Griffin; Godson, Richard Gallot,

Jr. and a host of nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

Many referred to Nancy R. Delafosse, who entered her eternal rest on April 18, as a precious jewel and extended tributes of love.

Good friends are just one of the little blessings God gives us to bring us joy.

I met Nancy at a Christmas parade in 1970 in Ruston. We were friends from then on. When her husband passed, we decided that she would call me at 9:00 a.m. and 9 p.m. She called me last Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. less than two hours before she called for help. She was a jewel to behold. ~ Dorothy Carter

Mrs. Delafosse was like a mom to me. She stepped into my life not to replace but to love.

She chose me, embraced me and offered steady support through life's changes. It could have been because of the relationship I had with Nan, but I didn't care I took it. She celebrated my wins, picked me up during my losses, and showed up time and again, with kindness and care.

She was often quiet, but her presence was deeply felt. This tribute honors the love given freely-not by blood, but by her heart. Though words can never fully capture the depth of her impact, I will always remember them with gratitude. Her memory will always live on in the values she shared, the laughter she brought and the strength she gave to me and others.

Forever Cherished in My Heart ~ Natalie Blake-Davis

CHURCH NEWS

Faith, Strength, and Survival: A Deeper Look at Black Women and Religion

Staff Report

For generations, the church has been more than a place of worship in Black communities—it has been a source of strength, stability, and survival. For many Black women in particular, faith is deeply woven into daily life. But conversations are emerging that take a closer look at why that connection runs so deep—and what it may cost.

At the center of that conversation is a powerful idea: that Black women's relationship with religion is not just spiritual, but psychological.

A Foundation Built on Survival

Historically, Black women have carried immense responsibility—within their families, their communities, and often in spaces where support was

limited. Faith became a refuge. It offered hope in the face of hardship, a sense of control when life felt unpredictable, and a framework for endurance.

Over time, that reliance evolved into a deeply ingrained attachment.

Many scholars point to what's often called the "strong Black woman" identity—a cultural expectation that Black women must be resilient, self-sacrificing, and emotionally controlled. Strong Black Woman schema This idea has been both empowering and limiting. While it celebrates strength, it can also discourage vulnerability and seeking help. Research shows that internalizing this expectation can lead to higher stress, anxiety, and untreated mental health challenges.

Religion, in this context, can reinforce that role.



When Faith Becomes Identity

In many cases, the church has served as a place where Black women are uplifted—but also where expectations are reinforced. Messages about endurance, sacrifice, and unwavering faith can mirror the same pressures Black women already face in everyday life.

Some observers argue

that this creates a cycle:

- Life presents challenges
- Faith becomes the coping mechanism
- Strength is praised, even when it requires silence

And over time, that cycle can make it difficult to separate personal identity from religious identity.

The connection becomes less about choice—and more about conditioning.

The Emotional Cost of Always Being Strong

One of the key concerns raised in this discussion is the emotional toll of constantly being "the strong one."

The expectation to endure without breaking can leave little room for processing pain, expressing doubt, or prioritizing mental health. In some cases, seeking help outside of faith—such as therapy—may even be discouraged or viewed as unnecessary.

Studies suggest that this dynamic can contribute to underdiagnosed depression and anxiety among Black women, as well as delayed care.

It's not that faith itself is harmful. For many, it remains a vital source of comfort and community.

The issue arises when faith becomes the only outlet.

A Shifting Conversation

Today, more Black women are beginning to question long-held expectations—redefining what strength looks like and exploring new ways to care for their mental and emotional well-being.

That includes:

- Setting boundaries
- Seeking therapy alongside faith
- Embracing vulnerability as part of strength

It's not about abandoning religion. It's about expanding the conversation.

Finding Balance

For communities like Grambling and others across the South, the church remains a cornerstone. But as conversations evolve, so does the understanding of what it means to be strong.

True strength may not be about carrying everything alone.

It may be about knowing when not to.

Church Announcements

Men's Fellowship group to celebrate Jesus

The area Men's Fellowship group will meet every second Monday of each month at the Memorial Funeral Home Chapel in Arcadia, Louisiana, located on 128680 LA-9 71001 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. The men only group gathers for strength, courage and knowledge.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 11. The meeting is spearheaded by Patrick Jefferson, former state representative, along with invited speakers. Every man is invited to come and worship.

Saint Duty to host Arcadia Women's Conference

St. Duty CME Church will hold a Women's

Conference at the Arcadia Community Center, located on 651 Washington Street, May 21-23, hosted by Dr. Pamela Peoples, pastor of St. Duty.

Speakers for the event on Thursday at 7 p.m. will be Pastor Lisa Hawkins; Friday at 7 p.m., Apostle Teresa Jackson Saturday, Pastor Jacqueline Mason and other speakers are Elder Sara Stewart, Lady Krishanda Abney, Evangelist Nelcina Moore and Lady Natalie Henderston.

The conference will also include the Silent Peace book release.

China Grove Church opens 'China Closet'

The China Grove Baptist Church will open the 'China Closet' to the public each Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at

the church on 407 Vernon St., Ruston.

The Closet will be open to anyone in need of clothing or assistance. It is under the supervision of the matrons/misison department of the church.

For additional information contact Evangelist Annie Wilson at 318-570-9134 or call Tonika Blake at 318-243-3295. The church is pastored by Rev. Damian E. Wilson, Sr.

Church of Christ in Grambling Extends invitation

The Church of Christ in Grambling invites all to worship. Bible Study is held Sunday at 10 a.m. and morning worship at 11 a.m. Listeners may join online services by tuning into the YouTube channel, 146 King St. Church of Christ.

Wednesday night Bible study begins at 7 p.m. The Zoom ID is 9744743562 and the church may be contact at ChurchofChristatGrambling@gmail.com or 318-596-1038. The Church is located at 146 King St.

New Hope Church to hold community-wide Bible Study

The New Hope Baptist Church of Ruston will hold a noon community-wide Bible Study each Wednesday. The church is located at 301 W. Vaughn Ave., Ruston.

Editor's Note: If you have a church announcement, please email the information to the gramblingconnection@gmail.com.

Area Church Directory

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Cathedral of Praise Worship Center - 2877 Highway 33, Ruston
First Assembly of God - 1400 Woodward Ave., Ruston

BAPTIST

Alabama, 16061 Hwy. 151, Arcadia
Barnett Springs, 1601 S. Barnett Springs Rd., Ruston
China Grove Missionary, 406 Vernon St., Ruston
Christ Temple, 7349 Hwy 80. Ruston
Church of Restoration, 285 Main St., Grambling
Cook, 2000 Cooktown Rd, Ruston
Corinth, 4327 Hw 545, Dubach
Countyline, 7426 Hwy. 146, Ruston
Dayspring Baptist Ministries, 3191 South Vienna St, Ruston
Emmanuel, 1200 Farmerville Hwy., Ruston
Fellowship, 6476 Hwy 151, Dubach
Fellowship, 1572 Highway 507 South, Simsboro
Hico, 117 Oak St., - One block south of Hwy. 80 in Choudrant
First, Hico St., Dubach
First, 200 S. Trenton St., Ruston
First, Simsboro
Friendship, 143 West Sixth Street, Bernice
Grace, 2808 Trenton Ave., Ruston
Grace Bible, 216 Rough Edge Rd., Ruston
Greater Pleasant Grove, 1270 Golf Course Rd., Unionville
Greater St. Luke, 163 St. Luke Church Rd, Arcadia
Gum Spring, 3117 Hwy 151, Farmerville
Hebron, Love Chapel, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston
Hico, 653 Hwy. 152, Dubach
Hopewell, 7657 Fellowship Rd., Hwy 151, Dubach
Lane Chapel, 1016 McAllister, Ruston
Lanes Chapel, Hwy. 151 Downs-ville
Liberty Hill, Simsboro
Longstraw, 1799 Styles, Ranch Rd.,
Love Chapel, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston

Macedonia, No.1, Rt. 2, Dubach
Macedonia, No. 2, 489 E. Sibley Rd., Choudrant
Mineral Springs, 4599 Hwy 822, Dubach
Mount Harmony, 210 Mt. Harmony Church Rd, Ruston
Mount Calm, 566 Mount Calm Rd., Simsboro
Mount Olive, 571 Mt. Olive Rd. Grambling, Louisiana.
Mount Olive Outreach, 2817 S. Service Road W., Ruston
Mount Pisgah, Hwy. 3061, Ruston
Mount Sinai, 2269 Hwy. 145, Choudrant
Mount Vernon, 1356 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach
Mount Zion, 2586 Hwy 150., Grambling
Mount Zion No. 2, 113 California Plant Road, Dubach
New Hope, Choudrant
New Hope, 302 W. Vaughn, Ruston
New Liberty Hill, Hwy. 544, Simsboro
New Living Word Ministries, 1900 W. Barnett Springs, Ruston
New Pilgrim Rest, Inc., 2697 Elm St., Arcadia
New Prospect, 3438 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach
New Prosperity, 1378 Prosperity Church, Clay
New Rocky Valley, 2155 Martin Luther King Ave., Grambling
Northview Missionary, Highway 33, Ruston
Olive Grove, 3138 Olive Grove Rd, Choudrant
Pilgrim Rest, 622 W. Line Ave., Ruston
Pine Grove, 470 Chandler Rd., Ruston
Pleasant Grove, 1366 Pleasant Grove Road, Choudrant
Pleasant Grove, "The Oasis in the Woods", 446 Bowden Rd., Ruston
Pleasant Hill, 1127 Mondy Rd, Simsboro
Rock Corner & Garden of Prayer, 824 Rock Corner Rd, Dubach, off Hwy.33, 14 miles north of Ruston
Rocky Valley, Simsboro
Solid Rock, 1511 West California Hwy 80, Ruston
Southside, 3191 South Vienna St., Ruston

Springhill, 727 Dicks Store Rd., Ruston
St. David, Vienna.
St. John, Old Grambling Rd., Ruston.
St. Mary, 1114 Larson St., Ruston.
St. Peter, 404 Longstraw Rd., Ruston
St. Rest, 09 Walker Rd., Choudrant
St. Rest, Hwy. 146 West, Dubach
Temple, 1515 S. Service Rd. W. Ruston
True Believers, 184 CCC Road, Ruston
The Springs, (A ministry of Temple Baptist Church) 1601 S. Barnett Springs Ave., Ruston
The Springs.life The Word, 504 S. Main St., Grambling University - 2856 W. California, Ruston
Vernon, 190 Vernon-Eros Road, Ruston
Woods Chapel, 326 Hwy 454, Ruston
Zion Hill, 505 Lee St., Ruston
Zion Traveler, 1201 Martin Luther King Dr, Ruston

CATHOLIC

St. Benedict, 471 Main St., Grambling
St. Thomas Aquinas, 810 Carey Avenue, Ruston

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Church of Christ, 2902 Hwy. 80 West, Ruston
Church of Christ, 146 King St., Grambling
Northside, 1804 N. Trenton St., Ruston
Orleans Cir. Church of Christ, 2103 Orleans Cir., Ruston
Ruston, 2300 W. Woodward Ave., Ruston, www.rustonchurchofchrist.org

EPISCOPAL

Church of the Redeemer, 504 Tech Dr., Ruston
St. Luke's, 538 Main St., Grambling

METHODIST

Ansley Union, 328 Ansley Rd, Ruston, located 10 miles south of Ruston off Hwy 167
Antioch UMC, Simsboro
Arcadia First UMC, Arcadia

Choudrant UMC, 125 Pecan St., Choudrant
Dubach UMC, Dubach
First UMC, Arcadia
Grace, 3401 N. Trenton St., Ruston
Lewis Temple, Main St., Grambling
Mays Chapel CME, 615 W. Line Ave., Ruston
Memorial UMC, 9325 Hwy 80, Simsboro.
Mt. Mariah UMC - Salem UMC - 11793 Hwy. 151, Dubach
St. Peter AME, 1104 Arlington St., Ruston.
Trinity Methodist, 1000 Woodward Ave., Ruston
Wesley Chapel, 4330 Hwy. 818, Ruston

PENTECOSTAL

Anchor Tabernacle, Exit 93 from I-20 then South 1/2 mile, Choudrant
First Pentecostal, Corner of Kentucky and Goodwin Ruston
King's Court UPC, 2401 S. Service Rd. West, Ruston
LifePoint Church, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston. lifepointruston.com
The Pentecostals, 2851 Hwy 33 North, Ruston
Powerhouse Temple of Christ Apostolic, 101 Main St., Grambling
United Pentecostal, Dubach
Zion Temple Apostolic Faith Deliverance - Eastern Hills, off Beacon Light Rd., Ruston
Voice of Revival Ministry - 304 W. California St., Ruston
PRESBYTERIAN
Alabama (USA), 2091 Hwy 145, Choudrant
Covenant Reformed, 2106 Cooktown Rd., Ruston
Greenwood, Lincoln Parish Rd. 181, between Mitcham's & Hwy. 146, Ruston
Ruston (USA), 212 N. Bonner St.

OTHERS

Abundant Grace Tabernacle, 3092 Hwy 556, Choudrant
Campus Community Worship Center, 1000 Saratoga St., Ruston
Christian L.I.F.E. Church, 107 Love Ave., Ruston

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 205 Woodhaven Rd., Ruston
Church of the Living God, 1438 Hwy. 167 W., Dubach
Church of the Nazarene, 1101 Center St., Ruston
Douglas Church, 1642 Hwy 821, Ruston
Church of God in Christ, 256 Voss Street, Dubach
Faith Church, 1507 Goodwin Road, Ruston
Focus Christian Ministries, Martin Luther King Community Center, 901 Martin Luther King Dr., Ruston
Fountain of Praise United Worship Center, 1394 Hazel St., Arcadia
The Gospel, 108 Sanctuary Rd, Ruston
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 2508 Kavanaugh Road, Ruston
Impact Worship Center, Greenwood Recreation Center, 1306 Cornell Ave, Ruston
Ruston Housing Authority Building 901 Martin Luther King Dr. Ruston.
Lifetchurch.LA, 3000 S. Vienna St., Ruston
LifePoint Church of Ruston, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston
Living Water Full Gospel Church, 149 Fairgrounds Rd., Ruston
Miracle Temple COGIC, 1405 S. Farmerville, Ruston
New Living Word Ministry, 1900 Barnett Springs Rd. Ruston
New Testament Church at Grambling Inc., 508 Main St., Grambling
Praise Temple, Ramada Inn, 107 Love Ave., Ruston
St. Paul Lutheran, 504 Tech Drive, Ruston
The Bridge Community Church, North Campus, 2301 N. Trenton, Ruston
Triumph The Church and Kingdom of God in Christ, Hwy. 3061 E. Tenn. Rd., Ruston
United Faith Tabernacle Ministries & Prayer Center, 303 Cherry St., Bernice,
Upon the Rock Outreach Center, 513 E. Texas Ave., Ruston



HEALTH & WELLNESS

CHARMING'S CORNER

Listening to the Body's Inner Intelligence

By Charming Davis

We often think of ourselves as one single voice—but in reality, we are a system of many.

The mind, the heart, and the gut each carry their own intelligence. Each one communicates in its own way. And when we learn how to listen, we gain access to a deeper level of intuition and self-awareness.

The mind is logical. It processes, analyzes, and tries to make sense of the world. It asks questions, weighs options, and seeks understanding.

The heart is emotional. It feels, connects, and guides us through love, compassion, and truth. It often knows what is right before the mind can explain it.

The gut is instinctual. It

reacts quickly. It senses danger, alignment, or discomfort without needing evidence. This is where our intuition often speaks the loudest.

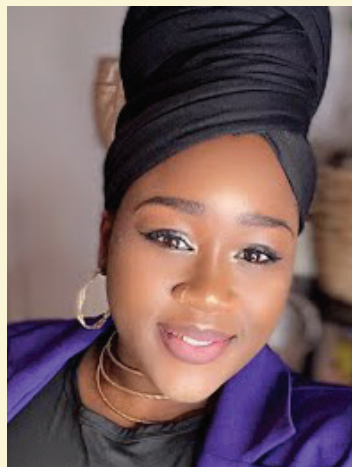
Each of these systems serves a purpose—but the key is learning how they work together.

Have you ever overthought a decision, but still felt something in your gut telling you “no”? That is your instinct speaking.

Have you ever felt drawn to someone or something without knowing why? That is your heart guiding you.

Have you ever talked yourself into something that didn't feel right—and later realized your body was trying to warn you? That is what happens when the mind overrides the body's intelligence.

The goal is not to silence one voice—it is to bring them



Charming Davis

into alignment.

For example:

You may meet someone and your mind says, “They seem great on paper,” but your gut feels uneasy. That discomfort is worth paying attention to.

Or you may have an opportunity that logically makes no

sense, but your heart feels expansive and excited. That feeling may be guiding you toward growth.

Your body communicates through sensations.

Tightness in the chest.

Butterflies in the stomach.

A sense of calm or unease.

These are not random—they are messages.

The more you slow down and become present, the more clearly you can hear them.

In a fast-paced world, we are often taught to ignore these signals. To push through. To override our feelings in the name of productivity or logic.

But true alignment comes from listening—not just thinking.

When the mind, heart, and gut are in harmony, decisions become clearer. Life feels

more grounded. And we begin to move in a way that is both intentional and intuitive.

Learning to trust your body is a practice.

It requires stillness.

Awareness.

And a willingness to listen without immediately reacting.

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Embracing Mother's Day with great mental health

By Jeannetta Stephens-Jones

Mother's Day is a day to recognize and appreciate mothers and with it comes emotionally complex experience. Mother's day can evoke a kaleidoscope of emotions such as joy, love and a deep appreciation to celebrate the women who raised and nurtured us. For some people, Mother' Day can also be a source of stress and anxiety. This is especially true if the relationship with their mother is strained or if they have experienced loss or even a trauma related to motherhood.

Mothers often feel the pressure to be everything. This includes nurturing, success, patient, present and forever composed. Often times, mothers carry an invisible weight which is the mental load of keeping everything running emotionally and logistically. For years mothers have been managing work, family responsibility along with maintaining appearances as well as social obligations. These chores can add pressure and be very impactful on a mother's mental health. And might I add that the presence of social media can louden the expectations of what mother's day should be.

Please don't misunderstand, the joy of being a mother is very beautiful and yet demanding, from sleepless nights with newborns to an emotional maze of raising teens or supporting adult children. In all these phases, mothers can find themselves filling the cups of others. This kind of love and dedication is very powerful. However, mental health does not take a break and many times Mother's day can be layered with convoluted feelings.

How to manage difficult emotions related to Mother's Day

The following are suggested strategies that can help manage difficult emotions:

- Validate your feelings- Recognize that it is normal to feel a range of emotions related to Mother's Day. Remember you are not alone.
- Set boundaries-understand your triggers. If being around family is triggering for you, take a break and decline from participating in activities that make you uncomfortable.
- Focus on gratitude-take time to reflect on the positive aspects of your relationship with your mother or the maternal figures in your life.
- Practice self-care - engage in activities that promote self-care



Jeannetta Stephens-Jones

and self-compassion i.e., yoga, meditation, healthy eating

- Check in with yourself- ask “How am I really doing?” please give yourself grace in the answer
- Seek support- reach out to friends or loved ones who can provide emotional support. Consider seeing a therapist who may be able to help you process your feelings and help to develop coping skills

How to minimize stress during Mother's Day
Stress for mothers stems from multiple categories, including how little time they have for themselves and being the point person. Here are some strategies to help as the Mother's Day holiday approaches:

- Get comfortable saying “No” - Saying no helps to establish healthy boundaries which can keep you from feeling excess stress
- Embrace Mindfulness:

engage in deep breathing exercising, spend some time in nature which can help you manage challenging emotions

- Engage in activities that you enjoy - Prioritize activities that bring you joy and relaxation. Reflect on needs and desires that you have emotionally, physically and spiritually and gift yourself with them

Mother's Day is a time

to celebrate and honor mothers which can bring on mixed emotions. The best way to deal with these mixed emotions is to acknowledge your feelings, even if they are complex. Mothers, please be mindful and remember that taking care of your mental and emotional health is beneficial to your whole family for mothers are the real MVPs. You are not alone and you don't have to do it alone.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY TO ALL MOTHERS!!!

Resources:

www.webmd.org

www.nami.org

www.mayoclinic.org

www.helpguide.org

Jeannetta Stephens-Jones, Ed.D., retired educational diagnostician/ speech pathologist and president of NAMI Ruston, may be contacted at jjones79_aka@yahoo.com.



"From all of us at the City of Grambling, we proudly extend our heartfelt congratulations to the graduating class of Spring 2026 at Grambling State University.

As you close this significant chapter of your academic journey, we celebrate your dedication, perseverance, and achievement. It is our sincere hope and prayer that you move forward well prepared and confidently equipped for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Anatomy of A Musical

By Lena W. Claybon

The recent production of Dreamgirls by the VAPA at GSU was nothing short of spectacular! The singing, the dancing and acting was top notch and all under the direction of Dr. Prince Duren, Assistant Professor at GSU. We recently sat down with Dr. Duren to talk about what went into putting together a musical such as this.

GC: So, what I want to start with is definitely your background. Then we'll move into talking about the production.

Duren: Well, I'm originally from a small town in Mississippi called Itta Bena.

I went to high school in Michigan, Muskegon, Michigan. I went to Jackson State University where I got my undergraduate degree in Mass Communications and English. Then I went to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville to get an MFA in play and screenwriting.

And then about two years ago, I got my PhD in Higher Education Administration from Jackson State. I started teaching at Grambling in 2023.

GC: Okay. So, then you came here in 2023 and you've been teaching here ever since?

Duren: Yes. I was teaching at Jackson State first then I came here.

GC: Alright, so how many musicals have you done prior to this one?

Duren: Are you talking about directing?

GC: Yes.

Duren: Okay. I've done a combination of both musicals and plays with music. And, so I've probably done maybe about... seven or eight.

GC: That's interesting. What's the distinction between the two?

Duren: Well, the difference between a musical and a play with music is that in a musical, the dialogue is sung. And then in a play with music, you've got the music and then you got the dialogue spoken. So, you stop the dialogue and then do a song. Like Tyler Perry plays would be plays with music.

GC: Ok, got it. So, let's talk about the production itself. I want to give the audience a bird's view inside of this world and what it takes to do musical theatre.

So, just from the beginning, tell me how do you go about putting together a musical? What's the first step?

Duren: Well, this process actually started two years ago when we were trying to get the rights to do Dreamgirls. And so that was a challenge in itself because it takes a lot to get the rights to musicals, especially when it's in conversation of being brought back to Broadway.

GC: Oh. It's coming back to Broadway?

Duren: Yes, if I'm not mistaken, it's slated to come back to Broadway soon.

GC: Oh, I didn't know that.

Duren: And so, the rights are scarcely distributed when that happens. So, one of the first things after getting the rights is that... Well, prior to getting the rights, you need to secure someone who's going to teach the music. The Music Director is the quintessential aspect. It's vitally important because that person pretty much is the one that's going to guide this musical.

GC: Okay.

Duren: And the thing that makes this musical challenging, than more so probably any of the others that I've directed, is that this is a musical about music. It's about a music group.

And that's important to understand because some plays you can get away with, you know, decent singers to slightly above average singers. But when you have a musical that is about music, you have to have individuals that can truly sing. And you need to also have someone that can teach. And so, we had to find someone that could do that, but also someone who would be able to have the patience to be working with college student. And all the intricacies that go along with that.

GC: I see.

Duren: And so that's the number one thing. The second thing you have to find is a choreographer. Because every musical has some type of dancing that goes along with it. So, once you secure who's going to teach your music, you need to secure who's going to teach your dance.

GC: And were these people outside of the university?

Duren: Well, we were fortunate to have, Mr. Carl, who's our coordinator of our theater program, who found Ruth God, who was an alum of Grambling, and who was in the music department. And she graciously agreed to be our musical director, which, you know, she was



Students T'Ana Johnson and Kendrick Adams as Deena Jones and Curtis Taylor Jr.

definitely a God-sent person, no pun intended.

GC: Well, it was definitely great that you didn't even have to leave the building to find someone!

Duren: Exactly! And so, once you get that music director, once you get that choreographer, who our choreographer was actually another one of our faculty members, Jaime Griffith, who is the Artistic Director of the Orchestis Dance Company. And so, I knew with Ruth and with Jaime, I was good.

And so, after that, the third entity that you want to find is a live band. That's important. You can get away with tracks, but there's just a distinction between a track versus hearing the horns.

GC: The band was phenomenal. At the show, at first, I thought the actors were singing to a pre-recorded track because the music sounded so much like the original!

Duren: And the thing is, typically musicals come with rehearsal track because you can't get the band to be there for three months during rehearsal so you use tracks, but Dreamgirls didn't come with rehearsal tracks!

GC: What? You're kidding me.

Duren: No, because the people that published the rights said, "Well, it's intended to be done with a live band. So that's why we don't equip it with rehearsal tracks."

And so, I had to find a way to find the music and pull the tracks or pull the vocals from the actual tracks. So, all these things had to happen.

GC: Wow, that's a lot.

Duren: Yes, and all these decisions and these choices had to be made before we got to the point where we could say, "Let's have an audition."

And so [once again] I was fortunate that Mr. Hendrix, Michael Hendrix, who was in the music department, came on board to help because hiring a band for a musical is expensive.

GC: I can imagine.

Duren: And Mr. Hendrix didn't charge me a thing. Mr. Hendrix said, "Hey, listen, we can't do all the shows [because of other obligations], but I got some students that I think could pull this off." And he delivered.

And that was the third leg of this. And so that was probably like the background of how we got through the initial process.

GC: Okay, so now at that point, you said it was a two-year process. So, at that point you start auditions?

Duren: Well, those things I just talked about was during the second year. The first year [while we were working on securing the rights],

I spent researching other productions, researching the backstory of the play, researching the characters, and



Cornelius Denzel Jackson plays "CC" in production

after that do you start rehearsals?

Duren: Oh, immediately.

GC: Because you had already set the date for the play, right?

Duren: Yes. I didn't mention this, but in those auditions, [the students] actually did choreography as well. So, Ms. Jaime actually came to callbacks. She taught a dance routine.

GC: So, in a week, they had to learn that?

Duren: Yeah, it was very intense. Very intense.

GC: Okay. So, you start the audition process. You find your actors and then you start your rehearsals. So that was around what, February?

Duren: We started our first rehearsal the first week of February.

GC: From that point, how long does it take for it to really kind of gel together where everybody knows their lines, knows the choreography, and you put it on and it looks like a real play?

Duren: We started in February, so we were probably show ready around April 10th, maybe April 11th, 12th,

something like that, a couple of weeks out from our first show on April 22nd.

GC: Wow, that really wasn't that much time.

Duren: Not at all, especially for a show of this size with all these elements involved... And some of these students who played principal roles, like Kendrick Adams, who played Curtis Taylor, Jr. and Destiny Hagen, who played Effie, it was their first play.

GC: What?! Wow, I thought they all came from a musical theatre background!

Duren: No, not at all.

GC: Well, they did an amazing job! The talent on this campus just amazes me!

Duren: Yes, and they were excited to be doing Dreamgirls.

GC: I bet! So that leads me to my last question. What can the readers expect for upcoming productions from you guys like for next season?

Duren: We are opening up our fall season with a play called "The Odd Couple".

GC: From the TV show?

Duren: Yes. It was a play first. So we're doing that. And then, next Spring, I'm directing a play called "The African Mean Girls" that kind of deals with colorism, that deals with identity, and deals with the pressures, of just being a high school teen trying to figure out life.

GC: Sounds interesting. Looking forward to it. Well, look, I thank you so much, Dr. Duren, for sitting down with me. This was a great interview.

Duren: Thank you.



Young men perform in show



Kayden Shelmine, T'Ana Johnson and Saudia Scott as The Dreamettes

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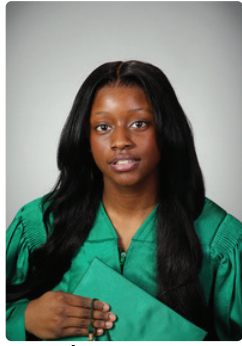


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The Faculty and Staff of Lincoln Preparatory School would like to recognize our 2026 Seniors. We salute these students and their parents on a job well done!



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Mackenzie Becks



Mikenzie Brooks



Courtnei Campbell



Landyn Chambers



Dbraylon Cooper



Ashari Davis



Khamaya East



Marquize Ellis



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Franklin Green



Star'reyelle Gross



Tyler Harper



Zion Hicks



Jaden Higgins



Jakaylin Huntley



Jaylin Huntley



Tylajah Jenkins



Jakobe Jones



Kalia Jones



Ta'miya Jones



Kianti Leger



Taleah Lewis



Lakiyah McCarter



Shayla Minnifield



Eniyah Moore



Ryan Randolph



Simya Richards



Jabari Robinson



Juel Rodriguez



Isaac Ross



Javion Shelton



Joseph Spann



Sa'Jaylon Timmons



Marley Venzant



Kaden Vernon



Haden Watts



Jabarri Willis



Tamia Witherspoon



Ja'larrion Wright



London Wright

NOT PICTURED:

Jamaica Goldsby
Adaylin Hammock



SPORTS

Grambling State Announces 2026 Soccer Signing Class Featuring 14 Newcomers

By: *GSU Athletic Communications*

GRAMBLING, La. | The Grambling State women's soccer program led by head coach Justin Wagar, has announced its 2026 signing class.

The class features 14 incoming student-athletes, including four collegiate transfers.

It also brings together a strong mix of domestic and international talent highlighted by four international signees and players representing eight different U.S. states.

Among the class are current or former national and youth national team players from Ghana, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Coming off an 11-7-4 campaign in 2025, Grambling State finished undefeated in conference play for the second time in three years and secured its second NCAA Tournament appearance in that span.

The Lady Tigers also ranked 16th nationally in scoring with 50 total goals.

With that momentum in place, the program looks to this class to continue elevating its success heading into 2026.

A versatile presence on the back line, Kianna Logan (5-7, Fr., Ontario, Canada) brings international experience as a starter for the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Women's National Team. A consistent leader at Burlington Soccer Club, she has earned multiple provincial selections while producing



both goals and assists. "Kianna is a versatile player who can play numerous positions from defense to midfield and excel," Wagar said.

From the Pacific Northwest, Sidney Johnson (5-8, Fr., Pullman, Wash.) adds size and physicality at center back following a decorated run with Washington East Surf Girls Academy. A two-time first team all-league selection and team MVP, she has also earned multiple regional and national team honors. "Sid is strong, fast, athletic, a hard worker and a good defender," Wagar said.

Speed and international pedigree define Sanai Sereboe (5-6, Fr., Ontario, Canada), who has represented the Ghana U-20 National Team. Currently competing for Scrosoppi FC, she has earned recognition as one of Canada's top prospects while excelling in both soccer and track. Her athleticism and versatility provide value on both sides of the ball.

Amely Parada (5-5, Fr., Nevada) has competed at a high level across multiple platforms, including U.S. club soccer and opportunities in Mexico. A Guatemala U-20 National Team invitee,

she brings vision and finishing ability to the attack. "She has a great shot, is creative with the ball, and has strong vision for passing," Wagar said.

Mia Philyaw (5-7, Fr., Oregon) offers pace on the wing as a two-sport athlete competing in both soccer and track for the Portland Thorns Academy ECNL team and runs as a sprinter for the track team.

A first team all-conference selection, she has the ability to stretch defenses vertically while contributing as a sprinter in multiple relay events. "Mia can fly up the line and stretch teams, she is aggressive, smart, with a hard shot and plays with passion," Wagar said.

Bringing experience from England, Millicent Smith (5-8, Fr.) has competed with Bolton Wanderers first team while contributing to a league title and cup championship. Millie also represented the Bolton Wanderers in the National Football League's U21 team as their team captain and reached the Trophy Final. Comfortable in possession, she provides composure and vision in the midfield. "She's a real-

ly smart, talented player who performs well under pressure," Wagar said.

In the midfield, Jaleah Gonzalez (5-5, Fr., Pa.) brings relentless energy and international experience with the Puerto Rican National Team. A standout for FC Delco ECNL and Reading United, she is known for her defensive work rate and ability to cover ground. "I love Jaja's work ethic in the midfield. She busts her butt to get back on D, to win the ball and to cover ground in the center of the pitch," Wagar said.

Adding experience in goal, Alina Arneith (6-0, Sr., Germany) transfers in from the University of North Texas after earning a starting role and conference recognition. She previously recorded 20 shutouts in two seasons at Motlow State. "She's a fantastic goalkeeper and person. She's very coachable and eager to learn, she wants to improve every week and we're looking forward to having her learn, grow & excel for us her senior year," Wagar said.

An offensive-minded addition, Brianna Murphy (So., Michigan) arrives as a junior college All-American after totaling 12 goals and 15 assists during her freshman season at Schoolcraft College. Her ability to create

and distribute adds another dimension in the attacking third. "I really like how Brianna attacks and creates, getting up the field, crossing it in and setting up her teammates when she's not scoring herself," said Wagar.

Defensively, Anaiya Morris (5-9, So., Ontario, Canada) joined the program mid-year and impressed during the spring. A left-footed defender with strong instincts, she previously saw action at Western Illinois and brings added depth along the back line. "Anaiya played well for us this spring, she reads the game and jumps passes, and has a blast for a shot and in serving the ball from the back," said Wagar.

Up front, Pearl Wicks (5-4, Fr., Wash.) has established herself as a consistent goal scorer, leading her club team while earning first team all-league honors in high school. Her tenacity and ability to pressure defenses stand out. "I watched her play this spring at the Champions Cup showcase and was so impressed by her ability to affect the game and be a difference maker. She is a great late addition for us," Wagar said.

In goal, D'Naela Myers (5-8, Fr., Fla.) brings athleticism and a 90 percent save rate. She was a All-County selection for Doral Acade-

my Charter School and the starting keeper for Ft Lauderdale Select U18/19 team and prior to them a starter on FC Prime's ECNL-R team. Quick off her line and strong in traffic, she has shown the ability to make key reaction saves. "DJ has a lot of upside to her play. She reads crosses and shots well and makes some big reaction saves. She's mobile and has a lot of range in goal," said Wagar.

Tyniah White (5-4, Jr., Utah) adds collegiate experience after a strong run at Casper College, where she earned first team all-region honors. With 10 career goals and eight assists, she brings speed and creativity to the wing. "She's fast, athletic, creative on the ball, can run at defenders and put them under pressure. We're happy to have her joining our GSU team," Wagar said.

Rounding out the class, Dylan Carter (5-5, Fr., Calif.) is a dynamic winger who scored 25 goals during her prep career while earning Southwest ECNL-R All-Region honors at the club level. "She's another late great pick up for us and can dribble in tight spaces and get out of trouble, create scoring chances, an finish. Another true lefty who will do well on the flanks for GSU," Wagar said.

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With love,
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