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First Amendment and Local Schools

Supreme Court to Hear Landmark Case

By **BILL BARLOW**

ERMA - In March 2018, high school students in Middle Township, Ocean City, Wildwood, and Lower Township walked out of class as part of a nationwide protest against gun violence.

A month earlier, a 20-year-old man murdered 17 people by semiautomatic rifle fire at Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland, Florida. It was the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history, sur-

passing the 15 killed in Columbine High School, in Colorado, almost 20 years earlier. It came shortly after other mass shootings, in 2017, and launched a renewed effort to address gun violence in schools and beyond.

Local students joined the impassioned call. In Lower Cape May Regional High School and other schools around the county, staff cooperated with the walk-out.

"We worked with the kids to make sure it was something safe and appropriate. How do you tell kids they shouldn't protest school shootings?" said Joseph Castellucci, superintendent, Lower Cape May Regional School District.

The message itself is not supposed to matter, whether school staff wholeheartedly agree or viscerally disagree with what students want to say.

Courts allowed restrictions on speech, such as limiting times, places, and methods for individuals to speak their minds. However, if the restrictions are based on the content of the speech, they are likely to face far more scrutiny, according to the Philadelphia-based Freedom Forum Institute.

Schools have far more leeway than governments in controlling what students may say or do. A school district has broad powers over students, under the concept of in loco parentis, or "in the place of the parent."

Schools can search lockers, limit expression, and even decide what students may and may not wear, but it's a balancing act, weighing the rights of the individual against the school's interests.

Students have issues they care about and want to be heard, Castellucci said, but that is not what schools are for.

Supreme Court To Have a Say

A showdown between school discipline and the First Amendment erupted over a social media post from a ninth grader, in Pennsylvania. In 2017, the

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Covid Vaccine Comes to Long-term Care Facilities

By **KAREN KNIGHT**

COURT HOUSE - An important step toward "making our community healthy and safe" was taken with the first Covid vaccine doses being administered at long-term care (LTC) facilities across the county.

CVS Pharmacy Dec. 30, 2020, arrived at the United Methodist Communities (UMC) at The Shores, in Ocean City, and administered the first of the two-part Pfizer vaccine to 24 health care residents and 44 health care staff at the facility.

Seventy-three of 79 residents at Crest Haven Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, in Court House, received their first dose of the vaccine Jan. 5, along with 25 of about 125 staff.

These LTC facilities, along with others across the county and state, will be receiving the vaccine through the federal Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program, a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CVS and Walgreens to facilitate onsite Covid vaccination services.

Walgreens and CVS work directly with the facilities to schedule vaccinations, and more than 530 facilities were scheduled to receive their first

"While the vaccine is not a panacea, it is an important step towards making our community healthy and safe. After nine long months, it is a ray of hope for many of our residents."

- Jan Carrato, communications and public relations director, United Methodist Communities (UMC) at The Shores

vaccines, according to the state Department of Health (DOH).

The elderly population has a much higher risk of severe illness, hospitalization, or death from Covid, thus contributing to the disproportionate effect the pandemic had on LTC residents, according to the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living.

Forty percent (<http://bit.ly/3bekXUd>) of all Covid-related deaths in the U.S. occurred in LTC facilities.

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Who Gets it and When? What's Known about the Covid Vaccine

By **VINCE CONTI**

COURT HOUSE - As Covid cases continue rising, the vaccination program has begun, but the rollout is slower than state officials would like.

According to state data, just over 200,000 individuals have been vaccinated in New Jersey since the first one on Dec. 15. With the state's goal of administering the vaccine to 70% of the adult population in six months—roughly 4.7 million individuals—the pace of vaccinations will have to be almost four times what it currently is.

Gov. Phil Murphy says that the state has a greater capacity to administer the vaccine, claiming that the problem is a slower-than-expected distribution of sufficient doses to the state.

Registration Site Goes Live

The state opened an online registration portal (<https://covidvaccine.nj.gov/>) to guide residents through the process. It takes about 10 minutes and requires responses to a series of demographic, job-related and health questions, which help establish an individual's position in the state's phased priority list. Once on the list, a confirmation email will explain the process by which a



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registered individual will be notified when they can schedule an appointment for vaccination. The state hopes to add an appointment scheduling function to the same website.

Who Pays? What if I Don't Have Insurance?

Vaccine doses are paid for with U. S. taxpayer dollars and will be given at no cost to the recipient.

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Suit Alleges Sexual Abuse at Point Retreat

By **BILL BARLOW**



Bill Barlow

A New York state woman filed a lawsuit alleging she endured abuse by clergy members while staying at the Marianist Center, on Yale Road, in Cape May Point.

CAPE MAY POINT - For over 50 years, the Marianist Family Retreat Center, on the corner of Yale and Cape avenues, in Cape May Point, has been the site of contemplation, celebration and prayer for the faithful.

One woman alleges that in summer 1974, it was a site of horror and violation that still hurts decades later.

At the time, she was 14 years old and a volunteer camp counselor, according to a complaint filed in Superior Court Jan. 6. Identified in the court documents as Jane Doe RP, she filed a suit against the center and the Marianist Province of the United States, alleging that she faced repeated sexual abuse from two clergy members.

One, the Rev. John Sheehan, was included in a list of Society of Mary members found to have sexually abused a minor. The other, brother Albert Koch, does not appear to be on any such list and appears to have been active at the center into 2020.

"Sheehan, I believe, has passed away. Al Koch, late last year, was removed from the retreat," said Patrick Noaker, an attorney representing Jane Doe.

Noaker is an attorney in Minneapolis. The accuser lives in New York state, where she grew up. The suit states that she decided to remain anonymous to avoid further harm. She is married, with grown children.

"This was a long time coming," Noaker said.

There is no indication that criminal charges were ever filed against either man. A search of news articles and databases outlining clergy abuse did not show other accusations of abuse at the center.

The civil suit is requesting a jury trial, in Cape May County. It does not list a number for the damages requested. That will be up to the jury, Noaker said.

The 2019 New Jersey Child Victims Act cleared the way for the suit, according to Noaker. It opened a two-year window for people to file civil claims asserting childhood abuse, even if it took place de-

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Cape May Man Arrested at U.S. Capitol

WASHINGTON - A Cape May man was one of several arrested during the Jan. 6 storming of the U.S. Capitol, in Washington, led by President Trump loyalists, NJ.com reported.

Leonard Guthrie was one of 10 charged with unlawful entry, as stated in a Jan. 7 release from U.S. Capitol Police.

The incident interrupted the vote to accept the Electoral College results declaring Joe Biden as president-elect.

As of Jan. 6, 52 people were arrested in connection to the incident, including 26 on the Capitol grounds. Fourteen police officers were injured.

One woman, identified as a protestor, was shot and killed by police, and three others died after suffering medical emergencies related to the breach, the report continued.



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A Cape May man was among those arrested at the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6 when a large group of Pro-Trump loyalists stormed the building during the 2020 Election's certification process.



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