

The Daily Mail

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Volume 229, No. 170

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WEATHER

TODAY	TONIGHT	SAT
A t-storm around	A t-storm around early	Showers around; not as warm
HIGH	LOW	74
86	62	68

Complete weather, A2

SPORTS

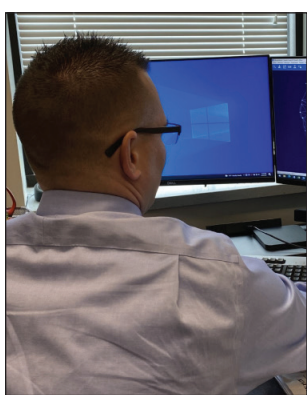


Changed hearts and minds

When Colin Kaepernick gently knelt during the national anthem in 2016, he set off an earthquake.

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LOCAL



Maintaining a watchful eye

Greene County Sheriff's Office joins nationwide network to monitor registered sex offenders

PAGE A3

STATE

New woes for ethics board

An unidentified JCOPE commissioner suspected of leaking information said to remain on panel

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School's open: Wear your masks

By **Melanie Lekocevic**
Columbia-Greene Media

It's like deja vu all over again.

As the COVID-19 pandemic infiltrates a third school year, students and teachers will be required to wear face masks under a new state mandate by Gov. Kathy Hochul, regardless of vaccination status.

Schools statewide were shut down and learning moved online in March 2020 when the virus outbreak began, and most schools incorporated a hybrid approach of remote and in-person learning for the 2020-21 school year last

September, with face masks required for students and staff when on school grounds and buses.

Today, as another school start looms for the 2021-22 academic year, Hochul imposed a mandate that face masks will continue to be required at this time.

Catskill District Superintendent Ronel Cook said Thursday the district will follow the state requirement.

“The goal from the onset and moving forward is to return students to school five

See MASKS A2



COURTESY OF TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Students and staff will be required to wear face coverings as the 2021-22 school year begins in September.



COURTESY OF TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Committee to spearhead Athens cannabis decision



COURTESY OF GREG GARRISON/AL.COM

The village of Athens is considering whether to opt in or opt out of permitting legal cannabis sales.

A display at Mountain View Naturals, a retail marijuana shop in Hood River, Oregon, on March 14, 2016.

By **Melanie Lekocevic**
Columbia-Greene Media

ATHENS—Could legal marijuana dispensaries or bars be headed for Athens? The village board held an informal community discussion Wednesday to gauge local reaction to the state's legalization of adult-use cannabis and whether the village should opt in or out.

“We want to talk about how we are feeling moving forward,” Mayor Amy Serrago said. “We have a committee assembled—we will appoint them tonight

—and then the first thing this committee will have to look at is, do we want to opt out?”

Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed legislation March 31 legalizing recreational adult-use cannabis. There will be a 9% state excise tax imposed on marijuana sales and a 4% local tax. Counties will receive 25% of the local tax revenue and 75% will go to the city, town or village, according to the legislation.

See CANNABIS A2

Hochul introduces Benjamin: ‘We are partners’

By **Kate Lisa**

Johnson Newspaper Corp.

HARLEM — Gov. Kathy Hochul and state Sen. Brian Benjamin stood with their hands clasped in solidarity Thursday, calling themselves partners, to mark the Manhattan senator's selection as the state's next lieutenant governor.

Benjamin will be sworn in as the state's next second-in-command soon after Labor Day.

A Harlem native, Benjamin has represented the state's 30th Senate District, which encompasses Harlem, East Harlem and the Upper West Side since 2017, and sits ready to vacate his position as senior assistant majority leader in the Legislature's upper

house in the coming weeks.

“I am so delighted to announce my partner — and the word ‘partner’ means something to me,” Hochul said just before announcing Benjamin. “Someone who works side by side in the trenches. Someone who will be out there championing our policies and our administration's agenda in every corner of the state with a real focus on New York City because New York City needs our help. This individual is someone who's been through the trenches, starting locally where he was on his community board, where he worked his way up to elective office and someone I've become a dear friend of in the Senate.”

Various news outlets reported Hochul's pick Wednesday, but the governor would not comment on her selection until Thursday's event.

Hochul announced Benjamin's lieutenant governorship with the Rev. Al Sharpton, founder of the National Action Network; and NAACP New York State Conference President Hazel Dukes at the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building in Harlem.

Democrats have championed Benjamin during his time in the Senate as a leader on criminal justice reforms and affordable housing. He chairs the Revenue and Budget



COURTESY OF GOV. KATHY HOCHUL'S OFFICE

Gov. Kathy Hochul and Sen. Brian Benjamin stand together and wave at a crowd in Harlem on Thursday after Hochul announced Benjamin as her official pick for lieutenant governor. Benjamin is expected to be sworn in immediately after Labor Day.

See HOCHUL A2