

WEATHER

TODAY	TONIGHT	FRI
Turning out cloudy	Rather cloudy	Cooler with some sun
HIGH	LOW	62
76	49	38

Complete weather, A2

SPORTS



County Softball Champs

Walsh's defeats the Homets, 14-10

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NATION

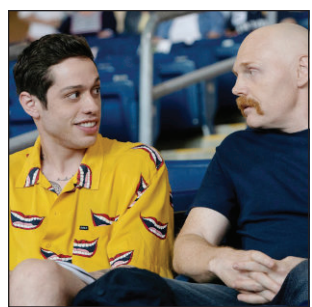


Riddle me this, Biden-Harris

Why are people sending the campaign \$19.08?

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THE SCENE



The kid is all right ... really

Pete Davidson stars in funny, melancholy "King"

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Hiker's death is ruled accidental

By Sarah Trafton
Columbia-Greene Media

GREENVILLE — The Larimer County Coroner's Office confirmed that the body found Monday in Rocky Mountain National Park was Steven Grunwald, a 24-year-old man from Greenville.

Grunwald was reported missing Sept. 10 by a friend.

His family and friends had not heard from Grunwald since Aug. 28, according to Rocky Mountain National Park officials. Grunwald's vehicle was found at the Glacier Gorge Trailhead on Sept. 10. His body was recovered Sept. 14 between McHenry and Powell Peaks.

Larimer County Coroner James Wilkerson performed an

autopsy on Grunwald and determined that he died on Aug. 29 from multiple blunt force injuries.

The death was accidental, according to the Larimer County Coroner's Office.

Teams searched for Grunwald, whose intended route



See HIKER A8
Steven Grunwald
Contributed photo

GOP makes new push for nursing home probe

By Kate Lisa
Johnson Newspaper Corp.

ALBANY — Senate Republicans launched a statewide petition Wednesday to pressure the Legislature to subpoena the state Health Department to publicly release an accurate number of New Yorkers who died from COVID-19 in adult-care facilities and nursing homes.

Sen. Jim Tedisco, R-Glenville, led a press conference in the state Capitol late Wednesday morning with Senate Minority Leader Rob Ort, R-North Tonawanda, and Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh, R-Ballston, to announce the online petition available at nysenate.gov/petitions/james-tedisco/governor-cuomo-release-real-nursing-home-numbers

"There are millions of New Yorkers who want answers," Ort said. "This petition drive is a great initiative. ...It's the right thing to do. We haven't gotten answers and we deserve the answers."

Tedisco did not specify a number of signatures lawmakers intend to collect before sending the list to Democrats in the Senate and Assembly majorities.

"I want a lot of signatures — I want to let the governor know it's not only the senators and assemblypersons who want this," he said.

Tedisco and Assemblyman Ron Kim, D-Queens, sponsor legislation S8756/A10857, which would establish an independent, bipartisan investigation with subpoena power to examine the handling of COVID-19 in state adult-care facilities and nursing homes. Walsh sponsors the measure.

New York has reported more than 6,500 nursing home deaths since the pandemic struck in March, but the state has only tallied the deaths of those who died in the homes, not hospitals. Critics have said the current figure doesn't provide a full picture of the issue.

Lawmakers, officials, advocates and family members have repeatedly called



Kate Lisa/Johnson Newspaper Corp.
Sen. Jim Tedisco, R-Glenville, speaks in the state Capitol on Wednesday after lawmakers launched a statewide petition calling for an independent investigation into state COVID-19 nursing home deaths. Senate Minority Leader Rob Ort, R-North Tonawanda, left, also spoke in favor of the probe.

for an independent investigation and for the state Health Department to release an accurate count.

"I think they have the numbers," Tedisco said. "It shouldn't take until the pandemic is over."

State Health Department Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker did not answer questions or provided vague responses to questions during a bicameral hearing Aug. 3 about how many coronavirus-positive nursing home patients were transferred to and died in New York hospitals, citing frequently changing numbers as the pandemic continues.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Zucker declined to be interviewed at a subsequent legislative hearing Aug. 10.

The Health Department absolved itself in a self-published report July 6 on COVID-19 fatalities in nursing homes and found staff and visitors brought the virus into the facilities.

"Fundamentally, we have to get the numbers, learn the lessons and develop a plan for a second wave or whatever we may be facing down the road," Walsh said. "It might be embarrassing, it might not be embarrassing. It's facts."

Republicans said Wednesday the real numbers are necessary to evaluate the state's COVID-19 protocols in case of a second wave, especially as fall approaches, the weather turns colder and flu season is set to begin.

"It defies logic," Tedisco added. "The governor keeps talking about the science — you can't get the science if you don't get the numbers and we don't have the real numbers."

The Justice Department announced Aug. 26 it is requesting details on decisions Cuomo and Govs. Phil Murphy, D-N.J.; Tom Wolf, D-Pa.; and Gretchen Whitmer, D-Mich., made during the COVID-19 crisis that may have contributed to the deaths of thousands of people in nursing homes.

The information will help the federal government decide about an official investigation into nursing home deaths under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, which protects the civil rights of persons in state-run nursing homes in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Michigan, according to the Justice Department.

"With this latest publicity stunt,

Tedisco and company accidentally revealed that even they think the [U.S. Department of Justice] inquiry is a trumped-up, partisan farce," Rich Azopardi, senior advisor to Gov. Cuomo, said in response to the petition launch. "The truth may be inconvenient for their politics, but, as has been the case with many other states, it was found that the main source of infection in nursing homes was, through no fault of their own, asymptomatic staffers."

Tedisco said the lawmakers' call Wednesday was not political.

"You know what politics looks like," the senator said. "Every legislator I've talked to would like to know the real number of those who died in New York state from a nursing home or lost their lives in a hospital. A large majority of them would like an independent investigation to find out why."

"You really couldn't get an answer if you didn't have the numbers."

The extent of the department's inquiry is unclear: The Department of Justice may only be able to look at a small fraction of the homes, mainly those that are public facilities.

New York has five state-run nursing homes of its 600-plus adult-care facilities, or 0.8%. The rest are privately owned.

The federal investigation is helpful, said Tedisco's Chief of Staff Adam Kramer, but will reveal a minuscule picture of the issue.

"That's just a small number of the hundreds of nursing homes where this took place," Kramer said. "It's not going to give us the full number and the big picture. We want to look at all of them. To just pin it on the feds is more obfuscation and lack of transparency from providing the real numbers."

Legislators have a constitutional responsibility of oversight of the executive branch, Kramer said.

"It's not about blame game — it's just

See NURSING A8

More rescue pets expected in Sally's aftermath

By Bill Williams
Columbia-Greene Media

HUDSON — More than half of the 15 pets rescued from hurricane-ravaged Louisiana four weeks ago have found forever homes, Columbia-Greene Humane Society President Ron Perez said Wednesday.

Three dogs and five cats have either left for their homes or will be going soon, after their quarantine period ends, Perez said.

Two of the dogs that arrived tested positive for heartworm and were treated before they could go to their new homes, Perez said.

"We want the pets to be healthy when they are adopted," Perez said.

The four dogs and 11 cats were left homeless when Hurricane Laura rumbled through Louisiana on Aug. 27. Response from the public has



Bill Williams/Columbia-Greene Media
Arabella is one of six rescued cats from Louisiana that is still looking for her forever home.

been strong. The shelter has received hundreds of inquiries regarding the

rescued pets, Perez said. The publicity of the rescued pets is

also helping other dogs and cats at the shelter.

"Sometimes people will come in to see a specific pet, and will end up adopting another animal instead," Perez said.

Columbia-Greene may see more rescued pets from the south after Hurricane Sally finishes sweeping across the Gulf Coast after making landfall Wednesday, Perez said.

The Humane Society of Louisiana, which spearheaded the rescues for Laura, breathed a sigh of relief when Sally missed Louisiana and made landfall in Alabama and the panhandle of Florida, Louisiana Humane Society Executive Director Jeff Dorsen said.

"There are many shelters here (in Louisiana) that are still closed because of Laura, and all our efforts are going

See PETS A8

Polls don't elect the president

YOU DO

REGISTER TODAY TO
VOTE 2020

New York offers online voter registration. You can register by mail to vote in New York by printing a voter registration form, filling it out, and mailing it to your local election office. You can also register to vote in person if you prefer.