

Nebraska sweeps Texas State to make regional semis

The Grand Island EST. IN 1870

Independent

Cloudy and chilly, High 43, Low 36

FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 2021

www.theindependent.com call (800) 658-3160 to subscribe



Independent/Josh Salmon

Asri Awale, a nurse with the CDHD, administers a first-dose COVID-19 vaccine to GISH junior Litzy Rodriguez on Thursday afternoon in the school gym. The vaccine event was for GIPS parents and students 16 and older.

GIPS, health district make vaccinations more accessible

By Jessica Votipka
jessica.votipka@theindependent.com

Cassidy Gakle waited in the Grand Island Senior High School's west gym bleachers Thursday evening. Her two children bounced around the gym enthusiastically as Gakle's spouse wrangled them.

Gakle was less than enthusiastic about getting vaccinated for COVID-19. "A friend of ours is a health fanatic," Gakle said. "She got hers and she's been pushing us to get ours. We decided to do it."

Gakle and her family were waiting in the bleachers after Gakle and her spouse received their first rounds of the Pfizer vaccination at a special clinic at Grand Island High School. Gakle said accessibility was also a factor in choosing to be vaccinated. "It's finally at more facilities; you can get it easier."

Accessibility was a major factor considered when GIPS and Central District Health Department teamed up to hold vaccination clinics at the school, said Jonna Mangeot, CDHD senior community health nurse.

"You want families to come where they're comfortable and



"I do feel like the community feels safe coming to the school to receive the vaccine. We're really grateful to do that."

Calvin Hubbard, GISH assistant principal

target those people who can't make it during the day," she said.

Calvin Hubbard, assistant principal at GISH, said he shared that mentality.

"I do feel like the community feels safe coming to the school to receive the vaccine. We're really grateful to do that," he said.

An extra element of comfort came thanks to interpreters available at the clinic, Hubbard added. "We understand our community and our demographic. We know what they need and how to make them feel more comfortable."

Twenty minutes into Thursday evening's clinic, Gakle and her family had company in the bleachers for a post-vaccination waiting period. Some seeking their first rounds of COVID-19 vaccina-

tions had arrived early, Mangeot said. She said organizers weren't sure how many people to expect.

"We ran a guess and we'll see how it turns out," she said.

Again, Mangeot indicated, accessibility to families was paramount.

"They sign up and then they can show up," she said. "We tried to make it as easy as possible. We're glad to partner with the schools."

Hubbard said the team effort pointed the vaccination clinic in a positive direction.

"We're familiar opening our doors with CDHD to give the vaccines," he said. "It's an effort and a partnership with the community, CDHD and our public school system."

■ turn to **VACCINATION EFFORT**, page 2A

GIEDC awarded \$1M grant

Funds will be put toward developing workforce housing

By Brandon Summers

brandon.summers@theindependent.com

Grand Island Area Economic Development Corporation has been awarded \$1 million for rural workforce housing development.

More than \$9.1 million in grants from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development were announced Thursday by Gov. Pete Ricketts from the ND-ED's Rural Workforce Housing Fund.

Aurora Housing Development Corporation also was awarded \$1 million.

Dave Taylor, GIAEDC president, called the announcement "very exciting."

"We know that there is a real need for what we refer to as 'workforce housing' in Grand Island," he said. "This particular grant, and those funds, will be put towards housing that is \$275,000 or less."

The need for such housing in Grand Island is great, Taylor explained.

"When I talked to Realtors as recently as yesterday, there were a total of 18 houses on the market in Grand Island," he said. "To be healthy, a community of our size should have about 160 homes on the market for sale."

He added, "This isn't going to fix that issue, but it sure should help get some of the stock back up."

Grand Island will focus mainly on "owner-occupied" housing, and funds can be used for student or internship housing.

"We anticipate that being one of the areas we look at, looking to bring more interns and having a common place where they can hang out with like-minded people," Taylor said.

GIAEDC will partner with community builders and bankers "to get the greatest impact" from the dollars, Taylor said.

The Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated Thursday's announcement, as well.

Chamber President Cindy Johnson said the funds will help to meet local needs.

"We're very pleased with the state's award of \$1 million for rural housing," she said. "Grand Island, like many areas in Nebraska, has housing issues, so this funding from the state, with the matching funds our community has committed, will help to address these needs."

■ turn to **WORKFORCE HOUSING GRANT**, page 2A



Gov. Pete Ricketts



Dave Taylor



Cindy Johnson

Democrats begin long-shot push to expand the Supreme Court

By Kevin Freking
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A group of congressional Democrats introduced legislation Thursday to add four seats to the Supreme Court, a long-shot bid designed to counter the court's rightward tilt during the Trump administration and criticized by Republicans as a potential power grab that would reduce the public's trust in the judiciary.

President Joe Biden last week created a commission to spend the next six months examining the politically incendiary issues of expanding the court and instituting term limits for justices.

The fight over the composition of the nine-member court has become increasingly contentious over the past two decades, with fierce battles over nominees and acrimonious debates about the politicization of the judicial branch.

But the bill's introduction had an inauspicious start. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said she might not bring it up for a vote if it advanced out of committee and Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, was noncommittal as well.

Democratic lawmakers and groups supporting the court expansion bill gathered on the steps of the Supreme Court to make their case.

"Some people say we're packing the court. We're not packing it. We're unpacking it," said the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y. He said Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and the GOP had "packed the court over the last couple of years. This is a reaction to that. It's a necessary step in the evolution of the court."

Inside the Capitol, Durbin,

made clear that he wanted to wait for the White House's 36-member commission to report its findings before deciding on a course of action.

"I'm not ready to sign on yet," Durbin said. "I think this commission of Biden's is the right move. Let's think this through carefully. This is historic."

Pelosi was even more dismissive. The prospect of an expanded Supreme Court is a campaign issue that Republicans will focus on as they target swing districts in their bid to retake the majority. Even before the bill's introduction, state GOP parties were drawing attention to the effort in an attempt to link vulnerable Democratic members to it.

■ turn to **EXPAND THE COURT**, page 5A



Nancy Pelosi



The Associated Press/J. Scott Applewhite

From left, Rep. Hank Johnson, D-Ga., Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., and Rep. Mondaire Jones, D-N.Y., hold a news conference outside the Supreme Court to announce legislation to expand the number of seats on the high court Thursday on Capitol Hill in Washington.



Find great deals, values and information from local businesses in the **ginetwork** at **theindependent.com**

INSIDE TODAY: 2 SECTIONS, 20 PAGES

Advice.....10B Crossword.....7B Legals.....5-6B Sudoku.....7B
Astrograph.....7B Editorial.....4A Markets.....7A Weather.....10B
Comics.....8B Entertainment..10B Obituaries.....8A

\$2 on newsstand call (800) 658-3160 to subscribe

© Copyright Lee BHM Corp. doing business as The Grand Island Independent 2021. All rights reserved.



13917 00002 1