



How McCaffrey took high school values to Super Bowl 58

SPORTS, 1B

THE DAILY TIMES

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2024 | DAILY-TIMES.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



President Trump is pictured speaking to his supporters at a rally on the Ellipse near the White House on Jan. 6, 2021. EVAN VUCCI/AP IMAGES

TRUMP ARGUES TO STAY ON COLO. BALLOT

Former president appeals ruling to Supreme Court

Maureen Gropp
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Is the president an officer of the United States? How the Supreme Court answers that seemingly simple question may determine if former President Donald Trump can return to the White House. Is “officer of the United States” a term of constitutional art that refers to appointed officials, like Cabinet secretaries and the

leaders of sometimes obscure government agencies, as Trump’s lawyers argue? Or does it mean anyone who holds a federal office, which would subject even former presidents to the anti-insurrection provision of the 14th Amendment? That’s a top issue Trump’s lawyers brought to the country’s top court to appeal the Colorado Supreme Court’s ruling that the former president disqualified himself from the ballot by ginning up the mob that rioted at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Four of Trump’s five arguments would extend beyond the Colorado case, likely putting an end to similar challenges across the country.

If a majority of justices reject all of Trump’s arguments, other states would be free to toss him from the ballot, depending on state law. That would unleash “chaos and bedlam,” Trump’s attorneys have told the court. Attorneys for the voters challenging Trump’s eligibility in Colorado say the nation already witnessed, on Jan. 6, 2021, the bedlam Trump caused when he refused to accept his reelection defeat. The Constitution makes him ineligible from being in a position to do so again, they’ve told the court.

See **BALLOT**, Page 5A

Fired Aztec animal shelter worker settles lawsuit with city for \$95k

Mike Easterling
Farmington Daily Times
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW MEXICO

For most of the 17 years she worked at the Aztec Animal Shelter, Kellie Willits says she used to make a habit of assuring every person who surrendered a stray or unwanted animal at the facility that the shelter staff would fight to generate a good outcome for it. But over her last two years at the shelter, Willits said she didn’t feel like she could make that promise in good faith. “When that became not a true statement anymore, that became a big issue for me,” she said. “... Staying silent wasn’t an option for me.” Willits, who was fired from her position as a veterinarian technician at the shelter in 2022 after she said she expressed her concerns about some of the facility’s procedures, filed a wrongful termination lawsuit against the city of Aztec and the shelter in September 2023, alleging her termination was a violation of the New Mexico Whistleblower Protection Act. Months later, in December 2023, the parties settled the dispute with the city agreeing to pay her \$95,000. “It was never about the money for me,” Willits said, explaining that if she had simply walked away from the job without trying to expose what she characterized as the mistreatment of some of the shelter’s animals, no one would have known about those issues. “The settlement was, for me, about bringing attention to the matter,” she said, adding that she hopes that news of the settlement will lead to change in some of the shelter’s procedures. Aztec City Manager Jeff Blackburn said the city had no comment on the settlement. Willits’ attorney, Albuquerque attorney Daniel Apodaca, said he and his client both believe the settlement is a fair one, and he hopes Aztec citizens will take the opportunity to ask questions of city officials and look further into the allegations.

Questioning the treatment of cats and dogs

Willits, who began her career at the shelter in 2006 as a kennel technician before being promoted to animal control officer and eventually veterinarian technician, said she spent her last 14 years at the facility serving as a surgical assistant to the shelter’s veterinarian, working in the spay and neuter program and on injured animals that had been brought in as strays. For most of her career, Willits said she never had an issue with the shelter’s treatment of animals. But in 2020, when the shelter was awarded a Community Cat Grant by the Best Friends Animal Society, she said things changed. The grant was designed to fund efforts by the shelter staff to humanely trap feral cats within a defined geographical area, spay or neuter them, then release them in the area from which they were captured, according to the lawsuit. Those cats then are able to roam and protect their “territory,” preventing other feral cats from encroaching on their turf. But Willits alleged her lawsuit she noticed some of those cats were not being released and were instead being kept in kennels at the shelter in apparent violation of the terms of the grant. When she asked why, she claims she was told the city lacked the resources to transport the animals back to their original neighborhood.

See **LAWSUIT**, Page 5A

Data: Lightning deaths continue to decline in US

Doyle Rice
USA TODAY

Lightning deaths in the United States last year were at a near-record low, part of a dramatic, decadeslong decline in the number of Americans annually killed by lightning. How dramatic? In 1943, for example, 432 people died after being struck by lightning. And that wasn’t unusual for the 1940s, when several hundred were typically killed each year, according to the National Weather Service. Compare that with last year, when 13 were killed, which was the second-lowest number on record. In 2001, when a national lightning safety campaign began, the U.S. still averaged 55 lightning deaths per year. Now the average is down to 21, said John Jensenius, a meteorologist with the National Lightning Safety Council. Since the campaign began, he said, “we’ve seen a notable drop in the number of lightning fatalities across the U.S., despite an increasing population.” In addition to increased awareness, the sharp drop in lightning deaths over the past 80 years “coincides with a shift in population from rural to urban regions,” meteorologist Ron Holle, also with the safety council, wrote in an article in the Journal of Applied Meteorology.



Lightning strikes as rain falls over Phoenix during a monsoon storm on Aug. 8, 2022. MICHAEL CHOW, THE REPUBLIC/USA TODAY NETWORK

See **LIGHTNING**, Page 5A

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to daily-times.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 136 | Issue 162
Subscribe 866-458-2297
©2024 \$1.50

