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Blackwater: Defense team says that photo evidence was suppressed.

Ukraine: Fighting near plane crash site causes residents to evacuate.

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The Daily Progress

Same-sex Marriage

Appeals court upholds ruling

BY MARKUS SCHMIDT
Richmond Times-Dispatch

RICHMOND — A federal appeals court panel in Richmond on Monday upheld a ruling from a lower court that struck down Virginia's ban on same-sex marriage.

In a 2-1 decision, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judges agreed with U.S. Judge Arenda L. Wright Allen's ruling in February that the 2006 amendment to the state Con-

stitution defining marriage as between a man and a woman violates the equal protection clause and due process clause under the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The decision goes into effect in 21 days, unless the defendants file a motion to appeal — which they are likely to do. The case will then head to the U.S. Supreme Court for review.

"Civil marriage is one of the cornerstones of our way of life. It allows individuals to celebrate and publicly declare their intentions to form lifelong partnerships, which provide unparalleled intimacy, companionship, emotional support, and security," Judge Henry F. Floyd wrote in his majority opinion.

"The choice of whether and whom to marry is an intensely personal decision that alters the course of an individual's life. Denying same-sex couples this choice prohibits them from participating fully in our society, which is precisely the type of segregation that the Fourteenth Amendment cannot countenance," he wrote.

The court's decision is significant because it also renders unconstitutional similar marriage bans in North Carolina, South Carolina and West Virginia — states that are part of the 4th Circuit. Same-sex

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LOUISA COUNTY



RYAN M. KELLY/THE DAILY PROGRESS

Visitors exit the new Thomas Jefferson Elementary School in Louisa on Monday after touring the school during its grand opening celebration. A 5.8 magnitude earthquake in August 2011 earthquake damaged the original facility beyond repair.

Ready for new beginning
Reconstruction complete at school damaged by 2011 earthquake

BY DEAN SEAL
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LOUISA — At first, fifth grade teacher Dan Bono thought he was hearing an airplane rumbling too low to the ground the day a 5.8-magnitude earthquake rocked Louisa County. As the ceiling tiles of his second story classroom began to shake and fall, he realized what was going on.

Now, almost three years after the quake forced the closure and demolition of Thomas Jefferson Elementary, the doors its replacement are open.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony Mon-

ONLINE
More pictures of the new school at www.Daily-Progress.com.

day evening at the front entrance of the school celebrated the long road that students, teachers, parents, school board members and the entire Louisa community traveled to get their students back into a brick-and-mortar facility.

"We've stood here on this site on several occasions that were not so happy," said Deborah Pettit, superintendent for Louisa County

Public Schools, to the crowd at the start of the ceremony. "But here we are, three years later, and we are moving in."

Along with more than 100 Louisa residents, members of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency were in attendance at the opening. Insurance on the school provided \$23 million after the facility was demolished in 2011, and the county took on a budget of \$14 million to begin replacing the school, said Phillip Trayer, the school's financial

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Jurors chosen for trial

BY FRANK GREEN AND JIM NOLAN
Richmond Times-Dispatch

RICHMOND — After opening statements today, the first government witnesses are expected to begin testimony in the federal corruption trial of former Gov. Bob McDonnell and his wife, Maureen.



McDonnell Trial

It took over eight hours to select an eight-man, four-woman jury, and four alternate jurors, out of a jury pool of more than 140 Monday. Moments after the panel was seated, however, one juror was excused to be replaced by one of the four alternates.

U.S. District Judge James Spencer thanked the prospective jurors for their service and joked that he was aware that many considered themselves lucky not to have been called.

"Pray for the rest of us," Spencer joked.

The McDonnells were charged in a 14-count indictment alleging they conspired to use the governor's office to aid former Star Scientific CEO Jonnie R. Williams Sr., who feted them with more than \$165,000 in gifts, trips, golf outings, loans and cash payments.

In exchange for the gifts and loans, prosecutors contend the McDonnells helped Williams and his company with various "official" acts.

Williams, who has immunity, is expected to be a key prosecution witness, but outside experts believe he will not be the first witness the government puts on the stand.

McDonnell was mobbed by

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Out-of-pocket billing for ambulance use ending

BY K. BURNELL EVANS
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Effective Friday, the era of Albemarle County residents paying out-of-pocket for ambulance rides to the hospital will end.

Under the new rules, bills for emergency medical transport will be sent only to private and federal insurance providers, the county announced in a Monday release that also touted the expansion of its cost recovery program.

The move ends a 4½ year practice of billing residents served by participating rescue squads for portions of

the bill providers would not cover. The county currently does not pursue collections and follows a "compassionate billing" policy that holds harmless people who say they cannot pay the tab.

About 20 people annually request and receive hardship waivers, officials said; participating rescue squads drove 5,195 people to hospitals in fiscal year 2014.

"It didn't sit well with us," Western Albemarle Rescue Squad Chief Kostas Alibertis said, of the current practice. "Some folks — especially older folks — are proud, and they will pay their bills before they buy their dinner."

Albemarle

Alibertis said the all-volunteer squad, which runs about 1,400 calls annually, would not participate in the cost recovery program until Albemarle moved to insurance-only billing.

"The county has pursued us and tried to get us to be a part of billing for several years now," Alibertis said. "We had, conceptually, a hard time with us giving our time freely and the county billing."

Albemarle currently charges a flat fee per trip that ranges between \$450 and \$750, depending on the

level of care required, and \$13 per mile traveled with a patient on board.

The rates, established in 2012, are based on an ambulance fee schedule set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said Wendy Roberman, who oversees program billing as an analyst for Albemarle Fire and Rescue. Revenues under the program are anticipated to more than triple from its first full fiscal year to just about \$1.8 million in the current fiscal year. The county expects losses from the switch to insurance-only billing to bring this year's net gain to about \$1.6 million.

Money currently is collected from county residents by the Virginia Beach-based billing company Fidelis, which takes a 5.5 percent cut of collections, Roberman said. Profits go toward the county's general fund.

"I don't think the board would have been interested in cost recovery at all initially if it weren't for compassionate billing," said Supervisor Kenneth C. Boyd, who was on the board when the program was approved in 2009.

Supervisors reached consensus on switching to

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