



Times-News

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TUESDAY
JULY 29
2014



WEATHER

Periods of clouds, sunshine
High 76 Low 56
FORECAST BACK PAGE

NOTEWORTHY

Fist bumps aren't just cool, they're more sanitary

NEW YORK — When it comes to preventing the spread of germs, maybe the president is on to something with his fondness for fist bumps.

The familiar knocking of knuckles spreads only one-twentieth the amount of bacteria that a handshake does, researchers report. That's better than a high-five, which still passes along less than half the amount as a handshake.

So fist bumps — popularized by Barack Obama and others — seem to be the wisest greeting, especially during cold and flu season, said researcher David Whitworth of Aberystwyth University in Wales. Results were published online Monday in the American Journal of Infection Control.

What makes the fist bump more sanitary? Mostly, it's the smaller amount of surface area in contact between the two hands, an analysis suggests.

— The Associated Press

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◆ New sewer system along the Oklawaha.
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BLUE RIDGE VIEW

Results from: Have you ever been caught in a rip current at the beach?

Number of votes: 189

29% YES
71% NO

Go to www.blueridgenow.com to vote on this question: Is Hendersonville business-friendly?

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Cooper won't defend marriage ban

NC attorney general prompted by federal court ruling invalidating Va. gay union law

By MICHAEL BIESECKER
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — North Carolina's attorney general said Monday his office will no longer defend the state's voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage in court after a federal appeals court ruled a similar prohibition in neighboring Virginia unconstitutional.

At a news conference about two hours after the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling was

announced in Richmond, Va., Attorney General Roy Cooper said the ruling made it highly likely North Carolina's ban will be overturned. North Carolina is part of the 4th Circuit.

Cooper, a Democrat, said further opposition to the four federal lawsuits challenging his state's constitutional ban on same-sex marriage would be "futile."

"Our attorneys have vigorously defended North Carolina marriage

law, which is their job," Cooper said. "But today we know our law almost surely will be overturned as well. Simply put, it is time to stop making arguments we will lose and instead move forward, knowing that the ultimate resolution will likely come from the U.S. Supreme Court."

Cooper had previously stated his personal opposition to the marriage ban, but said it was his duty as an elected official to defend the state constitutional amendment approved by voters in 2012. He said his decision Monday doesn't mean same-sex marriages in North

Carolina can begin immediately. That would take a judge's ruling. But since the 4th Circuit includes North Carolina, he said any federal judge in the state would be bound by the ruling out of Virginia.

Gay marriage proponents have won more than 20 legal decisions around the country since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down part of the federal Defense of Marriage Act last year. Nineteen states and the District of Columbia allow same-sex marriages.

"Our office, along with other

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DOUBLE-CHECKING



Tim Cagle, center, with the Hendersonville Fire Department, talks with Samantha Gragg and her daughter Marina, 2, as he inspects Marina's car seat during a free car seat check at the Blue Ridge Mall on Monday.

PHOTOS BY MIKE DIRKS/TIMES-NEWS

Pardee Signature Care Center, Hendersonville Fire Department and Safe Kids WNC held a free car seat check at the Blue Ridge Mall on Monday. Certified child passenger safety technicians performed inspections and gave parents advice on the best way to install and adjust car seats.



Panel hears ideas for helping city businesses

By EMILY WEAVER
Times-News Staff Writer

Hendersonville has garnered a reputation for being bad for business among developers and building contractors who say they are plagued with hurdles in getting new projects off the ground. But a new committee, composed of business owners and developers, is trying to change that stereotype, and gave the city a lot to think about during its second meeting Monday.

The Hendersonville Business Advisory Committee, formed by City Council earlier this year, brainstormed a list of regulation reforms in the city's Operations Center that zeroed in on some common complaints.

One of the complaints is that project review time takes too long. Tom Cooper, president and CEO of Cooper Construction Co. Inc., said the city has a tendency to review projects, find things wrong, send them back for correction, then review again, find more things wrong, and send those back for correction.

"What we are recommending is that the review process be (a) one-time (deal)," he said.

"Stormwater review by the city engineering department needs to be expedited," he added. "I don't know if that's the amount of staff, workload or what, but it is, comparatively speaking, very slow."

City Manager John Connet asked how the city could improve the process, which relies heavily on licensed engineers who aren't always the easiest to reach or get information from.

"Sometimes there's a gap there," he said.

Cooper said he was referring to delays generated after the city has already received all of the designs and information it needs for a project. In "getting those plans reviewed, it just seems like they

◆ SEE BUSINESS PAGE A4

Medicare's future looking healthier, report finds

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Medicare's financial future is looking brighter despite a growing wave of baby boomers reaching retirement.

Getting relief from a slowdown in health care spending, the program's giant hospital trust fund won't be exhausted until 2030, the government said Monday. That's four years later than last year's estimate.

As for Social Security, its massive retirement program will remain solvent until 2034, although disability benefits are in

more immediate danger. The disability trust fund now is projected to run dry in just two years. At that point, unless Congress acts, the program will collect only enough payroll taxes to pay 81 percent of benefits.

Trustees issued their annual report Monday on the financial health of the government's two largest benefit programs, which together accounted for 41 percent of all federal spending last year.

Though both are "fundamentally secure," said Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, "The reports also remind us of something we all

understand: We must reform these programs if we want to keep them sound for future generations."

Meanwhile, the trustees are projecting a 1.5 percent increase in monthly Social Security payments to beneficiaries next year. That would be among the lowest since automatic adjustments were adopted in the 1970s. The increase will be based on a government measure of inflation.

Lew

Medicare's Part B monthly premium for outpatient care is expected to remain unchanged for 2015, at \$104.90. Average premiums for prescription coverage are expected to increase by less than \$2 a month.

Medicare's hospitalization deductible is projected to rise to \$1,248 in 2015, an increase of \$32 from this year.

On balance, the report could help Democratic candidates in the midterm congressional elections. Republicans won the House

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