



# The Whirligig News

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## BSU Students Dying for a Drink

The recent death of a 19-year old Boys State University freshman has shocked the campus community and renewed calls for the college to do more to curb the abuse of alcohol. Elizabeth Ashley, a nursing major from Tyler, died from alcohol poisoning after attending a sorority formal. Her parents have chosen not to file charges against anyone in her death, despite the fact that Ashley was not old enough to legally be served or sold an alcoholic beverage.

Ashley's death comes on the heels of a survey that showed 63 percent of BSU students admit to having more than 4 drinks in a row at least one night a week. The number of students who consider themselves binge drinkers at the college has almost tripled in the past 15 years. Nationwide, eleven hundred college students die each year from drinking and driving related-deaths.

Boys State University President John Bailey said the university has taken steps to address the problem on campus. "We provide alcohol-free activities, offer alcohol-free dorms, and work closely with all of our student-run organizations to make sure our students are safe," Bailey said.

Many disagreed that the university has done enough to fix the problem. Local leaders are concerned that a young woman died after an event ran by a student organization. "Who was monitoring the students at that party? President Bailey still has not answered that question," Boys State Council for Responsible Drinking Chairman Eduardo Sanchez said.

Some students openly complained that the campus climate contributes to the problem. "The old saying "the weekend starts on Thursday and ends on Wednesday" is becoming more literal every year I am here," senior Brian Pollard said. "It's almost expected in some circles that having a drink means getting drunk," he added.

The president of the sorority hosting the formal where Ashley consumed the fatal amounts of alcohol had no comment on the matter. Ashley's parents have declined to speak publicly since their daughter's death.

Candidates for the Boys State University Board of Trustees have yet to be nominated, but it is expected that the alcohol issue will be crucial in this year's election. Pollster Geoff Smith said the issue is one that both Nationalist and Federalist candidates will have to take seriously as they prepare to face the electorate.

"It's become apparent that binge drinking is a problem that is affecting many students, and citizens are looking for answers from those they empower to run the college," Smith said.

## BUDGET TROUBLES AT BOYS STATE

Entering a new fiscal year, Boys State legislators will find themselves in a familiar situation as their next legislative session opens Tuesday. The state's \$1.9 billion in revenue are basically unchanged from last year's budget. The struggling state economy has been growing slowly for several years and the past year was no exception. A steady unemployment rate and few new business start-ups have resulted in limited tax growth.

Experts pointed out that one key difficulty in funding government operations lies in the sources the state relies on for revenue. Economist Gene Fortin noted that three-quarters of the state's monies come from income and sales taxes, "which are almost directly related to the strength of the state's economy," Fortin said. Due to the lack of growth in employment statewide income from both sources was stable.

State government is responsible for funding the public school and criminal justice systems, helping to keep tuition costs down at Boys State University, and maintaining an adequate infrastructure throughout the state. Political analyst Stuart Greenberg predicted the tight budget situation would have an important impact on Monday's elections. "Any candidate running this year is going to have to explain how they plan to provide adequate services, without having many additional resources to pay for them," Greenberg said.

Citizens for Responsible Taxation, an organization based in Lincoln, have stated publicly that the state has enough money to fund its operations. "Any tax hike, revenue enhancement, or whatever spin the politicians choose to give to a method used to take more money out of the pockets of Boys State citizens will be fiercely opposed," said Calvin Hogan, president of the organization.

Cities and counties will not be spared from the tough budget times. Less fiscal help from the state means more projects will have to be funded at the local level, stretching their already tight finances.

Elections for local officials will be held Monday, June 19. State officials will be elected and announced Tuesday, June 20. All Boys State citizens are encouraged to participate in

helping to shape their communities.

## GANG VIOLENCE OVERFLOWS INTO BAGLEY COUNTY JAILS

A rise in the crime rate in Lincoln city is resulting in an overcrowding at both the Lincoln City Jail and the Bagley County Jail. Inmates are threatening a lawsuit if conditions are not improved. A family member of a Lincoln inmate reports that prisoners are not being given proper care violating their civil rights.

Overcrowding has resulted in a rise in the number of rival gang members incarcerated in the Bagley County Jails. This has led officials to ask the state to help assist in separating violent gangs from Johnson City and Lincoln City. There have been 15 separate reported incidents of gang related violence at the Bagley County Jail since May 21<sup>st</sup>.

A rise in gang activity has led to an increase in the population of the Bagley County Juvenile Home. "This gang problem is not going away anytime soon. We need to find ways to end this gang violence " states Jonathan Van Eck, corrections office at the home. "Gang violence has put a serious strain on our corrections department and the cities in Bagley County."

## GAS PUMP RELIEF

With the price of the gasoline at an all time high, the people of Boys State are looking for some relief. Every gallon of gasoline the flows from you neighborhood gas pump is being taxed 30 cents. Suppose you pump 13 gallons of gasoline into your vehicle, you are paying \$3.90 in state taxes.

Nationwide gas prices are at an all time high. Boys State cannot control the price per barrel of petroleum set by OPEC. What we can control is the state tax we pay. The United States Federal Government collects an 18.4 per gallon tax on every gallon of gasoline sold in the U.S. When you add this to the 30 cent tax paid per gallon in Boys State, citizens are paying 48.4 cents a gallon.

"I drive from Jeffersonville to Jefferson everyday for work. I drive over 60 miles a day just to get to work and back to support my family," says Ronald Davison, resident of Crosswell County. Davison continued, "I spend over \$50 a week on gasoline.

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**GAS PUMP RELIEF CONTINUED**

Two years ago I was spending around \$30 a week. It's simply too much. I figure I am spending over \$1000 a year more now to drive to work than I did two years ago."

The grassroots group, Citizens Needing Relief, maintain that lowering the state gas tax would bring much needed relief to Boys State citizens. A recent survey shows that only New York (31.9), Pennsylvania (31.1) and Wisconsin (32.1) have a higher state gasoline tax than Boys State.

Opponents maintain that the gasoline tax brings much needed revenue to Boys State in these tight economic times. Cutting the Boys State gasoline tax in half would cost the state approximately 35 to 40 million dollars in revenue.

With the upcoming elections there is no doubt this will be an issue that candidates will have to address.

**JOHNSON TEACHERS MAY STRIKE**

The Johnson Teachers Association representative met with the School district negotiators yesterday. The meeting lasted most of the day and the result was still no contract? The Teachers are asking for limited numbers in the classroom as well as an increase in base pay? The Union Lawyer stated, "These teachers are making poverty pay. This is not acceptable for people who are teaching our youth". The School district has made it clear they are facing serious financial problems. "We are depending a lot on what the state is going to do with funding", said the Superintendent of Schools. The issue may see a teacher strike if the two sides do not make any progress in the coming week?

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EQUALITY TO FINE HARRISON?**

The State has sent DEQ inspectors to Harrison City in the past week. The inspectors were appalled at the contamination of the Scarborough River. The State has filed official charges against the City of Harrison for neglecting the storage of raw sewage. The order calls for fines of \$10,000 a day against the city if it does not fix the problems.

**DIRTY POLITICS INSIDE ADAMS**

The former Mayor and City Treasurer were found guilty of embezzlement yesterday. They were sentenced in Circuit Court to 3 years in prison. They were also ordered to pay back the money that was taken. The State Police conducted the investigation. "We estimate the losses to be somewhere around 15 million", said the state auditor. The damage done to the respect of city officials is unpredictable. A group of concerned citizens marched outside

the courthouse calling for serious penalties against the two convicted elected officials. "This crime calls for a much more serious sentence then was handed down here today. I think that the judge protected his fellow politicians here", yelled a citizen.

**SUPREME COURT TO HEAR ASSISTED SUICIDE CASE**

The Supreme Court is to hear the case on assisted suicide. The case calls for an individual to make the decision for himself or herself whether to live or to die? The State Legislature has made it illegal to commit assisted suicide. This is the core of the case to be heard by the Supreme Justices. A new term of elections is to come and what will the newly elected legislature do? Will they change the law or will the Supreme Court hear this case as it stands now?

**STUDENT TO FILE SUIT AGAINST ADAM SCHOOL DISTRICT**

A young male student wore a T-shirt to school with the President's picture on the front. The caption on the shirt was "International Terrorist". The School Principal ordered the student to turn his shirt inside out. The student refused and he was sent home. The school sent a letter home informing the boy he was not allowed to wear this shirt to school. The parents of the student hired a law firm to file suit against the school district. "This is a question of the basic right of free speech. The student is free to say he thinks the President is a terrorist. The school may not like it but they can not infringe on this right", said the family attorney. The school district attorney did comment saying, "It is the school's responsibility to maintain control and a safe environment while the students are at school. It would be disastrous to allow students to wear whatever they wanted to school".

**SWORDFISH TO SEEK PUBLIC FUNDING TOWARD NEW STADIUM**

The owner of the Swordfish Basketball team is asking Johnson City to pony up funds to help offset the cost of the new stadium? The past city council made no promises or commitments to the team. The issue is on the forefront as the team may move to another city more willing to contribute? "The cost will be around fifty million from the city", said a team spokesman. Many of the professional basketball teams around the country are getting public subsidizing to help the cost of new arenas. "We are only asking for the same help", said Mr. Goodman owner of the team. It is yet to be seen with a new city council and mayor soon to be elected?

**AUTO INDUSTRY TO DELIVER HITS TO LOCAL CITIES?**

The auto companies have made several announcements that the closing of plants may be coming to Boys State. The economy in McClelland County depends heavily upon the auto industry. "The automakers have lost money in production and must make some serious changes", said one-company spokeswomen. "We can not continue to do business and loose money". The companies are looking for tax relief help or assistance here in Boys State. There is no doubt that the new city governments are going to have to work with these companies or face unemployment problems. "I do not know what I would do if I lost my job. My family depends on my paychecks", says one autoworker in Washington City.

**RACIAL TENSION RISING IN BOYS STATE**

The national association of NAACP has sent representatives to meet with city of Tyler officials. "We can not believe that this type of discrimination is taking place here in America today. The Boys State citizens should be ashamed that this type of racial discrimination is taking place right here", said the NAACP lawyer. The civil rights group has charged that the city of Tyler is refusing to hire African-American workers.

The NAACP has also held two marches in two Boys State cities in the past week.

A Buchanan Police Officer shot a 14-year-old African-American boy last week. The Officer believed he had a weapon in his hand, it turned out to be an iron rod. The boy was fatally shot after he broke into a warehouse and fled. The Police Department spokesperson stated, "The Officer was effecting an arrest and the young man turned on him with a weapon in his hand. He had an iron rod and that is a weapon". The march had over 18,000 people condemning the shooting and supporting the young boys family.

The city of Polk has on its city flag the confederate stars and bars. This dates back to the American civil war when Polk joined the confederacy against the rest of Boys State. The city fathers incorporated the confederate battle emblem into their city flag. The local minority groups have had several demonstrations against this symbol. "It is a symbol of hatred and should be removed from this cities emblem. We will work hard to fight against this city as long as it holds onto this symbol of hatred", said a rainbow coalition spokesman.

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**TENSION RISING CONTINUED**

The past Mayor of Polk refused to remove this symbol calling it, "A symbol of a great history. We contributed to the confederate cause and this is what it shows. We will not be told by anyone how to live our lives". A new cycle of elections are coming and the new city officials will have this on their plate.

**STARR AIRPORT MAY LOOSE TERMINALS**

The City of Fillmore will have to make some serious improvements to the Starr International Airport. The FAA has made it clear through a letter to the city that much needed improvements are necessary to keep the airport open. The former city council made no appropriations toward any improvements counting on the state to help. Boys State has sent no funds to the city as of yet. "This airport is very important to all the state and to industry", said a local businessman. The Department of Homeland Security has also filed complaints that the Starr airport is in need of security updates. "It is very possible for a terrorist attack in Boys State. The airport has earned a poor rating in terms of security", said a Homeland Security Agent. The bottom line is funding and where is it going to come from?

**Monroe Traffic Becoming Worse**

Traffic jams throughout the City of Monroe has had a massive impact on the area, as a national survey recently released showed. It was documented that residents of the city spend an average of 76 hours a year in traffic jams at a cost of \$624 per commuter.

Monroe, which has the worst traffic in the state and the fourth-worst traffic in the country behind Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and San Francisco, is becoming a problem that does not appear to have a solution in sight. It has been noted as a growing problem for a few years, yet here has been little to no effort to rectify the congestion issue. The survey simply verified what was already known: Unpredictable travel time has become even less predictable, and things seem to be only getting worse.

"Driving here is absolutely frustrating," said Kimberly Thomas, a local police officer. "And we are expected to protect the roads when we can potentially be sucked into the traffic monster, becoming completely helpless just as easily as the next person. This is something that needs to be address immediately."

Monroe is not alone. Studies have shown that metropolitan areas across the country are experiencing an increase in congestion due to a lack of roads and other forms of public transportation (bus, train, etc.). Poor highway

management and land-use planning contribute to the deteriorating state of travel.

For those who are forced to deal with the traffic everyday, whether due to work or other obligations, it results in more travel time and less quality time with family or for themselves.

"I leave work some days at 4:00pm assuming I'm not getting home until 6:00pm or 6:30pm, when a clear commute only takes a half hour max," said Ernest Wyatt, who commutes from the east side to the west side of the city everyday.

"The crazy part is I feel like I'm spending more time on stuck in traffic than with my wife and daughter, said Wyatt who works for Brutt Shipping Company. "That is the most frustrating part because my daughter is only 2 and I want to spend time more time with her, but it's what I have to deal with living and working in Monroe."

After numerous calls, the City of Monroe and the Boys State Department of Transportation were never reached for comment.

**High School Graduation Requirements: Good Enough?**

There was once a time when the culmination of one's educational growth came at the completion of high school. Graduation from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade was all the preparation some individuals needed in order to be successful in this country. The majority of jobs did not require higher education and it was possible to live a productive, successful, and financially sound life. These days of simplicity are now long gone and the race to effectively prepare the leaders of tomorrow is speeding up everyday.

Boys State needs to be at the forefront of this race; however, in order for this to happen, constant reevaluations of our standards must take place so that we stay current with the rest of the world. Our current high school graduation requirements call for minimum credit attainment in major academic areas such as mathematics, English/language arts, science, etc. We live in a fast-moving, high-tech society that requires the competence levels of our students to be at a level that was not previously necessary. By the time a student has graduated from high school, he/she must have mastered fundamental skills and developed a strong, well-rounded foundation in all areas of education.

The Department of Education recognizes this great responsibility and has stated that current requirements are currently under review. They are as follows:

- 2 credits – Mathematics*
- 2 credits – English/Language Arts*
- 2 credits – Science*
- 1 credit – Social Studies*
- 1 credit – Physical Education*

Along with these requirements, the state gives the Boys State Assessment Test (BSAT) in both 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The test does not determine whether or not students will graduate.

Boys State Citizens for Educational Change (BSCEC) President Johan Timmersee feels that the requirements need a serious facelift.

"Boys State must establish themselves as a shining example to the country and the world as a state that believes in progress and success in their educational system. The current standards that we have for high school graduation are a joke and need to be rectified immediately. The BSCEC will be present at the next State Board of Education meeting to address our concerns."

This is a growing issue across the state that is developing into a hot debate topic.

**JEFFERSON CITY COUNCIL MAY LEGALIZE MARIJUANA**

The Jefferson City Council has entertained the motion to legalize marijuana within the city limits. This has sparked serious debate on all levels of government. The City Council tabled the motion last year and will be decided by the new City Council? "If someone wants to smoke marijuana it is their own choice", said a 27-year-old resident. If this measure passes the ordinance will undoubtedly be challenged in the courts. What will Jefferson City Council do?

**CIVIL RIGHTS FIGHT TO ENSUE IN MADISON**

The local adult entertainment establishments will more than likely seek relief from the courts. The last City Council passed Ordinance #193 stating, "No establishment within the city limits may have any type of nudity displayed". This has caused the local adult entertainment businesses to file suit. "It is a clear violation of our rights to speech and expression. This City can not take away our constitutional rights, what is next our homes", stated one businesses owner-filing suit. The new City Council may take up the ordinance and repeal it? Many residents like the ordinance and wish this type of attention would leave Madison City. "I have lived here all my life and to see this type of trash makes me sick to be in Madison", stated the 54-year-old resident. This fight is far from over but this cycle of elections will tell the tale?

**HEALTH CARE COSTS TO HIT CITIES HARD**

The rising health care costs are going to hit the local governments hard this year. Many union contracts are up and city employees are concerned over this health care battle.

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**SEE HEALTH CARE CONTINUED**

“The cost has risen over 20% in the past year alone”, stated a spokesman for state budget office. “The local cities are going to have to pay approximately \$820.00 per employee a month for family coverage”. The school districts are all going to face the same issues. Is there any end to these costs or what should happen to control such costs? In Tyler City many residents do not have health care coverage through their employment. This puts a heavy burden on the State to cover health care needs through tax dollars? This issue will be on the front in this year’s election.

**STREET GIVES OUT IN JACKSON**

The Main St. in downtown Jackson actually collapsed yesterday. Two cars fell into the sinkhole and both drivers were injured. “I could not believe the road just caved in”, said one eyewitness. “This city has to work on the infrastructure or else the entire city may sink”, stated another eyewitness. A city block in the downtown business district lost all sewer services since the sewer line burst in the sinkhole. The DPW Director said, “We have a serious problem here and it is going to take some time. The city is doing what it can at this point to keep sewer services available for the rest of Jackson”. There were many reports of sewer lines going out since this main line went down. The issue, as usual, is much-needed repairs through funding? The State has limited any infrastructure funding in the past year. “The City of Jackson is trying not to increase any taxes or services”, said the last years Mayor.

**BOYS STATE OPERA HOUSE TO SEEK NEW HOME**

The Boys State Opera Company is seeking a new home inside Taylor City. The proposal is to build a brand new Opera House inside the city on the waterfront. The company is asking the City of Taylor to allocate \$24 million in public funds to help finish the construction. “We have put millions into this project and it will make the entire area more attractive. We need help with the funding from the city to continue”, stated a spokesperson for the Opera Company. The prior City Council made no funding available in the projected city budget? The new City Council and Mayor will have to address this issue once in office. “I hope they help fund the arts. It is important to everyone to have this jewel right here in Taylor”, said one 40-year-old resident.

**ENVIRONMENTALIST MAD AT HARRISON LOGGING INDUSTRY**

The beautiful woodlands of Harrison City are becoming scarce? The logging industry has picked up production and this concerns many residents. “I do not want this beautiful land destroyed. Maybe the Governor or Mayor will step up and stop this terrible destruction of our woodlands”, said one resident. The environmental community has sent protesters to picket the logging, but this has not affected the trucks from rolling. The outgoing City Council made no attempts to address this issue they left it on the table. Now it has become a major topic on the streets of Harrison City. The Logging Company has made a promise to reseed the entire area once trees are cut. “We do not want to destroy anything, but it is a necessary to make paper products”, said a company representative. “We are committed to planting the trees once they are cut to help growth return”.

**SAME SEX MARRIAGE AN ISSUE FOR BOYS STATE**

The state legislature will most likely be forced to address this issue in this year’s session. Many of the State Representatives and State Senators have not touched this hot button issue. The issue is being pressed at the local levels when same sex couples are applying for marriage licenses. “We simply turn them away and tell them it is against the law”, said the outgoing Williams County Clerk. “It is a violation of my civil liberty and it is another form of discrimination”, stated one couple trying to get a marriage licenses. Many state elected officials have taken the road of letting the courts decide this political fight. “If we do anything the law will be challenged in the court, so let the court decide this issue”, said one outgoing State Representative. No matter what takes place this issue will be on the agenda at the state level.

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES ON THE RISE**

Many of the crimes committed have some type of substance abuse related activity attached to them. Over the past five years Boys State has watched almost all of the treatment centers close due to lack of funding. “This issue is simply not going to go away. It is going to cost way more money to house these people for diseases not crimes”, said one substance abuse counselor. The State has slashed the money allocated for these treatment centers and the Cities have made no attempt to pick up the lack of funding. A survey was conducted and over 40% of all incarcerated inmates have been convicted on some type of substance abuse crime. “This

number is seriously high for us to do nothing about. Let us treat these people not simply incarcerate them”, stated the substance abuse counselor. The new state legislature will have to examine this when the budget is being reviewed.

**STATE FLAG BURNING LAW**

Many residents have sent petitions into the Governor for some type of law protecting the flag against desecration. The Governor took no action on this issue and a bill died in the State Senate last year calling for the ban on burning the flag. “I hope this new legislature will take up this fight and protect the flag. It is a symbol of our freedom and our country. These people who desecrated it can leave anytime they want to”, stated one petitioner for the law. Many in the Senate voted against the bill saying, “If we pass any such law the courts will likely overturn it on the freedom of speech”? Many veteran organizations have put new life into the drive for the new legislature and Governor to take action. “This is exactly why we elect them to make laws. This issue is a must and we demand they do something about it”, said one veteran. Boys State would be the first state to enact such a law prohibiting the burning of the flag. “It is an issue of free speech and you can not take this from us. The very thing this flag stands for you are trying to limit”, stated one opponent of any such law.

**WANTED**

Beat Writers and Photographers for the longest running paper in Boys State history;

*The Whirligig News*

Write about city, county and state events. Be the one tells the news not the one who reads it. For further information meet in the Multi Purpose Room C at 12:45 p.m. on Sunday.

**WHIRLIGIG NEWS UNDER GOING RENOVATION**

The long time running paper of Boys State has begun renovation. In the upcoming issues readers will notice ongoing changes to bring this great paper into the 21’st century. So if you think you have what it takes to help with this transformation stop in at the Whirligig Paper located in the computer lab in Brody.