

## DEATHS

### Col. Ronald C. Martin, M.D.

Col. Ronald "Ron" Christian Martin, M.D., age 81, passed away on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at UPMC Hamot after declining health. He was born in Knoxville, TN, on February 7, 1944, son of the late Cecil and Myrtle Martin. He was a 1962 graduate from Young High School, earned his undergraduate (1967) and Masters (1971) degrees from The University of Tennessee, and his Doctorate in Medicine from the University of Santo Tomas in 1977.

Ron enlisted with the U.S. Army in 1967 and served his country for nearly 37 years. He served with the 339th Combat Support Hospital Unit in Erie and retired in 2004 at the rank of colonel. Ron joined the family medical practice in Cambridge Springs in 1987 and continued practicing until 2014. Simultaneously, he worked for various entities throughout his career, including Stepping Stones and the Emergency Department at Meadville Medical Center, as medical director at SCI Cambridge Springs, as medical director of Edinboro



University's Ghering Health Center, and Crawford County Drug and Alcohol. He was an Eagle Scout who loved woodworking, fossil hunting, star gazing, drawing, singing, and playing piano. He was a loving father and grandfather, devoted to his family, faith, and country.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his birth mother, Anne Lincoln, and her husband, Arthur Lincoln. Survivors include his wife of 54 years, Judith Martin of Erie; three children, Angela Martin-Horn and her husband Thomas of Edinboro, Benjamin Martin and his wife Colleen of Milltown, NJ, and Becca Smith and her husband Kyle of Meadville; and seven grandchildren, Benjamin, Nicholas, Hannah, Hailey, Harper, Jackson, and Owen.

Friends are invited to a Celebration of Life at Vernon Central Hose Company, 16589 McMath Ave., Meadville, on March 30, 2025, from 2-4 pm.

## Department reopens applications for student loan repayment plans

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The U.S. Education Department reopened online applications Wednesday for income-driven repayment plans for student loan borrowers.

The applications had been taken down in response to a February court ruling, which blocked the Biden administration's Saving on a Valuable Education Plan and parts of other income-driven repayment plans. The materials' removal had complicated the renewal process for borrowers already enrolled in repayment plans.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) had filed a lawsuit seeking to force the department to accept and process applications for repayment plans.

Delays in processing applications held up relief for borrowers including those enrolled in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, said Persis Yu, deputy executive director for the Student Borrower Protection Center, which represented the plaintiffs.

"Every day these applications go unprocessed deprives borrowers of critical time toward PSLF relief and finan-

cial stability," Yu said.

The Trump administration needed to revise the income-driven repayment plan application in order to comply with the February ruling, said James Bergeron, acting under secretary at the Education Department. While the online application was down, officials said there were no disruptions to the paper application process.

Income-driven repayment plans take a borrower's finances and family size into account when calculating monthly payments, but borrowers must periodically demonstrate they still qualify. When forms were unavailable, some borrowers were unable to complete that process.

Advocates for borrowers encouraged them to be prepared for delays in processing as the department begins accepting applications again.

"Looking at the application today, it does appear that everything is back online," said Sabrina Calazans, executive director of Student Debt Crisis Center. "Borrowers should still apply for the plan that works for them."

## Education

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

The foundation has donated \$150,000 to provide 900 touchpads to underserved preschoolers, Bob Sanford, the foundation's executive director, said Wednesday.

Ainsworth and ApSeed officials met with officials from nonprofit groups for an overview of the program and to discuss distribution.

The pilot program is working with WIC (Women, Infants and Children nutritional program); Meadville

Family YMCA; Willow Child Development Center; Center for Family Services; CHAPS (Crawford County Mental Health Awareness Program); Bethesda Lutheran Services; Women's Services; Meadville Public Library and Crawford County School for Adult Education initially to distribute the touchpads.

"We're trying to improve reading and math skills" to give kids a good start, said Bob Sanford, executive director of the Ainsworth Foundation. "We're trying to jumpstart education for 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds and we're better off as a community for it."

The touchpads will stay with the

kids who receive them.

"We're not asking for them back," Sanford said. "If they break or they get lost, we'll get them another one. We'll be able to track that."

The foundation became aware of ApSeed's program about a year ago.

"We were looking for (educational) programs that have been successful and this one percolated to the top," he said.

Stacie Hiott, child care director at Meadville Family YMCA, is excited about using the touchpads with preschoolers.

"It is so much fun," she said of using one of the touchpads. "I really

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — With the stroke of his pen, President Donald Trump restructured the way Americans can register to vote and when they can cast their ballots. Or did he?

After the president signed his executive order Tuesday calling for broad election changes, such as proof of citizenship for voter registration and an Election Day return deadline for mailed ballots, election officials, state attorneys general and legal experts said it would face legal challenges for encroaching on state powers outlined in the U.S. Constitution.

The order is "unlawful," Colorado Democratic Secretary of State Jena Griswold said in a statement.

"This cannot be done through executive action," said David Becker, a former U.S. Justice Department attorney who leads the nonprofit Center for Election Innovation and Research.

New Jersey Attorney General Matt Platkin said he expects his and other states will challenge the executive order, just as they have several other of Trump's actions. He said he's never seen a president threaten the integrity of state election rules like Trump did through his order.

The Trump administration says it has the authority to require the changes to secure U.S. elections from voter fraud, which the president falsely claims is widespread and responsible for his 2020 election loss. A decision about the order's legality will ultimately rest with the courts.

As he signed the order, Trump teased that there would be more action to combat voter fraud "in the coming weeks." Asked about the order on a podcast Wednesday, Trump doubled down on his threat to withhold federal money for states that don't comply and reiterated his frequent election falsehoods.

Here's a closer look at the legal obstacles for Trump's far-reaching executive order:

### ■ The president has limited authority to regulate elections

Trump's order calls for dramatic changes to voter registration and election procedures. For one, it requires states to ensure that all ballots are returned by Election Day — not simply postmarked by that day — or risk losing federal funding.

But the authority he's claiming goes beyond what's outlined in the Constitution, several election law experts said. Article I, Section 4 of the Constitution says states get to determine the "times, places and manner" of how elections are run.

Elections in the U.S. are unique because they are not centralized. Rather than being run by the federal government, they're conducted by election officials and volunteers in thousands of jurisdictions across the country, from tiny townships to sprawling urban counties with more voters than some states have people. The Constitution's so-called "Elections Clause" also gives Congress the power to "make or alter" election regulations, at least for federal office, but it doesn't mention any presidential authority over election administration.

Becker said when there is a nationwide problem with voting that needs to be solved, such as a particular group of voters being denied the right to vote, "it's always done through Congress."

"Look, the Constitution was very



Associated Press

Supervisor of the Checklist for the State of New Hampshire Leslie Dombroski registers Elise Collins, 18, to vote in Derry on March 11.

clear: The president is not king," Becker said. "The president doesn't get to establish executive orders that affect the states with the swipe of a pen. If he wants to affect funding, he has to go through Congress to do that."

Sean Morales-Doyle, director of the voting rights program at the Brennan Center for Justice, called the executive order "statutorily and constitutionally" illegal. As an example, he pointed to the provision requiring documentary proof of citizenship, which he said violates the National Voter Registration Act.

It's not the first time a president has issued an election-related executive order. In 2021, former President Joe Biden issued one directing federal agencies to take steps to promote voting access — earning him criticism from Republicans who argued it was unconstitutional and exceeded his authority. Trump rescinded that order earlier this year.

### ■ The order claims questionable power over an independent agency

Trump's order instructs a bipartisan, independent agency called the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to amend its federal voter registration form and its guidelines for voting systems. It says the commission should then rescind certification of voting equipment that doesn't meet his chosen standards.

But because the EAC was established by Congress to be independent, "the president can't just dictate to the EAC what they do," said Jonathan Diaz, director of voting advocacy and partnerships at the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center.

Trump's directives to the EAC come as he has sought to consolidate power over other independent agencies, including the Federal Election Commission and the Federal Communications Commission.

In a blog post, Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, described the executive order as an "executive power grab" that "would severely shift power over federal elections into the hands of the presidency" if it survives a court challenge.

A representative from the EAC didn't immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

### ■ Expect to see lawsuits over voter disenfranchisement

Even if courts eventually rule that Trump's order can stand, parts of it could face additional legal challenges if they prevent people who are eligible to vote from being able to cast a ballot.

Millions of Americans don't have appropriate documents readily available to prove

their citizenship even though they are U.S. citizens. For example, in recent town elections in New Hampshire, which recently passed a proof of citizenship requirement, some women didn't have proper documentation because they had changed their last name when they married.

The order also says the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Government Efficiency, the government cost-cutting initiative led by Elon Musk, will be able to obtain and review each state's voter registration lists and potentially sensitive voter data, under subpoena power.

Xavier Persad, senior policy counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union, said he could foresee a "faulty data review that would undoubtedly lead to eligible voters being improperly flagged for potential removal from the voter rolls and for potential criminal prosecution." Just the threat of that outcome would intimidate voters and suppress turnout, he said.

"We won't let this stand," Persad said. "We will definitely see the administration in court."

### ■ Legal challenges are on the horizon

Along with the ACLU, the Campaign Legal Center and Common Cause said they were reviewing the order for possible challenges. A stronger pledge came from the prominent Democratic election and voting rights attorney Marc Elias, who posted online on Tuesday, "We will sue."

State election officials and attorneys general had mixed responses, with several Republicans applauding the order and its promise to share federal citizenship data with states to help them identify noncitizens on their voter rolls.

Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab, a Republican who has gained a national profile for pushing back against baseless election conspiracy theories, said in a statement that Trump's order "makes points that states should have been doing for years."

But the top law enforcement officials in some Democratic-led states said they were evaluating options to defend their states' election laws and processes.

Washington state Attorney General Nick Brown, a Democrat, said that his office is looking at the order, noting his state would be particularly impacted as a state that votes entirely by mail.

"I don't think any serious lawyer looking at it thinks the order is legal," he said. "Voting systems for generations have been the purview of states and counties to govern."

## Changes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

home game.

"Any sporting event that the need exists, we're going to be there to control the safety and security of the spectators, the officials, the coaches, the players," said Chief Michael Stefanucci of Meadville Police Department. "As I've said before, Meadville's going to be known for its athletic programs and not for how the

fans react in the stands. That's where the line is going to be held — you can go there and cheer your kid or your friend, but you can't go to a game to yell at the refs, the coaches or the opposing team."

Stefanucci said Nick Mogel, a school resource officer who regularly attends home basketball and football games, was the only police officer covering the MASH gymnasium when a fight broke out in the stands during a stoppage in play with 3:12 remaining in the game between Meadville

and Uniontown. Video of the incident shows a second officer arriving about 77 seconds after the fight begins; over the course of the next 30 seconds, two additional officers enter the gym.

Two security guards were also present at the game, according to Crawford Central School Board President Kevin Merritt.

Stefanucci said one officer will be present for most home sporting events and additional officers will be present at basketball and football games. The action plan calls for one to two officers at home games. The heightened police presence will come in addition to the department's regular patrols, according to Stefanucci. "This'll be overtime work for the officers," he said. "This won't in any way affect manpower on the street to handle our day-to-day operations."

Crawford Central will pay the cost of overtime duty

for the officers involved, the chief noted.

Galdon acknowledged the possibility of additional expenses for the district but said safety grant funding would be sought to offset those costs.

In addition to police, MASH will provide one to two game managers for each home game. Game managers coordinate between home and visiting teams, officials, cheer squads and others involved in events, addressing various issues that arise before, during and after games, including security concerns.

Among other changes, Crawford Central will install additional security cameras for MASH athletic facilities and nearby outside areas. Home and away seating will be designated on opposite sides of the gymnasium, including designated sections for cheerleaders, students and for seniors and disabled fans. To protect players, the first two rows of seating will be re-

served as a boundary between teams and spectators.

The plan also calls for expectations on sportsmanlike behavior to be announced prior to each home event and reinforced on printed rosters or flyers for each event.

Several requirements imposed by PIAA and included in the plan apply specifically to coaches and members of the basketball team. Coaches and players must complete a module on sportsmanship; coaches must also complete a module on teaching and modeling behavior. Coaches and school officials will also be required to review the district's athletic handbook with game managers, players and parents.

Situational awareness training will be required for nearly everyone involved in athletic events, from athletes, coaches and game managers to cheerleaders and custodians.

Identified spectators involved in the incident will

It's safe. They love it and they're learning."

Feedback from the agencies will be key going forward to keep the project going, according to Sanford. "This could be a perpetual thing," he said of funding from the foundation. "Every year, there's kids moving on. We know this will catch on. We're happy to do more and we want to do more. If we can see a success measurement, then it will keep going."

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