

Freeman agrees to join Dodgers in six-year, \$162 million deal

SPORTS, 1B



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It's a deal: Teacher pay plan awaits final votes

Emily Wagster Pettus
ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSON – Negotiators from the Mississippi House and Senate reached a deal Wednesday to boost some of the lowest teacher salaries in the nation.

The two Republican-controlled chambers will vote on the plan in coming days, and members are expected to pass it by wide margins. Republican Gov. Tate Reeves has said he supports higher pay levels to recruit and retain teachers.

During a meeting Wednesday, negotiators from the Senate offered an aver-

age increase of about \$5,100 – a jump of more than 10% over teachers' current pay. That is a few hundred dollars higher than the House offered last week.

"We think that this is a doable proposal," said Senate Education Committee Chairman Dennis DeBar, a Republican from Leakesville.

Republican Rep. Kent McCarthy of Hattiesburg said House leaders were eager to reach a deal.

"Let's get this done," McCarty said.

Within hours, negotiators from the two chambers signed the final plan.

See **TEACHER PAY**, Page 2A



Elementary school teacher LaKristie Barner from Itta Bena, was one of several teachers that monitored a meeting of the education conferees from both the House and Senate, Wednesday as the lawmakers sought a compromise on their separate teacher pay bills at the Mississippi Capitol in Jackson.

AP PHOTO/ROGELIO V. SOLIS



ABOVE: James Moore, co-owner of Moore's Bicycle Shop in Hattiesburg on March 11, poses with a mock gas pump he intends to place in front of his store. Moore jokes that the difference between a car and a bicycle is the cost of fuel, "All [a bike] takes is a peanut butter sandwich and a Coke and you're good for the day."

BELOW: A Hub City Transit bus approaches a blue line stop at the intersection of Main Street and Front Street in Hattiesburg on March 10.

PHOTOS BY DOMINIC GWINN/
HATTIESBURG AMERICAN



Cities opting out of medical marijuana face growing pushback

Maria Clark
Mississippi Clarion Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

A handful of cities and towns have voted that for now, they are opting out of participating in Mississippi's nascent medical marijuana program that was signed into law just over a month ago.

Under the law, any town, city, or county governing board has up to 90 days, or until the first week of May, to vote against allowing dispensaries, cultivators, or production facilities from operating within those jurisdictions. These localities have the option to opt back in at a later date.

So far, only a small number of cities and towns have chosen not to participate including the cities of Brandon, Ridgeland, Pass Christian, and Gluckstadt. But advocates fear this could signal that more communities will follow suit, ultimately creating access issues for patients and limiting the number of businesses able to operate successfully in the burgeoning industry.

In recent days, Angie Calhoun, founder of the Mississippi Cannabis

See **MARIJUANA**, Page 3A



Angie Calhoun, CEO and founder of The Mississippi Cannabis Patients Alliance and a number of members, board members and advocates for medical marijuana, addresses reporters at the Mississippi State Capitol, in Jackson, to listen to their plea to the Legislature to pass the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Act "as is" on the first day of the new legislative session, Jan. 4. ROGELIO V. SOLIS/AP

Where there's a wheel, there's a way

Gas prices too high? Here are alternative ways to get around Hattiesburg

Dominic Gwinn
Hattiesburg American
USA TODAY NETWORK

Rising gas prices are expected to fuel a boom in alternative transportation, like cycling and public transit, but Hattiesburg residents hoping to save at the pump already have several options to get around town.

Bicycles

In addition to the Longleaf Trace, Hattiesburg has several

miles of trails, paths, and bike lanes for people looking to commute by bike.

According to Mississippi state law, cyclists must remember to obey all traffic laws and have working lights on the front and back of their bike. The Mississippi Department of Transit advises cyclists to wear bright, reflective clothing, and always wear a helmet.

"Technically a bicyclist shouldn't ride on the sidewalk, but in a place like Hardy Street where

See **TRANSPORTATION**, Page 4A

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Watching China: President Joe Biden's attempt to adjust foreign policy is complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. 7A

News

Speaker Philip Gunn is holding \$1.8 billion hostage and could give Gov. Tate Reeves a big win. 3A

Weather

High 80° | Low 46°
Severe a.m. t-storms.
Forecast, 6A

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