

The Sunday Print-and-Read

Our Best News, Opinion, Leisure, and
Thought Pieces + Puzzles

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FXBG

Advance

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Our editors select the best stories of the week and put them in an easy-to-read document that you can print and carry to the beach, the park, or just enjoy browsing over your morning coffee on a lazy Sunday morning.

News

Mary Washington Healthcare Acquires Another Local OB-GYN Practice

Some providers from Elite Women's Health are joining the healthcare system.



Photo by [freestocks](#) on [Unsplash](#)

By Adele Uphaus

MANAGING EDITOR & CORRESPONDENT

A well-established local obstetrics and gynecology practice is closing its doors this week, with some providers joining Mary Washington Healthcare and others establishing a new practice that will provide gynecological care only.

Patients of Elite Women's Health received a letter dated June 17 from Daniel Woodford, medical director of Mary Washington Medical Group, informing them that "many of the providers" associated with the practice would be joining Mary Washington Medical Group effective July 15.

Elite Women's Health has provided OB-GYN care to the Fredericksburg area for 12 years, according to its [website](#), which was updated to state that the practice is closing.

According to Woodford's letter, two of the practice's doctors, Leedylyn Stadulis and Brittany Bowler, are joining Mary Washington Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Hospital spokeswoman Emily Thurston said these doctors will continue to deliver babies at both Mary Washington and Stafford hospitals with no interruption in service.

The practice's third doctor, Zeenat Patel, is opening her own new practice, [Elite Gynecology and Wellness](#), that will provide gynecological care only, focusing on "menopausal health, breast health, weight loss, and soon, aesthetics," according to Woodford's letter.

Patel, joined by nurse practitioner Heather Pickett, will begin seeing patients on July 16, according to the website.

The new practice is the second women's health center in the area that no longer provides obstetrical care for pregnant and birthing people. New Beginnings OB-GYN has also stopped taking obstetric patients.

Elite Women's Health also employed three certified nurse midwives, who are joining Mary Washington Obstetrics and Gynecology's [new midwifery program](#). They will offer outpatient services in Spotsylvania beginning on July 15 but will not be delivering babies until they join "hospital-based care" at Stafford Hospital on July 31, Thurston said.

They'll join four Stafford-based certified nurse midwives to make up the midwifery team at Stafford Hospital.

The midwives will only deliver at Stafford Hospital, Thurston said.

Patients of the three Elite Women's Health midwives whose due dates fall between July 15 and 31 will not have their babies delivered by the providers they've seen throughout their pregnancies.

The Advance spoke to one patient who will be affected by this change.

"I was told to familiarize myself with [the obstetricians] already available through [Mary Washington Obstetrics and Gynecology]," the patient said.

"There are four pages of people and I have no idea who is going to be on call. I

will not have any choice. I don't know if they will respect my preferences, or whether I'll be put in a situation that I'm uncomfortable with.”

According to its [website](#), there are 15 doctors, four nurse practitioners, and one physician assistant affiliated with Mary Washington Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Of the 15 doctors, one is on a leave of absence, and—according to the website—just five are taking new patients.

Editor's Note: Read [our previous coverage](#) about the local, statewide, and national OB-GYN shortage.

Commentary

Why Do We Reject the Candidates We Say We Want?

American voters complain about candidate quality and money in politics. Ben Litchfield's 2023 primary provides a lens into why people vote against the types of candidates they say they want.



by Martin Davis
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Walking into the coffee shop at Barnes & Noble wearing a U Mass Department of Agriculture t-shirt, and sporting a scruffy beard common among the new-father-little-sleep club, Ben Litchfield looked at peace. His beguiling smile and jovial laugh, so often muted on the campaign trail in 2023, had returned.

Being a year removed from a bruising primary campaign for Virginia Senate District 27 that he ultimately lost to Joel Griffin is partly responsible for lightening his mood. The balance, arguably, is due to the mental recharging he's undergoing.

Campaigns take their toll on candidates — the pressure to be on all the time; the demands to give, and give, and give some more, only to be thanked by being publicly shamed the one time illness, or exhaustion, keep you from making an event. These are hard to comprehend if you've never experienced, or followed, someone on the campaign trail.

Some deal with the stress by jogging or biking or swimming. Litchfield seemed to perk up most during the campaign last year when he engaged in lively intellectual discussions. As he did on the [New Dominion Podcast](#), [twice](#), and as he and I did privately on numerous occasions.

Litchfield is all about the life of the mind. The campaign trail stole time from that. In this nonpolitical season of his life, he's regaining this part of his being.

A student of philosophy and history, and a lawyer by professional training, Litchfield's now turning his attention to agriculture and the brewing crises facing us all. He's particularly concerned about soil vitality, and the fact that the vast majority of our foods are in the hands of a small number of corporate giants.

Far from a [Malthusian](#), Litchfield is a [Boserup](#) protege who exudes confidence in the ability of the human mind to innovate and rise to the challenges confronting us.

How one gets from a life spent in law and running for office, to wrestling with soil composition and regenerative farming, isn't a far stretch. Litchfield enjoys new, big challenges and sees taking on new learning as a way to continue to stretch himself as a human being, whether politics is in his future or not.

Through nearly three hours of conversation with Litchfield recently, I found myself pondering the question he has asked himself many times in the wake of his loss: Why did voters turn against Litchfield in last year's race?

It's particularly challenging question in Litchfield's case, because he shone in a number of areas:

- **Debates:** The Advance moderated an early debate between Litchfield and Griffin, and Litchfield delivered a solid performance, registering no major missteps during the discussion.
- **Policy:** Litchfield's grasp of the intricacies of complex issues like finance, consumer protection, education, and transportation were apparent throughout his time on the campaign trail.

- **Advocate:** Litchfield’s policies matched his rhetoric around the people he said he was working hardest for — [Poor People](#).
- **Shoe Leather:** Litchfield built an army of young volunteers, and they knocked on more than 40,000 doors across the 27th for him. His ground-game still generates buzz in Democratic circles.

So what went wrong?

The short, easy answer is money.

Senior party officials deemed Litchfield incapable of raising it. The ground game he built wasn’t of interest to the powers that be. His competitor, who came late to the race (Griffin entered the race in February, just four months before the primary), brought money and — more important, the ability to raise still more money — to the table.

When the primary results came in, the money-people won. Of just 10,570 votes cast, nearly 60% went to Griffin.

Ironically, money wasn’t enough for the Dems to win the General Election — Griffin lost despite out-raising Republican Tara Durant by nearly \$600,000 in an election where Dems statewide over-performed and won control of both the House and the Senate in Richmond.

Money, it seems, does have its limits.

The Candidates We Claim to Want

There is a paradox with the American electorate. People say they want politicians who can think independently of party politics, and keep the best interests of the citizens they represent ahead of the money that drives the system. Yet, when it comes time to pull the lever, we it’s the parties and candidates money that often sways voters.

Litchfield is a local lens into this phenomenon. He was, in many ways, the candidate that voters said they wanted. And yet, on Primary Day, the voters at the thousands of doors his team knocked that said they would turn out and vote, didn’t. And a number of those who did vote went for the candidate who was deemed “more electable” — i.e., they had more money.

Before moving on, let’s be clear that I’m not suggesting here that voters made the wrong decision last June. Nor am I saying that Litchfield would have beat

Tara Durant if he had won the primary. Durant probably still wins because the seat was flagged as Republican-leaning. Further, Griffin ran a hard, well-fought primary campaign and race in the General Election. On primary day, the votes simply didn't go Litchfield's way.

Nonetheless, Litchfield's race provides some fascinating insights into voter psychology.

Talk with voters across our region, and one discovers that Republicans and Democrats alike share three main complaints with politics: 1. Too much money has harmed campaigns, 2. The power of the two dominant parties is too strong, forcing out moderate voices, and 3. The combination of money and party politics has left voters feeling more distant from the political process than they have felt in some time, breeding a sense of hopelessness.

The combination of these factors has had a dispiriting effect on voter turnout, especially in off-year and primary elections. Ironically, these are the elections where the power of local voters is magnified.

Money and 'Electability'

Let's begin with a closer look at the primary Litchfield lost. In that race, the Democratic primary produced a paltry 10,550 votes. Litchfield took 4,230 of those votes. He lost by just a hair over 2,000 votes.

[As we noted last year](#), "This primary featured debates and candidate forums and lots of campaigning and ads encouraging voters to turn out. They didn't. Especially the Democrats."

How is it that more than 40,000 doors knocked on by Litchfield's team only turns out 4,200 voters for him? There were some 155,000 registered voters in SD 27, meaning Litchfield's army reached almost a quarter of them. Add in doors knocked on by Griffin, and one has to wonder how only 10,000 voters showed up? (The Republicans, by way of contrast, turned out 15,000 voters on Primary day.)

Part of the reason for the poor response is that during the Democratic primary, the narrative of "electability" became a significant talking point among many of the citizens that the Advance interviewed at the polls and on the campaign trail.

When asked what made a candidate electable, and the discussion invariably turned to money.

The brighter the electability narrative burns, the more likely people will be to support the financially stronger candidate, or simply not turn out to support their favorite because who doesn't have significant financial resources. (Griffin spent \$402,889 to win the primary, Litchfield spent \$236,136.)

This is even true of the donor class, as Litchfield told me in an interview — to this point unpublished — about a month after the primary.

[Litchfield told the Advance], I had donors tell me ... the district was unwinnable because Youngkin carried the district by nine points I had a lot of donors who said they wanted to keep their money in more-competitive races ... I had donors who said I didn't have name recognition ...

It's not an unreasonable position to take. Campaigns are expensive, after all. Tara Durant and Joel Griffin spent a combined \$7.3 million in the SD 27 race. While Litchfield was struggling during the primaries to raise money, however, it's also true that had he won, state and national party dollars would have surely flowed.

The electability argument clearly hurt Litchfield's chances.

'The System'

Another issue may well be voters' growing discontent with the party system.

That's the key argument of the book [The Independent Voter](#) by Ali Omar. "Rather than 'leaning' to a party or an ideology," says the book's promotional write-up, "independents vary on issues but share a deep distrust of the partisan system."

Omar's book explores the basis and results of that distrust at the national level. Locally, that distrust has a great deal to do with the difficulty average citizens have getting involved with local politics.

Local parties have enormous influence on School Board, Board of Supervisor, City Council, and related local races, of course, but they also play a significant role in state races, particularly at the primary stage — before the state and national consultants get involved.

These local parties are typically small and dominated by the same few people who have done the lion's share of the work over a period of decades. "This creates a core team of people you can depend upon," Litchfield told the Advance last year. "It [also] makes the committees a bit isolated from the

broader public. Not very many people know they exist, they often don't know when the meetings are, and it's very hard to get involved. That's not to denigrate the work they do. They do hard work with no pay and they do it just because they're dedicated to the cause."

A cynical angle on the state of local parties is to say that those on the inside represent at the lowest level a political "elite," for want of a better word, who zealously guard their power.

A more-realistic angle on these parties is that participation in local political committees is crashing because citizens are significantly disengaged from social and political activities, as described in the book *Bowling Alone*.

Robert Putnam, the author of this classic sociological study of Americans' decreasing willingness to engage with organizations that historically built "social capital," describes the state of Americans' involvement in politics this way: "Today's cynical views may or may not be more accurate than the Pollyanna-ish views of the early sixties, but they undermine the political confidence necessary to motivate and sustain political involvement."

Bottom line — we don't get involved. Not just locally, but across the nation. And not just in politics. As Putnam said, the trend holds true in scouting, bridge clubs, Elk's clubs, bowling leagues, and the like. In short, the falling interest in local politics is simply an extension of Americans' choosing isolation over community.

But even the decline of involvement in politics doesn't fully account for the dismal turnout numbers we saw in the 2023 Democratic primary and, indeed, in most primaries, where 15% is considered a strong showing at the polls.

So how else to explain what is happening? A lack of hope.

Belief in Tomorrow

Standing in the house at Litchfield's watch party on election night last June with a cadre of young people who poured out to knock doors for Litchfield, the news that Ben had lost hit the crowd hard.

Their disappointment went beyond sadness. The results were demoralizing.

"All that work, and people just don't care," said one volunteer to me. Her sentiment was reflected in the eyes of everyone in the room.

“Would you do it again?” I asked one young man.

“I don’t know,” he responded. “I just don’t think people hear us.”

This should not surprise anyone. Over the past 25 years, the very institutions that were designed to instill an understanding of, and a trust in, our political system have come under withering criticism.

The press has caught a great deal of the brunt. “I don’t believe the lying liberal media” bumper stickers can still be seen on cars around town. The sentiment is one that I, as a member of the media, hear from people almost daily.

Public education has been turned on by parents, by students, and to a degree, by businesses, who are increasingly pushing work skills over soft skills like critical thinking and deep reading — the skills associated with developing self-awareness, as well as an understanding of our society, government, and how both work.

Even the government itself has become the butt of most every joke related to efficiency.

These three factors combined are what make it difficult for people with the skills we say we want in politicians — honesty, intellectual integrity, an understanding of people’s day-to-day concerns, and a heart for public service — to earn their way into the game.

Voters Need to Take Stock, And Get Involved

As Litchfield and I prepared to leave, I asked the question I’m sure he knew was coming.

“Are you going to run again?”

“To be determined,” he said.

Whether he chooses to run again or not, Litchfield is a candidate that voters should reflect upon before disengaging from the process.

Democracy — whether it be national or local — rests on people’s confidence that the candidates we elect will work in the interest of the people who put them into office. At the local level, we have an opportunity to get to know political candidates in a way that most of us can’t at the national level.

In many ways, Ben Litchfield is just the type of candidate we say that we want. One who is concerned for the everyday person, demonstrates a willingness to lead through service, and has a burning intellectual curiosity that leads to creative and innovative thoughts as opposed to stale ideological talking points.

He's not the only person we could say this about. I have tracked Democrats and Republicans throughout my career who fully display these traits. I've also watched over the past decade how much more difficult it has become for these people to get involved.

If voters truly are frustrated with the money in politics, the way the party system controls elections, and believe that hope has been stripped from them, there is a way forward.

It involves finding candidates like Litchfield — whether they be Democrats or Republicans — who embody the ideals they hold to, and support them early in the game.

Because of low turnouts and long lead times, voters in local and state-wide primary elections have time to get to know candidates more intimately, and to have a significant impact by simply turning out on Election Day.

Whether we choose to elect people the party rolls out, or people who embody the ideals of public service we supposedly admire, is entirely up to us.

Environment

How Much Hotter is it?

By Bruce Saller
WRITER



Photo by [Rajiv Bajaj](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Last year was the [hottest on record](#) since 1850, when temperature data collection began.

So far, this year has even been hotter than 2023. But how much warmer has it been in Fredericksburg?

One way to see the change is to use [degree days](#). Degree days measure how cold or warm a location is. A degree day compares the average of the daily high and low temperatures to 65°.

If the average temperature is above 65°, the difference (avg temp - 65°) is the number of cooling degree days (CDDs). If the average temperature is below

65°, the difference (65° - avg temp) is the number of heating degree days (HDDs).

These terms may seem backwards, but these measures were developed for utility companies to help estimate the amount of energy needed to heat (HDDs) or cool (CDDs) buildings. So, a hotter summer day has more CDDs and a hotter winter day has less HDDs, and the reverse for colder days.

HDDs and CDDs are accumulated by months and years. Summer/winter months generally only have either CDDs or HDDs, but spring/fall months have both.

The National Weather Service has collected temperature [data](#) for numerous cities, including Fredericksburg, from 1991 to the present, and calculated HDD/CDD monthly averages based on the data from 1991-2020, along with daily and monthly actuals.

Here are the 2023 and 2024 average monthly temperature changes from the 1991-2020 average (data notes follow article)¹:

	2023											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Degrees from Average	7.77	8.32	1.31	3.17	-2	-2.97	2.48	0.68	NA	2.74	-1	2.55

Which results in an average temperature 2.11 degrees above average for 2023.

	2024											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul (Through 7/9)	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Degrees from Average	4.32	2.45	4.55	2	2.81	4.6	4.33					

Which results in an average temperature 3.51 degrees above average through July 9 of this year.

2023 had a wide variation in temperature differences, ranging from about -3 to +8 degrees. The 2024 deltas have been in a much smaller range, from about +2.5 to +4.6 degrees, with a higher annual difference so far. (I'll publish updated data at the beginning of every month.)

So, Fredericksburg is now experiencing temperatures that are several degrees higher than the 1991-2020 average. If the temperature continues to increase at the same rate, in 2050 Fredericksburg will be about 6-8 degrees above that average.

While it is nice to have warmer winters (unless you ski), I don't think most of us want to have summers that are hotter than we are experiencing now.

So, what can you do to help prevent this?

1. [Transition away from natural gas/oil](#)
2. [Use battery-powered lawn equipment](#)
3. [Consider buying an electric vehicle](#)
4. [Consider installing solar panels](#)
5. Purchase energy star appliances when replacing appliances/hot water heater/heat pump and get a [federal tax credit](#).
6. Walk or ride a bicycle instead of driving
7. Eat less meat and more plant-based food and [be more sustainable](#).
8. [Conserve water](#).

Life in the 540

France in Fredericksburg



Students from Frejus and their American hosts took in a game at Nat's Park on Saturday. A group shot was taken along the first base line (left), and Maxime is shown holding the ceremonial first pitch (right).

By Martin Davis
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Editor's Note: Late Friday afternoon, a dozen students from Fréjus, France, touched down at Dulles International Airport and made their way to Fredericksburg. They will be in Fredericksburg until the 23rd, when they depart for a visit to New York City. Between now and then, the students will visit King's Dominion, Lake Anna, enjoy a trolley tour, visit Washington, D.C., and more. Each student is staying with a family that also has a teenager at home. Next year, those teenagers who played host to our friends from France will travel to Fréjus and spend time with host families there.

FXBG Advance is partnering with the Fredericksburg Sister Cities Association to allow the students to write short blog posts about their activities, and to share a few candid photos.

Today we have a look at the trip to a Nats game on Saturday night, where one lucky visitor was selected to toss out the first pitch.

We hope you enjoy tracking with these students for a couple weeks and getting to know them. Learn more about FSCA and its relationship with Fréjus, including how you can get involved, by visiting the [FSCA Frejus website](#). To learn more about the other cities in the Sister City Association, [visit here](#).

Fun at the Old Ballpark

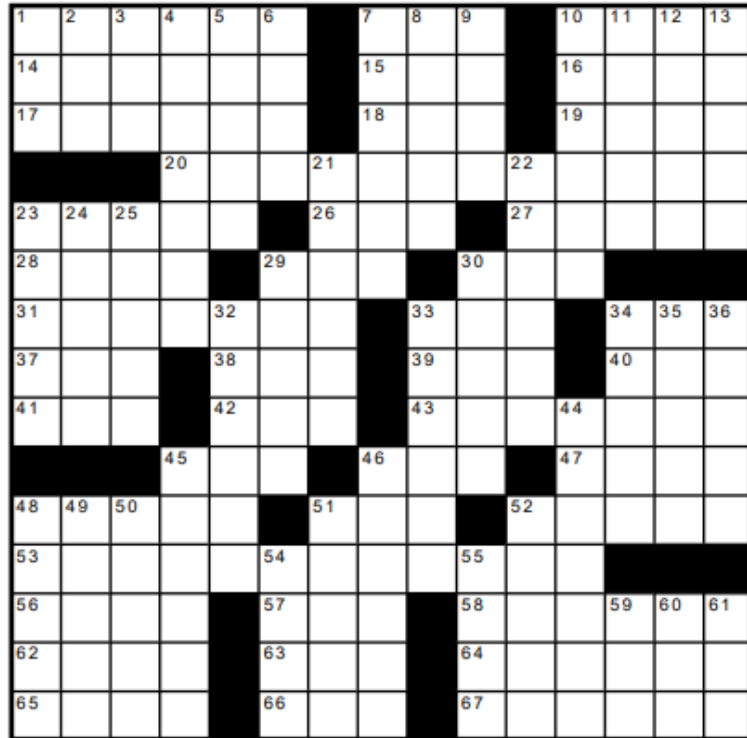
Hello, I'm Maxime; I'm from the sister city of Fréjus and my co-respondent is Darik. I threw out the first ball of Fred Nat's baseball game Saturday against the Mud Cats. For the first throw, the people who participate were told not to step on the white line (foul line) when walking onto the field because it brings bad luck.

Across

1. Cottonwoods
7. ___ kwon do
10. Conked out
14. Go over again
15. Egyptian cobra
16. The King ___
17. Theater district
18. Go downhill fast?
19. Cornfield cacophony
20. Aviation mechanic
23. Belle or Bart
26. Boy
27. Unfolds
28. Amos or Spelling
29. Like some ears
30. ___-Cat (winter vehicle)
31. Imperial dynasty of Russia
33. Injection amts.
34. Sprechen ___ Deutsch?
37. Mineral suffix
38. "Lord, is ___?": Matthew
39. That's gotta hurt!
40. Tolkien ogre
41. Third degree?
42. Legume
43. Uncommon
45. Belief system
46. Get older
47. Annapolis sch.
48. Hippodrome, e.g.
51. Menu words
52. Distinguishing characteristic
53. Made to resist breaking
56. Pigeon coop
57. Cinco de Mayo, e.g.
58. Scoffs
62. Polecat's defense
63. Common Market abbr.
64. People of courage
65. Neutral shades
66. D.C. advisory grp.
67. Size up

Down

1. Sheet music abbr.
2. Wreath of flowers



3. I've got it!
4. Swampfever
5. Blender maker
6. Restaurateur Toots
7. Dutch navigator
8. Inquired
9. Larger-than-life
10. Repeated from the beginning
11. Mindlessly stupid
12. Newsman Newman
13. Flat circular plates
21. Singer Newton-John
22. Island in central Japan
23. Piece of bacon
24. Fang, e.g.
25. Equipped
29. Tribal emblem
30. Teatime treat
32. Tries to bite
33. Puma
34. March man
35. Afghan's neighbor
36. Brilliance
44. Wave riders
45. Buries
46. Llama relative
48. Cravat
49. Role for Valerie
50. Stationery brand
51. Sign of spring
52. Shades
54. First place
55. Dept. of Labor division
59. Fair-hiring abbr.
60. Hi-___ graphics
61. Conscription org.