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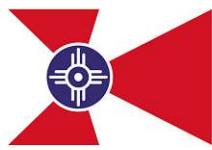
**GOP-backed health savings accounts cover fancy saunas but not insurance premiums.**

**In today's paper**

**SPORTS:** Kansas State AD Taylor laments state of college sports. **1B**



The Wichita Eagle



# The Wichita Eagle



DION LEFLER Wichita Eagle

Jon Rolph of Thrive Restaurant Group, an early supporter of the sales tax, speaks to the council.

## Wichita council approves special election on sales tax

BY CHANCE SWAIM AND KYLIE CAMERON  
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The Wichita City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to hold a special election for an added 1% sales tax on all retail purchases in the city — including groceries.

The election will be March 3 and will cost \$150,000.

The council approved hold-

ing the election on the first reading after more than four hours of discussion and debate about the proposed tax hike. It will hold another public hearing next week and vote again; only council member Mike Hoheisel signaled he could change his mind.

If public speakers at the meeting are any indication, the proposal is supported by the city's visitor's bureau, the summer musical theater company,

the firefighter's union, the chamber of commerce and the nonprofit organization running the city's homeless shelter while unpopular among people not directly benefitting from the sales tax revenue.

Thirty-three people spoke during the public comment session, with the majority in opposition.

The state removed a 6.5% tax on groceries earlier this year. Sedgwick County's 1%

sales tax approved in 1985, a majority of which goes to the city of Wichita, has remained in place. If the new tax passes, taxes on groceries in Wichita would double to 2%.

Some council members voiced concerns about the grocery tax and want the state to pass a law allowing food and other essentials to be exempt from local sales tax. But the law

SEE ELECTION, 4A

## Tariffs shrank trade deficit in September, new data show

BY ANA SWANSON  
*NYT News Service*

WASHINGTON

The Trump administration's tariffs continued to weigh on trade in September, as imports grew just 0.6% from August to \$342.1 billion, newly released data from the Commerce Department showed Thursday.

Exports rose 3% in the month, to \$289.3 billion. Because exports grew by more than imports, the U.S. trade deficit shrank, in line with the Trump administration's goals. The trade deficit in goods and services narrowed by more than 10% from the previous month, to \$52.8 billion.

The data, which is compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau, showed trade recovering slightly from a sluggish month in August, when newly imposed tariffs weighed on trade. President Donald Trump has imposed sweeping tariffs on imports from countries around the world this year, including cars, metals and furniture, in an effort to encourage more U.S. manufacturing.

The recent drop in the trade deficit has moved the country toward accomplishing one of Trump's biggest goals. The president has long seen the trade deficit as a sign of economic weakness, although plenty of economists have criticized his focus on the measure as overly simplistic or wrong. In September, the trade deficit in goods and services hit its lowest level since June 2020, when the United States was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But while the trade deficit has narrowed since tariffs were imposed, trade experts also caution against drawing too

SEE TARIFFS, 4A

## Report: \$2B in defense funds used for immigration crackdown

BY JOHN ISMAY  
*NYT News Service*

WASHINGTON

A group of Democratic lawmakers said in a report released Wednesday that the Pentagon had diverted at least \$2 billion from its core missions this year to support the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

The report found that shifting the funds had led to the pausing or canceling of programs, including the building of a pilot training facility, the repairing of schools for children of service members and the refurbishment of military barracks, something Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has

called a priority.

The report says that military readiness "will suffer as a direct result of diverting" Pentagon resources for immigration missions that are "not consistent" with the military's mission and that troops "have neither signed up nor been trained for."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said the administration was "using the defense budget as a slush fund for political stunts."

The report cited as an example funds that had been allocated for building a jet-aircraft training facility in Mississippi and barracks for troops on overseas bases. The money

SEE REPORT, 5A



JAIME GREEN File photo

Sledders enjoy College Hill Park in Wichita in this file photo.

## Wichita white Christmas unlikely this year

BY LINDSAY SMITH  
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It may not feel like it, but Christmas is right around the corner. While you may be hop-

ing for a white Christmas this year in Wichita, it's not very likely.

That's because since the National Weather Service started keeping records in 1888, the Wichita area has only seen 13

white Christmases. The last white Christmas, defined as at least an inch of snow on the ground that morning, was reported in the city in 2013. That means there is a 10% chance each year for Wichita to see snow on the holiday.

"Which makes it pretty rare for us," Chris Jakub, a forecaster with the NWS, told The Eagle.

In fact, this December hasn't been as cold as snow-lovers may have liked. Other than the dusting of snow Dec. 1, the area isn't expected to receive snowfall anytime soon.

"There are really no strong winter systems [expected]," Jakub said. "The snow is well to the north and east of us."

While there hasn't been much in the way of white, fluffy precipitation, the city has had an extra chilly start to December, but Jakub said this month is looking pretty mild overall.

"It's not going to rank high or low on the scale, just kind of right in the middle," Jakub said of December weather.

You may have to wait longer for snowfall, but cold weather is expected to move in this weekend. Here's a look at the agen-

SEE CHRISTMAS, 5A



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