

INSIDE THE HEIST

A team of over 100 investigators is working to understand how thieves pulled off the Oct. 19 theft at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

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ANKLE ANGST

Mizzou quarterback Beau Pribula reportedly tore three ligaments in his left ankle when he dislocated it during the Vanderbilt game

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CLARE NGUYEN/Missourian

Missouri Auditor Scott Fitzpatrick responds to emails in his office on Oct. 20 at the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City. According to his biography on the auditor website, Fitzpatrick "believes providing a quality education for the next generation of Missourians is the state's most important job."

Auditor adds intrigue to agency's work

BY TYLER KIRWAN

Columbia Missourian

JEFFERSON CITY — If a podcast episode titled "The audit of Ray County and the mystery of the 76 hams" seems worth listening to, then Missouri State Auditor Scott Fitzpatrick has succeeded.

Unbeknownst to many, "The World's Greatest Audit Podcast," is recorded here in the Show-Me State.

"Well, you know, it's a low bar," said Fitzpatrick, whose team's work drives the narrative of the episodes — five so far.

Missouri's 39th auditor is one of the voices that can be heard on the podcast that entertains listeners by detailing the oftentimes mundane world of state level auditing.

"We put out a hundred and something audit reports a year," Fitzpatrick said. "Most people are not going to read those. The podcast is a way to reach people who don't want to read

audit reports. You know, you can click on it, listen to it while you're driving."

Creating "The World's Greatest Audit Podcast" is one way that Fitzpatrick attempts to change conversations around government and educate people on what he calls "inappropriate expenses."

Fitzpatrick said the business he opened in high school, MariCorp U.S., is the reason he decided to enter the world of politics.

"I was 24 years old when I ran for the House of Representatives. And I did it because I was a business owner," Fitzpatrick said. He served in the state House for five years.

His marine products company grew to over 30 employees by the time Fitzpatrick graduated from college.

"After getting into business and becoming a taxpayer and dealing with different bureaucracies, it seemed like every day, I really started to get frustrated with government," he said.

"It wasn't because I didn't want to pay taxes

or anything like that. It was just because it seemed like it was so nonresponsive to the needs of citizens."

This frustration with bureaucracy led Fitzpatrick to the role he holds today.

"You can have an immediate impact on the way that the executive branch behaves if you're in charge of the budget," Fitzpatrick said.

He said he leads an agency that has about 125 personnel, including some 80 auditors. The auditors typically work in teams to carry out their audits, varying in size based on the expected workload. The rest of the team deals with administrative work.

Fitzpatrick works with his team as well as auditors at the county level.

Boone County Auditor Kyle Rieman said that the state level auditors don't interpose day-to-day with his auditing department or have a ton of interaction but they do offer tips and information.

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USDA says no federal food aid will go out Nov. 1

BY ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON

The Associated Press

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has posted a notice on its website saying federal food aid will not go out Nov. 1, raising the stakes for families nationwide as the government shutdown drags on.

The new notice comes after the Trump administration said it would not tap roughly \$5 billion in contingency funds to keep ben-

efits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly referred to as SNAP, flowing into November. That program helps about 1 in 8 Americans buy groceries.

"Bottom line, the well has run dry," the USDA notice says. "At this time, there will be no benefits issued November 01. We are approaching an inflection point for Senate Democrats."

The shutdown, which began Oct. 1, is now the second-longest on record. While the Republican administration took steps leading up to the shutdown to ensure SNAP benefits were paid this month, the cutoff would expand the impact of the impasse to a wider swath of Americans — and some of those most in need — unless a political resolution is found in just a few days.

The administration blames Democrats, who say they will not agree to reopen the government until Republicans negotiate with them on extending expiring subsidies under the Affordable Care Act. Republicans say Democrats must first agree to reopen the government before negotiation.

Democratic lawmakers have

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Nearly 500 await mental health care before trial

BY STEPH QUINN
Missouri Independent

A man jailed on felony drug possession charges has been waiting 469 days in the Clay County Detention Center for mental health services that could allow his case to move forward.

It took him 75 days just to get a court-ordered evaluation from the Department of Mental Health, said Sarah Boyd, spokesperson for the Clay County Sheriff's Office.

He hasn't been convicted of a crime. He was found incompetent to stand trial and has been in limbo ever since — stuck in jail until a bed becomes available in a state psychiatric hospital or services from the mental health department or the jail enable him to satisfy a judge that he can stand trial.

"We want folks to be restored to competency, so that they don't have their constitutional rights violated," Boyd said, referring to the Sixth Amendment right to a speedy trial. "We want that to happen, and we wanted it to happen here, but that hasn't really been the case."

In September, an average of 487 Missourians were waiting for a bed in a psychiatric hospital run by the department. The waitlist has grown by a third since September 2024 and almost 88% since September 2023.

In August, that average number reached 492, an all-time high.

These numbers include people who are receiving services — including medication, therapy and competency education — in jails or out on bond, according to the department.

Lawmakers in 2023 authorized the department to provide jail-based competency, and programs have been established in St. Louis city and county, along with Jackson and Clay counties. The law also allows outpatient treatment for individuals who can be safely released on bond.

The department has also expanded two mobile teams of clinicians who provide medication and case management to people on the waitlist through in-person jail visits and telehealth.

A year after the launch of the first jail-based competency programs, sheriffs, corrections medical staff and jail administrators say that although the new initiatives have helped address mental health needs, they aren't enough to tackle the waitlist — or address the underlying need for mental health and substance use treatment that keeps some people cycling in and out of jail.

Only 12 people have so far attained competency after completing a jail-based pilot program, according to the department, and 52 people have participated.

Jeanette Simmons, deputy director of the state mental health department, said the growing waitlist isn't a surprise.

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CLOUDY
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I-70 bridge project uses compensatory wetlands program

BY HANNAH L. GRAVES
Columbia Missourian

A legal loophole in the Clean Water Act allowed for wetlands near the new Interstate 70 bridge in Rocheport to be destroyed without being directly restored after the fact.

According to a 2020 Missouri Department of Transportation report required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the demolition of the old bridge would cause a significant and permanent impact to over 10 acres of nearby wetlands. The bridge was demolished on Sept. 10, 2023.

Under Sections 404 and 401

of the federal Clean Water Act, which outlines a required permit process for construction that might harm bodies of water, MoDOT had several options for responding to the destruction including directly restoring the affected areas.

MoDOT outlined preemptive design efforts to cut down on possible negative environmental impacts.

However, instead of direct cleanup of the area or restoration of the wetlands that were affected, MoDOT opted for what is known as "compensatory mitigation through an in-lieu of fee program."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for issuing the 404/401 permits, defines this as "the restoration, establishment, enhancement, and/or preservation of (wetlands) through funds paid to a governmental or nongovernmental natural resource management organization."

One of the organizations MoDOT worked with for this project was Swallow Tail which is a private, for-profit business that manages wetland and stream mitigation and habitat restoration.

Shane Staten, Swallow Tail's senior restoration manager,

said the organization has no obligation to directly restore the areas affected by construction, but instead the restoration work they do in other areas serves to balance the loss of wetlands elsewhere.

"So the deal is that those acres get to be impacted and they're kind of gone forever, but in compensation — that's why it's called compensatory mitigation — somebody else has restored wetlands somewhere else," Staten said.

The wetlands restored by Swallowtail in the process are legally protected forever and

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