



# **SALINE COUNTY BLUE REVIEW**

***The Official Newsletter of  
the Democratic Party of  
Saline County***

**September 8th, 2023**



# **INTRODUCTION**

**Welcome to the first ever Saline County Blue Review! This is the first of what will be a recurring newsletter written by the officers and committee chairs of the Democratic Party of Saline County for our members and the community at-large. We will be publishing non-urgent updates and information here so that our members, neighbors, and anyone else who is interested can keep up-to-date with the goings-on in Saline County, Arkansas, and the U.S. as a whole, as well as what the DPSC is up to in general.**

**The goal is to succinctly summarize local, state, and national news from a local Democratic perspective, as well as to create a consistent way of staying in contact with our membership in a more effective way than Facebook posts or generic email templates can. My hope is to eventually involve local community leaders and businesses in segments that can inform our members of what different folks around Saline County are doing to better our community.**

**Your continued support of the Democratic Party of Saline County is tremendously appreciated and valued. This newsletter, the events hosted by our outreach committee, and our candidate recruitment efforts would not be possible without each and every one of our members. I hope that this new way of communicating with Saline County residents shows the first steps toward our renewed commitment to keeping folks informed and engaged in our community.**

**- Bailey Morgan, DPSC Chair**

# Updates: Saline County

## Library Drama:

On August 21st, after 6 months of lengthy and bloated Quorum Court meetings, the Saline County Justices of the Peace voted 11-2 to strip the library board of its administrative power, granting the County Judge and Quorum Court near-total control over library operations. This was done in retaliation for Library Director Patty Hector's refusal to relocate or remove childrens' books featuring LGBTQ+ or racially diverse characters and themes.

Notably, this move puts the library at risk of losing \$200,000 of state funding, likely requiring the library to reconsider what programs and services it can provide to the taxpaying residents of Saline County. Now... remind me, which party is always touting "fiscal responsibility?"

## WE WANT YOU!

The DPSC is still looking for more candidates to run in 2024! We need candidates for Justice of the Peace, State House, and State Senate to make sure that Saline County residents get to have a real say in who represents them.

If you're interested, please reach out to [Saline@ArkDems.org](mailto:Saline@ArkDems.org)!





# Updates: Saline County

## End of an Era:

Smith-Caldwell Drug Store in Benton was bought out and closed by Walgreens. After 63 years of operation, its legacy was suddenly brought to a close at the end of August, 2023. According to the Saline Courier, 21 people were employed by Smith-Caldwell; Walgreens stated they are “welcoming several” of those previously employed there to their workforce.

This continues a trend of small, local, and regional businesses either being forced out or taken over by larger conglomerates, particularly in rural states like Arkansas.



Credit: Randal Seyler / The Saline Courier

## Arkansas... Wildfire Season?

Due to continuing record-high temperatures, Saline County has been designated as a “high” wildfire threat area by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

Notably, a 2022 UN report shows the possibility of wildfires could increase by 50% over the course of the rest of the century. Compare that to a report from just this year showing that, in California, climate change has *ALREADY* increased the risk for wildfires by 25% since 2003.

All that to say... while we are not presently under a burn ban at the time of writing, it would be extremely advisable not to set anything on fire at this time.



Credit: Arkansas Department of Agriculture -  
Forestry Division



# Updates: Arkansas

## Deja Vu:

This week, Congressional Republicans held closed-door meetings about how unpopular their national anti-abortion-rights stance is proving to be. Meanwhile, Arkansas is making very loud progress toward a “monument for the unborn” to be erected at the state capitol, as proposals are now being accepted for its design. I, for one, am *not* excited to see what art this project produces.

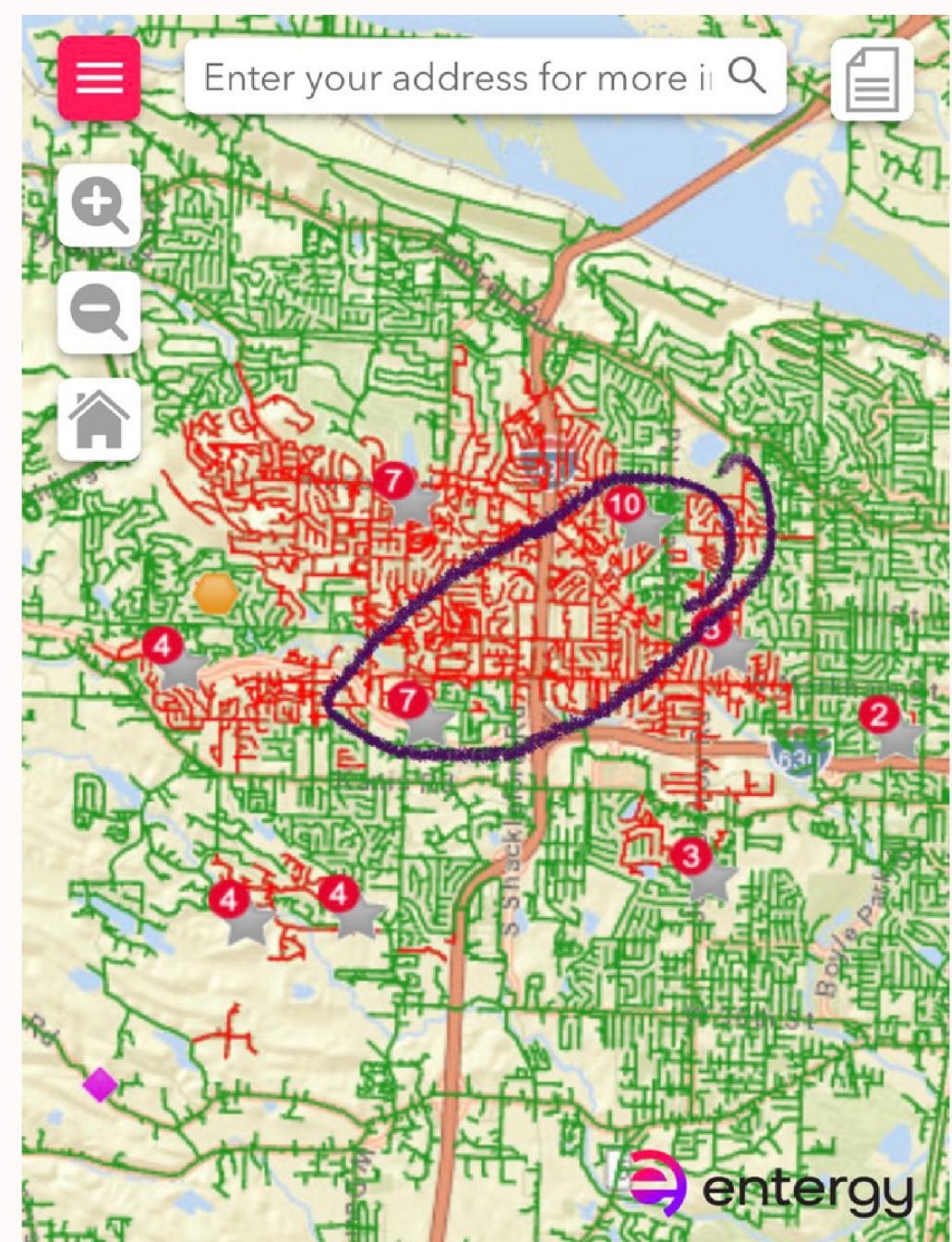
It awaits to be seen how this will be received by First Amendment groups who, in years past, haven't taken kindly to attempts by Arkansan politicians to pull stunts like these. See pictured a statue of Baphomet erected in response to a monument to the Ten Commandments placed at the Capitol in 2019: ->



Credit: Magnolia Pictures / Wired.com

## Dangerous Winds:

A series of “microburst” winds of up to 80 mph have left thousands in West Little Rock without power. This comes just 6 months after the exact same area was struck by an EF3 tornado on March 31st. As of writing, 17,000 people are without power according to Rhett Brinkley writing for the Arkansas Times.



Credit: Todd Yakoubian / X (Twitter)



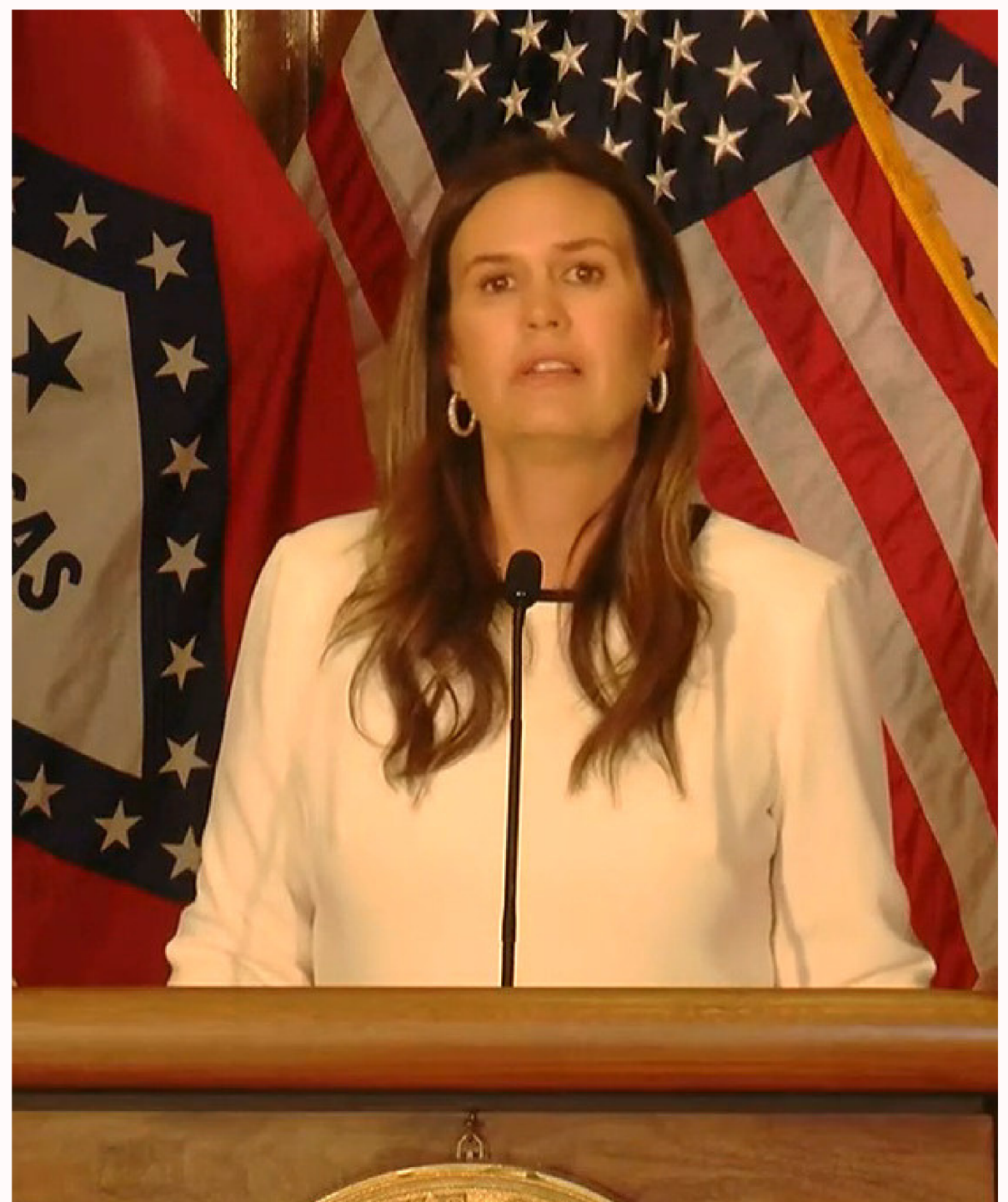
# Updates: Arkansas

## *If the LAST One Wasn't Enough...*

Governor Sarah Sanders has called a special session of the Arkansas Legislature beginning on 9/11/2023. For AR People, writing in the Arkansas Times, previously reported that 3 possible targets of this special session are:

- Crackdowns on the scope and requirements of FOIA laws, quite possibly in response to the numerous times Governor Sanders and members of her administration have been caught spending obscene amounts of money on out-of-state travel
- Anti-trafficking measures, an issue which the report points out is important, but raises concerns about how it will be approached in this session
- LEARNS Act cleanup, likely in response to outcry from innumerable local school districts that this law is BAD for Arkansans and our education system. To quote the report, “now taxpayers will get to fund a special session so the General Assembly can clean up its mistakes.”

Notably, Senate Pro Tempore Bart Hester previously indicated that FOIA would be a critical point of consideration for the session to “protect the governor.” Sanders stated on 9/8/2023 that the session would aim to tackle FURTHER tax cuts, FOIA changes, and... restrictions on COVID-19 mandates...? A little late to the party, but ok.





# Updates:

## United States

### *Deja Vu All Over Again:*

Potential for a government shutdown looms, as the far-right House Freedom Caucus has forced discussions outside of the scope of the deal cut by President Biden and Speaker McCarthy earlier this year.

Congress has just 11 days total to pass a continuing resolution to prevent the shutdown, but with the House and Senate starting from diametrically opposed points in negotiation, it awaits to be seen whether this is possible. (Hint: it probably isn't)



### *(No) Honor Among Thieves:*

The first hearing in the Georgia racketeering case against ex-president Donald Trump and 18 other co-defendants was held on September 6th, during which the Judge denied Sidney Powell and Kenneth Chesebro's requests to be tried separately from each other and their fellow co-defendants.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has stated her intent is to try all 19 defendants at the same time. Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Wade estimated a 4 month trial period with 150 witnesses. While Judge Scott McAfee did not reject this timeline, he did voice skepticism on how realistic that prospect would be in a case as complex and sprawling as this.





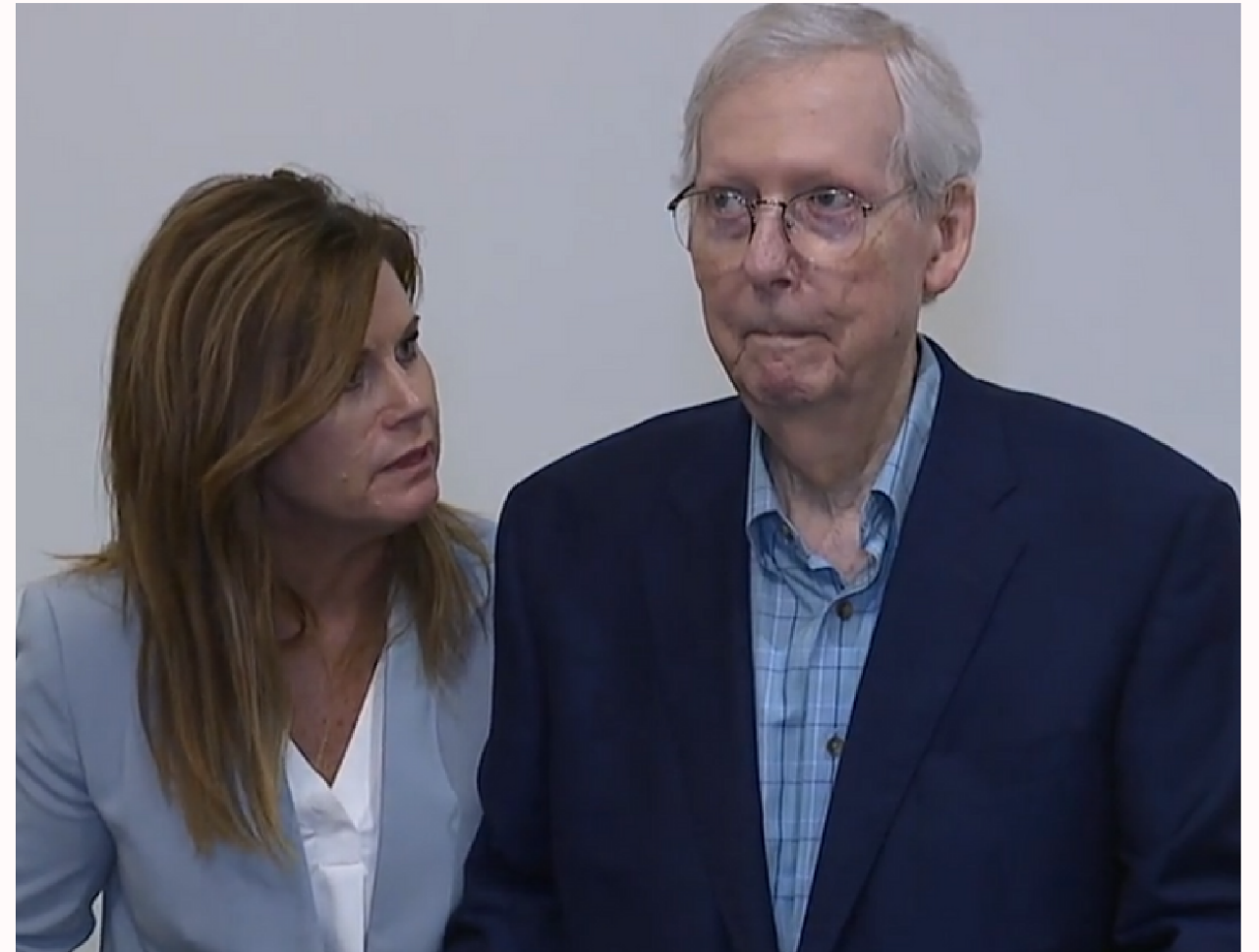
# Updates:

## United States

### *Silent Senator:*

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell froze for 30 seconds during a press conference, marking the second time in as many months he has seemingly experienced some sort of neurological event.

Doctors have stated that he is cleared to continue work, further claiming that it was not a seizure or a stroke. Instead, they indicated that it could (somehow) be the continued healing effects of a concussion McConnell suffered earlier this year after a fall.





# September Events:

## 9/11/2023 - DPSC Monthly Meeting

6:30 P.M. @ 101 S. Market St, Benton  
Social time at 6:00 P.M.

## 9/13/2023 - Saline County Library Alliance Shirt and Sign Pick-Up

6:00-7:00 P.M. @ Bob Herzfeld Memorial Library parking lot  
7:00-8:00 P.M. @ 101 S. Market St, Benton

## Date & Time TBD - DPSC Coffee House & Game Night

A board game night at the DPSC HQ aimed at bringing in young adults and providing a relaxed environment for folks to drink coffee, talk, and play games with other like-minded people.

### Menu:

Black coffee - free

Creamer, sugar, and syrups free

Espresso Drinks

Americano - \$2

Cappuccino - \$3

Latte - \$4

