

Saturday

TODAY
82 / 71
Partly cloudy

SUNDAY
81 / 70
Chance of thunderstorms

MONDAY
84 / 65
Chance of thunderstorms



Weather news from The Post's Kim Miller:
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LIVE RADAR: PALMBEACHPOST.COM
WEATHER ON THE BACK PAGE OF SPORTS

The Palm Beach Post

April 22, 2017

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GET READY FOR DELAYS AS BRIDGE WORK BEGINS

LOCAL, B1
POLICE SEEK HIT-RUN DRIVER



ACCENT, D1
UP IN SMOKE
Cigarettes are gone, as vaping habit settles in

BUSINESS, B6
NEXTERA POSTS QUARTERLY EARNINGS

POST IN-DEPTH INAUGURAL DONATIONS

Locals big Trump inaugural donors

Coal billionaire, FPL parent, private prison firm, sugar giant on list.

By George Bennett and Bill DiPaolo
Palm Beach Post Staff Writers

Coal-mining billionaire Christopher Cline of North Palm Beach is among three dozen or so contributors nationwide who gave at

least \$1 million to President Donald Trump's inaugural committee, according to a report filed this week.

Other big inaugural donors from Palm Beach County include West Palm Beach-based sugar giant Florida Crystals Corp. (\$500,000), Juno Beach-headquartered NextEra Energy (\$250,000) and private prison contractor GEO Corrections Holdings of Boca Raton (\$250,000).

TRUMP COVERAGE

For complete Donald Trump coverage see myPalmBeachPost.com/donaldtrump.

Trump's inaugural committee raised \$106.8 million, according to a 510-page report filed with the Federal Election Commission. Trump's haul dwarfed the pre-

Inaugural continued on **A9**



President Donald Trump waves after taking the oath of office Jan. 20, flanked by first lady Melania (left) and daughter Tiffany Trump.
JIM BOURG / AP

LAKE WORTH PARK VISTA HIGH SCHOOL



Macy's parade, here we come!

Confetti flies on Friday as members of the Park Vista High School Marching Band — including senior Harlen Golbe (center) and junior Aaron Brenner (center right) — celebrate the news that their band was selected out of hundreds of applicants nationwide to be one of 10 to participate in the 2018 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Golbe and Brenner play the clarinet.
Story, B1. To see a video of the event, go to myPalmBeachPost.com/parkvista BRUCE R. BENNETT / THE PALM BEACH POST

POST ON ECONOMY JOBLESS RATE

Home prices soar, jobless numbers fall

County sees median price hit \$325K, while unemployment drops to 4.2%.

By Jeff Ostrowski
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

In a one-two punch of robust economic news, Palm Beach County's housing market and labor market showed strong gains in March.

Palm Beach County home prices hit their highest level since the crash more than a decade ago, when the median sales price climbed to \$325,000 this past month, the Realtors Association of the Palm Beaches said Friday. Sales volumes rose 10 percent to a total of 1,676 houses.

"The numbers are all pointed to a very strong market," said Jeffrey Levine, president-elect of the Realtors Association of the Palm Beaches and managing broker at Continental Properties in West Palm Beach.

Meanwhile, spurred by a sustained surge in Palm Beach County's long-dormant construction industry, the region's unemployment rate fell to 4.2 percent in March.

That matches a post-recession low set in May.

Economy continued on **A10**

POST EXCLUSIVE OCWEN TROUBLES

Ocwen shares plunge after criticism

West Palm mortgage firm hit with enforcement actions by state, federal regulators.

By Jeff Ostrowski
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Perhaps the most dramatic developments in Ocwen Financial Corp.'s long and colorful history came Thursday afternoon, when state and federal regulators unleashed an onslaught of

enforcement actions.

The bipartisan barrage paints Ocwen as so incompetent that it can't properly credit borrowers' loan payments or keep track of their escrow accounts for property taxes and homeowners insurance.

Ocwen lashed back, saying state and federal regulators are simply wrong. But the company, a part of West Palm Beach's corporate landscape for nearly three decades, has consistently made headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Ocwen has racked up thousands of consumer complaints and has been hit with state and federal regulatory enforcement actions that run into the billions. The company routinely ranks dead last in JDPower's ratings of mortgage servicers, industry jargon for companies that collect homeowners' loan payments.

In a bit of office intrigue, two former female employees once won \$1 million

Ocwen continued on **A9**

LEGISLATURE 2017

After racial slurs, beleaguered Artiles quits state Senate

By Dara Kam
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Calling his presence a "distraction" days after apologizing for a public tirade that included racially charged and vulgar expletives, Miami Republican Frank Artiles announced Friday he was resigning from the Senate, effective immediately.

Artiles — a tough-talking, U.S. Marine veteran who earned the moniker "Frank the Tank" from fellow lawmakers — stepped down amid a Senate investigation into reports that he had insulted two black colleagues and others Monday night at a members-only club in the shadow of the Capitol.

Artiles has faced widespread condemnation for a rant that reportedly included calling Sen. Audrey Gibson, D-Jacksonville, "girl," a "bitch," and another vulgarities. Artiles also reportedly used the word "niggers" or "niggas," though he contended ear-



Artiles

Artiles continued on **A8**

POST ON COURTS JAILHOUSE INFORMANT

Jail snitch's sentencing on hold until December

By Jane Musgrave
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

WEST PALM BEACH — Notorious jailhouse snitch Frederick Cobia on Friday won yet another reprieve — five years after he admitted to pistol-whipping and then fatally shooting a 57-year-old Belle Glade man in 2009.

Once planning to seek the death penalty against Cobia for the murder of Desmond Dunkley, state prosecutors in 2012 allowed the career criminal to plead guilty to a charge of second-degree murder. In exchange, he agreed to testify against eight inmates

Cobia continued on **A8**

WHAT THE POST REPORTED

Frederick Cobia, a convicted murderer, agreed to help law enforcement gather information about dozens of inmates. In recorded jailhouse conversations, he brags about teasing confessions from as many as 60.



SPORTS, C1
Should Heat go after Knicks star Anthony?

The forward is available, but a trade for the future Hall of Famer is complicated by issues including age and big money.

LOCAL, B1
Social media postings lead to juvenile's arrest

A 17-year-old boy classified as a juvenile delinquent isn't allowed to have firearms, but the videos he posted showed otherwise.

LOCAL, B1
Delray police hit gym, honor fallen comrade

More than 40 officers took part in the CrossFit workout to salute the memory of officer Christine Braswell, killed in a scooter crash.

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FRANCE

Trump says attack will have 'big effect' on French election

French won't 'take much more of this,' president tweets.

Aurelien Breeden and Adam Nossiter
©2017 The New York Times

PARIS — President Donald Trump inserted himself into the tumult of French politics Friday, declaring that the fatal shooting of a police officer in central Paris would have "a big effect" when voters go to the polls Sunday to choose among 11 presidential candidates.

Trump did not mention any candidates by name. But his statement on Twitter — "The people of France will not take much more of this. Will have a big effect on presidential election!" — came at the tail end of a tight, fragmented race, with at least four contenders running neck and neck.

One of them, Marine Le Pen, the far-right candidate, has issued grim warnings that a declining France is losing its identity, echoing Trump's themes during the presidential race last year. It was not clear, however, that Trump's statement would help her among undecided voters.

In a statement Friday, Le Pen blamed "radical Islam" — "a monstrous, totalitarian ideology that has declared war on our nation, on reason, on civilization" — for the attack Thursday night.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility within hours of the attack, which also wounded two police officers and a bystander and



A woman kisses a flower along the Champs-Élysées in Paris on Friday following Thursday's shooting of a police officer. On Friday afternoon, the Paris prosecutor, Francois Molins, identified the gunman as Karim Cheurfi, 39, a French citizen with a long record of violent crime. He was shot dead as he tried to flee. JEFF MITCHELL / GETTY IMAGES

briefly shut down the city's most famous boulevard.

On Friday afternoon, the Paris prosecutor, Francois Molins, identified the gunman as Karim Cheurfi, 39, a French citizen with a long record of violent crime, and provided an account of the attack.

At 8:47 p.m. Thursday, Cheurfi arrived in an Audi off the Champs-Élysées, exited the car and opened fire with a Kalashnikov assault rifle on a police vehicle, mortally wounding the officer who was in the driver's seat. He then fired at police officers who were on duty outside a Turkish tourism office, injuring two, ages 34 and 31, and a bystander. He was

shot dead as he tried to flee.

A piece of paper found near Cheurfi's body contained a handwritten message expressing support for the Islamic State; other papers, in his car, had addresses for the French domestic intelligence agency and for a police station in Lagny-sur-Marne, a town about 13 miles east of Paris.

Cheurfi had spent more than a decade in prison. In 2001, he was charged with attempted murder after attacking three police officers, one of them while he was in custody. He was given a 15-year sentence. Three other convictions followed: in 2007, he attacked a prison employee; in 2008,

he assaulted a fellow inmate; and in 2013, he committed theft.

Last released from prison in October 2015, Cheurfi was placed under monitoring.

Cheurfi was not flagged in the so-called S-files of the intelligence agencies, Molins said, because he had not shown any signs of radicalization during his time in prison. Nonetheless, in March, authorities opened a preliminary terrorism investigation as a precaution.

Le Pen said foreigners in the files should be deported; that those who are dual citizens should be stripped of their French nationality; and that those who are French should be prosecuted.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Trump: 'No deal' involved in charity worker's release

By Julie Pace
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said he struck "no deal" for the release of an Egyptian-American charity worker who had been detained in Egypt for nearly three years.

Aya Hijazi, 30, and her husband, Mohamed Hassanein, an Egyptian, returned to the Washington area Thursday. She met Friday with Trump in the Oval Office.

Trump had hosted Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi at the White House at the beginning of this month. The two leaders discussed the case at the time.

"He was here, I said I really would appreciate it if you could look into this and let her out," Trump said.

Former President Barack Obama had worked on the case and "got zippo," Trump noted.

Hijazi's brother, Basel Hijazi, also attended the White House meeting, along with Trump aides Ivanka Trump, Jared Kushner and Dina Powell.

"We are very happy to



President Donald Trump meets with recently released Egyptian-American aid worker Aya Hijazi in the Oval Office on Friday. SUSAN WALSH / ASSOCIATED PRESS

have Aya back home and it's a great honor to have her in the Oval Office," the president told reporters.

Earlier this week, an Egyptian court acquitted Hijazi of charges of child abuse that had been dismissed as bogus by human rights groups and U.S. officials. She and her husband, who had established a foundation to aid Egyptian street children in

2013, were arrested along with several other people in 2014.

Trump and White House aides negotiated their release as well as freedom for four other humanitarian workers, and Trump sent a U.S. government aircraft to Cairo to bring them home.

The Washington Post contributed to this article.

Economy

continued from A1

The county's jobless rate was down from 4.7 percent in February, state labor officials said Friday.

The building sector added 3,000 positions during the past year, a 9 percent growth rate, CareerSource Palm Beach County said Friday. That follows 10 percent jumps from February 2016 to February 2017 and from January 2016 to January 2017.

While large-scale home building has yet to return, construction workers have been toiling on other types of projects, including the parking garage at the Palm Beach County Convention Center, the Brightline railroad station and a new north bridge between West Palm Beach and Palm Beach.

However, the county's job growth continued to lag the state's, a trend that has held steady for months. Palm Beach County employ-

ment expanded by 2.3 percent from March 2016 to March 2017, trailing Florida's overall job growth of 3 percent.

Florida's annual job growth matched Georgia's and Nevada's in a three-way tie for the fastest pace in the nation, the U.S. Labor Department said Friday. Florida's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.8 percent in March, compared to a national average of 4.5 percent.

Construction was the big gainer in Palm Beach County, but the low-paying leisure and hospitality sector added 2,900 positions. The professional and business services sector added 2,700 jobs, the education and health services category added 2,700 jobs and government grew by 1,600 positions.

"Businesses added more than 12,000 jobs in the West Palm Beach area over the year, which means thousands of new opportunities for families," Gov. Rick Scott

said in a statement.

In the housing market, inventories remain tight, and affordability is a challenge for many buyers. Sales of condos and townhouses rose to 1,352 units in March, up 6.5 percent from a year ago.

While few single-family homes are available for less than \$200,000, the median price of a condo sold this past month was \$162,500.

"That's the only alternative in those price ranges," Levine said.

For single-family homes, the median price was up 8.9 percent from a year ago, Realtors data showed. March marked the first time in years that prices have gone as high as \$325,000.

Palm Beach County home values remain below their levels in 2005 and 2006, when loose lending standards and a buying frenzy sent median prices above \$400,000.

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