

Saturday

TODAY
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Thunderstorms
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Chance of
thunderstormsWeather news from The Post's Kim Miller:
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WEATHER ON THE BACK PAGE OF SPORTS

The Palm Beach Post

October 21, 2017

REAL NEWS STARTS HERE

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SATURDAY CLASSIFIEDS HAVE MOVED

Find them inside the Accent section

LOCAL, B1

RESIDENTS MAKE TRAIN STATION SUGGESTIONS



ACCENT, D1

BIRTH OF A CITY

Idea for CityPlace unveiled 30 years ago this month

BUSINESS, B6

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE SIZZLING IN COUNTY

POST ON ECONOMY SEPTEMBER GROWTH

Irma leaves mark on state's economy

Home sales, job growth plummet in county, too; effect likely temporary.

By Jeff Ostrowski
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Hurricane Irma disrupted Florida's economy in September, slowing job growth and scotching home sales.

Even so, the storm seemed to deliver only a glancing blow to

the state's labor and housing markets. Palm Beach County's jobless rate fell to 3.6 percent and Florida unemployment dipped to 3.8 percent, both decade-long lows.

However, Irma knocked Florida from its perennial perch as the nation's leader in job growth. In August, before the storm hit, Florida boasted annual job growth of 2.6 percent, the best among large states and near the top overall.

In September, Florida's year-over-year job growth slowed to

just 0.9 percent, placing it in the bottom half of all states. And Palm Beach County fared even worse, expanding employment at a pace of 0.8 percent.

"Hurricane Irma was the largest storm we have seen, which affected our entire state and led to the largest evacuation and power restoration effort," Gov. Rick Scott said in a statement. "Obviously, our jobs numbers were affected because of this."

Irma also made a mark on Flor-

ida's housing market. Statewide, home sales plunged 20 percent from a year ago, falling to 18,030 in September. The slowdown was even more dramatic in Palm Beach County, where sales plummeted 26 percent compared to September 2016.

"In addition to most businesses losing up to five working days, no closings could take place until FEMA lifted our disaster-area status," said Jeffrey Levine, a West Palm Beach broker and first vice

president of the Realtors of the Palm Beaches and Greater Fort Lauderdale. "I anticipate a substantial increase in closed sales in the coming months as everyone recovers from lost time and resources due to the storm."

Palm Beach County prices also softened a bit. The median price of houses sold by Realtors in September was \$325,000, up a bit from a year ago but down from

Economy continued on A8

POST IN-DEPTH FLOODED CARS



Many cars flooded by Irma, like the ones in Jacksonville above, will be sold for parts. But some shady merchants may buy a vehicle, clean it up and get a "clean" title with no warning it has been flooded. AP

Buyers beware: Irma flooded 215K Fla. cars

Some of them could make their way onto used-car lots and into classified ads.

By Charles Elmore
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

In the same season Hurricane Harvey is smashing records for vehicle insurance claims, a report out this week said Hurricane Irma has generated a hefty number of its own in Florida – more than 215,000.

More than 422,000 claims in Texas include massive numbers of vehicles

taken to lots to be auctioned off for parts or scrapped, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau. That blows past vehicle claims from Hurricane Katrina (about 300,000) and from Superstorm Sandy (250,500), says the Des Plaines, Ill.-based nonprofit organization financed by the insurance industry.

But Irma is not far behind with more than 215,000 vehicle claims in Florida, whether from flooding, wind-blown debris or other causes, the group says.

Flooded cars continued on A8

HURRICANE SEASON ISN'T OVER ...

So keep tabs on your property insurer. You can see which Florida home insurers get the best financial soundness ratings from three different agencies, or which insurer generates the most consumer gripes. It's all in the expanded Palm Beach Post Insurance Guide: myPalmBeachPost.com/insuranceexplorer.

FEDERAL BUDGET

Trump: Tax cuts to be biggest ever

Promise comes after Senate Republicans pass \$4 trillion budget.

By Marcy Gordon
and Andrew Taylor
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump promised tax cuts Friday "which will be the biggest in the history of our country" following Senate passage of a \$4 trillion budget that lays the groundwork for Republicans' promised tax legislation.

Republicans hope to push the first tax overhaul in three decades through Congress by year's end, an ambitious goal that would fulfill multiple campaign promises but could run aground over any

number of disputes. Failure could cost the GOP dearly in next year's midterm elections.

The budget plan, which passed on a near party-line vote late Thursday, includes rules that will allow Republicans to get tax legislation through the Senate without Democratic votes and without fear of a Democratic filibuster. Nonetheless, the GOP's narrow 52-48 majority in the Senate will be difficult for leadership to navigate, as illustrated by the Republicans' multiple failures to pass legislation repealing and replacing "Obamacare."

The final vote on the budget was 51-49 with deficit hawk Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky the lone opposing GOP vote.

Budget continued on A8

POST IN-DEPTH SCHOOL ABUSE

12 years later, 2 in Boca sex abuse case speak out

By Andrew Marra
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Two of the four girls allegedly molested 12 years ago by a Boca Raton elementary teacher broke their silence Thursday to encourage other victims of sexual abuse to speak out, too.

Invoking this week's #MeToo movement on social media – in which women who have faced sexual harassment or sexual assault are sharing their experiences to underscore the problem's pervasiveness – the two victims said that discussing the 2005 sexual assaults could "help other sur-

vivors too."

"It took 12 years to close this case and get what the system calls justice," one of the victims, now a 22-year-old college graduate, said in an interview with reporters. "We were little girls, little girls who were brave enough, strong enough" to speak out.

The two women, who were third-graders at Coral Sunset Elementary when they were abused in 2005, discussed the case a day after the Palm Beach County School Board approved a \$3.5 million legal settlement with the

Speak out continued on A8

POST ON WEATHER COLD FRONT

Cold front expected to drop temperatures at night into 50s, 60s

By Kimberly Miller
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

A punch of cold air will whip through South Florida next week, dropping temperatures to lows not seen since spring.

National Weather Service forecasters in Miami are predicting

overnight Wednesday to dip into the 60s at the coast and plunge into the 50s in western Palm Beach County, while Thursday's daytime high might struggle to reach 80 degrees.

With the first seasonal offering of cooler, drier air several days out, the timing still is tenuous,

but the official forecast at Palm Beach International Airport on Thursday tops out at 79 degrees. The last time the high temperature was below 80 in West Palm Beach was May 6.

It hasn't dipped below 70 degrees at the airport since May 11, when the mercury fell to 69

for one final cool down before summer.

"It's not going to be an arctic blast by any stretch of the imagination," said Chris Fisher, a meteorologist with the NWS in Miami. "But we will be a little below nor-

Cold front continued on A8

GET THE APP

Check local conditions, see live radar and keep up with Kimberly Miller's weather updates. The free PBPPost Weather app is available on iTunes and at Google Play. Search for Palm Beach Post WeatherPlus.



SPORTS, C1

Landry getting antsy about end zone touches

Wide receiver is on two-game touchdown reception streak he wants to continue against Jets, but says he needs opportunities.

LOCAL, B1

Officials: Deputy stole dead man's pain meds

Jason Cooke went to suburban Boynton house where an elderly man had been taken to hospital, swiped 60 pills, authorities say.

LOCAL, B1

Ex-Santaluces student found guilty in killing

Frank Quarles was 15 when he shot Michael Coogle-Robertson to death in 2012; jury convicts him of second-degree murder.

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Deputy

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Boulevard between Jog and Hagen Ranch roads. Deputies found the older man on the floor of his master bedroom. He was taken to Delray Medical Center, where he died.

Deputies were on the scene for about 15 minutes before clearing the call and returning to service, according to the report. The man's son received an alert more than an hour later after a motion detector detected movement in the home.

Surveillance footage

VIDEO ONLINE

See the deputy appear before a judge Friday at video.PalmBeachPost.com.

showed a deputy enter the home through the garage and go into the master bedroom. A sergeant reviewing the footage identified Cooke as the deputy, the report said.

The video footage allegedly showed Cooke walk from the bedroom to the kitchen, where he appeared to open a container and empty something onto his right hand. Cooke put his hand in his pants pocket and repeated

the act with a second item, the report said. He allegedly opened all of the cabinets and drawers and searched through them.

Cooke had not been assigned to the welfare check and did not have permission to enter the home, the sheriff's office said. According to the report, he stole pills including Tramadol, a pain reliever, as well as the muscle relaxer Carisoprodol and prochlorperazine maleate, an anti-psychotic medicine.

Days after the incident, Cooke volunteered to be interviewed by investigators from the Violent Crimes Division. He allegedly told

investigators he used the garage code that was in the dispatch log to gain entry into the home. Cooke said he was at a death investigation and recovered some medications that had not been submitted into evidence, the report said.

The deputies who responded to the initial call told investigators that none of them had either communicated with Cooke or requested that he return to the home.

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Quarles

continued from B1

gle said of the verdict. "If he would be found guilty of manslaughter, or found not guilty, that would've been a humiliation for us. But at least they found him guilty of murder. I'll take that."

The jury returned the verdict, a lesser included offense of the first-degree murder charge, after about six hours of deliberations that began late Thursday and was marked with a mistake that could potentially bring the case back on appeal.

Jurors at one point in their deliberations asked to rehear a recorded statement Quarles gave to a detective shortly after the shooting. The version replayed for

them in court Friday mistakenly included portions of the interview that Circuit Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer previously had ruled that jurors were not allowed to hear. Specifically, a detective in the interview told Quarles he "looked like a stone-cold killer."

Salnick moved for a mistrial based on the mistake, but Feuer denied the request.

The jurors also asked to examine the murder weapon during their deliberations. A major point in the case was Quarles' claims to the detective that the gun had a light trigger pull and had gone off after he "tapped it." Richstone in closing arguments reminded jurors that she had allowed them to examine the gun during the trial and that a witness testified

that the gun actually had a pretty heavy trigger pull.

"It didn't happen the way he said it did. No way, no how," Richstone said of Quarles during closing arguments Thursday, which ended a week-long trial.

Sentencing for Quarles, who was 15 at the time of the shooting, is set for Feb. 12. The verdict means Quarles still potentially faces up to life in prison when he is sentenced.

Though he did not take the stand in his own defense, Quarles trial featured testimony from several witnesses to the shooting, who said Cooke-Robertson was mostly laid-back during both his confrontations with Quarles. The 16-year-old football and basketball star appeared not to believe Quarles would shoot

him even after he pulled the gun out, and at one point told him he wasn't afraid of the gun.

After the verdict, Quarles' parents, extended family and friends, gathered in a circle and prayed together. Janice Coogole said she understood their pain, but would trade places with them in a heart-beat if she could.

"To be honest with you, I would've took it the other way around. I would've taken the jailhouse visits," Coogole said. "But I don't get to watch my son grow up. I don't get to see him have kids. And Michael was a good kid. If my son was here today, my son would've made me really proud of him."

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