

# SunSentinel **LOCAL**

Today's Money stories can be found inside this section

## Leader wants Gaetz to run against Rubio

Palm Beach County GOP member wants congressman to run in next Senate primary

**By Anthony Man**  
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Joe Budd, a leader of the Palm Beach County Republican Party, said Friday he wants Congressman Matt Gaetz to challenge U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio in the 2022 party primary for U.S. Senate.

Budd said he isn't the only one who feels that way. "Our people who are your more hard-core Trump supporters have a disdain for Marco Rubio," he said.

"If he [Gaetz] ever thought there was a good time to step up to senator, now would

be it," he told the South Florida Sun Sentinel. "I'm going to encourage him to run."

Budd is Palm Beach County's Republican state committeeman, reelected to that post by Republican voters in the August 2020 primary.

He is also president of the Trump Club 45 USA, a political club that draws enormous crowds to its monthly meetings. (Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Budd said monthly meetings drew 1,400 to 1,800 people. Since then, 900 to 1,200.)

And he was an early, public supporter of Trump when most of the state's Republican establishment favored Rubio or former Gov. Jeb Bush for the 2016 presidential nomination. He also was an early supporter of Gov. Ron DeSantis, when most of the Republi-

*Turn to Gaetz, Page 3*



U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, a Panhandle Republican, addresses the crowd during a President Donald Trump campaign rally at the Ocala International Airport on Oct. 16. A leader of the Palm Beach County Republican Party wants Gaetz to challenge U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., in the 2022 Republican primary. **PHELAN M. EBENHACK/AP**

## EPA wetlands change challenged

Environmentalists sue to stop move that puts some authority in hands of state

**By Jim Saunders**  
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — A coalition of environmental groups Thursday filed a federal lawsuit challenging a potentially far-reaching move by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to shift permitting authority to Florida for projects that affect wetlands.

The coalition, represented by attorneys from the Earthjustice legal group, contends that the EPA and other federal agencies did not comply with a series of laws in making Florida the third state to have such permitting authority.

"EPA is lowering the bar to allow a state, for the first time, to run the federal wetlands program without meeting federal standards," Tania Galloni, Earthjustice managing attorney for Florida, said in a prepared statement Thursday. "Developers have called this the 'holy grail' because it would make it easier, faster and cheaper for them to get permits for big projects with less oversight and accountability for environmental impacts."

The EPA on Dec. 17 announced approval of the shift, which involves permitting for dredge and fill activities under part of the federal Clean Water Act. Florida lawmakers in 2018 overwhelmingly approved a bill that was an initial step in trying to move authority for the permitting from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to the state. Gov. Ron DeSantis in August submitted a package to the EPA seeking approval.

Supporters of the move praised the EPA's decision as helping reduce duplicative state and federal permitting and giving Florida more control over such decisions.

"Our waters and wetlands are critical to our economy and way of life in Florida. As such, it is important for the state to be in charge and take the lead in their protection," state Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Noah Valenstein, whose agency is slated to oversee the permitting, said in a statement released last month by the EPA.

But Thursday's 51-page lawsuit, filed in U.S. district court in the District of Columbia, alleges that federal officials violated laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Administrative Procedure Act.

"This action arises from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's unlawful approval of a state application to assume jurisdiction over the Clean Water Act's Section 404 permitting program, which regulates the dredging and filling of waters of the United States, including wetlands essential to water quality,



## Mural project at Mizner Park

West Palm Beach artist Eduardo Mendieta paints his 30-foot-high by 60-foot-wide mural project at the Mizner Park Amphitheater stage in Boca Raton on Friday. Mendieta was selected from among 29 artists who submitted proposals to the city. **MIKE STOCKER/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL**

## Judge: No premeditated murder charge in killing

Man accused of shooting teen in Pembroke Pines drug buy

**By Rafael Olmeda**  
South Florida Sun Sentinel

A Broward judge said Thursday that she can't allow a Pembroke Pines man to be charged with premeditated murder in the death of a teen during an alleged drug buy — a decision that confounded the dead man's family while drawing praise from the defendant's lawyers.

Daniel Estevan Baquero, 23, was facing a possible charge of first-degree murder, which carries a sentence of life in prison if he had been charged and Baquero convicted. The judge's decision is not final, but it raises the likelihood that Baquero will soon be free on bond and, even if convicted, may not spend the rest of his life in prison.

Broward Judge Corey Amanda Cawthon said she was forced for now to agree with defense lawyers who said it was not a premeditated murder case.

The lawyers painted the shooting of

Ja'Shun Jones, 17, as a case of self-defense. According to a report on Baquero's arrest, Jones pulled a gun and pointed it at Baquero's friend during a marijuana deal Sunday at the Avant apartment complex on the 11800 block of Southwest 16th Street in Pembroke Pines.

Baquero produced his own handgun and fired at Jones as he fled, the report says.

"The bottom line was this kid tried to commit an armed robbery and lost his life as a result," said defense lawyer Bruce Ratciff.

The judge's decision was a bitter pill for Jones' family to swallow.

"I don't know what kind of investigation has been done on this case. I am very confused," said his grandfather, Fidelis Ezewike. "We believe this was premeditated before they got there."

Why are we saying there is no probable cause? We have a kid, a 17-year old, dead. What kind of investigation is that?"

Criminal charges are still possible as the investigation continues, according to the Broward State Attorney's Office. Baquero still could face a lesser homicide charge,

*Turn to Charges, Page 3*

## Woman who refuses to wear mask arrested

Showdown takes place in West Boca bagel shop

**By Lisa J. Huriash and Rafael Olmeda**  
South Florida Sun Sentinel

A staunch opponent of wearing masks became the latest South Floridian to wind up behind bars over COVID-19 rules when she refused to cover her face inside a West Boca bagel shop, deputies say.

The mask showdown happened Thursday when Cindy Falco-DiCorrado, 62, of Boynton Beach, refused to cover her face inside an Einstein Bros. Bagels at 9795 Glades Road. She shouted at customers and employees about her right to stay mask-free and refused to leave the store, leading deputies to arrest her on a trespassing charge, according to a Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office report.

"You are violating my rights!" she said while in front of a store counter, the Sheriff's Office said. "You are violating the Constitution!"

South Florida still is seeing instances of people railing against masks nearly a year into the pandemic, leading to arrests and citations. Palm Beach County drew the nation's attention last summer when Falco-DiCorrado and several other anti-mask activists urged elected officials to vote against requiring people to wear face coverings in public.

Groups of anti-maskers also last year have strolled into Target and Walmart stores to rip off their coronavirus masks in protest.

Falco-DiCorrado, who on social media has referred to the COVID-19

## Report: Trump plans to employ some current aides after move to Mar-a-Lago

**By Brooke Baitinger**  
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Donald Trump is planning to live at his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach after his term as president ends, Bloomberg News reported Thursday night.

Trump has said he does not plan to attend the inauguration of the next president, Joe Biden, on Wednesday. Trump is expected to arrive in Florida in the next week; some reports say he will leave Washington on Wednesday morning.

Several current White House staffers will work for him or his son-in-law Jared Kushner after his presidency, according to Bloomberg News.

Trump, who was kicked off his social media platforms after he encouraged a mob of his supporters to storm the U.S. Capitol, has not officially announced any post-presidency plans.

But those who live next-door to him in Palm Beach have made it clear that they

*Turn to Trump, Page 2*



President Donald Trump plans to live at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach after his term ends.

**WILFREDO LEE/AP 2019**

*Turn to Arrest, Page 3*