

**GAS PRICES ARE RISING AT RECORD RATES AFTER SANCTIONS**

The average price per gallon in Washington is up to \$4.22, and it's up to \$3.83 in Spokane. **NEWS, 6**

**BACKLASH BUILDS AGAINST RUSSIAN-BRANDED GAS STATIONS**

New Jersey city council asks to suspend license of business, but two stations are locally owned franchises. **NEWS, 9**

**RUSSIAN FORCES SEIZE LARGE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT**

Firefighters put out a blaze started from shelling, and both sides said no radiation was released. **NEWS, 3**

**WHITE HOUSE STRONGLY REBUKES GRAHAM'S COMMENT ON PUTIN**

South Carolina senator implored for someone in Russia to assassinate the country's president. **NEWS, 3**

# THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

SATURDAY, March 5, 2022

139th VOL., ISSUE 270 - EST. MAY 19, 1883

Spokane, Washington

**TROUBLE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

## Lawmakers want answers after VA outage

Employees said some problems continued even after critical computer system was restored

By Orion Donovan-Smith  
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs confirmed Friday a critical computer system had been restored after corrupted patient data caused Spokane's VA hospital and clinics across the Inland Northwest to stop admitting patients a day earlier, though employees said prob-

lems with patient records persisted throughout the day.

In an email, VA Press Secretary Terrence Hayes said more than 200 patients' records may have been affected by the error, which caused the director of the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center to order a near-complete work stoppage Thursday, the latest in a series of problems that have plagued the system since it

was launched in October 2020 at the Spokane hospital and VA clinics in Coeur d'Alene, Sandpoint, Wenatchee and Libby, Montana.

The outage forced the VA to take the system down from about 10:30 a.m. local time Thursday until about 7 a.m. Friday, Hayes said. The system, developed by Missouri-based Cerner Corp. under a \$10 billion contract, is so far used only at Mann-Grand-

staff and its affiliated clinics, but Hayes said the outage also affected a hospital in Columbus, Ohio, where the system is scheduled to launch at the end of April.

"There are no known patient safety issues because of this outage," Hayes said, adding VA and Cerner have established procedures to "limit the impact on

See **VA, 8**



It's invaluable having these tournaments here in Spokane because they bring in families that are shopping in our stores, eating in our restaurants and staying in our hotels."

Kate Hudson, Visit Spokane spokeswoman



JESSE TINSLEY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Girls teams, on the left, and boys teams play on the second day of the State 2B and 1B basketball tournaments inside the Spokane Arena on Friday. The annual tournaments are being played indoors for the first time in two years.

## RETURN OF THE STATE B BASKETBALL TOURNAMENTS

By Greg Mason  
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

State 2B and 1B basketball tournaments returned to Spokane this week after last year's competition was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And if hotel occupancy levels and tourism projections are any indication, it may be back in force.

Occupancy rates for hotels in Spokane County returned to pre-pandemic levels in January, according to the nonprofit tourism group Visit Spokane.

Countywide hotels in January collectively reported a 44.3% occupancy rate, which finished near the 44.9% posted in

January 2019. Similarly, the number of people seeking rooms at Spokane County hotels that month was 111,499, exceeding January 2019's mark of 108,962, according to a Smith Travel Research Rate report prepared by Visit Spokane.

Visit Spokane spokeswoman Kate Hudson said her guess is the rates will stay consistent for February and into early March.

"It's been a long two years," Hudson said. "To see (the State B tournaments) back and back in full the way it has always been feels like we're on a good trajectory. It's invaluable having these tournaments

See **STATE B, 8**

**MORE ON STATE  
FRESHMAN SHINES IN COLFAX GIRLS' WIN OVER LIBERTY**

Forward Brynn McGaughy scored 22 points and pulled down 13 rebounds to lead the third-seeded Bulldogs into the State 2B championship game. **SPORTS, 3**

## ACCREDITATION PANEL FINDS COLLEGE NONCOMPLIANT

NIC faces probation with board chair at heart of complaints

By Greg Mason  
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Leaders in higher education appointed to investigate North Idaho College's eligibility to stay an accredited institution have found the college noncompliant with several standards needed to maintain accreditation, placing the college's status in further jeopardy.

The panel was assigned by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities around December as part of an investigation into two complaints centered on the actions and conduct of the Coeur d'Alene community college's board of trustees - primarily, the board's majority led by Chair Todd Banducci.

The accusations against the board include failing to address allegations of threatening and unprofessional behavior exhibited by Banducci toward employees, trustees and former President Rick MacLennan; amending college policy without

See **NIC, 8**

## Some police reform changes become law with Inslee's signature

Officers, families of those killed by police remain at odds over laws

By Laurel Demkovich  
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

OLYMPIA - Two bills that would tweak police reform measures passed last year are now law after Gov. Jay Inslee signed them Friday.

Two other, more controversial bills, dealing with the definition of "use of force," still are making their way through the Legislature.

Inslee on Friday signed a bill that clarifies the use of physical force against a person who needs mental health assistance. He signed another bill that allows law enforcement agencies to use and acquire ammunition of .50 caliber or greater and other types of firearms of .50 caliber or greater.

"When we take steps forwards, we learn and we improve," Inslee said Friday. "I'm glad legislators have had an open mind to listen to what is actually happening in the field and to respond."

See **POLICE, 9**

**NURSE-TO-PATIENT RATIO BILL LIKELY DEAD**

The legislation, which could be revived later, would have required hospital staffing plans to follow specific ratios, such as one nurse for every eight patients. **NW, 1**

**WAZZU WOMEN WAITING FOR NCAA FATE**

The Cougars, who set a school record for wins, were knocked out of the Pac-12 Tournament by Utah and are on hold until the committee makes its selections. **SPORTS, 1**

**VALLEY COMIC BOOK SHOP HIT BY THIEVES**

Owner of the Comic Book Shop said perpetrators broke his window and made off with about \$30,000 worth of Pokemon and Magic: The Gathering cards. **NW, 1**

