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Judge denies Brown's bid for new trial

Longtime congresswoman to be sentenced Nov. 16

By Steve Patterson
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A federal judge has rejected former Rep. Corrine Brown's request for a new trial on fraud and tax charges.

Brown was convicted of 18 crimes in May, but her lawyers argued the verdict shouldn't count because U.S. District Judge Timo-

thy Corrigan had improperly replaced one juror during deliberations.

Corrigan denied a request to start over Wednesday and scheduled a sentencing hearing Nov. 16.

Corrigan said in his ruling he was right to remove a juror who said "the Holy Spirit" told him of Brown's innocence.

"Had (the) juror ... simply stated to his fellow jurors that he was praying for guidance during the deliberations, that would not have been problematic. ... But that's not what happened," Corrigan wrote. "(The) juror ... announced at the beginning of deliberations that he was following instructions from an outside source, which is



Former U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown was convicted of 18 crimes in May. (Bruce Lipsky/Florida Times-Union)

not permitted." Corrigan also turned down a motion for an

outright acquittal, ruling "reasonable inferences of guilt" that could be made from trial testimony hadn't been undone by other testimony in Brown's favor.

Brown's criminal case centers around her involvement with a sham charity, One Door for Education.

The judge also scheduled sentencing hearings Wednesday, the day be-

BROWN continues on A-4



Bob Reeder stands near his desk in the operations center as he supervises the team that manages port operations at Mayport Naval Station. Reeder, 71, is the deputy port operations officer and directs ships to their basin berths. (Bob Mack/Florida Times-Union)

University nixes white nationalist's appearance

UF cites concerns about safety after Charlottesville rally

By Dara Kam
 News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE | The University of Florida is refusing to allow white nationalist leader Richard Spencer to speak on campus next month, citing "serious concerns" about safety in the aftermath of a deadly weekend clash in Charlottesville, Va.



Fuchs

In a message to staff Wednesday morning, university President Kent Fuchs said the decision to deny the National Policy Institute's request to rent space on campus came "after assessing potential risks" with campus, state, local and federal law enforcement officials.

Continued calls "online and in social media for similar violence in Gainesville such as those decreeing: 'The Next Battlefield is Florida'" also played a role in the decision, Fuchs said.

But Cameron Padgett, a Georgia resident coordinating the event with Spencer, told The News Service

UNIVERSITY continues on A-4

Sea of change at Mayport

Naval station's next chapter: Littoral ships

By Joe Daraskevich
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People greet a Mayport-based aircraft carrier after it returns from a six-month Mediterranean deployment in the mid-20th century. (Florida Times-Union)

A lot has changed at Mayport Naval Station since Bob Reeder first arrived as an enthusiastic young sailor in 1972. Other than a three-year tour, he's worked at the Navy base at the mouth of the St. Johns River ever since.

Back in 1972 part of the wharf was made of sand, and Reeder was assigned to the cruiser USS Albany.

Now Reeder is 71 and still working as the deputy port operations officer where he watches ships come and go just outside his office window.

At his desk he has a roster of ships that were assigned to the basin in 1987

with about 30 vessels — including the aircraft carriers USS Forrestal and USS Saratoga. As the port master, his job is to make sure the ships fit in the basin like puzzle pieces so they can get the services they need while in port.

"As my daughter says, I tell the ships where to park," Reeder said.

He said that job was a little trickier back before the construction of two additional wharves when it was common to have ships tied up three deep in the basin.

"At one time we had 34 ships here," Reeder remembered.

Now there are a little over a doz-

MAYPORT continues on A-4

River dredging bids come in much lower than expected

Proposals range from \$22.8M to \$30.9M, with lowest at half the projected \$43.2M

By David Bauerlein
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The low bid to start dredging the St. Johns River for bigger cargo ships came in at roughly half the federal govern-

ment's estimated cost for the 3-mile first phase, giving project backers some financial breathing room.

The Army Corps of Engineers estimated the cost would be about \$43.2 million. This week, the Corps

opened bids submitted by six dredging contractors that ranged from \$22.8 million to \$30.9 million.

The cost for dredging the first three miles of the 11-mile project doesn't necessarily mean future phases will likewise come in under the current budget, which stands at \$484 million.

"What I can say is the

Corps of Engineers is conservative with the estimates," Corps spokeswoman Susan Jackson said Wednesday.

She said factors in the dredging industry can affect bids at any given time, including the demand for dredging in other parts of the country. "So much is dependent on what else is going on out there," she

said.

The federal government, state Department of Transportation and the Jacksonville Port Authority are joining forces to pay for the first piece of dredging.

"It's a great start," Jax-Port spokeswoman Nancy Rubin said.

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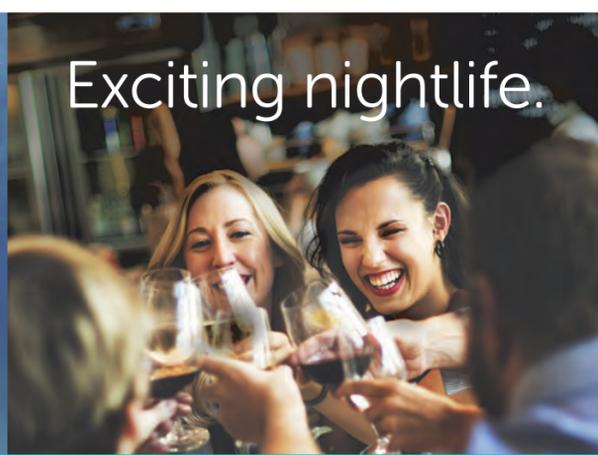
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GET AWAY and PLAY



People line Fifth Avenue on Wednesday as they watch President Donald Trump's motorcade leave Trump Tower in New York. With corporate leaders fleeing, Trump on Wednesday disbanded a pair of advisory business councils — the latest fallout from his comments on racially charged violence in Charlottesville. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

CEOs flee Trump, who disbands panels

White House councils' end latest fallout after president's Charlottesville remarks

By Darlene Superville & Julie Bykowitz
Associated Press

NEW YORK | With corporate chieftains fleeing, President Donald Trump abruptly abolished two of his White House business councils Wednesday — the latest fallout from his combative comments on racially charged violence in Charlottesville, Va.

Trump announced the action via tweet, although only after one of the panels had already agreed to disband earlier in the day. A growing number of business leaders had openly criticized his remarks laying blame for the violence at a white supremacists rally on “both sides.”

“Rather than putting pressure on the businesspeople of the Manufacturing Council & Strategy & Policy Forum, I am ending both. Thank you all!” Trump tweeted.

The decision came as the White House tried to man-

age the repercussions from Trump's defiant remarks a day earlier. Advisers hunkered down, offering no public defense while privately expressing frustration with his comments.

Some Republicans and scores of Democrats denounced Trump's statements as putting white supremacists on equal moral footing with counterprotesters in Charlottesville and called for an apology. Most of those Republicans, including congressional leaders, did not specifically criticize the president.

Trump stayed out of sight, tweeting occasionally about a primary in Alabama, the stock market and his campaign slogan.

The president told associates he was pleased with how his press conference went, saying he believed he had stood up to the media, according to three people familiar with the conversations but not authorized to speak publicly.

Denise Morrison, chief executive of Campbell Soup, declared she was leaving Trump's manufacturing council, saying, “The president should have been — and still needs to be — unambiguous” in denouncing white supremacists.

CEOs had begun tendering their resignations from White House panels after Trump's initial comments following the Saturday violence. The first to step down, Kenneth Frazier of Merck, drew a Twitter tongue-lashing from the president. Later, Trump called those who were leaving “grandstanders” and insisted many others were eager to take their places.

Members of the Strategy and Policy group, led by Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman, concluded after a 45-minute conference call in the morning that they would end the council and announce their decision in a statement, according to two people familiar with the discussions. They insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations.

In a subsequent call with Trump, the president agreed it was the right course of action. He tweeted before they could announce the decision they'd reached — making it appear it was his choice.

Publicly criticizing the president and resigning from his councils is a significant step for big-name corporate leaders. Though the policy influence of such advisory groups is sometimes questionable, simply meeting with Trump with TV cameras going is valuable face-time for the executives — and for the president.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said Wednesday the president “took a step backward by again suggesting there is moral equivalency” between the marching white supremacists and the people who had been demonstrating against them.

Former GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney tweeted: “No, not the same. One side is racist, bigoted, Nazi. The other opposes racism and bigotry. Morally different universes.”

UNIVERSITY

Continued from A-1

of Florida they are working with attorneys and plan to file a lawsuit challenging Fuchs' decision.

Spencer is a leader in the “alt-right” movement, blamed for a deadly outburst following a “Unite the Right” rally Saturday in Charlottesville. One person died when a car plowed into a group of counter-protesters, and two Virginia state troopers also died in a helicopter crash while monitoring the situation.

“I find the racist rhetoric of Richard Spencer and white nationalism repugnant and counter to everything the university and this nation stands for,” Fuchs wrote. “That said, the University of Florida remains unwaveringly dedicated to free speech and the spirit of public discourse. However, the First Amendment does not require a public institution to risk imminent violence to students and others. The likelihood of violence and potential injury — not the words or ideas — has caused us to take this action.”

Gov. Rick Scott said Tuesday he was coordinating with Florida National Guard about the potential event, which was proposed to take place on Sept. 12.

But Padgett said if there is any chance of “mob violence,” it's due to people protesting the event.

“There are already 4,000 people, the president announced, that are threatening to come there that want to shut it down,” Padgett said. “That's not coming from us. It's just me, Richard, and that's about it. We haven't incited any violence.”

Padgett said the purpose of speaking on the campus is to discuss their political beliefs and to explain the alt-right.

The university's ability to restrict controversial speakers like Spencer is limited, even in the aftermath of the Charlottesville events, according to First Amendment lawyers. Officials can't make spaces available to the public

off-limits simply based on the content of a speaker's views.

And the university's decision to block Spencer from speaking could heighten tensions, First Amendment lawyer Tom Julin told The News Service of Florida in a telephone interview Wednesday morning.

“Certainly, the university is going to be targeted by whoever they disappointed, so it's a troubling decision that they're making, to me,” Julin said. “I think that is the sort of decision that the white supremacists will use to their advantage to try to criticize the university from stopping them from speaking.”

In his message announcing the decision Wednesday, Fuchs noted that Texas A&M University, where Spencer spoke in December, also canceled an event with the white nationalist leader that was scheduled to take place the day before the Gainesville appearance. Texas university officials also cited safety issues, Fuchs said.

An inability by the University of Florida and the community to manage a potential conflict is something officials can take into consideration when weighing the First Amendment rights of potential speakers, Julin said.

“But I would not be surprised to see that decision challenged. There obviously was a very serious incident in Charlottesville, but then to conclude from that that the particular awful controversial view is not going to be allowed to speak in the future is a very difficult position to sustain,” he said. “But these are unusual times, and we have an unusual president (Donald Trump) and the concerns about violence are legitimate. It will be unfortunate if this does exacerbate the tensions that already exist.”

But the decision by Fuchs drew quick praise from state Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith, D-Orlando.

“Thank you @UF for doing what is right for the safety of faculty, staff + students,” Smith tweeted.

DREDGING

Continued from A-1

JaxPort has said it will seek \$47 million to \$150 million from the city to help pay for the dredging, depending on how much money the federal government puts up for the project.

The amount sought from the city also could change based on what the actual costs of dredging are when the Corps receives bids and awards work for the second and third phases.

The opening piece of dredging will start near the St. Johns River's mouth at the ocean and proceed toward the vicinity of Mayport.

As dredging continues toward the Blount Island Marine Terminal just east of the Dames Point bridge, the deepening will be more complicated and expensive because the river bottom is harder, which might require

blasting to break it up.

The Dutra Group submitted the low bid for phase one, but it's not done deal yet, Jackson said.

The Corps still must work through its contracting process and expects to award the contract at the end of September. Dredging could start in early or mid-December and end in May 2019.

In addition to the cost of the dredging contract, the first phase will require roughly \$5.5 million for environmental monitoring and contract oversight.

If funding falls into place, the Corps expects to advertise for the second phase of dredging in July 2018, start the work in January 2019 and finish in about five years. Bid advertisements for the third piece would go out in July 2019, dredging would start in January 2020, and take about five and a half years.

BROWN

Continued from A-1

fore Brown's hearing for One Door president Carla Wiley and Brown's former chief of staff, Ronnie Simmons. Both pleaded guilty to fraud conspiracy and testified against Brown.

Brown was convicted of wire and mail fraud, conspiracy, filing false tax returns, and concealing income that she should have listed on financial disclosure forms members of Congress are required to file yearly.

Most of the charges centered on her involvement with One Door for Education, for whom Brown sought donations from her political supporters. At her trial, a string of those supporters testified they wouldn't have written checks worth tens of thousands of dollars if they knew Brown would be getting part of the money.

FBI agents described donations totaling more than \$800,000 for One Door and very little record of actual charitable work by the group. Although One Door was created to be a scholarship fund, agents said records showed just two scholarships totaling \$1,200 were issued. Wiley and Simmons, who were once a couple, both acknowledged stealing from One Door for their personal benefit.

Jurors were told more than \$30,000 in cash was moved from One Door's bank account to Brown's accounts, and that she had used that money and cash from other unreported sources to pay for a lifestyle that her annual congressional pay of about \$174,000 couldn't cover.

The 12-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives lost a re-election bid last year, shortly after she was indicted. Steve Patterson: (904) 359-4263



At left, the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga returns home to Mayport Naval Station 1991, and at right, the USS Detroit docks at the pier when it is welcomed to its new home port along with the USS Milwaukee. (Florida Times-Union)

MAYPORT

Continued from A-1

en ships home-ported at Mayport. But Reeder said those numbers will soon be growing with the influx of littoral combat ships headed to the basin.

Buildings are popping up all around Mayport to accommodate the new ships and the sailors that operate them. The USS Milwaukee and USS Detroit are there already, with more coming about every six months for the next few years. The relatively small Navy ships use steerable jet propulsion so they can operate close to shore, and Mayport is the East Coast home for the littoral program.

The Freedom-class littoral ships are all based at Mayport while the Independence-class littoral ships are based in San Diego. The Freedom ships resemble traditional Navy vessels with steel hulls and aluminum superstructures, and the Independence ships have trimaran hulls made entirely of aluminum.

Reeder said it's exciting to see new buildings going up to accommodate the new class of ships because he remembers the gloom that shrouded the Mayport community when the announcement came that it was losing its last aircraft carrier, the USS John F. Kennedy.

He said when the Kennedy was decommissioned

in 2007, it was one of the toughest times for the people who worked in and around the base.

“A lot of the economy around here comes from the shipyards,” Reeder said. “When the carriers went away, that knocked out about 50 percent of the workforce.”

When the Kennedy left for good, it was a time of uncertainty. Reeder said his seven-mile commute from Jacksonville Beach used to take him an hour and 15 minutes with the line of cars waiting to get through the main gate. He said he used to get off work at 4 p.m. but would stay in his office for a couple extra hours because it was useless to try to fight the traffic leaving the base.

Now when he drives down Mayport Road he remembers all the bars and restaurants that were forced to shut down when the era of aircraft carriers came to a close. He said the rumors swirled constantly that Mayport would surely vanish without a carrier.

“I didn't think they would close it, and now I'm pretty sure they won't because they have spent some big money on this LCS program,” Reeder said.

ships and their supporting infrastructure.

“Two existing large military construction projects for training and mission package systems are under way now and three more future large projects for additional training capacity, additional work space and parking are already in the funding process,” said Cmdr. Mike Brand, chief staff officer for Littoral Combat Ship Squadron Two.

Reeder said all the construction is a good sign for the community.

Brand said the littoral ships are predominantly manned by senior sailors, so housing and berthing facilities already at the base from the days when the Kennedy and 14 frigates were docked in the basin will be sufficient.

“The completion of the Mission Module Readiness Center is planned for February, and the LCS Training Facility and installation of the Integrated Tactical Trainer in a refurbished portion of an existing building should be completed and ready for training by summer,” Brand said.

The trainer will have a full mock-up of a Freedom-class bridge, bridge wings and combat system spaces for realistic training purposes, he said. The state-of-the-art facility will have a full-screen projection program to simulate various types of drill scenarios.

Brand said there are sev-

eral temporary buildings in use now while the construction projects are completed.

The first building dedicated to the littoral program, the Logistics Support Facility, opened in October 2015. It had a price tag of \$16 million.

Brand said the cost of the buildings under construction plus the equipment that will be inside them is estimated at \$86.2 million.

Reeder said people ask him all the time about retirement, but he plans to work for at least another four more years.

“I'm in no hurry,” he said. “I still get up in the morning and enjoy going to work. I love being around the Navy, around ships, around sailors.”

He said the arrival of the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group — which includes the USS Iwo Jima, USS New York and USS Fort McHenry — was a major step in the right direction in 2014, bringing nearly 2,000 sailors back to Mayport.

Now the littoral ships are coming, and Reeder said all the construction and added personnel mean his job is about to get a lot more busy.

It might not be the same as when there were two aircraft carriers at Mayport, he said, but the littoral ships are something new, and they're just what the base needed to stay relevant.

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