

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

# It's official: Paiva Weed resigns Senate seat

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE — Former state Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed, D-Newport, is resigning from her legislative seat effective today, triggering a special election in her district in August.



Paiva Weed

Weed, who has served in the Senate since 1993, made the announcement Thursday, making that day's Senate session her last. She is leaving to take a job as president of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island, starting on May 1.

Weed resigned as the Senate president last week. She was replaced in that role by Dominick Ruggerio, D-North Providence.

Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea announced Thursday the special

election will be held Tuesday, Aug. 22. The Newport Canvassing Authority has a meeting Tuesday at 11:30 a.m. at City Hall with an agenda that includes discussion of the special election.

Three Newport Democrats have announced their intention to run for the seat in District 13, which includes Jamestown and part of Newport.

John Florez, a Newport City Councilman at-large, announced his candidacy the morning after Paiva Weed said she was leaving the Senate for her

new job. Dawn Euer, a social activist who is co-project director of the Newport Open Space Partnership, and David Allard, a state Department of Education employee and former outreach manager for Gov. Gina Raimondo, also have announced they are candidates.

Brandon Bell, chairman of the state Republican Party, did not return a call from The Daily News last week about Republican interest in the seat.

Statewide news media have

reported Republican Mike Smith, who challenged Paiva Weed in 2014, is considering another run for the seat.

The period for candidates to file declarations of candidacy with their local board of canvassers will be June 8-9.

A primary election will take place on Tuesday, July 18, if more than one candidate from either party qualifies for the ballot. The deadline to register to vote in the primary would be June 18, and the last day to register to vote in the special election is July 23.

## Bishop, pope don't agree on panhandling

PROVIDENCE (AP)—A month after Pope Francis endorsed giving money to panhandlers, the Roman Catholic bishop in Rhode Island has posted three reasons not to.

Pope Francis was asked last month by an Italian magazine for the homeless "if it is right to give alms to people who ask for help on the street," according to a transcript of the interview posted on the Vatican website. He replied that there are many arguments to justify not giving money, such as being concerned the person will go buy himself wine. But, Francis said, "Help is always right."

He added that when people give, they should do so not by throwing coins, but by looking the person in the eye and touching their hands.

Bishop Thomas Tobin, who has previously criticized Francis, posted a Facebook message Tuesday entitled "Three Reasons Not to Give to Panhandlers." Tobin's spokeswoman said the post was prompted by recent local debate on the panhandling issue, not in response to anything Pope Francis has said.

Tobin said it can be a safety hazard if someone standing on a curb or roadway is asking for help, and said the practice enables dishonest people to prey upon others' compassion when they do not have legitimate needs. He also said throwing loose change at a panhandler is demeaning to that person's dignity.

"While it might make us feel better, in fact it sustains a very unhealthy and degrading lifestyle. Our community has legitimate and structured means of helping the poor and needy. We should support those," the bishop wrote.

Tobin also quoted Francis in his post, saying a great danger when aiding the poor is falling into "an attitude of protective paternalism."

## Cat walk



Kayla Ebner | Staff photographer

Nick Maione of Newport takes his cat Beyonce for a stroll along Annandale Road in Newport on Thursday. Maione said Beyonce has her own Instagram account ([beyonce\\_newport](#)).

## RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

# Flynn seeks immunity if he agrees to questioning

WASHINGTON (AP)—Former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn is in discussions with the House and Senate intelligence committees on receiving immunity in exchange for agreeing to be questioned as part of ongoing probes into possible contacts between Donald Trump's presidential campaign and Russia, his attorney said Thursday.



Flynn

"Gen. Flynn certainly has a story to tell, and he very much wants to tell it, should the circumstances permit," said Flynn's attorney, Robert Kelner.

Kelner said no "reasonable person" with legal counsel would answer questions without assurances that he would not be prosecuted, given calls from some members of Congress that the retired lieutenant general should face criminal charges.

Flynn's ties to Russia have been scrutinized by the FBI and are under investigation by the House and Senate intelligence committees. Both committees

are looking into Russia's meddling in the 2016 presidential election and any ties between Trump associates and the Kremlin.

Since July, the FBI has been conducting a counterintelligence investigation into Russia's interference in the election and possible coordination with Trump associates.

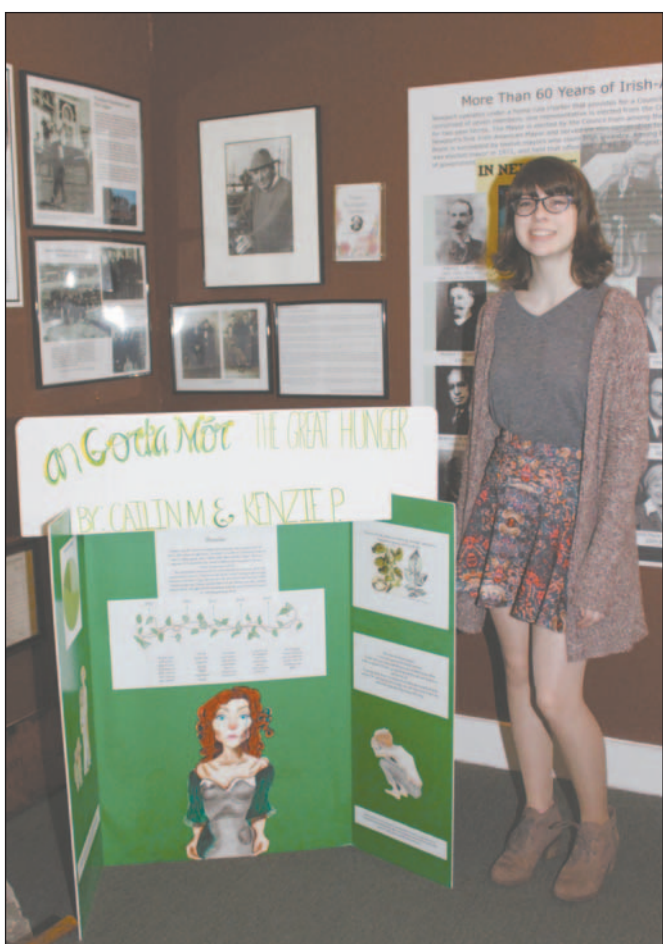
Kelner released a statement after The Wall Street Journal first reported that Flynn's negotiations with the committee included discussions of immunity. The lawyer described the talks as ongoing and said he would not comment on the details.

A congressional aide confirmed that discussions with the Senate intelligence committee involved immunity.

House intelligence committee spokesman Jack Langer said Flynn, a native of Middletown, Rhode Island, has not offered to testify to the committee in exchange for immunity.

Four other Trump associates have come forward in recent weeks, saying they would talk to the committees. As of Wednesday, the Senate intelligence committee had asked to

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Kayla Ebner | Staff photos

Cailin Martin, a freshman at Rogers High School, on Thursday displays her artwork on the Irish Potato Famine at the Museum of Newport Irish History.

# 'The Great Hunger' revisited

Rogers High School freshmen prepare exhibits for Museum of Newport Irish History

By Sean Flynn  
Staff writer

NEWPORT — Cailin Martin, a Rogers High School freshman, decided to portray a gaunt red-headed woman as a sufferer during the Irish potato famine of the mid-1800s as part of a class project now on display at the Museum of Newport Irish History.

Martin had never seen the painting in the museum's permanent display by artist Rosemary Cavanaugh O'Carroll, formerly of Newport, that portrays a woman famine victim with the same characteristics.

"The similarities are incredible," said Mike Slein, president of the museum. "It's haunting."

The almost 50 freshmen in the two honors world history classes taught by Rogers social studies teacher Stephen Ferris all completed exhibits on what the Irish know as "The Great Hunger," or "Gorta Mór" in the Irish



Rogers High School freshman Colin McCabe added a potato to his display on 'The Great Hunger' by using newspaper and other art supplies.

language. The top 10 projects — some completed by groups of two or three students, and some by individuals — were chosen for display in the museum.

The exhibits were open to students and their parents Thursday afternoon after school, and can be seen by the general public when the

museum opens on Memorial Day. The exhibits will be rotated during the summer because the small museum, at 648 Thames St., cannot display them all at the same time along with the permanent displays, Slein said.

This is the second year that student exhibits on Ireland will be displayed in the museum.

"It was just a weird coincidence," Martin said when asked about the likenesses between her painting and O'Carroll's.

During the famine, from about 1845 to 1852, about 1 million people died and another 1 million more emigrated from Ireland, causing the island's population to drop by around 25 percent — with some estimates going as high as 30 percent, which Martin cited.

All of Ireland was part of the British Empire at the time, she pointed out.

"The British could have helped but they didn't, although they had the opportunity through the Parliament," she said. "It was the laissez-faire economics of the time."

Potatoes came to Ireland from North America in the early 1500s and a large percentage of the Irish subsistence farmers — tenants on large estates owned by absentee landlords who lived

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today's news  
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Ninth-graders from Rogers High School assemble outside the Museum of Newport Irish History on Thursday after displaying their projects on the Irish Potato Famine.

Kayla Ebner  
Staff photographer



## Hunger

Continued from A1

mainly in England — were dependent on the potato for their sustenance, as Katherine Caparas explained in her exhibit. The famine occurred when a micro-organism called Phytophthora infestans caused the blight that ruined the crops, she wrote.

“The Choctaw Indians in this country sent aid and food to the Irish,” said Martin, who completed her display with Kenzie Palmer. “It was not enough to stop the famine, but the effort showed some part of humanity cared.”

Colin McCabe used foam board, newspaper pages, brown paper bags and paint to create a sculpture of a rotten potato to illustrate what the blight did.

“I put in extra effort so my project would be chosen for the museum, so people will see it,” he said. “The Irish are a big presence in the history of Newport, and that history is so important to so many people.”

When construction of Fort Adams began in 1824 and continued for the next 37 years, Irish masons, stonemasons

and laborers were recruited for the project. There were up to 400 mostly Irish laborers at the site during some periods.

There were Irish immigrants to the city before then; the 1790 census showed 37 Irish families were here. The work at Fort Adams, the influx of refugees from the famine, and a later generation of Irish laborers who helped build the mansions of Bellevue Avenue and staff them all provided significant waves of immigrants to the city.

“It was good for us to go back to our Irish roots,” said Elsa Eliasson, who has a Swedish name but said her family’s mixed ancestry includes Irish ancestors. She completed her exhibit with Dylan McGrath.

“It’s sad the starving Irish tenants at that time had to pay their rent with potatoes,” she said.

Mia Stevenson, Alyssa Berry and Julia McGinn concentrated on the conditions of poverty and insecurity among the large number of tenant farmers in Ireland at the time of the famine.

“I thought it was crazy they were exporting all this food, but they couldn’t buy it and

eat it to survive,” Stevenson said. “They had to pay these high rents to the landowners or be evicted.”

“The prices for food were more than they could afford,” McGinn said.

Rent collection was left in the hands of the landlords’ agents, or “middlemen,” whose ability was measured by the rent income they could contrive to extract from tenants, the students explained.

Besides the students named above, the following groups completed exhibits for the museum: Shea Milburn, John Rangel and Nate Buchannan; Chanelle Butler and Stella Garcia; and Lily Bestoso, Anna Bodycoat and Olin Martins. Will Feury and Maeve Newsome completed individual exhibits.

“The students were very enthusiastic about the project,” teacher Ferris said. “Whether they looked at the immigration aspects, the biology of the famine, or the social conditions of the time, they all had different takes on the tragedy.”

Flynn@NewportRI.com

# Poll: Economy aside, Trump’s ratings low

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Americans disapprove of Donald Trump’s overall performance two months into his presidency. But they’re more upbeat about at least one critical area: his handling of the economy.

Nearly 6 in 10 Americans disapprove of Trump’s overall performance, and about the same percentage say the country is headed in the wrong direction, according to a new poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. It was conducted amid the collapse of the GOP’s health care overhaul.

But the poll also found a brighter spot for the businessman-politician on the economy, often a major driver of presidential success or failure. There, Americans split about evenly, with 50 percent approving and 48 percent disapproving of Trump’s efforts.

“He’s driving the car off the cliff in every other kind of policy and executive action he’s trying to push through, but (not) the economy,” said Ryan Mills, a 27-year-old tobacco company chemist from Greensboro, North Carolina.

Overall, just 42 percent of Americans approve and 58 percent disapprove of the job Trump is doing as president. That’s an unusually poor rating by historical standards for a still-young administration.

By contrast, at this point in their presidencies, Barack Obama’s approval rating was above 60 percent in Gallup polling and George W. Bush’s was

above 50 percent. Gallup’s own measure of Trump’s approval has dipped below 40 percent.

Trump has suffered defeats in the federal courts, which twice temporarily halted his travel ban on some foreigners, and in Congress, where discord among Republicans has stymied legislation to change Obama’s signature health care law. The FBI, along with Congress, is probing Russia’s meddling in the 2016 election and any possible coordination with the Trump campaign.

The president has responded in public with beligerent tweets often blaming the media, Democrats, conservative Republicans and others.

The AP-NORC poll did show Republicans still far more likely to approve than disapprove of Trump, a fifth of GOP respondents said they don’t approve of his performance. Among independents, six in 10 disapprove.

Notably, whites — who formed an important chunk of Trump’s political base during the election — divide about evenly on the approval question, 53 percent approving and 47 percent disapproving.

But there are signs in the poll that Trump’s base is holding and that people are willing to give him a chance on the still-strong economy.

Fifty-eight percent of whites without a college degree — who were especially likely to vote for Trump — approve of the job he’s doing overall.

Nearly 20 percent of those who disapprove of Trump’s

overall performance still approve of how he’s handling the economy. And most Americans — 56 percent — describe the national economy as good, while 43 percent describe it as poor. About a year ago, in April of 2016, just 42 percent of Americans described the economy as good in another AP-NORC poll.

The current majority extends across party lines, with 63 percent of Republicans, 54 percent of independents and 53 percent of Democrats describing the national economy as good.

Trump voter Joshlyn Smith, a Riverside County, California, law enforcement officer, said the president needs to move past “the Twitter stuff” that often mires him in social media spats — and focus instead on the nation’s policy.

“I feel like I want to give him a fair shot, especially in terms of helping on taxes and the economy,” said Smith, 38. “On a personal level, I think he’s too involved with how he’s portrayed in the media. I want him to have a little bit tougher skin.”

The approval ratings of many presidents through history are linked to the economy, with several — including Harry Truman, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama — suffering politically for downturns during their first year in the White House, according to a project by the Miller Center at The University of Virginia.

## Flynn

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interview 20 people as part of the probe.

In his statement, Kelner said the political climate in which Flynn is facing “claims of treason and vicious innuendo” is factoring into his negotiations with the committees.

“No reasonable person, who has the benefit of advice from counsel, would submit to questioning in such a highly politicized, witch hunt environment without assurances against

unfair prosecution,” Kelner said.

In September, Flynn weighed in on the implications of immunity on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” criticizing Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and her associates in the FBI’s investigation into her use of a private email server.

“When you are given immunity, that means that you have probably committed a crime,” Flynn said during the interview.

Flynn was fired from his job as Trump’s first national security adviser after it was disclosed that he misled the vice

president about a conversation he had with the Russian ambassador to the U.S. during the transition.

In the weeks after he resigned, Flynn and his business registered with the Justice Department as foreign agents for \$530,000 worth of lobbying work that could have benefited the Turkish government.

The lobbying occurred while Flynn was a top Trump campaign adviser. The Turkish businessman who hired Flynn, Ekim Alptekin, said that Flynn’s firm registered under pressure from the Justice Department.

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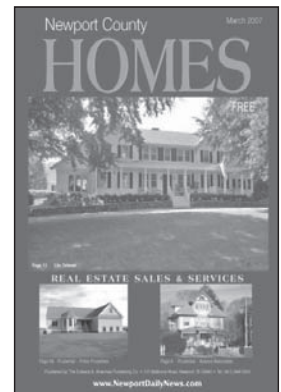
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**Ad fax:** (401) 849-3335  
**Business hours:** Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
**Office location:** 101 Malbone Road, Newport, RI 02840  
©2017 - The Edward A. Sherman Publishing Company  
USPS 384-320  
Vol. 172 - No. 76

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