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Stepping
with Spirit
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New state law further restricts cell phones in school

by Areli Hernandez

As student cell phone use has become a controversial topic nationwide, Indiana lawmakers will enact a stricter law to prevent any cell phone usage by Hoosier students during the school day next year.

Indiana State Representative Wendy Dant Chesser, who represents District 71 that includes Jeffersonville, said Senate Bill 78, passed several weeks ago, improves students' educations and health.

"I do support this legislation. The goal is to improve students' focus in class and increase face-to-face interactions with their peers. About 46% of teens say they're online almost constantly, which is worrisome. We know that a high amount of screen time can negatively impact teens' self-esteem, social interactions, and mental health," she said.

Math teacher Jaclyn Fifer breaks down current issues students have encountered with phones in her classroom.

"The regulation policy is that students are not supposed to have phones during instructional time. Unfortunately, we don't have all students abiding by that, and because I also deal with upperclassmen, I do feel like they make a lot of decisions for themselves and need to learn about responsibility," said Fifer.

As technology continues to integrate to daily life, it has also become an issue with students complying with expectations.

"It just seems as phones have become so much more social; it's hard to ask the students to try to do something on their phone educationally because they are so drawn to what else they can do beyond other sites. That is even true with chromebooks and technology,"



Daily Cell Phone Use by Students

Senior Camila Levario glances over at sophomore Hailey Franco's phone during lunch. Students like Levario use their personal devices once lectures are over to continue working. "I use my phone mainly when the teacher isn't teaching; my laptop I use for my work 100% of the time." New Indiana legislation will further restrict cell phones during school. Photo by Mackenzie Stubblefield.

said Fifer.

Chesser agreed that putting a stop to cell phones during school hours allows students to become responsible about their devices.

"By giving them the full school day without phones, we can help teens learn to self-regulate their phone use before they become adults," said Chesser.

Even though this hasn't become a severe issue for anatomy and AP biology teacher Missy Brewer, she hopes for better alternatives to help students beyond legislation.

"I think students understand that the phones are a distraction, but they're unable to put them away

without someone forcing them to. I wish we were able to teach students strategies for not needing their phones all the time rather than just making that a rule, but we've tried that, and it doesn't work."

Brewer also has certain expectations for her classroom in order to maintain efficiency.

"I start each class reminding students to clear off their desks, including their phones. If I see someone on their phone, I'll say something to them. I let them have their phones for the last five minutes of class and also have them put their phones in a 'caddie' during testing. I think it's important that students

don't have that physical distraction in front of them," she said.

Radio/TV teacher Fred Cowgill finds himself questioning the legislation regarding students' educations and well-being.

"I've got very mixed emotions on what's being done or trying to be done. I disagree with it at the end of the day, honestly, because I don't want someone to tell me what I can or can't teach, and this is an important ingredient because kids would rather tear off an arm than give you their phone, and we've got to be able to educate these kids in a better way so they don't feel that way anymore," Cowgill said.

Cell phone usage is a serious topic for Cowgill, whose lessons rely on media equipment on a daily basis.

“The problem for us is that we use our phones; the kids use their phones as part of the process of doing what we do here, which is turning in stories for social media, for the internet, and for our newscast we do every Tuesday,” he said.

However, he is also concerned about the amount of screen time dominating teenagers’ lives.

“Attention spans are down to five minutes at a time, that’s it. I’m like, ‘Wow.’ Apparently the peak was two hours before smartphones came out; the smartphones and the internet have damaged that quite a bit. It’s a serious topic, I won’t fib, and there are a lot of layers to it, which is why so many people react to it in such a negative way, especially teachers.”

While previous legislation limited cell phone usage during instructional time and allowed students to use devices during lunches and passing periods, the new legislation adds more restrictions.

“This year’s proposed legislation, Senate Bill 78 from Sen. Jeff Raatz, would completely restrict cell phone use in schools,” said Chesser, who mentioned several ways schools could comply with the new state law.

“Schools could choose between two enforcement policies: students can’t bring phones to school at all, or schools can implement a secure storage policy. It expands the definition of a wireless communication device to include smartwatches that connect to cell phones,” she said.

Senior Camila Levario finds the proposed legislation unwise and even dangerous for not only herself, but for other students who are self-aware of current events impacting their lives.

“A complete cell phone ban would

not kill me, but with everything going on in the world right now it’s not a good idea at all. I understand if anything important happens the office will notify us, but what if by the time they tell us or find us it’s already too late? I just wouldn’t be able to live with that,” she said.

Cowgill agreed that student access to cell phones is an important safety concern in modern schools.

“God forbid anybody ever tries to break into the school and do some harm to us. In our case, right now we have roughly 24-2500 people who would have phones and would get the message out to their loved ones and authorities,” he said.

School safety and communication with parents are reasons why principal Pam Hall plans to proceed cautiously in implementing new cell phone procedures next school year.

“I don’t really plan to make any significant changes unless I am directed to,” Hall said. “We’re just going to continue on with what we’re doing.”

Hall said she supports the intent of the legislation, but added that local school corporations should be creating these policies. “It should have been left up to the district,” she said.

For sophomore Arieslie Tejada, a near-total ban for cellphones would be an adjustment.

“I wouldn’t think a complete phone ban would affect me personally because if I put my mind into learning I’ll get the work done without AI, but I feel like we should still be able to listen to music or get on our phones when we have free time and during lunch time. We should also still be able to carry them in case of an emergency,” she said.

Senior Luis Rebolledo is apprehensive about current cell phone policy changes, emphasizing the importance of having a cell phone

Indiana Senate Bill 78 (2026), titled the “Wireless communication device policy,” mandates a “bell-to-bell” ban on cellphones, smartwatches, and other gaming electronics for K-12 students throughout the school day. Approved by the Senate in Feb 2026, the bill aims for uniform rules, with limited exceptions for special needs, medical monitoring (e.g., diabetes), or language translation.

Key Details of Indiana SB 78 (2026):

- **Purpose:** To restrict student access to personal communication devices during school hours to improve focus and reduce disruption.
- **Scope:** Covers K-12 public and charter schools, covering cellphones, smartwatches, and similar devices.
- **Exceptions:** Limited exceptions exist for emergencies, students with specific medical requirements (e.g., monitoring blood sugar), and translation needs.
- **Source:** Indiana General Assembly at <https://iga.in.gov>.

Graphic by Daysha Gray.

for safety precautions.

“A complete phone ban wouldn’t bother me at all. You’d get used to it eventually,” he said. “What would concern me though is — what if we or our loved ones were in a situation and we had to contact each other? Stuff

goes on around the world and we could be involved in a dire situation. The office wouldn’t act fast enough to contact the other. Scenarios like these are where we would need our phones to alert anyone and let them know about our well-being.”



New diploma standards emphasize work-based learning

by Tyler Conley and Parker Vibbert

In December 2024, the Indiana State Board of Education adopted new high school diploma standards, which will take effect beginning with the Class of 2029. These new standards will affect all current and future Indiana freshmen.

With the Indiana High School diploma remaining significantly unchanged for several years, the Indiana Department of Education aims to provide students with more work-based learning opportunities and increased chances to achieve their goals.

Engineering Academy counselor Whitney Roberts said the new standards are in response to employers' increased need for employees who are ready to enter the workforce upon graduation.

"They are trying to get away from a college-focused curriculum, and instead are trying to keep up with employers that need a more ready workforce," she said.

According to Roberts, the new standards feature a base diploma and three core principles.

"The new diploma splits, it's three E's:

Employment, if you want to go to work after high school; Enrollment, if you want to enroll into a college, and Enlistment, if you want to go into the military," she said.

Greater Clark County Schools wants to ensure that students meet their work-based learning goals while still enjoying extracurricular activities.

"Greater Clark County has purchased an online system to allow students who have lots of after-school commitments to still meet work-based learning goals for high school students," Roberts said. This should help students meet some work-based requirements through their extracurriculars.

Freshman Academy counselor Andrea Schedler explained the biggest change from the previous diploma is that the number of credits needed for graduation has increased.

"The biggest thing is now it's 42 credits instead of 40," she said.

Indiana Diploma Standards have been well known as the "Core 40" for 15 years, since it took effect in 2011, owing to the now-outdated 40-credit graduation requirement. Before this, the diploma standards had not seen any changes in a

decade.

Among these new standards, some classes have now been labeled as graduation requirements.

"For English 10, they are going to either take Speech or an advanced English class. Another big change is the College and Careers Credit, which, along with Computing Foundations and Personal Finance, has become a required graduation class," Schedler said.

Prior to the new standards, College and Careers was not a graduation requirement, nor did Computing Foundations exist until this school year. Preceding Computing Foundations as the semester 2 successor to College and Careers was Personal Finance, which has now become a required senior class.

Unlike the "Core 40" diploma, the new standards feature more honors academic options.

"In the old diploma, there was only the base diploma, academic honors, and technical honors. Now there are more options, like the honors seal and the honors plus seal," Schedler said

Each diploma (Enrollment, Employment, and Enlistment) has its own specific requirements to

obtain the honors and honors-plus seal to ensure success in each field.

Schedler said that there are advantages and disadvantages to these changes, and they could put a lot of stress on students' shoulders.

"I think there's good and bad. The good thing is that we give students more options, but the requirements for the honors-plus seal for employment can be very difficult. It requires 650 work hours," she said.

Public Service Academy principal Chelsea Jordan elaborated on the difficulties of building direct relationships between students and their work.

"We're going to have to work with teachers to find ways to build more career-driven, hands-on experiences in the classroom," she said.

Principals and teachers are taking any step necessary to stay informed on the changes to better help the students meet their goals.

"We've already spoken with our teachers about it and kind of brainstormed different ideas within the academies of how to make adjustments," Jordan said.

Jordan, however, is more skeptical about the changes and how they actually benefit the majority of students.

"I think it's a little extreme. You have kids in sports, or other extracurricular activities, and it can be hard for them to meet their diploma requirements."

College and Careers teacher Michael Moody said giving kids more options other than enrolling in college is a benefit.

"College isn't for everybody. One of my friends actually went into the military, and they paid in full for her college after serving for nine years," he said.

Moody helped create the college and careers program at Jeff High and described it as a gateway into figuring out what teens would like to do during their high school careers.

"We have basic jobs that we're supposed to do mainly to help you have an idea of where your skills and aptitudes match in the pathways," he said

With college not being for everyone, the new diploma also helps students realize easier paths to success in their future fields.

"Why should you go to a four-year college and spend tens of thousands of dollars to get a job when you can go and get training and you getting paid right out of school?" he said.

Ultimately, teachers, counselors, and the State Board of Education agreed that the changes to this diploma were made to encourage and support students to achieve their goals, whether that be Employment, Enrollment, or Enlistment.

“Why should you go to a four-year college and spend tens of thousands of dollars to get a job when you can go and get training and you get paid right out of school?”

**College and Careers Teacher
Michael Moody**

INDIANA BASE DIPLOMA CLASS OF 2029 AND BEYOND 42 CREDITS

ENGLISH: 8 CREDITS

English 10(Speech), English 9, 11, 12

MATH: 6 CREDITS

Algebra I & II, Geometry

SCIENCE: 6 CREDITS

Biology, STEM: ICP, Chem, or Physics

SOCIAL STUDIES: 6 CREDITS

World History, US History, US Government

PE/HEALTH: 6 CREDITS

PE, Health

COLLEGE/CAREERS: 3 CREDITS

Personal Finance, Prep for College & Careers, Computing Foundations

PERSONALIZED ELECTIVES: 6 CREDITS

CTE, Performing, Fine Arts, World Languages

STUDENTS MUST ALSO:

Learn and demonstrate employability skills by completing one of these experiences:

Project, Service, and Work-based learning.

Complete one of the following Post-Secondary Ready Competencies:

C average for 3 AP/Dual Credit classes

ACT: 18 English OR 22 Reading AND 22 Math or 23 Science

SAT EBRW 480 and Math 530

ASVAB: 31 or higher

Earn a state/industry certificate

C average for all courses in the CTE graduation pathway

Graphic by Daysha Gray.

Importance of the Arts

by Aurora Grisham and Daysha Gray

Art is said to help students express themselves and explore their thoughts and emotions, especially in high school. JHS offers numerous opportunities to explore visual, musical, and performing arts.

But would all students benefit from taking an art class?

Musical Arts

Junior Gabriel Collins sings in unison with the choir at the Winter Fantasy concert in the JHS auditorium. The annual event brings musical arts groups – including choir, band, and orchestra – together to perform for the community. Photo by Malachi Conrad.



High school arts promote teamwork, creativity

Why is Art Important?

Creative writing teacher Evan Myers said the importance of the arts in high school and society is the joy it brings to life.

“You don’t need it to survive, but rather, it’s one of those things that gives value to survival; you need art for that.”

Art teacher Jennifer Beckman said the arts promote life skills that teens carry with them after high school, like planning and breaking big projects into smaller steps. She explained that students who don’t major in art can learn business skills, but art majors can actually create work to sell to others.

Artists can create beyond their studios. Performing arts students act and make music as well, often sharing their talents with others in concerts and performances.

Theatre arts teacher Derrick Ledbetter called musical and theatre arts “massively important” for helping students understand themselves and others.

Public Service counselor Tyler Colyer said, “Some people are artistic, some are not, and that’s okay. But I also think that there are lots of different arts, especially at Jeff High.”

Freshman Miley Smith, who takes band, agreed, saying that band “helps with creativity and teamwork.”

Sophomore Fallon Powers, who is enrolled in Introduction to 2D Art, described art as an escape.

“I think that art is very beneficial for our students because it makes me happy and it keeps my mind off regular school stuff.”

Senior Makayla Robinson, also in Intro to 2D Art, said, “You can express yourself with art, and sometimes a lot of people, or a lot of kids, don’t express themselves.”

Do All Students Need Art?

Art is widely valued as part of the high school curriculum, but do all students need it?

The Princeton Review states that high school arts education helps students explore interests, discover talents, and develop skills useful for college and careers.

Myers agreed, saying, “In one way or another, yes, it’s essential. Without that creative part of your brain getting activated, you grow stagnant.”



Project in Progress

Sophomore Fallon Powers glues newspaper clippings as part of an art project in her Introduction to 2D art class. Powers described her art class as a way to keep her mind off “regular school stuff.” Photo by Mackenzie Stubblefield.

Beckman said that while art may not be essential for every student, it is important for students to explore their interests in high school, and that everyone has a different passion.

“It’s complicated,” said Ledbetter. “I think that students should have an exposure to it, but I don’t know if it’s for everybody. I think there are creative outlets for everybody, and everyone would benefit from that.”

Colyer said, “I think it’s important to have that creative side because you can use critical thinking in math and English, but you can also use it in those things, too.”

Smith said these creative outlets do not always have to be arts-related. “No, they should take a class that helps them be creative. It doesn’t have to be an art class.”

But Powers pointed out the health benefits to

creating in an art class, saying, “I think that every high school student should be taking art because it’s amazing for your mental health.”

Robinson agreed. “I feel like it’s beneficial for people. As I said, I feel like it allows you to express yourself, and I feel like it’s a way to express yourself in, like, colors and different shapes and stuff like that.”

The Final Word?

With new Indiana diploma standards emphasizing work-based learning, student artists, musicians, and teachers say arts-based courses can teach “real-life” skills in creative settings, still making them valuable. While not crucial for everyone, these artists believe anyone can take these creative classes to benefit the brain and as a source of comfort.

Stepping with Spirit

Step team brings rhythm, pride to JHS

by Magdalene Conrad

At JHS, the step team is making noise in the best way possible. Known for greatly choreographed performances, as well as being synchronized and sharp, it's more than just a team for these ladies. It's a sisterhood.

Senior captain Ja'Breeah Batey said, "It's more than performing; it's about moving as one and pushing each other to be better."

Not only does the team put in hours of practice each week after school, but they perform at basketball games, football games, showcases, and have even been invited to perform at University of Louisville games during the halftime shows.

As the program continues to grow, team members hope to inspire more students to get involved and keep the tradition going.



Practice Makes Perfect

Freshman Autumn Brown, junior Cheyenne Bonner, junior Aeriona Miles, and freshman Trinity Tyus practice their routine after school. Photo by Magdalene Conrad.

Bringing the Beat

Freshman Trinity Tyus performs for the crowd at halftime of a Jeffersonville basketball game. Step team performs at home games. Photo by Magdalene Conrad.





Step by Step

Junior Jaelyn Hernandez performs at halftime for the JHS step team. The team performs at every home basketball game. Senior co-captain Ja'Breeah Batey said the team is about more than just performing, though. "It has helped me become more responsible, communicate better, and learn how to lead others," she said. Photo by Magdalene Conrad.

Leadership guides step team to success



"Being captain of the step team means taking on a leadership role and setting a positive example for young girls and encouraging a safe space and sisterhood."

**Senior Co-Captain
Ja'Breeah Batey**

"Being captain means being a leader and setting a good example for my teammates, whether it's within step or not."

**Junior Co-Captain
Zyaria Alexander**

Compiled by Zaria Lewis.



More Than Just a Team

Step team members gather for a team photo in the Marshall Center at their end-of-the-season celebration. Team members say the team is bonded through sisterhood. Photo by Magdalene Conrad.

Get to Stepping

The step team performs during a basketball game. The team steps in the bleachers during the game, and during halftime they perform a floor routine. Photo by Magdalene Conrad.



Tickets to Order

Senior Tania Sanchez gets order tickets ready during passing period. Photo by Liliana Castellanos.

Double Delights

Two caramel frappes, courtesy of senior John Paul. The coffee shop has an extensive menu, including sodas, lemonades, and specialty drinks, as well as cookies, cake pops, brownies, and Rice Krispy treats. Photo by Liliana Castellanos.



Ready to Serve

Student-managed coffee shop provides delicious treats while teaching business

by Kaleb Baker and Liliana Castellanos

From blue raspberry lemonades to caramel frappes to Rice Krispie treats, the JHS coffee shop, located in the Commons, provides just the right delicious delight for customers.

The shop, managed by a class of seniors and faculty sponsor Amy Whitaker, is open Wednesday through Friday during all lunches; the class prepares the week's treats each Monday and Tuesday.

Coffee shop staff members said serving students and faculty teaches valuable business skills.

Senior Jasmine McLeod said working in the coffee shop "gives me a hands-on experience," while senior Dontravion Lucas said, "I get to learn how to work with people and enjoy great cooking."

The Coffee Crew

Seniors who manage the coffee shop learn real-world business techniques and prepare for future careers as they serve JHS coffee, hot drinks, and other tasty treats. Senior Cohen Andrews said, "I love working for the coffee shop because it gives me the experience for a future job as a cook." The coffee shop, located in the Commons, is open during all lunches each Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Photo by Kaleb Baker.



Making a *Sweet* Treat



Timely Teamwork

Senior Gabriel Langford hands change back to his customer as senior Timothy Brown prepares the purchase. Teamwork is one of the skills emphasized as part of working in and managing the coffee shop, which is in its first semester of business. Photo by Liliana Castellanos.

Serving the Customer

Nutrition and culinary arts teacher Amy Whitaker assists junior Adam Keown. Whitaker is the faculty sponsor of the coffee shop, which is managed and staffed by her team of seniors. Photo by Kaleb Baker.



Sweet Tooth

Senior John Paul makes the Valentine's Day special drink -- the Chocolate Covered Strawberry. Photos by Liliana Castellanos.

Sectional Champion

Senior Quintin Smith deflects Charleston High School senior Boomer Hester's grab attempt, maintaining a good defense during a meet with Charleston. Smith was a sectional champion and advanced to regionals. Photo by Malachi Conrad.

“Wrestling isn’t just a sport; it’s a daily choice to suffer so you can stand taller later.”



Daily Choice to Dedication

Wrestlers’ successes stem from habits formed throughout the season

by **Aubrey Cummings**

Wrestling, the sport of the strong-bodied and strong-minded, may have wrapped its season, but recent competitions are results of training and mentality from throughout the season.

Both boys and girls wrestlers competed in their final matches of the season, as girls’ wrestling sent junior Abi Lemon to the state finals, and the boys’ team advanced 14 wrestlers to regionals this year. With these teams, however, the commitment to next season has already begun.

In reality, wrestling seasons never truly end, primarily due to the mindset of the athletes and coaches. As junior wrestler Scarlett McRae said, “Wrestling isn’t just a sport; it’s a daily choice to suffer so you can stand taller later.”

While Red Devils wrestlers stood taller as they competed this winter, each season technically begins in the early months of the school year with conditioning.

“Every sport anymore is year round,” explained head coach Danny Struck. “However, the goal for me and my kids is to still be able to do multiple sports. It’s all about balance. It’s about encouraging

them to do more.”

In the fall is when the fun -- or suffering -- actually starts. The girls’ season officially starts right after fall break each year, and the boys are not far behind, beginning at the end of October.

Sophomore wrestler Jaylen Howard said, “Wrestling is more than just a winter sport because it starts the day school starts in August and ends July the next year -- just in time for the season to start again, creating a never-ending cycle.”

What most people don’t know is that, unlike some sports, wrestling doesn’t end with an in-season break. As soon as the technical season ends, wrestlers jump right into the off-season, whether it be coaching local elementary students or going to meets across the country.

“It’s a year-round thing. Every single weekend is seen as a new opportunity to get more matches in. Anything less and you’re selling yourself short while your competition is getting better,” explained 2024 graduate and wrestler Dawson Slaughter.

Off-season isn’t just about training current wrestlers. It’s also about teaching those who may eventually wrestle as a Red Devil. The JHS

wrestling program is bigger than just the high school, reaching out to the community to build future success for athletes.

“Wrestling’s a year round thing, whether you’re helping younger kids with their wrestling careers or trying to improve yourself for the next season,” said Lemon, a four-sport athlete.

Middle and elementary school wrestlers are considered a part of Team Jeff. JHS wrestlers teach and practice with these younger athletes so they know a friendly face in the coming years.

“Going to the middle schools allows for us to become greater leaders and know who we are leaving the program to when we are finished,” said senior Abril Andres.

It’s this commitment to “do more” -- to train more and guide younger athletes in the community, that leads to success on the mat.

“Average people do average things. Champions do more,” said Struck. “If you want to accomplish the extraordinary, you have to do extraordinary things.”

As junior wrestler Will Honaker said, “The definition of wrestling is to struggle.”



Going for the Pin

Sophomore Jaylen Howard gets a pin for the Red Devils. Howard advanced to regionals later in the season. Photo by Magdalene Conrad.

Intensity

Senior Gavin Grisham goes for a pin against his Charlestown opponent. Grisham advanced to regionals later in the season. Photo by Magdalene Conrad.



Multi-sport athlete Abi Lemon's dedication extends beyond wrestling

by Isabella Stewart and Mahalia Smith

As a four-sport Red Devil athlete, junior Abi Lemon understands the daily choice to dedication expected of Team Jeff wrestlers.

Lemon, a two-time state qualifier in wrestling, also plays football, soccer, and tennis. At the beginning of wrestling season she had to work through physical therapy to meet her season goals to be the best version of herself.

Girls' wrestling coach Joe Somerville helped Lemon set her goals.

"I want her to realize she needed to practice harder to reach her potential, and when she did that's what pushed her to state."

Lemon said journaling helped her stay focused during the season.

"When I write in the journal every Monday and

put my goal for state, I really believed that's what helped me get there, along with the efforts of my coaches believing in me."

Head coach Danny Struck described Lemon as a great team player.

"She brings a great attitude and example of someone that never gives up and likes to be well rounded."

Somerville agreed, saying, "Abi is a very polite person who happens to love the competition, and that's what really drives her and she helps others realize they can be nice off the mat and a beast on it."

Lemon described going to the state finals twice as "amazing," adding, "Even though I didn't get very far at the state, the journey and the experience was worth it all -- the loss, the burnout and the support."



Four-Sport Competition

Junior Abi Lemon shows determination during a wrestling meet. Lemon is a four-sport athlete who advanced to the state finals this season. In addition to wrestling, she plays football, soccer, and tennis. Submitted photo.

Americans live in a state of ongoing propaganda

by Ayianna Maddox

America has a history of constant propaganda, death, and injustice. Yet, it's portrayed as a "haven" for all who enter. The "Pledge of Allegiance" is known for integrity, loyalty, and respect for America. Still, the shimmering mirage of our Pledge fades, revealing its true meaning.

Throughout the U.S. at the beginning of the school day, students are expected to recite the Pledge of Allegiance with our heads held high, standing tall, right hands over our hearts. Then, we carry it with us throughout our lives, because we have been conditioned to do so from an early age. We know the words, but have we comprehended the meaning?

The first line states, "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America." As we recite this line, we are making a promise to ourselves and our country to uphold important documents, such as the Constitution.

The second line states, "...to the Republic for which it stands." The Republic is a form of government where supreme power is held by the people and exercised through elected representatives, rather than by a hereditary ruler or dictator. However, currently in our country, our executive and judicial branches of government have forgotten this important detail. The people elected those in power, yes, but those in power are not listening to the people's cries.

The third line states, "...one Nation under God, indivisible..." This could be interpreted as we're all equal as a people beneath the "protection of God," but how I wish in my core that this was true. If we're all "One Nation under God, indivisible..." then why is oppression still active today despite our history?



Art by Cella Hutton.

The last line states, "...with liberty and justice for all." Once an eternal promise, that line is now a plea for help. Inside the "land of the free," the American civilians plead for justice for their loved ones, a rescue through liberation. Citizens of a "justified nation" should not have to beg for something that was promised beforehand; that's not what was taught.

With the never ending unlawful acts of President Donald Trump and his administration, the number of nationwide protests against their policies increases.

According to *The Guardian News*, "There were more than 10,700 protests in 2025, a 133% increase from the 4,588 recorded in 2017, the first year of President Donald Trump's first term."

The significant leap in protest participation from 2017 to 2025 justifies America's cries. The combined

protests of 2017-2025 (15,288) are for different reasons, but they're all aimed at the same variables: justice, peace, and hope. The population affected by constant conflict is rallying together and using their voices to strive for a better outcome.

Recently and more frequently, ICE agents are wreaking havoc to no end – targeting and assaulting defenseless protesters, bystanders, and families. Not only that, but they are attacking schools. Women, men, and children are being taken away, harassed, and attacked with no explanation. No one is safe. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, ICE agents have not only terrorized but also killed people.

On Jan. 7, 2026, ICE agents stormed Roosevelt High, a school in Minneapolis. Reports from MPR News states, "Armed U.S. Border Patrol officers came on school property during dismissal Wednesday and be-

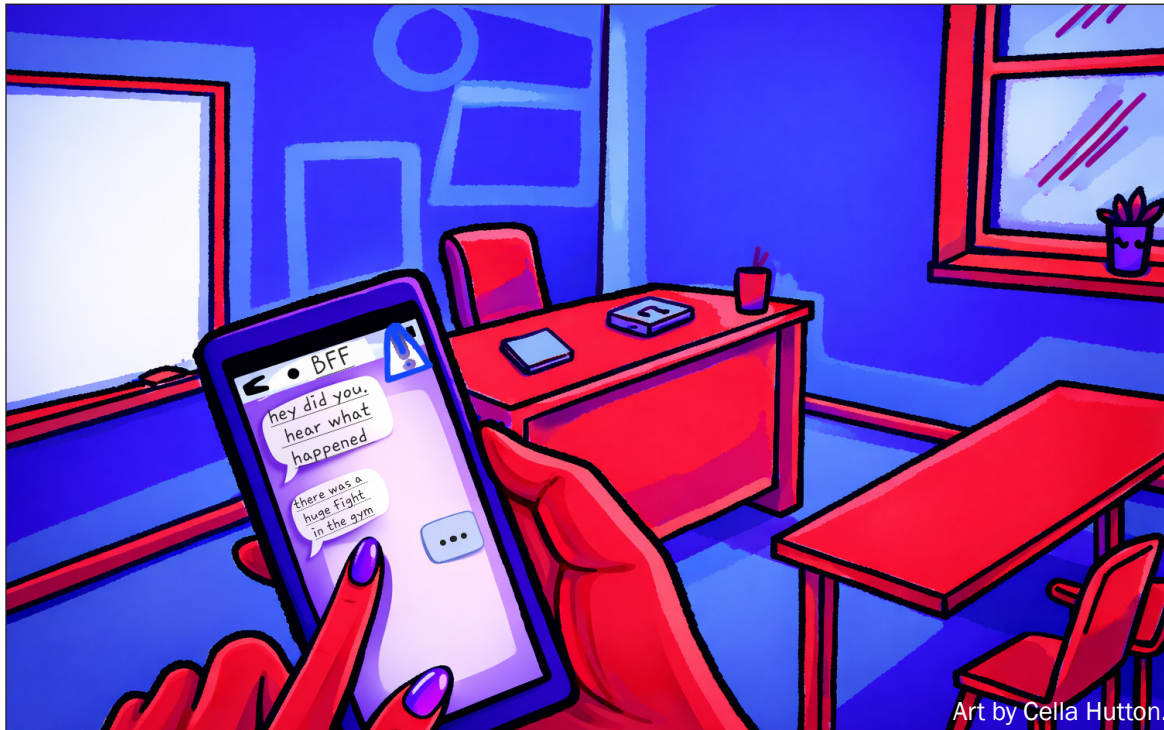
gan tackling people, handcuffed two staff members, and released chemical weapons on bystanders." This incident occurred just a few hours after Renee Good was killed, approximately three miles away from Roosevelt High School.

Seventeen days later, on Jan. 24, 2026, ICE fatally shot an ICU nurse named Alex Pretti. The New York Times breaks down video footage from a witness at the scene.

The United States of America has inverted: Rights are being constantly violated, humanity is a myth, and safety is no longer a luxury.

As a teenager in America, I'm watching the colors of my home turn red with bloodshed and the skies grow dark with despair, blocking the hopeful light.

People of America, we are our own light; bendable, but not breakable. We will overcome this.



Art by Cella Hutton.

New Indiana cell phone limits ignore reality of modern world

Cell phones are the most relevant and consequently the most convenient piece of technology in modern society. Attached to us at every moment of the day, they alter many aspects of our lives, for positive reasons as well as negative. But what solution exists for students who cannot stay off their devices when new Indiana laws will further limit phones next school year?

Indiana Senate Bill 78 tightens restrictions on student cell phones and devices, mandating a “bell-to-bell” ban for all public and charter schools. *The Hyphen* views this matter as an escalation of a law that was not being enforced in the first place and does not account for the nuances of students’ cell phone usage.

Phones, like any other piece of communicative technology, can be used for important and unimportant purposes. If the issue is that students are often using them in ways that waste time, then an even stricter law will not suffice.

The “no phones out” during instruction time was important during its inception, but slowly

dwindled in line with students’ attention spans. When teachers do not enforce existing rules, the rules get harsher, yet students find more ways to abuse them.

This new law banning devices all day is too extreme and inconvenient to work as intended. Students may have health concerns, including diabetes, that they need their phones to monitor. Lawmakers insist there will be exceptions, but why enact a law if you must exempt some people because the legislation is too extreme.

And what happens when parents need to speak to their children? A total cell phone ban will require students to waste time walking to the office to call their parents. In an age where students fear more for their safety, limiting student communication with parents is excessive.

Only time will tell how schools will implement these required changes, but students will voice their concerns. It’s up to administrators to follow through with pragmatic policy rather than authoritative rules forced on students and teachers.

Hyphen Staff _____

The Hyphen is the source for student news at Jeffersonville High School in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

As student journalists, we are committed to the truth, and strive to provide a voice for students, tell stories that matter, and inform the community through accurate, balanced, and trustworthy news content.

JHS news can also be found on the **Hyphen** website at thehyphennews.com.

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Honoring Mr. Everything

Social studies and current events teacher John Santry celebrates as he is awarded GCCS Employee of the Year. Santry currently teaches U.S. history, world history, and current events. He is also certified in special education K-12. Additionally, he has taught Algebra I and English 9-12 in the past. Santry said, "One of the most important things in my classroom is to teach without bias, so students have the opportunity to form their own opinions." Photo by Magdalene Conrad.

Money Man

GCCS Employee of the Year John Santry enjoys the moment after the surprise announcement and presentation on March 11. Santry currently teaches U.S. history, world history, and current events. He described the moment as "wild" and "unexpected." Photo by Magdalene Conrad.

Santry earns wild ride by winning GCCS Employee of the Year

by Magdalene Conrad

A car and a check.

These are two unexpected gifts for most teachers.

However, on Wednesday, March 11, social studies and current events teacher John Santry was awarded both, as he was officially named GCCS Employee of The Year.

Santry describes winning the honor as "wild" and "unexpected."

"As a teacher, we don't expect those thank yous. We are here for the students," he said. The car and check were presented to Santry as surprises to honor his career teaching and mentoring students.

Santry is seen every day in the halls greeting every student he encounters. As special education teacher Chloe Merkle said, "He greets

students he doesn't even know."

Santry said he interacts with as many students as he can.

"Once I got into teaching, I realized I was able to make connections with the students, and I'm actually pretty good at it."

Principal Pam Hall agreed, describing Santry as "all that is good and wholesome about education. He handles every challenge with grace and a smile, proving his unwavering commitment to his students."

Santry not only teaches his students, but tries to make a lasting connection with them, hoping they'll connect positively with others later in life.

"If I can get you invested into teaching, how many kids can you impact? That's my legacy."

