

In and About

Washington

April 2026

FREE – TAKE ONE



Great day

Food, music, a popular car show, plant sale, catfish cookoff, and gorgeous weather made for a full, fun day at the Washington Community Festival March 21.



Confusing primary vote on May 16

All registered voters can vote on a 9.9-mill property tax increase proposed by the parish school system in the May 16 election, but the rest of the ballot is confusing.

Under the state's new party primary plan only registered Republicans will be able to vote on four challengers for the District 6 congressional seat now held by Democrat Cleo Fields and on three for the U.S. Senate held by Bill Cassidy.

Fields has no Democratic opposition, so registered Democrats will have only the school tax and U. S. Senate races on their ballot. Three Senate candidates will be on the Democratic ballot.

Voters registered as Independent can pick which primary they want to vote in, but those registered as "No Party," will only be able to vote on the school tax.

The school tax would be used to fund a salary increase for school employees, address a backlog of deferred maintenance, and pay for added security and support staff.

Of Note.

A LOVE THE BOOT cleanup will be held Saturday, April 25, sponsored by the Washington Garden Club, Steamboat City Association, and Town of Washington. Love the Boot Week (April 18-26) is Louisiana's largest litter removal and beautification effort.

THE SPRING Family and Friends Fun Day will be from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 18 at the Town Pavilion. Chicken, pork steak, and catfish dinners will be offered, with free hotdogs for elementary school children. Voter registration will be available for people with proper IDs. The day will also include free bingo, a yard sale, and Avon basket giveaways. Call Johnnie Fontenot, (337) 308-2442, for information.

VOLUNTEERS are needed for Cemetery Cleanup Day, April 18. Contact Evelyn Bailey Hanna, (337) 945-3079.

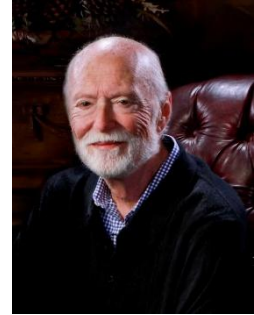
THE LOCAL American Legion post is selling "Happy 250th Birthday America" yard signs for \$20. Contact Don Simoneaux (337) 290-1661 or Dane St. Cyr (337) 344-0469.

THE RABBIT COOK-OFF sponsored by the Gumbo Foundation will be on April 11 at Willie's Campground.

Steel tariffs delay plant opening

A pause in government contracts and federal steel tariffs have delayed the opening of the Southland Industrial Coatings plant in Washington, according to Brandy Ledet, business development director for Louisiana Economic Development.

She said construction of the \$13.1 million facility is completed and "the company has hired a number of employees in leadership and for its skeleton crew. She said the company anticipates fuller operations by this fall.



Robert Tinney remembered

A memorial service is being planned for May for Robert Tinney, who died in February at the age of 78.

The artist was known for his many cover illustrations for *Byte Magazine*. He was born in New York state in 1947 and moved with his family to Baton Rouge. He studied at Louisiana Tech and served in the military during the Vietnam War. He and his wife Susan purchased the historic Crawford House in Washington in 1987.

He applied his skills to many projects here including the trompe l'oeil ceiling arches in Immaculate Conception Church.

In addition to his wife of 48 years, he is survived by three children, nine grandchildren and a great grandchild.



Antique sale April 10-12

The Antique Fair and Yard Sale will be April 10 through 12 at the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall. The mall in the old Washington High School is open each Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Fun Day

Marvin Richard, owner of Richard's Soul Kitchen on Veterans Memorial Highway, sponsored a community fun day March 14. DJ Mike B provided music, Sunshine Inflatables gave kids a choice of fun jumps, and Richard supplied free hot dogs, drinks, and snow cones.



Grant for GIS system

St. Landry Parish municipal and parish officials announced March 5 a \$373,500 ExxonMobil corporate funding initiative that will eventually create a parishwide Geographic Information System. Parish president Jessie Bellard said establishing a GIS system will allow parish departments, first responders and 911, to interconnect with a mapping system that provides updated and accurate information.

Council considering alcohol ordinance

The Town Council will take up a revised ordinance regulating alcohol sales at its next meeting. The ordinance restricts sales to two zones and sets hours for sale.

Zone One includes the east side of Main Street from the intersection of East Garrigue south to Bayou Carron; both sides of Main Street from Hill Street north to Bayou Courtableau, and a short stretch of Highway 103 and Dupre Steet that includes the former Ardoin’s and Leger’s Country Market buildings and Washington Fast Foods (Phillips 66).

Zone Two runs east on both sides of St. Landry Veterans Memorial (Highway 103) from Main Street to the town limits near I-49.

Sales are limited to from 6 a.m. to midnight Sunday through Thursday and from 6 a.m. to 2 a.m. Friday and Saturday.

Town plans to annex Highway 103 plot

An ordinance introduced at the March Town Council meeting would annex a vacant 12.4-acre plot on Highway 103 across from Southland Industrial Coatings.

According to the ordinance to be voted on at the next council meeting the property owned by ALCYE, LLC, “has no residents nor any registered voters and therefore meets the annexation requirements.” It would fall into Town Council District 3.

ALCYE is represented by Steven (Buzz) Durio, who is also the town’s attorney.

From Town Hall

BUSINESS AND property owners are being asked to complete a brief survey for Washington’s anticipated Main Street program. Anyone owning a business or property in town should go to info@steamboatcity.org to complete the survey.

THE TOWN COUNCIL has given the St. Landry Council on Aging permission to use the Washington Community Center for distribution of hot meals to the elderly. Distribution will not begin until funding is approved.

THE COUNCIL made no change in the town’s property tax millage, which will remain at 6.55 mills.

WASHINGTON WEATHER

March 1-27

High: 86, March 6, 7

Avg. High: 77.9

Low: 31, March 17

Avg. Low: 57.8

Avg. Temp: 67.9

5-Year Avg: 63.6

March Rainfall: 7.86

20-year Avg.: 4.09

Rain for 2026: 12.83

20-Year Avg: 12.73

Schell's grand scheme nearly fueled another

In the early 1900s, Franklin Schell had an idea for a huge irrigation canal to pump water from Bayou Courtableau into south Louisiana rice fields. That dream ended in the parish's biggest bankruptcy ever, but in 1962, when the Cuban Missile Crisis stirred nuclear war fears, a part of his canal nearly came back to life. A tunnel dug to flow Schell Canal water beneath the Washington railroad tracks was considered briefly for use as "one of the largest, most efficient and certainly most unusual fallout shelters," according to the *Opelousas Daily World*.



Looking Back

The tunnel had a solid brick wall 18 inches thick, was 12½ feet wide at its flat bottom, was more than 10 feet high, and was buried deep underground. It began at a 30-foot-deep, brick-walled pit near the Southern Pacific track that still ran through Washington. The long-abandoned pit was filled with water and would have to be pumped dry, but after closer inspection Civil Defense officials decided that would be the easy part. Walter Smith, an owner of the land above the old tunnel, had pumped it some years before and found a huge iron door at the tunnel entrance. He was able to open the door and found the tunnel filled with muck. Smith thought pumping out the pit would not be a problem but that clearing the muck from the long tunnel would be another matter.

Daily World editor John Thistlethwaite estimated that "a considerable outlay of Civil Defense funds would be required to seal off the tunnel ends, pump it dry, and provide proper inlet and exit." But, he said, "if these details could be worked out, then we would have access to a nuclear shelter capable of handling a substantial part of the population of this area – a legacy [that would] astound the late J. Franklin Schell and his cohorts who dreamed up, engineered and built this remarkable venture."

Mark these dates for events in St. Landry

- Dewey Balfa Cajun & Creole Heritage Week, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 13-17, Eunice
- Top of the Teche boat race, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 18, Leonville to Arnaudville
- Arnaudville Étouffé Festival, all day April 23-25, Little Flower Auditorium
- Rendezvous in the Prairie, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. each Thursday, Prairie Acadian Cultural Center, Eunice
- Zydeco Capital Jam, 1 to 3 p.m., second Saturday, St. Landry Visitor Center, I-49 exit 2
- Zydeco Dance Lessons, 6 p.m. each Wednesday, Holy Ghost Church cafeteria, Opelousas
- Dulcimer Jam, 10 a.m. each Wednesday, St. Landry Visitor Center, I-49 exit 23
- Jammin' on the Bayou, 1 p.m. each third Saturday, St. Landry Visitor Center, I-49 exit 23
- La Table Française, 9:30 a.m. each Wednesday, Eunice Depot Museum, C.C. Duson Street
- La Table Française, 8:30 a.m. last Wednesday, Orphans Museum, Vieux Village, Opelousas
- La Table Française, 9:30 a.m. last Saturday, NUNU Art & Culture Collective, Arnaudville
- La Table Kreyol, 2 p.m. second Saturday, NUNU Art & Culture Collective, Arnaudville
- French Table, 2 p.m. each third Sunday, St. Ann Church, Mallet



Come see us today!

**St. Landry Visitor Center
978 Kennerson Road
(I-49 exit 23)**

**337.948.8004
cajuntravel.com**

