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River Oaks Baptist School breaks ground on \$65 million expansion



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Trump ex-lawyer Cohen given three years in prison, blames 'blind loyalty'

NEW YORK (Reuters) - President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen was sentenced to three years in prison on Wednesday for orchestrating hush payments to women in violation of campaign laws before the 2016 election and financial crimes, posing potential legal and political risks to Trump. In the courtroom, Cohen told U.S. District Judge William Pauley in Manhattan that "blind loyalty" led him to cover up for Trump. The sentence imposed by Pauley was a modest reduction from the four to five years recommended under federal guidelines but still highlighted the seriousness of the charges and possible implications for the president.

The sentencing capped a stunning about-face by a lawyer who once said he would "take a bullet" for Trump. Cohen said in a guilty plea in August that he was directed by Trump to make hush money payments to two women who said they had sexual affairs with the president in the past. Trump has denied the affairs and any involvement in the payments.

Pauley sentenced Cohen to 36 months for the payments and to two months for Cohen's lies to Congress about a proposed Trump Tower project in Russia. The two terms will run simultaneously. The judge set March 6 for Cohen's voluntary surrender.

As part of the sentence, the judge ordered Cohen to forfeit \$500,000 and pay restitution of nearly \$1.4 million.

Cohen, 52, walked into court with his wife, son and daughter amid a crowd of photographers and reporters. His 23-year-old daughter, Samantha, and 19-year-old son, Jake, both wept silently in the courtroom, the son wiping his eyes with his jacket sleeve. After being sentenced, Cohen walked over to his daughter and kissed her head.

Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former attorney, exits the United States Court house after his sentencing, in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, U.S., December 12, 2018. REUTERS/Jeenah Moon

Cohen's father, Maurice Cohen, who showed little emotion during the hearing, later told reporters: "My heart is ripped."



Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former lawyer, arrives for his sentencing at United States Court house in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, U.S., December 12, 2018. REUTERS/Jeenah

Cohen pleaded guilty in August to charges including tax evasion, bank fraud and campaign finance violations in a case brought by federal prosecutors in New York. Cohen was sentenced on a separate charge of lying to Congress brought by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russia's role in the 2016 election and possible coordination between Trump's campaign and Moscow. Cohen pleaded guilty to that charge last month.

Canada frees CFO of China's Huawei on bail; Trump might intervene

VANCOUVER (Reuters) - A top executive of Chinese telecoms giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd was granted bail by a Canadian court on Tuesday, 10 days after her arrest in Vancouver at the request of U.S. authorities sparked a diplomatic dispute.

Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's [HWT.U] chief financial officer and the daughter of its founder, faces U.S. claims that she misled multinational banks about Iran-linked transactions, putting the banks at risk of violating U.S. sanctions.

In a court hearing in Vancouver, British Columbia, Justice William Ehrcke granted C\$10 million (\$7.5 million) bail to Meng, who has been jailed since her arrest on Dec. 1. The courtroom erupted in applause when the decision was announced. Meng cried and hugged her lawyers.

Among conditions of her bail, the 46-year-old executive must wear an ankle monitor and stay at home from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Five friends pledged equity in their homes and other money as a guarantee she will not flee.

If a Canadian judge rules the case against Meng is strong enough, Canada's justice minister must next decide whether to extradite her to the United States. If so, Meng would face U.S. charges of conspiracy to defraud multiple financial institutions, with a maximum sentence of 30 years for each charge.

The arrest of Meng has put a further dampener on Chinese

relations with the United States and Canada at a time when tensions were already high over a trade war and U.S. accusations of Chinese spying.

U.S. President Donald Trump told Reuters on Tuesday he would intervene in the U.S. Justice Department's case against Meng if it would serve national security interests or help close a trade deal with China.

Speaking in Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Meng's arrest "was a mistake from the start". "We have already made clear our position to the United States and Canada, who should immediately correct their mistake and release Meng Wanzhou," he told a daily news briefing.

"Any person, especially if it is a leader of the United States, or a high-level figure, who is willing to make positive efforts to push this situation toward the correct direction, then that, of course, deserves to be well received."

China had threatened severe consequences unless Canada released Meng immediately, and analysts have said retaliation from Beijing over the arrest was likely.

The U.S. State Department is considering issuing a travel warning for its citizens, two sources said on Tuesday.

The Canadian government was considering issuing a similar warning, Canada's CTV network reported. Reuters was not

able to confirm the report.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Canadian government said that one of its citizens in China had been detained. The International Crisis Group think-tank said on Wednesday it had received no information from Chinese officials about the detention of its employee, former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig, and that it was seeking consular access to him.

The Chinese ministry spokesman, Lu, said he had nothing he could say on the details of the case, but said the ICG was not registered in China as a non-governmental organization and Kovrig could have broken Chinese law.

The Canadian government said it saw no explicit link to the Huawei case.

However, Guy Saint-Jacques, Canada's former ambassador to China, asked by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp whether the Kovrig detention was a coincidence, said: "In China there are no coincidences ... If they want to send you a message they will send you a message."

Tuesday was the third day of bail hearings. Meng's defense had argued that she was not a flight risk, citing her longstanding ties to Canada, properties she owns in Vancouver and fears for her health while incarcerated.



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River Oaks Baptist School breaks ground on \$65 million expansion



Construction has begun on the mega \$65 million expansion of Houston's River Oaks Baptist School, the Christian private school announced via a press release last week. The record amount, raised by the educational institution earlier this fall, is one of the largest fundraisers in the U.S. for a school ending in eighth grade, according to the National Association of Independent Schools. Several prominent Houstonians made generous donations to the campaign, including Elizabeth and Gary Petersen and Mindy and Jeff Hildebrand, who gave \$5 million each, as well as Alice and Keith Mosing who donated \$10 million. School leaders broke ground on the 18-month building project in early December. It will include a new middle school building, underground parking garage, and leadership center. The Mosing's are the namesakes of the new four-story Keith and Alice Mosing Middle School, which features an advanced robotics lab and maker space, dedicated music rooms for instrumental and choral groups, visual arts studios, and science labs. What's more, the middle school will have a state-of-the-art performance space with retractable seating called the Blue Box Theater. Underneath the structure, a 150-space parking garage is designed to improve traffic flow and maximize green space. Named in recognition of Susan and Faye Sarofim, The Sarofim Leadership Center will become the new main en-

trance to the school and administrative wing. Faye Sarofim was No. 1,290 on Forbes 2017 ranking of the world's billionaires with a net worth of \$1.6 billion. See who made the list: 13 Houstonians earn spot on Forbes billionaires list "We believe children become stronger thinkers when they are active learners. The new building will be a mecca of active learning space where our kids can build robots, get messy in a workshop, problem-solve in group settings, or rehearse for a performance," head of school Leanne Reynolds

said via the release.

In 2015, River Oaks Baptist School acquired an adjacent property (formerly occupied by a Walgreens store) for the expansion. The project will ultimately allow the school to increase its student population by about 10 students per grade level and decrease the student-teacher ratio in classrooms.

The \$65 million expansion is expected to be completed in time for the 2020-2021 school year.

Google 'Year in Search': World Cup and Mac Miller top Houston's list for 2018

So what did you "Google" the most this year?

On Wednesday, Google released its "Year in Search 2018" report, which tracks the top-trending, highest-traffic searches across news, politics, film, entertainment, sports, and more throughout the current year.

Recommended Video
What tops the list of Google searches in Houston? The Bayou City's top 10 list includes memorable moments

in sports, films, and tragedies.

Despite the latter, Google News data editor Simon Rogers says the majority of Google searches made in 2018 trend on the positive side.

"During a year of highs and lows, the Year in Search highlights all the ways people continued to search for "good"—and this year, it was more than ever," Simon said in his Google blog.

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Meet Dr. Beth Yip



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"I consider it a privilege to be allowed to help take care of patients and their families and make a difference in the life of a child. I view myself as a partner with the parents and patient and derive great satisfaction through our interactions. I love working with kids, a simple smile or hug will brighten my day."

-**Beth Yip, M.D.**, co-managing physician, Pearland Clinic

Dr. Yip is a board-certified pediatrician who completed her medical degree, internship and residency at Baylor College of Medicine. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and member of the American Medical Association, Texas Medical Association, Harris County Medical Society and Texas Pediatric Society.

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Editor's Choice



Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former lawyer, arrives for his sentencing at United States Court house in the Manhattan



Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former lawyer, arrives for his sentencing at United States Court house in the Manhattan



A protester wearing a gas mask holds a petrol bomb as clashes erupted during an anniversary rally marking the 2008 police shooting of 15-year-old student Alexandros Grigoropoulos, in Thessaloniki



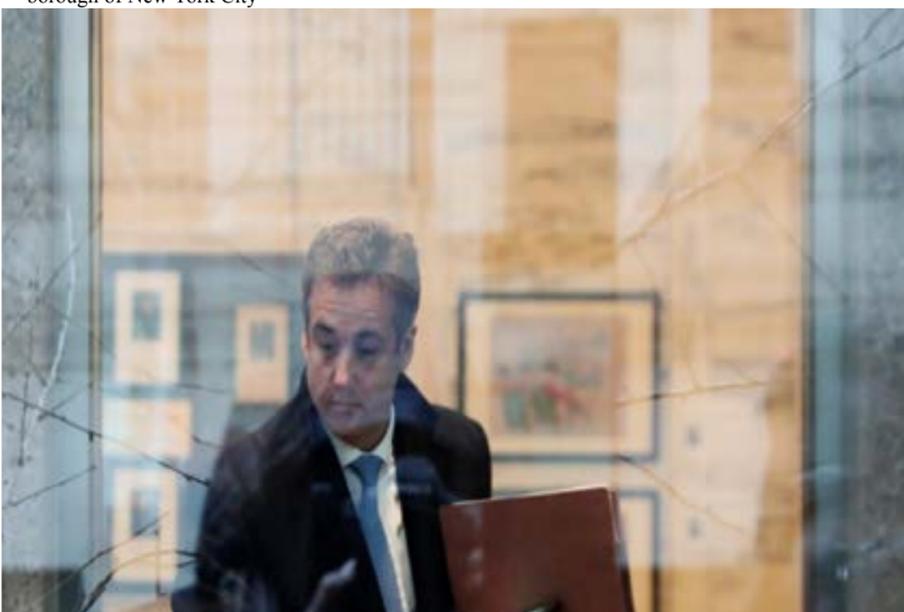
Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's former lawyer, arrives home following his sentencing in New York



Attorney Michael Avenatti speaks to the media after the sentencing of Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former attorney, at the United States Court, in the Manhattan borough of New York City



Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former attorney, exits the United States Court house after his sentencing, in the Manhattan borough of New York City



Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former attorney, arrives for his sentencing at United States Court house in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York



Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump's former attorney, arrives for his sentencing at United States Court house in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York

HOUSTON (Dec. 5, 2018) – Four members of the Houston Community College Board of Trustees have been appointed to prominent committees of the Association of Community College Trustees. The association represents 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern more than 1,200 two-year colleges in the nation. The HCC trustees appointed to the committees include:

- Board Chair Carolyn Evans-Shabazz, Dist. IV, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
- Trustee Neeta Sane, Dist. VII, Public Policy and Advocacy Committee
- Trustee Adriana Tamez, Dist. III, Finance and Audit Committee
- Trustee Pretta Vandible Stallworth, Dist. IX, Governance and Bylaws Committee



HCC Board in session.

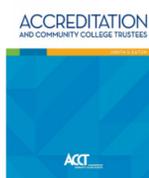
The association serves as the voice of community college trustees in the congressional and executive branches of government.

“These appointments demonstrate the leadership of our trustees and the respect they have earned among their colleagues at community colleges throughout the nation,” said HCC Chancellor Cesar Maldonado.

The trustees will serve one-year terms on their committees.

Related

Accreditation and Community College Trustees Goals



• Accredited status is essential for colleges to establish legitimacy with the public.

Accredited status is a signal of an institution's basic soundness; is a gatekeeping function to be eligible for public funds including federal Title IV assistance; neces-

sary for student mobility; and sustains public confidence in a college.

• Trustees have an important role in each stage of the accreditation process—for both institutional and programmatic accreditation. Trustees play an important part in informing and reviewing essential documents for the self-study, engaging the peer review team, meeting with the accrediting commission, and working with the president to assure accreditation recommendations are addressed by the college.

• Accreditation can strengthen institutional accountability and innovation. In today's policy landscape, governing boards are called upon to be accountable for student success and implement new practices to meet the needs of today's students who face many demands outside of the classroom and rely on attaining their degree for career mobility. Trustees play an important role in this conversation to ensure that demands are realistic considering a college's resources while also striving for student success.

News From HCC



HCC Trustees Named To Prestigious Committees



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

About HCC

Houston Community College (HCC) is composed of 15 Centers of Excellence and numerous satellite centers that serve the diverse communities in the Greater Houston area by preparing individuals to live and work in an increasingly international and technological society. HCC is one of the country's largest singly-accredited, open-admission, community colleges offering associate degrees, certificates, workforce training, and lifelong learning opportunities. To learn more, visit www.hccs.edu.

HCC Student Rises From Homelessness To Produce "Invisible" Documentary



Photo from the movie, "Invisible."

HOUSTON (Nov. 26, 2018) – Using her own experience with life on the streets, a Houston Community College student has produced a documentary she hopes will create understanding and compassion for America's homeless.

Justice Butler's documentary, "Invisible," shares the stories of students who once found themselves without homes and focuses on their harrowing experiences, and the lessons they learned. "It's called 'Invisible' because that's how we see the homeless," Butler explains. "But those people aren't invisible. They could be you tomorrow. That's the message I want people to receive."

Butler believes she is the perfect person to deliver that message. As a young woman, she envisioned a bright career in radio and entertainment. "I thought I knew my future," Butler says.

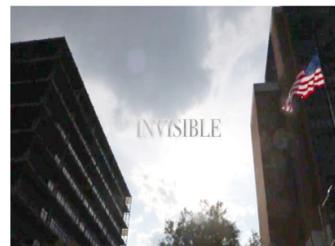
Instead, she fell on hard times. Butler ran out of money, out of food, out of shelter. "Turns out I didn't know my future," Butler recalls. "I became homeless."



Butler lived in despair, but never completely lost faith in herself. Friends, former HCC students, convinced her to enroll at the college. "So, that's what I did," Butler says. "I came to HCC and that's where this journey started for me."

Butler's journey took her to film classes at HCC and a conference on student homelessness at Temple University in Philadelphia. She learned her situation was not unique. So, with encouragement from an HCC professor and fellow students, she decided to make a documentary about student homelessness.

Butler says, "I'm not the only student who struggled. There were many homeless students who attended HCC, as well as other colleges throughout the nation."



Butler says the documentary was well-received at a Temple University screening and is being entered in film festivals. She hopes to schedule public screenings early next year. Butler plans to graduate from HCC in May, 2019 and views "Invisible" as her legacy to inspire other homeless students to make the most of their talents.

"I really want to make sure that when I leave, we have students more involved in shaping their lives," Butler says. "We know what we need and 'Invisible' allows others to see what we need as well." (Courtesy HCC)

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OVERVIEW

2017 had the highest levels of carbon emitted globally

Current projections would lead to 3.2 degrees C of warming

Countries goals are not ambitious enough to limit warming to 2 degrees C

The Trump administration released a major new climate science report on Black Friday, warning of “hundreds of billions of dollars” in annual losses to some economic sectors without scaled up actions to adapt to current changes and slash emissions to avoid future warming.

Why it matters: The report by scientists from 13 federal agencies constitutes the second volume of the Fourth National Climate Assessment, which is a congressionally mandated report. Its conclusion: Lives and property are already at risk in the U.S. due to climate change.

• The release date, on the Friday after Thanksgiving, which is traditionally the busiest shopping day of the year, is likely to bury the news coverage of its findings.

• On a call with reporters this afternoon, David Reidmiller, the director of the assessment, said the timing was determined in order to have the report come out in advance of the next round of U.N. climate talks beginning in Poland on Dec. 2 as well as a large scientific meeting in Washington in mid-December.

• “We wanted to get this out sufficiently in advance of those meetings so that folks have a chance to review it,” Reidmiller said.

• Monica Allen, a spokesperson for NOAA, said the decision to release the report on Black Friday was “made in the last week or so.”

The details: The contents of the new report, which consists of 29 chapters that were extensively peer reviewed, are bleak. The report points out that the era of climate consequences for the U.S. is well underway, and only actions taken in the next few years can be effective in addressing the scope and severity of the problem.

• The authors warn that neither climate adaptation or the pace of emissions cuts are keeping up with the severity and swiftness of the challenge.

• The report release comes as the death toll from historic California wildfires continue to rise, and it finds that climate change is expected to bring more frequent wildfires and poor air quality.

• The report finds that under a worst-case climate change scenario, in which emissions

New Climate Report Warns Of Increasing Severe Risks To U.S.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



An American flag hangs at a burned out mobile home park in Paradise, California on Nov. 18. (Photo:AFP/Getty Images)

continue to climb at current rates, extreme heat would cause labor-related losses of an estimated \$155 billion per year by 2090. At the same time, coastal property damage in the U.S. from sea level rise and storm surge flooding could reach nearly \$120 billion per year.



The backstory: The new report builds off of findings from the first volume of the National Climate Assessment, which was released by the Trump administration in November 2017.

• The second volume contains more information specific to vital U.S. economic sectors, regions and national interests. It includes a region-by-region breakdown of how global warming is altering life and economic productivity, as well as what opportunities there are to adapt to it.

• The first report was a sweeping overview of climate science findings, which decisively concluded that there is no credible explanation for modern-day global warming other than the burning of fossil fuels for energy.

• The report was written and published un-

der the auspices of the U.S. Global Change Research Program, which brings together the 13 federal agencies that work on climate change issues, from the Energy Department to NOAA.

“This report dives into details concerning the US in a way that has not been done before,” Michael Wehner, a climate researcher at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, told Axios.

Between the lines: The Trump administration has allowed the National Climate Assessment process to move forward without interference, while at the same time expressing doubt about the causes and extent of the threat of human-caused climate change when it comes to forming its energy policies. In an interview with in November with “Axios on HBO,” President Trump was presented with the first volume of the assessment, and he dismissed it. (Courtesy <https://www.axios.com/>)



Related

If there is one consistent message about climate change that has been made abundantly clear in a flurry of recent major assessments on the topic, it is that our planet’s climate is already changing, and now is the time to act to avoid devastating impacts. According to a United Nations report released on Tuesday, however, projected emis-

sions of carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas, from nations around the world fall woefully short of the 2 degree Celsius goal set in the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015.



In fact, the report states that the current emission targets for all countries would result in an average global temperature rise of 3.2 degrees Celsius (5.8 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100.

A 3.2 degree warmer world by the end of this century would bring about many of the dire consequences for human health, global economies and sea level rise that are projected from the “higher-emission” scenarios (also known as worst-case scenarios).

The 2018 Emissions Gap Report is the flagship annual report from the UN Environment Program and acts as a report card on how countries are doing on their individual contributions to the Paris Climate Agreement; it also helps determine the gap between those expected contributions and what will be necessary to stay within the range of 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial temperatures (before burning fossil fuels for industrial needs led to major increases in greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere).

This year’s report shows the largest gap ever, resulting from increasing emissions and slow action to mitigate.

The foreboding message in the report aligns with the recent findings in the “Special Report on 1.5 Degrees” issued last month by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), that the world is failing to act fast enough to avoid the dire future climate and weather and time is quickly running out.

According to Tuesday’s report, global emissions of CO2 in 2017 were 53.5 gigatons (a gigaton is 1 billion tons), the most ever released into the atmosphere, representing an increase of more than 1% over 2016 emissions.

Global emissions need to be 25% lower than this figure by 2030 in order to limit warming

to 2 degrees Celsius and 55% lower in order to limit to 1.5 degrees, the report claims.

The increase in 2017 follows relatively stable global emissions from 2014 through 2016, a period that allowed for optimism that global greenhouse gas emissions may be peaking. But Tuesday’s report shatters that optimism. “Global peaking of emissions by 2020 is crucial for achieving the temperature targets of the Paris Agreement,” the report states, “but the scale and pace of current action remains insufficient.”

Global emissions are not expected to peak by 2030, let alone 2020. In fact, only those of 57 countries (representing 60% of global emissions) are projected to peak by 2030.

The authors of the report conclude that nations must be more ambitious in their projected emission cuts, increasing them by three times in order to meet the 2 degrees goal and by five times to meet the 1.5 degrees goal by 2030.

Knowing that level of action is extremely unlikely, the 2018 Emissions Gap Report points to the growing potential of “non-state actors” to help reach global emissions goals.



These include smaller governing bodies such as city, state and regional governments, as well as

private entities such as companies, investors and civil organizations.

In addition to simply reducing their own carbon emissions, these entities “build confidence in governments concerning climate policy and push for more ambitious national goals,” according to the report.

Another potential gap-filling tool the report highlights is fiscal policy reform, including fossil fuel taxes and subsidies to low-emission alternatives, which can create strong incentives for low-carbon investments and reduce emissions.

The report will be a key talking point as key environmental figures convene in Poland next week as part of COP24, where the stated goal is to adopt a plan to execute the Paris Agreement, affecting climate and energy policy for the coming years.

The United States is the only country not in the Paris Climate Agreement after President Trump pulled the country out of the pact in 2017, claiming it placed “draconian” financial burdens on the American people. (Courtesy cnn.com)

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