

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Diane Walker with local news and commentary for Friday, March 1, 2024.

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Today is the first day of Women's History Month, so even though this is not strictly local news, it's worthwhile to note that US Senate Republicans are blocking a proposed Access to Family Building Act. The proposed legislation was co-sponsored by Washington Senator Maria Cantwell to protect Americans' rights to assisted reproductive services such as in vitro fertilization, or IVF. The bill was drafted in the wake of the recent Alabama Supreme Court ruling that frozen embryos are considered children. The Alabama ruling has caused a chilling effect on IVF clinics, several of which in Alabama have already stopped offering IVF for fear of prosecution.

IVF, the main type of assisted reproductive technology, is a safe and proven procedure that has been in use for nearly a half century. Nearly 2% of all babies born in the U.S. are born as a result of IVF and more than 8 million babies have been born using this approach. An estimated 1 million frozen eggs and embryos are currently being stored across the U.S. Senator Cantwell said, "Our Republican colleagues chose to block legislation that would allow millions of Americans to continue to use IVF to help expand their families. These personal medical decisions belong to families, not the government."

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Senator Cantwell has also co-sponsored the SAFER Banking Act of 2023 (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1323>), which would ensure that licensed marijuana, hemp, and CBD businesses are no longer prohibited from using banking and financial services. Senator Cantwell noted that "Last year there were more than 50 robbery attempts at marijuana dispensaries in the State of Washington. This bill will take the target off the backs of our state's dispensaries by updating federal banking laws so they don't have to do all their business in cash."

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In other news, Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz has announced that more than \$8 million dollars in urban forestry grants will be distributed to communities around Washington State. The City of Port Townsend will be receiving some of that funding to restore a diverse mix of native trees in public parks around the city.

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Those of you who would like to learn more about Habitat for Humanities' proposed Mason Street Neighborhood, mentioned in yesterday's news, may wish to stop by the 2024 Home Show, which will be presented by The Jefferson County Home Builders' Association at Blue Heron Middle School tomorrow, March 2. Habitat will have a booth there and will do a main stage presentation about the Mason Street project at noon. The event opens at 9 and goes until 4 pm.

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This coming Monday, March 4, Port Townsend Mayor David Faber and City Manager John Mauro will deliver their annual State of the City Address at the Port Pavilion on Hudson Street. Along with a retrospective look at 2023, Faber and Mauro will discuss the 2024 Workplan and Comprehensive Plan. This annual meeting is taking place in a hybrid in-person/virtual format this year with support from the Chamber of Jefferson County and the Port of Port Townsend. This is a great opportunity to ask questions and learn how you can engage in 2024.

Please register with the Chamber of Commerce (<https://www.jeffcountychamber.org/events/details/state-of-the-city-2024-3979>) if you wish to receive virtual access.

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And finally, today marks the launch of Raw Art Collective's Wild Art portal and vending machine at the Reveille Cafe in Fort Worden. Currently featuring over 25 different artists, the Wild Art portal/vending machine allows creatives to share their work in the universe, offering unexpected and contemplative experiences for viewers. Bring your quarters and check it out!

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KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Diane Walker. Thanks for listening.