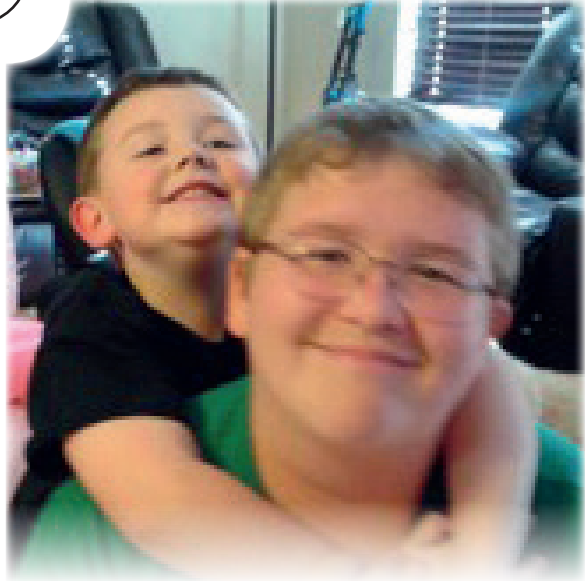


## Stories of the week

**NATIONAL:** The United States national debt surpasses \$30 trillion for the first time.

**INTERNATIONAL:** 99 million-year-old flowers found perfectly preserved in amber were discovered in Asia.



'Adam's Law' is named after Adam Oakes, who died of alcohol poisoning on Feb. 27, 2021 at a Delta Chi Fraternity house. His family is currently working on two anti-hazing bills. Photos Courtesy of the Oakes Family.

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**SENATE BILL 439, CALLED** "Adam's Law," passed unanimously through the Virginia Senate on Jan 26.

"Today, it was 38-0!!!," stated Eric Oakes in an email in regards to senate votes on the bill.

"Adam's Law," named after Adam Oakes, is one of the two anti-hazing bills the Oakes family have been working on since Feb. 2021. Adam Oakes, who was a freshman at the time, died on Feb. 27, 2021 at a Delta Chi Fraternity house on West Clay Street, according to a statement made by VCU.

Oakes' cousin, Courtney White, said she has been working on anti-hazing legislation alongside legislators and hopes to use his story to address the issue of hazing on college campuses.

"We have been able to utilize Adam's story for every single part of both bills, everything that we have modified in terms of education and punishment, we have used Adam's story as the 'why,'" White said. "This is why this is important. This is why this is crucial."

Eric Oakes, Adam Oakes' father, has been working on the legislation with White. Eric Oakes stated that representatives from some Virginia colleges have worked with the family on the bills.

"I would like to add that VA Tech, UVA, James Madison, Radford, ODU and Longwood all had representatives there that met with us and we were able to work out some slight changes and make amendments in support of this legislation now," Eric Oakes stated in an email. "Take notice who wasn't present, at least if any others were present they didn't connect with any of us."

VCU spokesperson Matt Lovisa did not comment on the two anti-hazing bills, due to the university's policy of not commenting on pending legislation, he stated in an email.

In an email from James Madison University spokesperson Mary-Hope Vass, she stated that the university does not comment on pending legislation, but "appreciates the efforts from the bill patrons and the family."

White said she hopes the preventative measures set in place by the bills

# 'ADAM'S LAW'

## *Senate Bill 439 passes unanimously through the Virginia Senate*

will help protect other students and families from hazing.

SB 439, will require universities to publicly report hazing and other misconduct beginning at the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

"Every university will have to put found incidents of hazing, of misconduct, of all these things that we wished, as Adam's family, we had known about Delta Chi," White said. "They would have to publish all of this on a website so other students can see."

The bill requires an adviser present at all official organization events, with some exceptions. Advisers will be required to educate Greek life members and new members about hazing.

SB 439 will allow amnesty from "disciplinary action based on hazing or personal consumption of drugs or alcohol" for those who report an act of hazing during or after another individual has endured serious bodily harm.

"When you look at that amnesty clause in this bill, that is to say when you see something you say something, you get someone help," White said.

SB 440, the other bill the Oakes family has been working on, makes hazing a Class 5 felony if it results in death or serious bodily injury to any person. Hazing that does not result in a death or injury is still a Class 1 misdemeanor. This bill includes a similar

amnesty clause to SB 439. SB 440 is yet to be brought to the senate floor.

Eric Oakes said in an interview that he felt it was important to hold the larger organization responsible if it is aware of hazing.

“

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**Courtney White,**  
Adam Oakes' cousin

VCU's Delta Chi chapter was suspended for four years in 2018 due to multiple infractions. The university ended up lifting the suspension after only one year,

despite the chapter's history of rule breaking, according to an article by the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

"Had they not rescinded that four-year suspension ... Adam would be alive today," Eric Oakes said.

The bill states that organizations which are aware of hazing and do not intervene will receive civil penalties.

One of the 11 arrested for hazing Adam Oakes, Andrew White, pled guilty in December to two Class 1 misdemeanor charges of unlawful hazing of a student and buying alcohol for a minor. Andrew White's sentencing is scheduled for March 1, at 9 a.m., according to the Virginia Judiciary Court Systems website. Andrew White is not related to Adam Oakes' cousin, Courtney White.

Ten other former Delta Chi brothers were charged with unlawful hazing of a student and are awaiting future court dates and jury trials according to the Virginia Judiciary Court Systems website.

White has worked closely with legislators such as Del. Kathleen Murphy, D-McLean, and Virginia Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-Herndon, to push for the bills.

"In the senate, Jennifer Boysko who is really patroning, she has been crucial in pioneering this and really getting it to fruition for us. And then Kathleen Murphy of course in the House of Delegates has too and even Sen. Jennifer McClellan has played a big part," White said.

White extended her thanks to the students of VCU for helping the Oakes family during this difficult time.

"The students at VCU have been instrumental in ways they don't even understand. That vigil, creating that vigil for Adam meant so much to our family," White said.



**Sen. Jennifer Boysko, Eric Oakes and Courtney White discussed Adam's law at the Virginia Senate Subcommittee of Higher Education on Monday, Jan. 17.** Photo Courtesy of the Oakes Family

## CORRECTION

An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that Courtney White wanted to thank VCU. She wanted to thank the students of VCU.

The full version of the story is available online at [commonwealthtimes.org](http://commonwealthtimes.org).