

More thrills: Epic Universe bolsters Universal Orlando

Officials hope new theme park widens appeal as a destination vacation spot in Florida. **In Money**

Big Ten QB rankings start with some familiar names

Penn State's Drew Allar tops the list, but there are fresh faces coming this season. **In Sports**

Theron: 'I'm going to do it up the way I want'

"Old Guard 2" star has thoughts about turning 50 in Hollywood and says she doesn't have time to pretend to live her life for other people. **In Life**

USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | \$3 | **HOLIDAY** | JULY 3-6, 2025

MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES FOR NETFLIX



Sean Combs was convicted on July 2 of a prostitution felony but acquitted on racketeering and sex trafficking charges. ROBYN BECK/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Diddy cleared of top charge

Split verdict: Guilty of lesser sex crime

KiMi Robinson, Patrick Ryan and Aysha Bagchi
USA TODAY

NEW YORK – After nearly two months of daily court appearances in his hometown of New York City, Sean “Diddy” Combs is facing a split verdict, acquitted on the top charges and convicted of a lesser sex-crimes charge.

On July 2, a 12-person jury delivered a bombshell split decision in Combs’ case, which started May 5 in Manhattan federal court. Jurors found Combs guilty of two counts of transportation to engage in prostitution but acquitted him on the top charge of racketeering and both sex trafficking counts.

“There is serious, serious conduct here that will mandate a lengthy period of incarceration.”

Maurene Comey
Prosecutor

Combs, who was charged with two counts of sex trafficking, two counts of transportation to engage in prostitution and one count of racketeering for leading what prosecutors alleged was a criminal organization over two decades, has long maintained his innocence. He previously pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Combs has been incarcerated at Brooklyn’s Metropolitan Detention Center since his arrest on Sept. 16.

Prosecutor Maurene Comey opposed the defense’s request for Combs to be released immediately following the verdict. “There is serious, serious conduct here that will mandate a lengthy period of incarceration,” she said.

Combs’ trial is among the most noteworthy of the #MeToo era, following explosive cases against disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, R&B singer R. Kelly, and A-list actors Kevin Spacey and Johnny Depp.

The case of Combs is particularly challenging, wading into the murky gray areas of consent and coercion, complex workplace dynamics, and the myriad ways that people cope with

See COMBS, Page 4A

In these 6 towns, it’s ‘always’ the Fourth



- 1. GALLUP, NM: Raquel Sam rides a horse at the 100th Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial on Aug. 13, 2022.
- 2. BEDFORD, VA: The town marks D-Day in 2014.
- 3. BRISTOL, RI: The Bristol Parade where the town has honored veterans since 1785.
- 4. AUDUBON, NJ: A monument honors the town’s three Medal of Honor recipients.
- 5. GETTYSBURG, PA: The Gettysburg National Military Park.
- 6. COOPERSTOWN, NY: Crowds gather ahead of Hall of Fame Awards Presentation in 2018.

PHOTOS BY MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES; BEDFORD MUSEUM AND GENEALOGICAL LIBRARY; DAVID DELPOIO/USA TODAY NETWORK; PHAEDRA TRETHAN/USA TODAY; LEAH MILLIS, REUTERS; ALEX TRAUTWIG/MLB VIA GETTY IMAGES

‘Your life is irreversibly changed in a second’

The dangers of fireworks and tips on how to stay safe. **2-3A**

Communities remember the glory – and the sacrifice – of freedom

Phaedra Trethan USA TODAY

AUDUBON, New Jersey

Every year on July Fourth, this tiny town hosts a parade, complete with marching bands, fire trucks, babies in star-spangled strollers and kids on red-white-and-blued-up bikes. • Homeowners compete for the best decorated houses; the fire department has an open house with free hot dogs. The Fourth is usually capped by a fireworks show at the high school, a small-town Independence Day like any other in America. • But flag-waving is not a one-holiday deal here: This borough of 8,700 people was built on pillars of patriotism. Audubon has been home to three Medal of Honor recipients, men who have been given the highest military honor, bestowed on those who have exhibited extraordinary valor in combat – more recipients per capita, its mayor said, than any other town in the United States.

See THE FOURTH, Page 2A

Three decades later, parents reflect on religious rights

Supreme Court decision relives their struggle

BrieAnna J. Frank
USA TODAY

On April 8, 1992, Suzanne Brown asked her son, Jason Mesiti, about his day at school.

“He said, ‘Probably the worst in my life,’” Brown recalled.

Though she said the remark was “somewhat dramatic,” she, too, was disturbed by what her son, a high school

sophomore at the time, described.

Jason had to attend an assembly about sex and AIDS prevention at his school in Chelmsford, Massachusetts. He described the program’s use of “profane, lewd and lascivious language” and how at one point a demonstration included a female student pulling a condom over a male student’s head.

Jason said such actions made it feel “like you were being Punk’d.” Brown said she was “totally shocked” upon reviewing a transcript of the program.

See PARENTS, Page 6A