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Photos: IVY ASHE/Tribune-Herald

Hilo Union School sixth-graders Thea Saito, left, and Kai'ulani Rocha prepare their Mission Possible Rube Goldberg machine at the Hawaii Island Science Olympiad Saturday at the University of Hawaii at Hilo.

Scientific endeavors

Teamwork, innovation showcased at the Hawaii Island Regional Science Olympiad

By IVY ASHE
Hawaii Tribune-Herald

A quiet flurry of activity was underway at the University of Hawaii at Hilo Campus Center Plaza on Saturday morning. High-schoolers guided robotic arms as they moved small items around a table. Middle-schoolers paced back and forth reading highlighted notes scribbled in composition books. Crowds gathered around pegboard boxes to watch Rube Goldberg contraptions in action, cell phones set to video mode.

Eight teams from around the island competed in the

Hawaii Island Regional Science Olympiad, hoping to earn one of two spots in the statewide competition, to be held on Oahu next month.

Science Olympiads focus on developing both interest and skills in the four STEM subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Unlike science fairs, which showcase just one or two students' efforts per project, the Olympiads spotlight an entire team.

"It's about working together," said Hilo Intermediate School teacher Cindy Fong.

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US awaits fate of travel ban

White House predicts courts will reinstate executive order

By ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rebuffed in its bid for a quick reversal, the White House said Sunday it expected the courts to reaffirm President Donald Trump's executive power and reinstate a ban on refugees and travelers from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States.

The case promised to extend into today at least, when fresh legal filings were due, and observers had no doubt the Supreme Court ultimately will have a say.

The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in a brief order overnight, denied the administration's request to set aside a Seattle judge's ruling that put a temporary hold on the ban nationwide.

The lawsuit by Washington state and Minnesota said Trump's order harmed residents and effectively mandated discrimination. Their lawyers had until 2:59 a.m. EST today to submit briefs opposing the government's request. The Justice Department then had a 6 p.m. EST deadline to respond.

"We'll accomplish the stay and will win the case on the merits," Vice President Mike Pence said.

Members of Trump's Republican Party

"We don't appoint judges to our district courts to conduct foreign policy or to make decisions about the national security."

MIKE PENCE
Vice president

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Sophomore Eli Dawson tests how much weight his tower, built with sophomore Lily Cho, can support.

Crooked out of coins

Holualoa man feels betrayed by system after \$200K collection stolen

By CAMERON MICULKA
West Hawaii Today

HOLUALOA — More than three and a half years after someone broke into Terry Lutterman's storage shed and made off with boxes of the man's antique coins, Lutterman said he has yet to see justice in the case.

That's despite Lutterman believing he knows exactly who's responsible

for the burglary and theft.

The loss is two-fold. There's the monetary — Lutterman estimates the value at \$200,000. But there's also the sentimental dagger. Lutterman first inherited the coins from the couple who formerly owned the property on which he now lives — a couple who opened their doors to Lutterman when he moved in with them rent-free in 1983.

"I used to go over there all the time, used to play cards with them," he said. "I kept 'em company; that's what I did ... And I did it 'cause I loved them."

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Terry Lutterman opens an ammunition box filled with silver coins, given to him by a couple who formerly owned the farm on which Lutterman now lives.

CAMERON MICULKA/West Hawaii Today

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

SCIENCE From the front page

who has brought a team of students to the event since it first began six years ago. At the time it was hosted by 'Imiloa Astronomy Center. UH-Hilo has hosted for the past four years.

Volunteer judges manned tables across the plaza and in classrooms across campus, where students put their knowledge of everything from rocks and minerals to forensics to the test.

"We love it," Fong said. "It's great for STEM, it's great for the kids."

The Hilo Intermediate team meets after school twice a week. But in anticipation of Saturday, they met every day for the past week.

"I have to kick them out at 5," Fong said.

This year Hilo Intermediate also sponsored entries for two other school participants. At Science Olympiad, the more merrier.

Teams competed in the Division B (middle school) and Division C (high school) events.

Next year, the Hawaii Island Olympiad is expected to have Division A (elementary school) for the first time. The first elementary-only event is scheduled for next month.

That event's organizer Leeann Ragasa, a fourth-grade teacher at Hilo Union School, first heard about Science Olympiad after her son joined Fong's Hilo



IVY ASHE/Tribune-Herald

Ha'aeo Elementary students, in purple, and others watch as their Rube Goldberg system is tested for judges.

Intermediate team. She chaperoned a trip to the state tournament, and attended an elementary event on Oahu.

"I was mesmerized by the amazing science these tiny kids were doing," she said. Ragasa returned from the trip hoping to build the same program on the Big Island.

"We hope that in the future we can encourage more schools to participate," said regional event coordinator Sharon Ziegler-Chong.

West Hawaii Explorations Academy sophomores Lily Cho and Eli Dawson were at the Olympiad for the first time.

"Last year I saw all of my friends go, and it looked super fun," Cho said. The West Hawaii team was up at 5 a.m. to

make the trip from Kona.

Cho and Dawson had just finished demonstrating their entry into the Towers event. Their structure, which resembled a shortened radio tower, was built of thin wood slats with a wider-than-mandated base (to earn bonus points). The tower took six hours to build, Cho said.

It ended up supporting a load of 15 kilograms — just over 33 pounds — of sand, the maximum possible.

"The kids figure it all out on their own," Fong said. Problem-solving is "something that's really hard to teach. You just have to do it."

Hilo Union School sixth graders Thea Saito and Kai'ulani Rocha spent weeks planning their Mission Possible Rube Goldberg

entry before they sat down to build it.

A spring triggered a cascade of dominoes, which dropped a weight that raised a see-saw to drop a weighted paper cup that lifted a barrier to send a Lego car down a ramp and hit a ruler, which triggered another set of weights, finally raise a cardboard flag with "Rainbows" written on it in colored letters. The entire sequence took less than three seconds.

The girls tested their machine again and again before bringing it to the judging table.

"Do you feel like you're ready?" Ragasa asked. "One more time," Rocha said. Then she and Saito set up the dominoes again, just to be sure.

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BAN From the front page

scolded him for Twitter attacks on U.S. District Court Judge James Robart, appointed by President George W. Bush, and accused Trump of stepping over the line that separates the executive from the judiciary. To Trump, Robart is a "so-called judge" whose "ridiculous" ruling "will be overturned."

Trump renewed his Twitter attacks against Robart on Sunday. "Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril. If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!"

He followed with another tweet saying he had instructed the Homeland Security Department to check people coming into the country but that "the courts are making the job very difficult!"

Vice President Mike Pence defended Trump, saying "the president can criticize anybody he wants." Pence added that he believes the American people "find it very refreshing that they not only understand this president's mind, but they understand how he feels about things."

At issue is the legality of a presidential action undertaken in the name of national security. Whatever the outcome, a president who was used to getting his way in private business is finding, weeks in to the jobs, obstacles to quickly fulfilling one of his chief campaign pledges.

"The president is not a dictator," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif. "He is the chief executive of our country. And there is a tension between the branches of government."

The government had told the appeals court that the president alone has the power to decide who can enter or stay in the United States, an assertion that appeared to invoke the wider battle to come over illegal immigration. Congress "vests complete discretion" in the president to impose conditions on entry of foreigners to the United States, and that power is "largely immune from judicial control," according to the court filing.

"We don't appoint judges to our district courts to conduct foreign policy or to make decisions about the national security," Pence said.

Feinstein, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, predicted the appeals court would not have the last word. "I have no doubt that it will go to the Supreme Court, and probably some judgments will be made whether this president has exceeded his authority or not," she said.

COINS From the front page

The coins, which the couple collected over many years and stowed away in old ammunition boxes, included old silver U.S. currency; everything from silver nickels and dimes to old silver dollars. They'd been carefully sorted, rolled and accounted for on a piece of paper inside each box.

"You know how long it took for those guys to save all that money?" Lutterman asked.

But face value alone doesn't capture the worth of Lutterman's collection. Many of the coins in the collection are prized for their high silver content, making them much more valuable than they are as currency.

The collection also included 40 Krugerrands, South African gold coins, alone worth \$60,000, he said. Still, how they represent his friendship with the couple makes it all the worse.

"I loved both of them to the maximum," said Lutterman, who moved to Hawaii in 1980 before moving three years later to the farm he now lives on.

The disappearance

In June 2013, Lutterman noticed that the locked door to the shed where he'd kept the ammunition boxes had been pried open.

Thirteen of the 23 ammunition boxes were gone, including all of the gold Krugerrands. A month after Lutterman discovered the coins had disappeared, he and a friend went to visit some coin shops in Hilo and a gold and silver buyer in Kona.

There, he said, his friend asked store staff if they knew the man Lutterman suspected of stealing the coins — a man Lutterman had live on his property for several months before the coins started vanishing.

Store staff said they knew him, and that he came in many times with lots of silver.

The kicker was how the suspected thief transported

the silver. In a couple cases, Lutterman said, the coins were carried in ammunition boxes — exactly like the ones that had been taken.

Lutterman provided West Hawaii Today with documents detailing all of his suspect's alleged visits to coin stores and a gold buyer in Kona and Hilo. The dates of sales on the documents pre-date Lutterman's discovery of the missing coins by months.

The records show a series of sales at three stores, sometimes as frequently as every week or every other week. Lutterman suspects the person who stole the coins was taking them long before he found the storage shed pried open.

One of the stores who bought the Krugerrands was Golden Egg Cash Assets, a Kailua-Kona gold and silver coin buyer. Store owner Michelle Johnson said she was shocked when she found out that the coins she'd been buying might have been stolen and were part of a police investigation.

Her store, she said, has an extensive vetting process to ensure every transaction is above board.

"Typically I ask a lot of questions," she said. Those include questions about how long the seller's had the wares and where it came from.

She also keeps a record of the identities of people who come in to sell goods. It's only when she feels completely comfortable with the seller and verifies his or her identity that she moves forward with a purchase. She's turned sellers away in the past.

"I've had many cases where I did not feel comfortable and I would tell them so," she said. "I'd say 'I'm so sorry, I do not feel comfortable purchasing this from you.' And no one has given me a hard time about that at all."

She also keeps reports of thefts on hand so she can keep an eye out when gold and silver come through her door.

She said she didn't know the man suspected of stealing Lutterman's coins before he first came to the store. When provided the alleged thief's name and photograph, she said it matched that of the seller who sold her the coins.

"He came in and said that he was a coffee manager, managed coffee farms," she said.

He needed to sell the coins, Johnson said, to be able to pay his workers. Johnson said the man would typically come in with one or two coins at a time, telling the store that his grandfather had gifted him the coins before he passed away.

Over time, she said, they developed a business relationship with the man, with him coming in to sell one or two coins at a time. His name is being withheld, and he couldn't be found for this story. Lutterman believes his one-time friend doesn't have a fixed address.

Krugerrands, Johnson said, are common coins. "And it always was around paying the coffee laborers," she said.

Everything about the man who sold her the coins, Johnson said, looked and sounded legitimate.

"He looked like a farmer," she said. "He came in like he came in from the fields working the farm."

Johnson, who comes from a long line of coffee farmers, said the two of them would talk coffee when he came in. And in the several times the man came in to her store, she said, "the story was always same."

It was a shock, then, when she found out the coins might have been stolen.

"When I found out about the case, I was so mortified and I felt taken," she said. "Because we had developed trust and ... a business relationship."

Coins melted, sold,

But by the time Lutterman

and his friend visited the store, she said, she didn't have any of the coins she'd purchased. The last recorded sale of coins to the store, according to Lutterman's documents, was March 2013, three months before Lutterman reported the burglary to law enforcement.

Had they still been in her possession, she said, she would have returned them.

However, by the time Lutterman notified her about the case, it had already been months since the last sale. In that time, some of the coins were melted down and others had been resold.

She hasn't seen the man who sold her the coins since, adding that he's on her blacklist for the store.

Lutterman turned his findings over to law enforcement, but, he said, the result's been anything but swift in the last three years.

In January 2014, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney sent Lutterman a letter informing him that they received the police report in the case and that it was "being reviewed to determine if criminal charges can be pursued."

About a month later, Lutterman said, the case was passed to a Hilo prosecutor before being passed again to another prosecutor in July 2015.

Lutterman said he's called and called, but he's seen no progress on his case.

"Oh, nothing yet," he said of the response he hears when he calls.

Last April, Lutterman said, he spoke with the prosecutor handling the case, deputy prosecutor Ricky Damerville. At that time, he said, the prosecutor told him to "expect some papers for the grand jury."

"Nothing happened," Lutterman said.

Then in September, he said, he spoke with the prosecutor again. That time, Damerville told him he would take the case to a judge instead of a grand jury.

But that's the last time he heard from the prosecutor.

Lutterman said he can't understand what's taking so long.

"I don't know why these guys are not doing anything about this," he said. "Should've been done a long time ago."

Damerville on Wednesday said there's "likely to be some action soon," and that the "nature of the facts" has caused the case to take as long as it has.

Johnson said she's only been approached by police about the case once, when she was asked to identify the seller.

She said she was surprised to hear the case was even still open when a reporter contacted her about it.

"I'm very surprised that this has not been completed because I've helped a number of cases where I would be called as a professional witness," she said.

Losing hope

At this point, Lutterman said, he's concerned that the case could end up being too old to prosecute and he'll never see justice done.

"I'm afraid it's gonna be ... too late," he said. "That's what I'm worried about."

And if that ends up being the case?

"I'd be pissed," he said. "I did everything. The cops didn't have to do anything. I did everything."

His ire though, isn't with police, he cautioned, but with prosecutors, why it's taking so long despite being told of progress from the office along the way.

At this point, he said, he doesn't expect to get any money back. He does, however, hope to see whoever took the coins held accountable.

"I just want him to go to prison," Lutterman said. "That's where he belongs."

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