



MARYLAND — A 131-year-old paper mill in the western Maryland town of Luke closed in June, eliminating 675 jobs. The mill, owned by Miamisburg, Ohio-based Verso Corp., was one of the largest employers in Allegany County, which has an unemployment rate higher than the state average. According to the *Baltimore Sun*, the mill was controversial among environmentalists because it was one of the largest industrial sources of air pollution in the state but generated energy by burning “black liquor,” a paper-making byproduct, which is considered a renewable fuel under a state green energy program.



NORTH CAROLINA — Did a craft brewery just open near you in Charlotte? Good news: Your home may be worth more. A recent report from researchers at the University of Toledo and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte studied homes sold in Charlotte between 2002 and 2017 and found that when a brewery opened within a half-mile, condo prices in city-center neighborhoods jumped an average of nearly 3 percent while single-family home prices increased nearly 10 percent. It’s been found that breweries spur revitalization when they move into abandoned industrial spaces by drawing other businesses to the area.



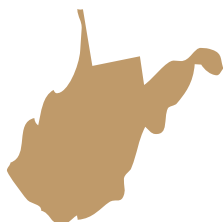
SOUTH CAROLINA — The Carolina Panthers will soon strengthen their ties to South Carolina. On May 20, South Carolina lawmakers passed a \$115 million tax incentive package for the NFL team to move its headquarters and practice facilities from Charlotte, N.C., to Rock Hill, S.C. The Panthers plan to purchase about 200 acres in Rock Hill for a \$200 million sports complex that should be open by 2022. The state’s Commerce Department estimated that the new complex could have an economic impact of up to \$3.8 billion over 15 years. The Panthers will continue to play games at their existing stadium in Charlotte.



VIRGINIA — Pharmaceutical maker Merck & Co. announced in May that it will invest \$1 billion over the next three years to expand its vaccine manufacturing plant in Rockingham County. The expansion will add 120,000 square feet and an estimated 100 new jobs. To support the project, James Madison University and Blue Ridge Community College will work together to develop biotechnology engineering and computer science programs aimed at creating a workforce trained for jobs at Merck and other life-science companies in the area.



WASHINGTON, D.C. — A record number of tourists visited D.C. in 2018, according to a May report from the nonprofit Destination DC. More than 21 million domestic tourists visited D.C. and spent almost \$8 billion. This was an increase of 1.1 million domestic visitors and a 4.3 percent increase in spending from 2017. Tourism in the nation’s capital supports almost 80,000 jobs in everything from music venues to museums to sports stadiums. Figures on international tourists won’t be available until later in 2019.



WEST VIRGINIA — In early May, state business and education leaders announced they were joining together to form the “West Virginia Ready Graduate” initiative. After studying hiring, promotion, and college admissions data, the initiative pinpointed the characteristics, skills, and knowledge that West Virginia students need to succeed in the workforce. Building on the initiative, a new internship program will place rising high school juniors and seniors in four-week paid summer internships at various state businesses. The internship will result in college credits.