



Mayor Conley reading a proclamation on behalf of both the city and Union County Government.

Arbor Day...from Page 1A

Blairsville, Blairsville Garden Club and the Union County Commissioner's Office.

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, Jim Conley Mayor of Blairsville and Lamar Paris Sole Commissioner of Union County, do hereby proclaim Feb. 17, 2017, as Arbor Day, and commend this observance to all its citizens."

Arbor Day was established in 1872 in Nebraska City, Nebraska, and was brought about by J. Sterling Morton when he stood before the State Board of Agriculture requesting such legislation be proclaimed in the state of Nebraska.

By the 1920s, more than 45 states had joined Nebraska in the celebration of native trees and all these plants offer to mankind.

Today, all 50 states partake in Arbor Day festivities, as well as many countries and cities around the world.

"If you all weren't doing this, it wouldn't get done," said Harkins. "It takes a long time to grow trees and keep up with landscaping. We certainly appreciate your effort and all that you do. You should take



This "Empress of China" Dogwood now has a permanent home behind Blairsville City Hall.

pride in your community, and this is just one of the things that makes it so beautiful."

This year, an Empress of China Dogwood tree was planted in the green space behind Blairsville City Hall, courtesy of General Supply Store on Gainesville

Highway.

Unlike a typical dogwood tree, the Empress is an evergreen and will keep its leaves year-round, promising to make a beautiful sight for visitors traveling through town, even during the winter months.

Jordan Keen of General Supply planted the tree during the celebration.

National Arbor Day is observed on the last Friday in April, and each state observes the holiday on a date that is reflective of planting season in each region.

Gurtler...from Page 1A

me to the Georgia House of Representatives to represent those values and principles.

"I was then immediately threatened by Mr. Riley.

"He stated he wanted me to be a 'YES vote on the 2018 budget,' and further stated, 'If you believe that then I will cut all funding to your district,' and repeated it once more. This all happened in front of other freshmen legislators."

Continued Gurtler's statement: "I am appalled by Mr. Riley's actions of intimidation and bullying tactics of an elected official. His actions were wrong and unethical, and this type of behavior goes against our system of separation of powers. Not only did Mr. Riley threaten me, he threatened my entire constituency, some 50,000 plus Georgians in the 8th District."

When reached for comment, Riley told the AJC that he never threatened Gurtler, but merely challenged him on his position, which he viewed as Gurtler voting against funding in his own district.

That story appeared in the Atlanta news market on Feb. 14, and the very next day, on Feb. 15, news broke about Gurtler's 2013 Lumpkin County arrest.

According to the University of North Georgia police report obtained by the AJC, Gurtler had been arrested in July of 2013 for obstruction of a law enforcement officer.

At that time, police were taking Gurtler's friend into custody for driving under the influence, and Gurtler, a passenger in the car, ignored repeated orders to stay in the vehicle, according to the report.

One officer noted that Gurtler had been moving toward them in an "aggressive manner" while refusing to comply with orders, according to the report, and he was ultimately arrested.

In police video obtained by Channel 2, Gurtler can be heard swearing and threatening a lawsuit, as well as asking for the badge numbers of his arresting officers after telling them that he worked for a state representative.

At the time of his arrest, Gurtler was a legislative aide to then-Rep. Stephen Allison, who decided last year not to run for re-election.

When reached for comment by the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald*, Gurtler responded with the following statement:

"This incident occurred four years ago. After requesting a jury trial to clear my name, the case was resolved through pre-trial diversion, and the district attorney dismissed the charge.

"I have great admiration for law enforcement and all individuals who dedicate their lives to public service and safety.

"I felt I needed to exercise my constitutional rights. In hindsight, the incident could have been handled better on my part. For that, I apologize. My intention was never to escalate the situation, but only understand what was really going on.

"The timing of these attacks is quite interesting in light of recent events, such as the intimidation and bullying following my vote against the Amended 2017 Budget that

increased the size, scope, and intrusiveness of government. The dots are easy to connect.

"This is the Atlanta liberal media and career politicians attacking our district because I vote for our shared values and principles, what I was elected to do.

"As we saw during the

presidential election, this is the type of politics people hate.

"I can't express how much I appreciate the outpouring of support from my constituents, and I will continue to faithfully do my job for everyone."

As District 8 state representative, Gurtler represents Union County, Towns County, Rabun County and some of White County.

Union County Schools Completion day set for Parent Involvement Survey

Union County Schools knows that Parent Involvement is the foundation for every student's success. We want you to feel welcome as a partner in the planning of your child's education. Please take a moment to fill out the Parent Involvement survey.

UCPS and UCES sent surveys home with students. You can complete UCMS survey online. Your feedback

will allow us to learn how effectively our schools partner with families. Your individual responses, which may help our school improve connections with parents and families, will remain anonymous. Union County Schools values your time and opinions. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

Please complete the survey by Friday, February 24.