

Tampa Bay Times

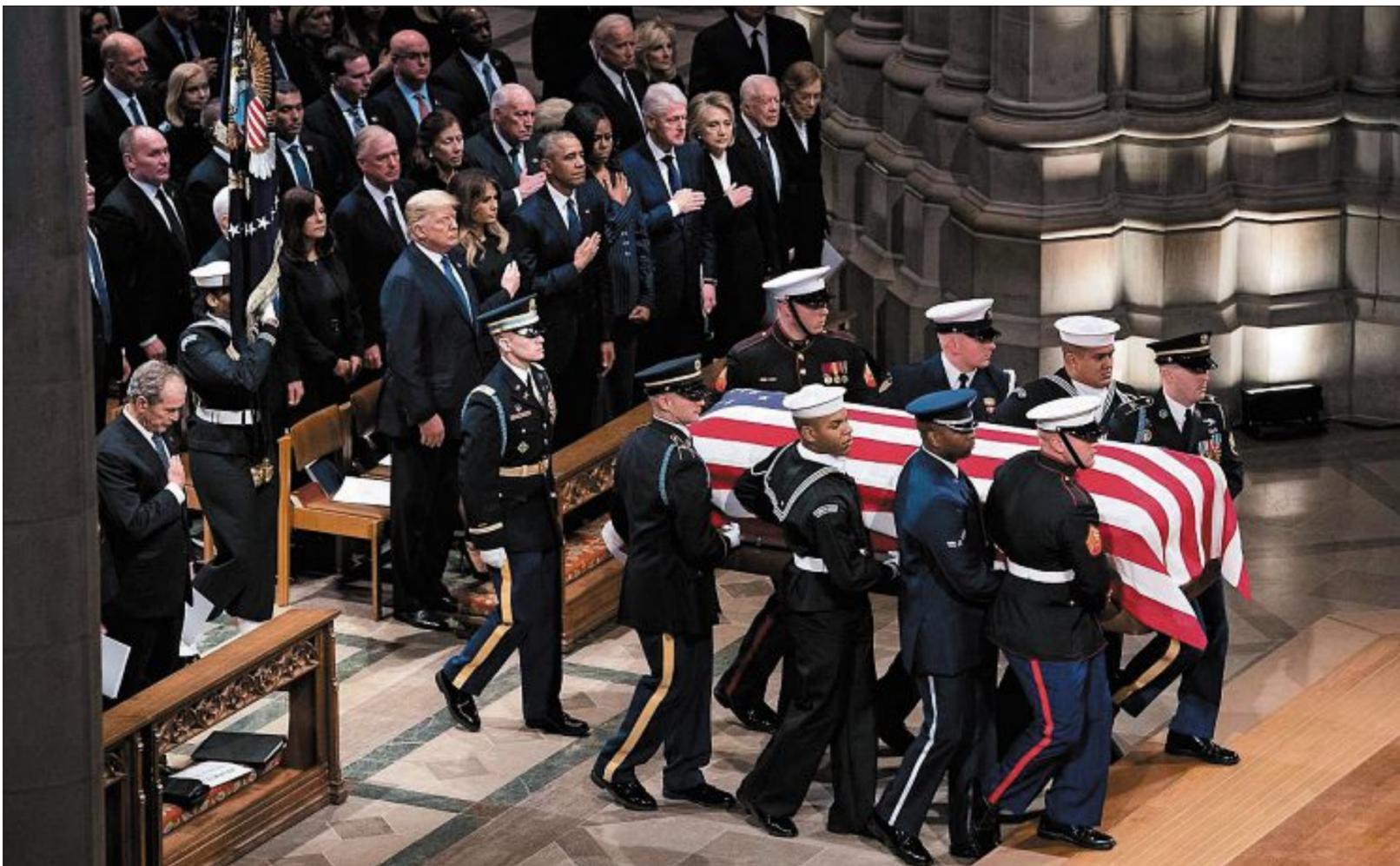
FLORIDA'S BEST NEWSPAPER

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George H.W. Bush (1924-2018)

A nation bids farewell



New York Times

Former President George H.W. Bush's coffin is carried Wednesday into the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., for his state funeral. In the front row, from left, are former President George W. Bush; President Donald Trump; first lady Melania Trump; former President Barack Obama; former first lady Michelle Obama; former President Bill Clinton; former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; former President Jimmy Carter; and former first lady Rosalynn Carter.

"He showed me what it means to be a president who serves with integrity, leads with courage, and acts with love in his heart for the citizens of our country."

Former President George W. Bush

Local residents feel loss

The ex-president connected through his Points of Light foundation. **Story, 8A**



Associated Press

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, left, reaches out to his brother, former President George W. Bush, as they arrive for their father's funeral at the National Cathedral.

The late president is honored as much for his decency as his political accomplishments.

Washington Post

WASHINGTON

Mourners from across the nation gathered Wednesday morning to pay their respects and celebrate the life of former President George H.W. Bush at a state funeral at the Washington National Cathedral.

With President Donald Trump and four living former U.S. presidents in attendance, Bush was remembered by his son former President George W. Bush who said that his father had "showed me what it means to be a president that serves with integrity, leads with courage and acts with love in his heart for the citizens of our country."

He also remembered his father as someone who "valued character over pedigree," who "showed us how setbacks can strengthen," and who, with his optimism, "made his children believe anything was possible."

George H.W. Bush "could tease and needle but never out of malice," his son said.

» See **BUSH, 7A**

Rays given deadline on Ybor ballpark deal

Hillsborough's top administrator says team must enter a contract before end of March.

BY CHARLIE FRAGO
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Hillsborough County's top administrator on Wednesday laid down the terms and deadline for striking a deal to build the Tampa Bay Rays a new \$900 million stadium in Ybor City.

And if the Rays don't agree to the county's terms within the next three months?

Then County Administrator Mike Merrill declared that there will be no ballpark in Ybor City — and no Major League Baseball team in Tampa.

"If we can't come up with term sheet by March of next year we're basically done anyway," Merrill told commissioners during Wednesday's meeting.

Merrill said the county's pitch to the Rays promises a stadium financing deal largely made up of private dollars — a potentially ground-breaking proposal for MLB stadiums that are typically built with public dollars. But if the Rays don't agree to the county's framework by Jan. 1, and if a binding agreement isn't struck by the end of the 2019 spring

» See **BALLPARK, 10A**

J.Lo and A-Rod drop in on Tampa

Former New York Yankee Alex Rodriguez and his partner, entertainer Jennifer Lopez, help raise money for Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay. **Etc., 2B**

Tax suit has potential conflict of interest

A suit challenging Hillsborough's transportation sales tax hits a snag: the judge assigned to the case is married to one of the tax's opponents. **Local, 1B**

Sunny skies

8 a.m. 51° Noon 63° 4 p.m. 67° 8 p.m. 59°

10% chance of rain
More, back page of Sports

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Introducing the Belleview Inn

Once destined for the wrecking ball, the historic Belleview Biltmore, closed in 2009, is reborn as an elegant boutique hotel. **Business, 3B**

Stop, elf thief! (And smile for the camera)

A security camera captures a Grinch making off with a 3-foot elf at a Tampa home. Be on the lookout. **Local, 1B**

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State sues Marlin Financial auto lender

Attorney General's Office seeks penalties for its insurance-type debt cancellation add-on.

BY MALENA CAROLLO
Times Staff Writer

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi's office is suing online auto lender Marlin Financial for what it says are unfair and deceptive trade practices.

In a civil lawsuit filed in Hillsborough County in late November, the state's legal arm alleged that an add-on that the lender said was optional "was in fact a mandatory feature of loans made to consumers." That add-on, known as a "debt cancellation product," was marketed to customers as an insurance-like

product that would wipe out a customer's remaining debt if their car was totaled. Instead, it dramatically increased the cost of the loans.

Marlin's debt cancellation product was the focus of a September *Tampa Bay Times* investigation into the company. It found that Marlin saddled consumers with significantly more debt than they expected, charged interest rates above state limits and failed to give some customers access to items in cars that were repossessed when

» See **MARLIN, 13A**