

**Local**  
The McGraw Central School District is performing an early dismissal drill on Dec. 19.

**Sports**  
The Groton boys basketball team got a late start to its season, but won the opener.

**Community**  
Tompkins County Whole Health announced mental health initiatives for the holiday season.

# Cortland Standard

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The museum has been decorated for the holidays and upcoming events.

## The 1890 House brings Victorian Christmas to life

**Paige Kingsley**  
**Staff Reporter**  
CORTLAND — The 1890 House Museum will open its doors for the annual wassail party Sunday, a celebration of Victorian Christmas traditions and quality time with loved ones. The event will be free to attend and everyone is encouraged to come join the festivities at the old Wickwire mansion.

Wassail is an old Victorian term people typically associate with caroling, but

it doesn't refer to the door-to-door singing like many assume. Wassail is actually a fruit punch or cider-like drink that would be prepared around the holidays, and carolers would be served this drink at nearly every house they stopped to sing at. A version of this traditional beverage will be served at the museum gathering to emulate the Victorian era.

"Throughout the day there's going to be different music going on, there's going to be

the wassail of course," museum volunteer Martha Howlett said. "There's going to be cookies and other snacks, too. It's a big family friendly event and it's a way for the museum to give back to the community at the end of the year."

The house has already been decorated for the holiday season and themed events, including the festival of trees upstairs on the third floor. The museum's goal is typically to bring people into

See **1890 A8**

## City optimistic for '26 after 3rd downgraded rating

**Sydney Lee**  
**Staff Reporter**  
CORTLAND

— Fitch Ratings downgraded the city's loan obligation rating from "A" to "BBB" at the end of October. City Finance and Administration Director Elizabeth Greenwood said they've met the concerns and the city's next credit rating will be going up.

"We're heading in the right direction, finally," Greenwood said.



Cortland City Hall is pictured.

Fitch's report stated the downgrades reflect the city's weakened general fund operating results following three consecutive audited years of general fund deficits from 2021 to 2023. Fitch gave the city a negative outlook and said it reflects projected near-term structural budget imbalances and the potential for further declines in general fund balance.

The city's long-term liability composite was assessed as "Weak" relative to Fitch's ratings portfolio. It stated this reflects high direct debt and net

pension liabilities when compared to residents' personal income, government revenue and the high carrying costs relative to governmental expenditures.

This downgrade for the city follows two others from S&P and Moody's in May and July.

Greenwood said it's confusing because all of the organizations look at the same materials to make their ratings, but are released at different times of the year. The organizations look at

materials from two years ago, according to Greenwood.

"It's almost a two year gap in those things," Greenwood noted. "When we're working in 2026, they'll be looking at the 2024 information. That's just the nature of financing."

She said the credit ratings being released do not reflect the work that has been done to address the concerns after 2024.

"Basically they're just catching up to those two previous ratings, they're all

See **CITY A8**

## Local author shoots for stars with new novel

**Paige Kingsley**  
**Staff Reporter**  
CORTLAND — Inspired by a lifetime of being out in nature and an academic career in environmental history and conservation, Charles Yaple, Ph.D., has taken an astronomical leap in his new novel, "Harley Stardust: Mission Oasis Earth." The fiction book is geared toward adolescents and takes a look at how the planet can be viewed as a valuable phenomenon of life that should be treated as an oasis. Yaple's other novels also center on the environment and environmental history, but this is his first time writing a story that interacts with

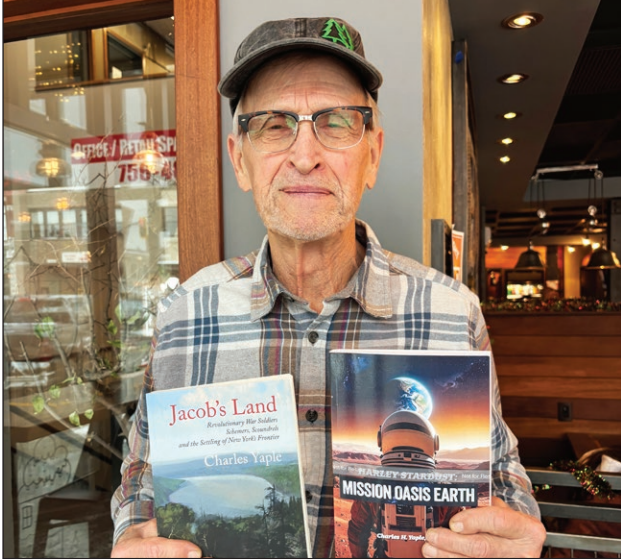
outer space as a mode of storytelling. Blending the technology of space travel with a narrative of protecting the earth just seemed to be the perfect vehicle for Yaple's message.

"The main character, Harley, starts out life with some hardships," Yaple said. "Eventually he becomes an astronaut and becomes part of a mission to colonize Mars and make a metropolitan area on Mars. Instead of continuing to disrupt the Earth's natural ecosystems and contributing to resource depletion, manufacturing can take place on other planets."

The story of Harley Stardust doesn't only tackle the question of how to

preserve the Earth and the environment, but also deals with mystery and romance and coming-of-age themes that are often prominent in young adult novels. Yaple is hoping for this story to be integrated into high school classrooms as a way to synthesize the conservation knowledge students get in science class.

The world of science fiction storytelling seems to be approaching the line of realistic fiction as technology continues to advance. This makes it harder for science fiction writers to create worlds for their audiences to escape into, but with Yaple's conservationist perspective, he's able to embrace the true



Charles Yaple, Ph.D., is pictured holding two of his novels.

possibility of being able to colonize other planets and write it into an effective message of caring for

the environment.

"What this book is trying to do is get young people to think about how special this planet is," Yaple said. "Humans are known as Homo sapiens, but maybe we can become 'geo sapiens' and be more Earth-conscious. We can think of Earth as an oasis and make sure we're taking care of that oasis."

"Harley Stardust: Mission Oasis Earth" will be published through Kindle Direct and available for purchase on Amazon, though Yaple hopes it will find its way into classrooms above all else to spread his message of how precious the planet is.

## C'ville holds 1st solar, battery energy systems meeting

**Sydney Lee**  
**Staff Reporter**  
CORTLANDVILLE — Town of Cortlandville Councilmember Glenn Reisweber held the first Solar and Battery Energy

Storage Systems Committee meeting on Wednesday. Reisweber spoke about pressure from the state and goals of committee members before the next meeting.

Cortlandville will be hearing the recommendations of the committee for solar and battery storage systems from the end of January to March. This is following residents speak-

ing against multiple solar pilot projects within the town. Reisweber heard the trends of resident concerns at a prior listening session.

Solar and Battery En-

ergy Storage Systems Committee and Zoning Board of Appeals Member Bernice Potter-Masler previously denied a solar project before the state took it over and allowed

it in Cortlandville. Potter-Masler said she is focused on the agricultural concerns of solar.

"It's disappointing


See **MEETING A8**

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**Weather**



**Tomorrow's Weather:**  
High around 26, low near 11. Chance of snow showers before noon.

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# Tompkins County Whole Health supports mental health during holiday season

TOMPKINS COUNTY — With the holiday season upon us and the end of the year fast approaching, Tompkins County Whole Health (TCWH) would like to remind the community of resources available to support your mental health well-being.

While the holiday season may be a time of celebration, joy and festive activities for many, for others it is a time of year that brings feelings of sadness, grief, loneliness and stress — and for those already impacted by mental health conditions or substance use, those symptoms are even more exacerbated. According to a survey conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 64% of respondents with a mental illness reported having worsened symptoms during the holiday months. If you or someone you know are experiencing new or worsening symptoms that are overwhelming and difficult to manage, it is important to know where to go to seek support.

Resources are available in the community 24/7. TCWH's Mobile Crisis Team and CARE Team (co-response law enforcement and mental health services) are available on evenings, weekends and holidays, and can be reached by calling 911 or 988.

If you are experiencing problems with mental health and want to

get help now, come to TCWH's office at 201 E. Green St., Ithaca, for Open Access Hours to begin treatment as soon as you walk in the building. Open Access Hours are walk-in, first come first served and allow you to begin the intake process

and see a clinician with no appointment needed. Open Access Hours take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

In addition to the primary location at 201 E. Green St. in downtown Ithaca, TCWH now offers mental health clinical appointments at the 55 Brown Road office in Northeast Ithaca, offering free on-site parking, brand new construction and first floor, accessible meeting spaces. Clinicians from both the Adult and Children/Youth teams can meet with clients at this location. Call to schedule an appointment at this location at 607-274-6200.

Emergency and crisis contacts are available for 24 hour help. If you or someone you know needs

to speak with a mental health professional, consult these resources. For life-threatening emergencies, dial 911.

■ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, DIAL 988 (1-800-273-8255)

■ Veterans: dial 988 and Press 1 or text 838255. Vis-

use of naloxone (i.e. Narcan), an opioid overdose reversal spray.

"We implore everyone in our community to pick up a Narcan kit and become trained in its use," TCWH Commissioner Jennie Sutcliffe said. "In its nasal spray form, Nar-

can) and be trained in its use. Dial 877-696-1996.

■ Use fentanyl and xylazine test strips as a precaution, or have supply checked at a drug testing site (Southern Tier AIDS Program, Inc., 314 W. State St./MLK Jr. St., Ithaca).

■ Carry naloxone (Nar-

■ REACH Medical ■ Southern Tier AIDS Program

Naloxone (Narcan) is available at pharmacies via a statewide pharmacy standing order. Individuals will need to have insurance to access this standing order at no cost in a pharmacy. If you do not have insurance, dial 2-1-1 (1-877-211-8667) to receive assistance. Narcan and testing strips can also be ordered for free through NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports (NYS OASAS), delivered to your residence. Order online at oasas.ny.gov/harm-reduction.

Another resource for individuals interested in obtaining free testing supplies can be found via NY Matters.

For more information about drug checking programs:

■ NYS OASAS "Project COPE" website for overdose prevention and harm reduction education

■ Addiction and Mental Health Community Resources

■ Tompkins County Whole Health's Mental Health Services: 607-274-6200

■ Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services (CARS): 607-273-5500

■ REACH Medical: 607-273-7000

■ To find other available treatment programs throughout the state, use the NYS OASAS online directory.



it veteranscrisisline.net for online chat and more

■ Crisis Text Line, text HOME to 741-741

■ Ithaca's Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service hotline (1-607-272-1616)

This time of year also provides an opportunity to raise awareness of drug overdose, strengthen our efforts to prevent overdoses and substance use-related harms and deaths and enhance our support for individuals with substance use. It is important to know the signs of overdose and be prepared to act quickly to intervene and help prevent death. The Centers for Disease Control reports that nationwide 67.5% of drug overdose deaths in 2024 had at least one potential opportunity for intervention. One step we can all take to help save lives from drug overdose is to be trained in the

can is simple to use and effective. Having a Narcan kit and being prepared to use it may save someone's life."

TCWH compiles data related to opioid overdoses in our county. Over the past six years, Tompkins County has lost 109 residents due to unintentional overdose. TCWH also compiles data about Narcan use, distribution, and training in Tompkins County. Learn more about local opioid statistics and additional resources on our website.

Tompkins County Whole Health recommends the following overdose prevention strategies:

■ Never use alone. Use with others and take turns. If you are alone, call the "Never Use Alone" Hotline to be connected with an operator who will stay on the line while you

can) and be trained in its use.

■ Before using drugs, ask someone you trust to check on you regularly.

■ Go slow by taking small amounts, especially if you haven't used in a while. There is no safe dose of opioids.

■ Wait long enough to feel the effects of what you took before taking more.

■ Avoid mixing with alcohol or other drugs, especially drugs that make you sleepy.

■ Seek treatment and support.

■ Always dial 9-1-1 in the event of a medical emergency.

Narcan kits, fentanyl testing strips, and xylazine testing strips are available free of cost at local community agencies:

■ Tompkins County Whole Health

■ Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services

## McGraw schools to hold early dismissal drill

MCGRAW — The New York State Education Department requires that all school districts perform an annual "Go Home Early" drill.

The McGraw Central School District will conduct this drill on Dec. 19. Students in grades 7 through 12

will be dismissed at 2:35 p.m., grades Pre-K through 6 walkers at 2:40 p.m., and bussers at 2:45 p.m. Parents are encouraged to review the emergency location where their child would go in the event of an actual early dismissal

situation.

Students will be transported to their regular bus stop location, unless the individual school buildings are

contacted regarding a different location for the child to be sent on the date of the drill.

The guidelines for the emergency drill include a review of the procedures district staff would utilize in the event of an actual early dismissal for emergency purposes, according to the District Safety Plan.



## Tompkins legislators add Chief Equity, Diversity Officer to county charter

**Sydney Lee  
Staff Reporter**

A public hearing about the adoption of a local law adding the Chief Equity and Diversity Officer (CEDO) position to the Tompkins County Charter was held during its legislative meeting on Dec. 2. Following a lengthy discussion among legislators, the resolution passed in an 8 to 5 vote.

Several community members, county staff, and legislators-elect provided feedback on the matter. Legislator Amanda Champion (Town of Ithaca) introduced the resolution, saying "if diversity, equity, and inclusion are our values, then this should be a permanent position."

This sentiment was echoed by Legislator

Shawna Black (Town of Ithaca).

"This shows our employees and constituents how important DEI work is," Black said. "Protecting this position means a lot to many of us whose rights are threatened right now."

Legislator Veronica Pillar (City of Ithaca) referred to DEI priorities in the county's strategic plan and the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee (WDIC), Team Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and how "the CEDO position operationalizes our values with their tools and expertise."

"Equity shouldn't be dependent on who is in office and what the budget looks like," Legislator Gregory Mezey (Dryden) said. "Equity is not optional, it's essential."

Other legislators didn't see a need to add the position to the charter.

Legislator Michael Lane (Dryden) said he would support embedding the position within the Human Resources Department and pointed to the value the legislature places on equity work by including a standing WDIC report on their meeting agendas. Legislator Daniel Klein (Danby, Caroline, Ithaca) and Legislator Randy Brown (Newfield, Enfield) doubted that adding the position to the county charter would make the county as an organization more inclusive or diverse, an area that they both would like to see improved. Lane, Rich John (City of Ithaca), Lee Shurtleff (Groton, Dryden, Lansing), Mike

Sigler (Lansing) and Klein opposed the vote.

Interview teams are being formed to review applications for the County Historian and Chief Equity and Diversity Officer positions.

Tompkins County Administrator Korsah Akumfi reported the first week of the Code Blue shelter went well. He said they are serving an average of 20 to 25 individuals per night.

Legislators also approved a series of bond resolutions for infrastructure projects, motor vehicles, machinery, highway reconstruction projects and bridge reconstruction. The legislature unanimously approved 2026 payments for Tompkins Cortland Community College operating budget.



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## It's a Wonderful Life Festival at Seneca Falls until Dec. 14

SENECA FALLS — Grab your overcoat, dust off your angel wings and get ready to shout "Yippee!" from the top of the Bailey Building & Loan, because the most heartwarming weekend of the year is coming back to "The Real Bedford Falls." The beloved It's a Wonderful Life Festival returns to Seneca Falls from today to Dec. 14, bringing three full days of holiday cheer, movie magic and small-town charm.

Seneca Falls will once again transform into a festive winter wonderland as it hosts more than 100 events celebrating Frank Capra's classic film.

This evening kicks things off with culinary comfort at Mrs. Martini's Pasta Dinner, followed by the glowing warmth of the It's a Wonderful Bonfire, complete with a visit from

Santa himself. This year's bonfire has been moved to Lower Fall Street.

Saturday shines even brighter with the It's a Wonderful Parade, featuring the inaugural float contest, the delightfully offbeat Bedford Falls Mediocore Marching Band and the always-fabulous Witchy Women of the Finger Lakes. Lace up those sneakers for the colorful and wildly popular It's a Wonderful Run 5K, which draws more than 5,000 runners to dash through streets lined with cheering spectators.

Sunday brings a joyful lineup including Uncle Billy's Wonderful Scavenger Hunt, the Wonderful Music Brass Ensemble and a brand-new Sunday Fun Day. This day is a family-friendly celebration of games, music and outdoor merriment at

People's Park.

Lights, cameras and plenty of laughter return with "Lights, Camera, Action!" Festival-goers can reenact iconic movie moments around town, film them and upload their creations for a chance to win \$100. The weekend wraps up with one of the most cherished traditions — the Bells of the Real Bedford Falls, ringing throughout town Sunday evening in celebration of hope, community and the spirit of George Bailey.

This year brings an extra special treat — the debut of It's a Wonderful Life-Opoly, a brand-new collectible board game inspired by the movie's unforgettable characters and moments. A competition will take place throughout the weekend with prizes and a chance to win an It's a Wonderful Life-opoly

game.

"This game is a fun new way for fans to relive the story while celebrating the message of generosity and community at the heart of the film," It's a Wonderful Life Festival President Haidee Oropallo said.

Several cast members from the 1946 original film will return to Seneca Falls for meet-and-greets, autographs, presentations and other special appearances. Guests include Carolyn Grimes (Zuzu Bailey), Jimmy Hawkins (Tommy Bailey) and Don Collins (Young Pete Bailey). Also joining the celebration are Mary Owen, daughter of Donna Reed; Monica Capra Hodges, granddaughter of Frank Capra; and John Kuri, son of set decorator Emile Kuri. George Bailey's car is on display at James Chrysler Dodge Jeep & Ram.



Religion Notices

**The Church at Freetown MARATHON** — The Church at Freetown, located at 2405 Church Lane, Marathon, is a nondenominational church holding services at 10:30 a.m. every Sunday morning.

There is also a 10 a.m. for fellowship. The church may be reached at thechurchatfreetown@gmail.com.

**Cortland Area Catholic Churches**

The Catholic Community extends a warm welcome to all who would like to join in prayer.

St. Anthony’s Church, 50 Pomeroy St., Cortland — Mass is at 10 a.m. Sunday and Tuesday.

St. Mary’s Church, 46 N. Main St., Cortland — Mass is at 5:15 p.m. Saturday, at 11:30 a.m. Sunday and at 7 a.m. Wednesday and Friday.

St. Margaret’s Church, 14 Copeland Ave., Homer — Mass is at 4 p.m. Saturday and at noon Monday.

St. Lawrence Church, 1672 Cortland St., DeRuyter — Mass is at 8 a.m. Sunday.

O’Heron Newman Hall Catholic Center, 8 Calvert St., Cortland — Mass is at

5 p.m. Sunday during the school year.

With questions or for information on baptisms, weddings and current ministries, contact the parish center at 607-756-9967 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday to Thursday, or visit online.

**Grace and Holy Spirit Church**

CORTLAND — Grace and Holy Spirit Church is a blended Christian community in the Episcopal and Lutheran traditions located in Downtown Cortland at 13 Court St., Cortland, offering a traditional service in person and online at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays.

Prayers, readings, hymns and Holy Communion are offered.

A conversation with Pastor Jenn & Company will be held at Bru 64 at 2 p.m. on Tuesdays. Prayer in community is held at 8:15 p.m. every Thursday on Zoom.

For more information, or for the Zoom link to all services, contact the church at 607-753-3073 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, or email graceandholyspirit@cnyemail.com.

**Cortland Homer Ave. and Virgil United Methodist Churches**

Cortland Homer Avenue and Virgil UMCs will each gather in-person Sunday. Virgil will gather at 9:30 a.m. and Homer Avenue will gather at 11 a.m. All ages are welcome at all services.

Pastor Steph Brown’s message will be “Preparing the Way.” All ages are welcome at all services.

**United Presbyterian Church of Cortland**

CORTLAND — All are invited to come to the United Presbyterian Church at at 10:30 a.m. Sunday for an Advent worship service in the sanctuary. The members of the Sunday School and children of the congregation will present “The Pageant” — a Christmas gift to the congregation.

The children’s message will be shared by Aaron Hart. The IHS Choir, under the direction of Dr. Stephen Wilson, will sing “Our Lord, Emmanuel,” by M. McDonald.

Bible Explorers will begin immediately following the children’s message in the Sunday School rooms on the second floor. Children in grades kindergarten through eight are welcome.

Visit the church’s website at unitedpresbyterian.net or find it on Facebook. You can also contact the church office at officeadmin@unitedpresbyterian.net. The congregation is part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The United Presbyterian Church is located at 25 Church St., Cortland. Parking is available. The church is wheelchair accessible.

**Scott Community Church**

SCOTT — The Scott Community Church, 6816 State Route 41, Scott, is a nondenominational church where all are welcome to share in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Service time is 10 a.m. Sunday, with fellowship at 11 a.m.

Pastor Steve Swartz will reflect on the third week of Advent, speaking about joy, which focuses on the imminent arrival of Christ and the deep happiness His birth brings.

Swartz can be reached by email at sccpastor25@gmail.com.

**Homer First United Methodist Church**

HOMER — Homer First

United Methodist Church continues to offer a live streamed service on YouTube, as well as an in-person service at 9:30 a.m. every Sunday.

The Rev. Dr. Park’s message this week will be “The Servant Love of Jesus,” based on Luke 2:1-7 and Philippians 2:5-11. Join the live streaming service using the link from the church website homerfirst.org on your smart device or PC.

Bible Study is at 10 a.m. on Tuesdays in the narthex.

Sunday School and Youth Group is at 10 a.m. during church service. Nursery is at 9:30 a.m. during church service.

The food pantry is open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursdays.

**McGraw United Methodist Church**

McGRAW — McGraw United Methodist Church at 20 Main Street will hold Bible Study from at 9 a.m., followed by service at 10 a.m. The scripture will be Luke 2:1-20, and the sermon given by Julie Ryan will be “Shepherds and Innkeepers.”

The church’s food pan-

try is open from 6 to 7 p.m. on Thursdays.

The church is handicap accessible.

The service is live streamed through the McGraw United Methodist Church Facebook page.

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Cortland**

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Cortland worships on Zoom or in person at 10:30 a.m. Sunday. This week’s worship will be in person. Rev. Darcey Laine will give a worship service titled “Happy Holidays from your Multi Faith Community.”

The church is a welcoming congregation to all who come in peace no matter the person or whom they love.

**McGrawville Baptist Church**

McGRAW — George Mekeel has been appointed the new pastor of The McGrawville Baptist Church. Mekeel will begin as pastor on Jan. 1. An installation service is planned for 4 p.m. Dec. 13.

Mekeel comes with over 35 years of experience in missions, youth programs and pastoral ministry.

Meeting Notices

**City of Cortland**

City Hall is located at 25 Court St., Cortland.

The Historic Commission will meet at 8 a.m. Tuesday at City Hall.

The Common Council will meet at 6 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall.

The Zoning Board of Appeals will meet at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 22 at City Hall.

The Planning Commission will meet at 5:15 p.m. Jan. 5 at City Hall.

The Common Council will meet at 6 p.m. Jan. 6 at City Hall.

The Youth Bureau Commission will meet at 11 a.m. Jan. 8 virtually.

The Fire Commission will meet at 5:15 p.m. Jan. 8 at the Armory Building, 25 Wheeler Ave., Cortland.

**Cortland County**

The Cortland County Office Building is located at 60 Central Ave., Cortland.

The Cortland County Legislature will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Cortland County Office Building.

**Cortland Enlarged City School District**

The Cortland Board of Education will meet at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Kaufman Center, 1 Valley View Drive, Cortland.

**Village of Homer**

Homer Town Hall is located at 31 N. Main St.

The Board of Trustees will meet at 6 p.m. Dec. 23 at Homer Town Hall.

The Planning Board will meet at 6 p.m. Dec. 24 at Homer Town Hall.

**Town of Homer**

Homer Town Hall is located at 31 N. Main St.

The Planning Board will meet at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 24 at Homer Town Hall.

**Village of Marathon**

The Village Board Room is located at 18 Tannery St.

The Board of Trustees will meet at 7 p.m.

Wednesday at the Village Board Room.

The Board of Trustees will meet at 7 p.m. Jan. 7 at the Village Board Room.

**Village of McGraw**

The Village Board will meet at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the McGraw Village Office and Municipal Building, 24 Cemetery St.

**Town of Preble**

Preble Town Hall is located at 1968 Preble Road.

The Planning Board will meet at 7 p.m. Dec. 24 at Preble Town Hall.

The Zoning Board will meet at 7 p.m. Jan. 1 at Preble Town Hall.

**Town of Solon**

Solon Town Hall is located at 4012 N. Tower Road.

The Town Board will meet at 7 p.m. Monday at Solon Town Hall.

**Town of Lapeer**

The Lapeer Highway Department is located at 2685 Clarks Corners Road.

The Town Board will

meet at 7 p.m. Dec. 29 at the Lapeer Highway Department.

**Town of Freetown**

Freetown Town Hall is located at 2369 Marathon-McGraw Road.

The Planning Board will meet at 6 p.m. Jan. 1 at Freetown Town Hall.

**Town of Harford**

Harford Town Hall is located at 394 State Route 38.

The Town Board will meet at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 5 at Harford Town Hall.

**Town of Dryden**

Dryden Town Hall is located at 93 E. Main St.

The Rail Trail Task Force will meet at 7 p.m. Monday at Dryden Town Hall.

The Climate Action Committee will meet at 5 p.m. Tuesday virtually.

The Town Board will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday in a hybrid format.

The Broadband Committee will meet at 10:30 a.m. Dec. 19 in a

hybrid format.

The Conservation Board will meet at 7 p.m. Dec. 30 in a hybrid format.

**Village of Groton**

The Board of Trustees will meet at 7 p.m. Monday at the Groton Municipal Building, 308 Main St.

**Village of Freeville**

The Board of Trustees will meet at 7 p.m. Jan. 6 at Freeville Village Hall, 5 Factory St.

**Village of Moravia**

The Moravia Village Office is located at 22 Central St.

The Planning Board will meet at 7 p.m. Monday at the Moravia Village Office.

The Village Board will meet at 7 p.m. Dec. 22 at the Moravia Village Office.

**Town of Locke**

The Town Board will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday at Locke Town Hall, 1215 Main St.

**Town of Sempronius**

Sempronius Town Hall is located at 2481 State

Route 41A.

The Town Board will meet at 7 p.m. Monday at Sempronius Town Hall.

**Village of Tully**

The Tully Municipal Building is located at 5833 Meeting House Road.

The Village Board will meet at 7 p.m. Jan. 7.

**Village of DeRuyter**

The Genevieve D. Staley Civic Center is located at 735 Utica St.

The Village Board will meet at 6:15 p.m. Wednesday.

**Cortland Area Al-Anon**

Meetings for Al-Anon support group will be held at 6 p.m. Thursdays at the YWCA, 14 Clayton Ave., Cortland, 7 p.m. Sundays at Christ Community Church, 1093 Route 13, Cortland, and 7 p.m. Monday at Homer Congregational Church, 28 S. Main Street, Homer.

The entrance for Monday’s meeting is at back of church.

Cortland Calendar

**Friday, December 12**

CORTLAND — The Homeville Museum at the CNY Living History Center will host the Whitechapel Ringers and the Finger Lakes Saxophone Quartet. The free concert starts at 7 p.m.

CORTLAND — Santa will be visiting Crown Park Rehabilitation and Nursing Center for free pictures at 4:30 p.m. There will be a hot chocolate bar and other refreshments.

CORTLAND — The Women of Faith will meet at 10 a.m. at Christ Community Church, 1093 State Route 13, Cortland. The focus is “What is our nonperishable gift?” The charity will be gifts for two specially chosen families from “Helping Hands Caring Heart.” For details, call 607-753-9917 or 607-753-7148.

CORTLAND — Join Waterfalls Spa at Greek Peak for an evening of relaxation and holiday indulgence. The Spa-liday Party starts at 5:30 p.m. and features exclusive discounts on products, memberships and gift cards, along with the opportunity to build your own custom gift baskets. Guests will enjoy complimentary food, drinks and a selection of pampering services, including chair

massages, reflexology and mini facials.

**Saturday, December 13**

CORTLAND — The Visitor Center at Lime Hollow Nature Center will turn into a Holiday Market from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Dec. 13 and 14, filling the space with craft, artisan and specialty food vendors. Shop locally for everyone on your list right at Lime Hollow. All proceeds support the Nature Center and local vendors. Warm up inside with tea and hot chocolate.

FREEVILLE — Freeville Fire Department is hosting a free holiday movie at 6 p.m., showing “How the Grinch Stole Christmas.”

**Sunday, December 14**

CORTLAND — The 1890 House will be holding a Victorian Wassail event from noon to 4 p.m. The annual open house will have festive fare, traditional wassail punch, music of the season and visits by Santa and the Grinch. Optional donations of canned food for a local food pantry will be accepted.

CORTLAND — Park Alumni House will be transformed into a winter wonderland from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Stroll along the

enchanted pathways, breathe in the crisp winter air and enjoy the joy of the season. There will be hot chocolate and gingerbread cookies to warm your belly, a firepit for warming your face and music will fill the air to warm your soul. Join the Parks Alumni House in supporting the Cortland Cub Scout Pack 100 with entry donations, whether they are monetary, canned food or gently used clothing, all will be greatly appreciated.

CORTLAND — Join the Cortland County Family YMCA for a free holiday movie. Home Alone will be showing at 11 a.m., accompanied by hot chocolate, cookies and a coloring contest.

LISLE — The Lisle Fire Department will be hosting breakfast with Santa at 8 a.m. The event is all you can eat pancakes, French toast, eggs, coffee and more, with free pictures with Santa.

**Tuesday, December 16**

DRYDEN — Stop into Protagonist Books and Coffee for some freshly brewed tea and take a seat with local author Isabel Sterling, who will be offering free tarot readings for the evening. See

what messages are to be revealed during Yuletide. Sign ups for tarot readings begin at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday with readings starting at 6 p.m. There are only 20 slots available for the reading so be sure to sign up to ensure a spot.

**Thursday, December 18**

CORTLAND — Take the time this Winter Solstice to warm-up by a roaring fire and enjoy warm soup and bread at Lime Hollow Nature Center at the Solstice Lantern Festival from 4 to 7 p.m. Set your intentions by creating a wish bundle and walk through a Winter Spiral made of evergreen branches. The event will be entirely outdoors and donations are encouraged but not required.

CORTLANDVILLE — Homer Chapter 222 Order of Eastern Star will meet at 7 p.m. at the Cortlandville Masonic Lodge, 1883 State Route 13, Cortlandville. Matron Katina Casterline will preside for the purpose of the initiation of a new member. Dress code for the ladies is long white dress or skirt and blouse, and dark suit for the gents. “F” dollars continue to be collected for the Grand Chapter Foundation. Refreshment committee is Sandra Attleson and Barbara Bergeron with help

from chapter members.

**Friday, December 19**

CORTLAND — Santa Claus will be at Cortland Water Works for three dates to a visit all the little boys and girls for the annual tradition that goes back decades. The big man himself returns to Cortland Water Works Dec. 19 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Dec. 21 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Dec. 23 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**Saturday, December 20**

CORTLAND — Holiday fun, videos, photos, hot cocoa and a cookie contest await from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at SPLAT! Sumthin’



**CHRISTMAS TREES**

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**Any Size- Any Kind**

**Open Through December 21st**



# Gov. Hochul wants universal child care.

## A new report suggests a starting point

**Dan Clark**  
**Times Union, Albany,**  
**N.Y. (TNS)**

ALBANY — Democrats in New York have been trying to achieve universal access to affordable child care in New York for years, but have so far failed to coalesce around a plan to get there.

Gov. Kathy Hochul is expected to soon renew her push toward that goal, which she committed to in her most recent State of the State address almost a year ago.

It's not an impossible task: New Mexico this year became the first state in the country to offer universal access to no-cost child care by removing income eligibility requirements for assistance and permanently waiving family co-payments.

One of the main obstacles for New York to expand its own offerings is disagreement about the most effective place to start.

Advocates for universal child care say they have an answer the state could adopt as soon as this year. It's being pitched in a new report from the advocacy group New Yorkers United for Child Care and members of the United Auto Workers union.

"Everyone's talking about universal child care but we barely have pre-K and 3-K," said Rebecca Bailin, the founder and



**Gov. Kathy Hochul attends a news conference in Astoria, New York, on Oct. 14, 2025, in New York.**

Barry Williams/New York Daily News/TNS

executive director of New Yorkers United for Child Care. "That's the first step."

Bailin founded the group three years ago when she began to question whether she could afford to remain in New York City if she had children.

The price tag on child care in New York is high: The average annual cost can range from \$12,000 for care at a licensed provider's home to \$20,459 for infants at brick-and-mor-

tar facilities, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

"If you're not rich, it's really hard," Bailin said. It becomes less difficult, but can still be challenging, when children are old enough to attend school. Instead of having to scramble to find a child care provider, parents can send their kids to public school.

That can happen earlier if children have access to pre-K, but that varies in

each region of the state. Access is highest in New York City, where 90% of 4-year-olds are able to enroll in pre-K, according to the new report from Bailin's group.

It's lowest in the Capital Region, where only 55% of 4-year-olds are able to enroll in pre-K, according to the report. That's well below the statewide average of 75%.

Pre-K is often offered where it's available by school districts, some of

which also contract with local providers, but space can be limited. The state would need to provide access to another 40,684 4-year-olds to ensure pre-K that's truly universal, the report says.

Every parent who can't enroll their child in pre-K and doesn't have a support system to step in has to shell out thousands of dollars each year on average. That's why United Auto Workers members got involved with the issue.

"Putting an average of \$20,000 a year back in families' pockets is the best investment our state can make toward achieving the affordability agenda," said Brandon Mancilla, director of UAW Region 9A.

"Affordability," of course, is the latest buzzword driving policies pushed by Democrats as they enter a critical election year in New York and around the nation.

Universal access to child care is expected to be one of those policies. It was a top priority for New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani during his campaign this year. Hochul has said she intends to partner with him on it. New Yorkers United for Child Care estimates that the state would have to spend another \$500 million each year to enact universal pre-kindergar-

ten programs statewide.

"I hope in this political climate that exists today that it's possible," said state Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages, a Democrat from Nassau County who has faced personal challenges finding child care for her three children.

That funding would unlock new economic opportunities, Solages said. Parents would be able to spend their money elsewhere while children begin to receive an education at a critical time for brain development.

"That amount is a drop in the bucket to the massive amount of investment that you're going to be making in young children (and) in parents who now can work," Solages said.

The report from New Yorkers United for Child Care proposes including that initial investment in next year's state budget, which is due to be negotiated and finalized by the end of March.

That's the first part of the report's three-year plan for New York's expansion to universal child care. It recommends expanding access next year to 3-K — full-day instruction for 3-year-olds — in next year's state budget. The report then proposes fully funding universal preschool access to 3- and 4-year-olds in the third year.

## Obituaries



**Sandra**  
**'Sandy' Brown**

Sandra "Sandy" Brown passed away peacefully on December 7, 2025, at the age of 79. Born in Johnson City, NY, on November 19, 1946, Sandy was a proud graduate of Whitney Point Central School, Class of 1967.

Sandy devoted much of her life to the Marathon School District, where she served as both a bus driver and a teacher's assistant. Her dedication, kindness, and tireless work ethic left a lasting impact on countless students and families. She took great pride in being a part of the school community and was known for her warm heart and unwavering support.

Outside of her professional life, Sandy found joy in sewing and quilting, often crafting beautiful pieces that reflected her creativity and care. She had a deep love for genealogy and spent many hours tracing her family's roots, preserving stories and connections for future generations. Time with family and friends was especially precious to her — whether it was a shopping trip, a travel adventure, or simply sharing a laugh. Sandy cherished every moment.

Above all, she had a remarkable way of putting her family and friends first; no matter the distance or effort required, she would go out of her way to help, to show up, and to make sure those she loved felt supported. One of her greatest joys was helping to plan her high school reunions, a role she embraced with enthusiasm and love.

Sandy was preceded in death by her parents, Monroe C. Perce, Marguerite, and Robert Theleman; her brothers, Monroe "Sonny" Perce, and Raymond Perce; her stepsons, Mark, Scott, and Jason Brown.

She is survived by her daughters, Danie'l Fish and Denise (Kevin) King; her beloved grandsons, Alexander and Ethan King; her stepson, Martin Brown; and many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren who will carry her memory forward. She is also survived by her sisters, Verna "Randi" Carlisle (Michael Repetto), Soniann Ratcliffe, and numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews.

At this time, no services are scheduled. In lieu of flowers, donations in Sandy's memory may be made to the Center Lisle Congregational Church, 9670 State Route 79, Lisle, NY 13797.

The family is being assisted by Wright-Beard Funeral Home of Cortland. Online condolences may be shared at <https://wright-beard.com>.

# DV victims get coerced into debt, NY may create way out

**Dan Clark**  
**Times Union, Albany,**  
**N.Y. (TNS)**

ALBANY — Among the dozens of bills Gov. Kathy Hochul will consider before the end of the year is one that would allow debt incurred by victims of domestic violence at the hands of their abuser to be removed.

It's a bill that supporters say would change the lives of those victims, who often find that debt nearly impossible to pay off as they're getting a fresh start away from their abuser.

"For many years, we've seen the reality for survivors of domestic violence (and) gender-based violence, who are left with the bag financially for the abuse they've suffered," said Rachel L. Braunstein, policy director at Her Justice, a nonprofit that provides legal help for women living in poverty. When a victim of domestic or family violence is able to escape their abuser, the remnants

of that person's control often continue to wreak havoc in several areas of that survivor's life. Among them is the victim's finances, which are often used by an abuser both for their own benefit

***"We know that economic abuse is nearly universal (in domestic violence)."***

— Lauren Schuster,  
Vice president of government affairs  
at Urban Resource Institute

and to instill a sense of fear around the idea of living without them.

"We know that economic abuse is nearly universal (in domestic violence)," said Lauren Schuster, vice president of government affairs at Urban Resource Institute, the largest provider of domestic violence shelter services in the country.

"Almost 100% of survivors of domestic and gender-based violence have experienced it," Schuster

said. "And importantly, they list it as among the main reasons that they stay in or return to a dangerous and violent situation."

That includes instances of what is known as

"coerced" debt, which is when an abuser convinces or forces a victim to take out a loan or line of credit on their behalf. The victim is then responsible for paying off that debt regardless of whether their abuser contributes or not.

The bill, soon to be acted on by Hochul, would allow victims to have that debt removed by creditors, who would then be able to hold their abuser civilly liable for the mon-

ey owed.

"If you want to keep a survivor down, this is a great way to do it from the point of view of the abuser," Rosenthal said. The bill "is a way for victims to dispute the debts."

The process was designed to balance the rights of creditors with the relief sought by survivors. The first step would be for the victim to inform the creditor, either by phone or through a written notice, that they were coerced into the debt. The creditor would then request documentation and provide them with a form that explains the process.

Victims would have to provide the creditor with an official document that backs up their claim that the debt was coerced. That could be a police report documenting the abuse, a court order, an identity theft report or a sworn certification from a qualified professional who has helped them, such as a domestic violence counselor.

# NY woman charged with smuggling Indian nationals across US border

**Hindustan Times**  
**New Delhi**  
**(TNS)**

A 42-year-old woman from New York has been charged with smuggling Indian Nationals into the US through Canada.

The woman, identified as Stacey Taylor, has been accused of being part of an international smuggling conspiracy, under which individuals, primarily from India, were brought illegally to the US, PTI news agency reported.

According to an official statement, the woman, from Plattsburgh, appeared for an arraign-

ment earlier last week after being indicted by a federal grand jury in Albany in October.

Taylor's vehicle was stopped by US Border Patrol agents near the Quebec border in Churubusco, New York in the early morning hours in January, PTI cited court records as showing. After her arrest in January, Taylor has also been implicated in a smuggling conspiracy as recently as September this year.

After her vehicle was stopped in January, the border patrol agents found four foreign nationals inside the wom-

an's vehicle, three of them being Indian nationals and one Canadian national, police said.

The four had crossed the US-Canadian border illegally, without any checks.

Taylor's cellphone, which was later inspected by law enforcement officials amid the probe, also revealed text messages indicating that she had been involved in multiple other such smuggling activities prior to being caught.

Following this, Taylor was charged with conspiring with others to engage in alien smuggling,

and four counts of alien smuggling for profit, according to the indictment. Among these, three counts were second or subsequent offenses.

If the indictment does turn into a conviction, Taylor could face a mandatory minimum penalty of five years' imprisonment, per count of alien smuggling for profit.

In addition to this, she might receive additional time for second and subsequent offenses, Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's Criminal Division Matthew Galeotti said in the statement.

The Cortland Standard accepts death notices and obituaries. There is no charge for a death notice, which only includes limited information: Name, age, date of death. The name of the funeral home handling arrangements. When and where calling hours and services will be (if any).





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## Another View



Scott Olson/Getty Images/TNS

Customers walk in the parking lot outside a Costco store on Dec. 2, 2025, in Chicago, Illinois.

# Costco’s lawsuit puts Trump’s tariffs on trial

The following editorial is from the Chicago Tribune.

Costco has become a symbol of American abundance.

A place where you can buy a 10-pound rack of ribs, Christmas lights, a new winter coat, shoes for your kids, a flat-screen TV or those delicious gluten-free macarons. You can get a massive slice of pizza for \$1.99. If you’re a hungry high schooler, you can buy the whole pie for about \$10.

A handful of viral videos on TikTok and X show people from communist countries such as Cuba, as well as former Soviet bloc nations, having emotional reactions as they first experience the store’s aisles of plenty, wandering awestruck amid cases of oversized meats, prepared food and clothing.

To some degree, most of us feel that sense of wonder when we walk into one of these warehouses.

Point is, Costco is a beloved part of American culture. A place where you can get a good deal and a good meal — and about a thousand other things. And President Donald Trump’s tariffs are on their naughty list this holiday season.

Costco is suing the Trump administration, asking the courts to overturn the sweeping

tariffs imposed beginning in February under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and arguing the law doesn’t actually give the president authority to levy import duties without the approval of Congress. The retailer is also seeking refunds of tariffs it has already paid this year on imported goods.

Costco has not publicly disclosed the cost it has incurred due to Trump’s trade wars, but it’s certain to be a lot of money. And when one of America’s biggest retailers is forced to shoulder substantial new tariff costs, a fair chunk of those expenses show up in its price tags. Ordinary Americans ultimately pay that freight.

Americans trust Costco with a kind of bipartisan affection that’s increasingly rare in today’s politically fraught consumer landscape. The chain symbolizes value, fairness, stability and competence — traits many voters feel our politics lack. When a brand with that sort of credibility publicly challenges a president’s signature economic policy, it punctures Trump’s narrative that his tariffs primarily hit foreign governments rather than American consumers and businesses.

In short, Costco has loads of clout with suburban families, small business owners and

other middle-income shoppers who watch prices closely. What they say and do matters.

The mega retailer isn’t the only company that’s challenged Trump’s tariffs. Learning Resources LLC, a Vernon Hills toymaker, also filed suit, as did Revlon and Kawasaki Motors. The Supreme Court recently heard arguments on the challenge by Learning Resources and another plaintiff and is expected to decide within the next few months. If the court rules against Trump, it would deal a major blow to what has become a central plank of the president’s trade agenda.

No matter what the courts decide, shoppers are already feeling the consequences. Even with inflation cooling, prices remain well above pre-pandemic levels, giving warehouse clubs a bigger role in helping families stretch their budgets.

And if the brand on which you rely for necessities points the finger at tariffs, you’re more likely to listen.

Trump can shrug off criticism from economists or Democrats. But when one of the country’s most beloved brands says his trade policy is misguided, it risks shifting the conversation from ideology to everyday life — where Trump’s message is most vulnerable.

## LWVCC Legislative Corner Checks and Balances

### The League of Women Voters of Cortland County

One of the most fundamental principles of our democratic government is checks and balances. The term has recently been prominent in the news. Let’s look at what the system is and why it is currently coming up so frequently.

The Constitution divides the government into three distinct branches. The checks and balances system of government grants and limits powers of each of its branches to eliminate any single branch from becoming too powerful. Each of the three branches has its own set of rules, obligations and constraints. Each branch has an obligation to maintain this system to assure the proper functioning of the government.

The first branch, the Legislative (which together comprise the United States House of Representatives and Senate), creates laws, approves presidential appointees, controls the government budget and can declare war. The second branch, the Executive (the President), enforces the laws created by Congress, issues executive orders, sets policy to comply with the laws and is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The third branch, the Judiciary (including the nine justices on the United States Supreme Court as well as appointed federal judges across the country), interprets the laws and actions to ensure that they are constitutional. Each of these members of our government swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution.

Each branch is held accountable by the others. The president can veto laws established by the Congress, but the Congress, with a supermajority (two thirds majority in both the House and Senate), can override that veto. The Judiciary can review the laws to assure that they follow the Constitution. While the executive branch can write executive orders, the Congress can make laws that might negate the order or the judiciary may overturn the law if they find it to be unconstitutional. The

judiciary is meant to be bound by the articles and amendments of the Constitution.

The co-equal branches are meant to work together to uphold the laws of the country safe and free. Each member of Congress and the President hold elected office and must be chosen by the electorate (the public that votes). The offices have specifically defined terms and election conditions.

If the voters are unhappy with the functioning of the elected officials, they can be replaced in the subsequent election cycle. While the priorities of these officials may be aligned, each branch is designed to oversee the others.

The president is not meant to have any power regarding who is elected to the House of Representatives or the Senate, and likewise these members of Congress have no power regarding who is elected to the presidency. Congress has oversight of the presidency and can, if warranted, have that person removed through the impeachment process. The impeachment process is well defined and requires at least half the members of the House of Representatives and two thirds of the members of the Senate to vote for this measure. While presidential impeachment has been invoked in the past, the process has never successfully been completed in our country’s history. The president has no oversight of Congress but has the ability to veto laws passed by the Congress holding Congress to a standard acceptable to the president.

The members of the United States Supreme Court are not elected, but are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Upon confirmation, the new justice holds a lifetime term. The purpose of this is to eliminate any potential for political prejudice on their interpretation of the Constitution. The president can choose to nominate someone, but if the Senate believes that individual is not qualified or may not be impartial, they are not obligated to confirm

that person. Once confirmed, the members of the Supreme Court have no direct oversight but are subject to the impeachment process and can be removed by Congress.

These checks and balances require the various members of government to carry out their responsibilities with the interests of the country and its citizens as guides. If the elected officials have different priorities than these, the system doesn’t work. Members of Congress are meant to work together to establish laws to benefit the population. The Judiciary is meant to interpret the laws and orders to guarantee that they comply with the Constitution. Although not intended to be the case, the system of checks and balances can be questioned at times when each elected branch of government is in political alignment with the other as is currently the case.

As voting members of our society, it’s our responsibility to demand that our elected officials meet their responsibilities in maintaining these checks and balances. Our elected officials are in effect hired by the electorate to carry out these responsibilities. If the checks and balance system is ineffective, our democracy will fail.

As members of the League of Women Voters, we endeavor to educate the voting population regarding the responsibilities associated with each elected office as well as make available the information specific to each candidate. We accomplish this by providing the necessary information through the Vote411 website, as well as sponsoring public forums for candidates wishing to participate. As a nonpartisan organization we never promote any candidate or party, but attempt to shine light on the pertinent information needed to cast an informed vote.

*The League of Women Voters of Cortland County is a nonpartisan activist organization encouraging informed and active participation in government. We believe in empowering voters through education.*

## Letters to the Editor A note from Jesus

### To the Editor:

My birthday is soon, and many of you want to put “Christ” back into Christmas. You talk about that a lot. So this year I thought I’d tell you how. I’ve told you before — thoroughly — but there are a some who’ve forgotten. So let’s go!

Long ago, I said, “I was

hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you tended me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

When folks asked when they’d done all those

things for me, I explained, “Whatever you did for the least of these my brethren, you did for me.”

Those who care for others go straight to heaven, I explained.

Remember though, that “whatever you did” part applies to the bad stuff, too.

Those who refuse to

feed the hungry, who beat and imprison strangers, who tear families apart, are doing that to me, too.

In the USA right now, tens of thousands of armed men (and a few hundred women) spend their days beating and imprisoning ME, tearing my family away from ME, cutting off MY access to food,

shelter, freedom and love.

Many more Americans support the regime responsible for this cruel assault on ME.

But neither the voting booth nor the marauders’ masks can hide their souls from me. And my answer to them will be the same as it was in Matthew 25:41— “Depart from me,

you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Or in modern terms, “Go straight to hell.”

What part of love thy neighbor did they not understand, I wonder?

Maggie Shayne Lewis  
Cincinnatus

### Letters to the editor policy

The *Cortland Standard* welcomes letters from readers for publication on this page. All letters submitted must be signed by the writer and include the writer’s home address and daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and content. Letters are limited to 300 words in length. Letters endorsing or opposing the election of candidates for public office are limited to 200 words. Thank-you notes will not be accepted.



# Abrego Garcia wins latest bid to be released

**Zoe Tillman  
Bloomberg News (TNS)**  
WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Maryland has ordered the immediate release of Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran migrant at the center of political and legal battles as a symbol of President Donald Trump's hard-line immigration policies.

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis found that U.S. officials lacked legal grounds to keep Abrego Garcia in custody and that his ongoing detention appeared to be "constitutionally infirm." Abrego Garcia has been fighting Trump administration efforts to deport him while also defending against human smuggling charges in Tennessee. U.S. officials' latest plan had been to send him to Liberia, but a judge has blocked that for now.

Xinis' decision on Thursday is the latest setback for the Trump administration in the long-running court fight, which gained attention earlier this year after the government admitted it had sent Abrego Garcia to El Salvador by mistake. The release order follows a ruling in the Tennessee case that allowed his lawyers to collect evidence to seek dismissal of the criminal case as a vindictive and selective prosecution effort.



Sen. Van Hollen's Office via Getty Images/TNS

**In this handout provided by Sen. Van Hollen's Office, U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) meets with Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, left, at an undisclosed location on April 17 in San Salvador, El Salvador. Abrego Garcia, a Maryland resident, was illegally deported by the Trump administration and has been held in prison in El Salvador since March 15.**

The federal judge presiding over his criminal case already had ordered that Abrego Garcia could go free pending trial. He has pleaded not guilty to the indictment. The immigration matter was the remaining reason the Trump administration gave for keeping him in custody.

Abrego Garcia is being held at an Immigration

and Customs Enforcement facility in Pennsylvania.

In Thursday's opinion, Xinis found that there was no final decision on the record from a U.S. immigration judge ordering that Abrego Garcia be deported, which meant that officials couldn't hold him. An immigration judge had originally barred him from being

returned to El Salvador, given the risk to his safety, but that wasn't the same as a final deportation order, she wrote.

The judge also concluded that Abrego Garcia's detention appeared to be "constitutionally infirm" because the Trump administration hadn't used his months in custody to take reasonable steps to find a different country for

his deportation. She noted that U.S. officials failed to act on his willingness to be sent to Costa Rica — which agreed to take him — but instead focused on exploring arrangements with African nations that refused or that he opposed. The U.S. Supreme Court has said that immigration detention cannot be used as a form of punishment, she wrote.

Xinis directed the government to provide an update on Abrego Garcia's status later in the afternoon on Thursday.

A Justice Department spokesperson declined to comment. An attorney for Abrego Garcia did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Thursday.

Separate from the detention issue, the Justice Department has argued for Xinis to dissolve her order barring Abrego Garcia from being removed from the U.S. The judge hasn't ruled on that yet.

Abrego Garcia, a father of three married to a U.S. citizen, was arrested in March and sent to El Salvador where he was immediately incarcerated without a trial in a maximum security prison. Trump administration officials acknowledged that Abrego Garcia's deportation was an "administrative error" but continued to oppose efforts to bring him back to the U.S.

He spent several weeks at the notorious facility known as CECOT before he was transferred to another lockup in El Salvador.

After months of legal wrangling that wound up before the U.S. Supreme Court at one point, he was returned to the U.S. in June to face the fresh federal criminal charges.

## Moderate House Republicans look to force vote on Affordable Care Act tax credits

**Jessie Hellmann  
Lia DeGroot  
and Sandhya Raman  
CQ-Roll Call (TNS)**

WASHINGTON — Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., on Wednesday filed a discharge petition to force a vote on a two-year extension of the enhanced Affordable Care Act tax credits, as House GOP leadership eyes a health care vote next week that won't include such a measure.

The petition had only eight signatures as of Wednesday afternoon, though some supporters

said it could get the support of between 10 and 20 Republicans. A discharge petition needs 218 votes to force a vote on a bill, but it's unclear if it will get enough support as Democrats have pushed for a longer extension of the subsidies.

"If these protections expire, millions of Americans will be hit with premium increases they simply cannot afford, forcing impossible choices about their health, their finances, and their futures," Fitzpatrick said in a statement. "They de-

serve a concrete solution now — not promises of one later."

Fitzpatrick introduced the bipartisan bill on Tuesday to extend the credits for two years and establish minimum premiums and income caps for enrollees, while allowing enrollees to take half of the amount of the credit instead in the form of a health savings account contribution. The bill also includes language to regulate pharmacy benefit managers.

Fitzpatrick is among a small contingent of

Republicans running in competitive elections next year who have voiced concern about letting the tax credits expire Dec. 31.

But House Republican leadership has resisted their call, instead promising a vote as soon as next week on health care bills that would not include an extension of the credits.

"It was clear that, given the time frame and given some of the differences within our conference on particular issues, that a bill was not going to be put forward," said Rep. Mike Lawler, R-N.Y., who

signed the petition.

The enhanced tax credits were first passed by the Democrat-controlled Congress in 2021 and then extended with an expiration at the end of this year. The fight over them was the focus of the week-long government shutdown this fall, resulting in a promise from Senate Republican leadership to hold a vote on a bill to extend them.

Most House Democrats favor a three-year extension of the subsidies with no changes to how they are structured, a prop-

osition even the more ACA-friendly moderate Republicans have balked at. Two Democrats — Rep. Tom Suozzi of New York and Jared Golden of Maine, who co-sponsored the Fitzpatrick bill — had signed on to the petition as of Wednesday afternoon.

Suozzi said the muscle of bipartisanship in Washington had atrophied, "and this is trying to get back to the muscle memory of people working together to actually solve problems that people face."

## 'Gold Card' visa website has been launched

**Chris Johnson  
CQ-Roll Call  
(TNS)**

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Wednesday launched a Gold Card initiative that would allow foreign nationals to purchase legal status in the United States for \$1 million.

President Donald Trump was among the U.S. officials who made announcements touting

the opening of the trump-card.gov site, which has the Gold Card for individuals and the Corporate Gold Card for businesses.

"THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT'S TRUMP GOLD CARD IS HERE TODAY!" Trump posted on social media. "A direct path to Citizenship for all qualified and vetted people. SO EXCITING! Our Great American Companies can finally keep their

invaluable Talent."

Qualified individuals and corporations, who contribute \$1 million and \$2 million respectively, will receive expedited EB-1 or EB-2 green cards following rigorous vetting, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said.

The site allows people to apply to "receive U.S. residency in record time" via a \$15,000 DHS processing fee, a background

approval and a contribution of \$1 million.

And it allows businesses to apply to receive U.S. residency "for your employees" via a \$15,000 DHS processing fee, a background approval and a contribution of \$2 million.

Trump signed the executive order in September establishing the Gold Card after announcing his plan for the initiative

during an address to Congress at the start of the year, which has been promoted by Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. Back then, Trump was putting the price at \$5 million.

Trump set a Dec. 18 deadline in his executive order. A draft copy of the Form I-140G, which Gold Card applicants would use to make the purchase, was published in the Fed-

eral Register last month.

The order for the Gold Card came down at the same time Trump signed the proclamation instituting a \$100,000 fee to obtain an H-1B visa, which generated more attention at the time.

Lutnick has estimated the Gold Card initiative combined with the new fee on H-1B visas would amount to \$100 billion in federal revenue.

## Trump: Warner Bros. deal should include sale of CNN

**Jennifer A. Dlouhy  
Bloomberg News (TNS)**

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signaled he'll oppose a Warner Bros. Discovery Inc. deal that doesn't include new ownership of CNN, a potential wrinkle for the bid from Netflix Inc.

"I think any deal should — it should be guaranteed and certain that CNN is part of it or sold separately," Trump said during a meeting with business leaders Wednesday at the White House.

"I don't think the people that are running that company right now and running CNN, which is a very dishonest group of people, I don't think that should be allowed to continue," he added. "I think

CNN should be sold along with everything else."

Trump said his primary concern is that the current management of the network may be rewarded by being allowed to continue operating "with money" from a sale. Warner Bros. is the target of competing offers from Netflix and Paramount Skydance Corp.

Netflix has agreed to buy the Warner Bros. TV and film studios and its HBO business in a deal valued at \$27.75 a share. Warner Bros. plans to spin off its cable channels, including CNN, before it closes the Netflix transaction. The spinoff is scheduled for the third quarter of next year, with Warner Bros. Chief Financial Officer Gunnar Wiedenfels

named to lead the business.

Paramount is trying to buy all of Warner Bros., including cable networks like CNN, for \$30 a share.

Hollywood and Washington have been closely monitoring the president's comments on the possible deals. Paramount Skydance Chief Executive Officer David Ellison's father, software billionaire Larry Ellison, is a Trump supporter.

The Wall Street Journal reported David Ellison promised Trump sweeping changes at CNN, which has long drawn complaints from the president, if he took control of the network's parent company. Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, has also been involved in setting



Alex Wong/Getty Images/TNS

**U.S. President Donald Trump participates in a roundtable discussion in the Cabinet Room of the White House on Monday in Washington, D.C.**

up financing for Ellison's competing offer.

Ellison sent a letter on Wednesday to Warner

Bros. investors arguing that his proposal offers better value and a higher chance of passing regulatory scrutiny. He urged them to support his tender offer for the shares.

Trump has also met with Netflix co-Chief Executive Officer Ted Sarandos about the deal and hasn't publicly weighed in to favor either offer. Trump sidestepped a question about Kushner's involvement on Wednesday, but indicated he could eventually weigh in on a regulatory review.

"I will be probably involved, maybe involved in the decision. It depends," Trump said. "You have some good companies bidding on it."





Heiko Junge/NTB/AFP via Getty Images/TNS  
Nobel peace laureate Maria Corina Machado addresses a press conference at the Grand Hotel in Oslo, Norway, on Thursday. Machado arrived in Oslo hours after the Venezuelan opposition leader's award was collected on her behalf by her daughter.

# Nobel winner Machado plans to return to Venezuela

Ott Ummelas and Heidi Taksdal Skjeseth  
Bloomberg News (TNS)

OSLO, Norway — Venezuelan dissident María Corina Machado said she plans to ultimately go back home and disappear from authorities to continue fighting for democracy. Speaking at a news conference in Oslo on Thursday, after emerging in the Norwegian capital in the early hours, the No-

bel Peace Prize laureate said she will return “as soon as possible.”  
“I will return to Venezuela when there are enough conditions in terms of security, it doesn’t depend on the regime’s exit,” Machado said.  
“When I go back, there are two possibilities,” she told journalists earlier the same day. “There’s no certainty where the regime will be but if it’s still in

power, certainly I will be with my people and they will not know where I am, we have ways to do that.”  
The Nobel Institute said that Machado had undergone “a journey in a situation of extreme danger” to reach Norway from her place of hiding in Venezuela. She missed Wednesday’s Nobel Peace Prize ceremony by hours, and her daughter accepted the award on her behalf.

The perilous trip involved her taking a boat to Curacao, a Dutch Caribbean island about 40 miles away, a person familiar with the matter said on Wednesday. Bad weather delayed her journey, the person said.  
Machado leads the resistance to President Nicolás Maduro’s autocratic rule. Leaving the country carries a risk of not being allowed back in.

# Ukraine allies to meet as Kyiv sends draft plan to Trump

Aliaksandr Kudrytski  
Bloomberg News (TNS)

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte warned Russia will come for the rest of Europe if its war-mongering is not checked now, just moments before Ukraine’s allies were slated to discuss U.S. President Donald Trump’s latest peace push.

“We need to be crystal clear about the threat,” the military alliance leader said in a speech Thursday in Berlin. “We are Russia’s next target. And we are already in harm’s way.”

Rutte painted a stark picture of what’s at stake for the continent as Moscow continues to press its maximalist demands for territory and NATO restrictions in return for a vague promise to end its full-scale invasion, currently heading into its fourth winter.  
“Russia has brought



Toby Melville/WPA/Getty Images/TNS

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, second from left, hosts a meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, left, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, second from right, and French President Emmanuel Macron at 10 Downing Street on Monday in London, England.

war back to Europe,” Rutte said. “And we must be prepared for the scale of war our grandparents

and great-grandparents endured.”  
Rutte’s remarks come as Europe frets over what

the Trump administration may do in its ongoing talks with Russia over the war.

# UN says peacekeepers came under Israeli fire in Lebanon

Weedah Hamzah  
Amira Rajab  
and Sara Jemel  
dpa (TNS)

BEIRUT — The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL, said on Wednesday that Israeli forces fired multiple bursts of machine-gun fire near a UN peacekeeping patrol along the UN-demarcated Blue Line, causing no casualties.

The Israeli military later said that the shots were not aimed at the peacekeepers but at a suspect.

UNIFIL said peacekeepers in vehicles were conducting a routine patrol near the village of Sarda on Tuesday when an Israeli Merkava tank

opened fire.  
“One burst of 10 rounds was fired over the patrol, followed by four additional 10-round bursts landing nearby,” the statement said.  
The mission said the peacekeepers immediately contacted the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) through UNIFIL liaison channels to demand an end to the shooting.  
“Attacks on or near peacekeepers constitute a serious violation of Resolution 1701,” the statement said, urging Israel to halt what UNIFIL called aggressive behavior toward forces mandated to maintain stability along the frontier. UN Resolu-

tion 1701 ended the 2006 Lebanon War.  
UNIFIL noted that both the tank and the patrol were located inside Lebanese territory at the time.  
**Israel: Warning shots by soldiers at suspect**  
The IDF said in a statement that soldiers had identified a suspect approaching an Israeli base and fired warning shots at him.  
“During the warning fire, UNIFIL forces contacted the IDF claiming they heard gunfire in their direction. It was clarified to them that the fire was not aimed at them or in their direction, but at the approaching threat in the area,” the IDF said.

The military emphasized that it was not acting against UN troops and would continue to cooperate extensively with their representatives.  
**Repeated violations of ceasefire**  
The incident comes amid a period of Israeli military activity along the Lebanese-Israeli border, where Israel has been carrying almost daily strikes against pro-Iranian Hezbollah positions.  
Israel and Hezbollah agreed to a ceasefire in November 2024 after more than a year of cross-border fire, though both sides have repeatedly accused each other of violating the deal since then.

# How Machado outsmarted Maduro’s forces to get to Norway

Antonio  
María Delgado  
Miami Herald (TNS)

The extraordinary escape of Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado from the grip of Nicolás Maduro’s authoritarian regime to fly to Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize involved months of planning, a stealth journey through 10 military checkpoints and a perilous predawn voyage across the Caribbean Sea, according to new details shared by people familiar with the operation and reported by The Wall Street Journal.

Machado said she intends to return home “very soon,” despite the severe risks she faces. Long considered Maduro’s most influential political rival, she had been living in hiding for more than a year in a suburb of Caracas.

The regime had barred her from registering as a presidential candidate and accused her of conspiracy and terrorism — charges widely condemned by international human-rights groups as politically motivated. Venezuela’s attorney general had warned she would be declared a fugitive if she attempted to travel to Norway.

Yet her escape was already underway.

According to The Wall Street Journal, Machado was smuggled out of her safe house shortly before dawn on Monday, wearing a wig and a disguise, then placed into a vehicle headed for the coast. The 75-mile journey to a small fishing village — where a boat had been arranged in advance — took nearly 10 hours. Along the route, the vehicle passed through 10 military checkpoints, each posing a potentially life-threatening risk of arrest. With two helpers beside her, Machado slipped through every control undetected, arriving at the coast just before midnight.

The escape corridor had been established over two months by a Venezuelan network experienced in clandestine evacuations. The group, according to the source, has helped numerous dissidents, activists and ordinary citizens flee the country as political repression has intensified.

But the most dangerous moments awaited them on the water. Before departure, the team made a critical call to the U.S. military to alert American forces stationed in the Caribbean of the vessel’s identity and occupants. In recent months, U.S. airstrikes targeting drug-trafficking boats in the region have struck more than 20 small vessels, causing over 80 deaths. The warning, the person said, was essential to avoid a fatal misunderstanding.

By the time Machado reached Curaçao, the most perilous phase of her escape had passed — but secrecy remained

imperative. Even the Nobel Institute, according to the BBC, did not know her whereabouts or whether she would arrive in time for the ceremony. Her daughter, Ana Corina Sosa, ended up accepting the award on her behalf.

When Machado finally appeared on the balcony of Oslo’s Grand Hotel, hours after landing in Norway, she was greeted by Venezuelan exiles waving flags and singing the national anthem. Many were seeing her in public for the first time in 16 months.

“For more than 16 months I have not been able to hug or touch anyone,” she told the BBC the next day. “Suddenly, within a matter of hours, I’ve been able to see the people I love most, touch them, cry and pray together.”

Speaking to reporters on Thursday after visiting the Norwegian Parliament, Machado said the journey that brought her to Oslo had been “long and dangerous,” and that dozens of people had risked their lives to help her. She insisted the award belongs to them — and to the Venezuelan people.

“The world is with us, and we are not alone,” she said. “This is a defining moment.”

The president of Norway’s Parliament, Masud Gharahkhani, who welcomed her with an embrace, said the peace prize honors not only Machado’s struggle but “the will of the Venezuelan people, who demanded change in an election that the regime refused to recognize.”

In her public appearances in Oslo, Machado reiterated her longstanding accusations that Maduro presides over a “criminal structure” funded by drug trafficking and human smuggling — allegations the government vehemently denies. She called on the international community to help “cut those flows” and pressure the regime toward democratic transition. She confirmed she had previously offered to meet with Maduro’s representatives to seek a peaceful resolution, but said “they rejected it.”

Asked about the recent U.S. strikes on vessels allegedly transporting drugs from Venezuela — the same operations that threatened her escape route — Machado declined to endorse any foreign military action. Instead, she accused the Maduro government of “handing over our sovereignty to criminal organizations.”

Despite her elevated global profile and the threats awaiting her at home, Machado said she is determined to return to Venezuela.

“Of course I am going to return,” she told the BBC. “I know exactly the risks I’m taking. I will be wherever I am most useful to our cause.”

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# Pres. Trump pardoned them for Jan. 6. Now they’re seeking millions of dollars

**Zoe Tillman**  
**Bloomberg News (TNS)**  
WASHINGTON — Almost 400 people pardoned or granted clemency by President Donald Trump in connection with the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol are now seeking millions of dollars in payouts from the federal government, according to their lawyer.

Attorney Mark McCloskey on Wednesday delivered hundreds of claims in person, wheeling a cart with five bankers’ boxes into a Justice Department office building in Washington. The St. Louis-based lawyer declined to share copies, citing his clients’ privacy, but said most are seeking \$1 million to \$10 million for alleged injuries and property damage during their arrest, prosecution and, in many cases, imprisonment.

It’s the latest instance of Trump supporters and allies pressing claims for taxpayer funds since he reclaimed the White House a year ago. The Justice Department confirmed in court papers



Smoke can be seen outside of the U.S. Capitol while police disperse the crowd hours after a mob of Trump supporters breached the building on Jan. 6, 2021. Rioters breached the building following a rally, as Congress was preparing to certify President-elect Joe Biden’s victory.

that it’s in settlement talks with Michael Flynn, an ex-Trump administration official and conservative activist, and Stefan Passantino, who served as a White House lawyer during Trump’s first term.

Trump previously told reporters that the Justice Department “probably” owes him “a lot of money” but said he’d give it “to charity” or use it to pay for White House renovations. The New York Times

reported that he had filed administrative claims seeking \$230 million for the now-defunct investigations into his 2016 campaign and his handling of classified material after he left the White House

in 2021. After Trump won the 2024 presidential race, he signed a proclamation on his first day in office granting pardons, sentence commutations and other clemency to the more than 1,500 people

charged with playing a role in the riot that unfolded as Congress met to certify Joe Biden’s 2020 victory over Trump.

Trump’s order described the prosecution effort — the largest in the Justice Department’s history — as “a grave national injustice.”

Earlier this year, U.S. officials agreed to pay nearly \$5 million this year to settle a claim brought by the family of Ashli Babbitt, who was shot and killed by a police officer inside the Capitol on Jan. 6.

A Justice Department spokesperson declined to comment. A White House spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment on Wednesday.

The president’s Jan. 6 clemency action covered an array of crimes prosecuted by Biden’s Justice Department, from misdemeanor trespassing to felony charges for assaulting police — approximately 140 officers were injured, according to government reports — carrying guns and other weapons to the Capitol, and seditious conspiracy.

## US Capitol is hard to navigate. Does it have to be?

**Nina Heller**  
**CQ-Roll Call (TNS)**  
WASHINGTON — To the unfamiliar, the U.S. Capitol and its surrounding office buildings are a maze of fluorescent lighting, identical hallways and unmarked tunnels. Even experienced staff and lawmakers sometimes get lost.

But that could start to change next year, if some House members get their way. Wayfinding tools could offer turn-by-turn directions, according to a new proposal from the House Administration

Modernization and Innovation Subcommittee.

“It’ll be sort of like a Google Maps, where it will take you through the Capitol, and that’s going to be great for folks that have never been,” said Rep. Stephanie Bice, R-Okla., who chairs the subcommittee. Digital signage would be installed at nine public entrances in the Longworth, Rayburn and Cannon Buildings, complete with daily committee schedules and member office listings. Funding for the project would come from the

existing Modernization Initiatives Account, if the House Appropriations Committee approves the request. Supporters say the project could help a range of people get where they want to go, from constituents visiting their representatives to lobbyists arriving for meetings. And even some members of Congress said they’d welcome any navigation help they could get.

“There’s so many different hallways and buildings,” said Rep. Yassamin Ansari, D-Ariz., who came to the Hill in this year’s

freshman class. “I think it takes personal effort, which sometimes can be difficult when you’re immediately kind of thrown into working 14-hour days and learning the ropes of Congress.”

Mapping out the Capitol can be a sensitive subject, thanks to a tug-of-war between security fears and accessibility to the public.

While visitors to the Capitol building are limited to tours and official business, the public can roam unescorted in the surrounding office buildings after passing through

a security screening. That keeps lawmakers accountable to the people, advocates argue.

The House doesn’t currently offer detailed maps of the office buildings on its public websites, which means turned-around visitors are largely on their own, left to ask for directions or retrace their steps.

Bice said the subcommittee is working with the House sergeant-at-arms to address any security concerns over the wayfinding proposal.

“We plan on having something that’ll be

geofenced, so when you leave the building it actually won’t be accessible any longer,” she said.

Elliot Carter has seen first-hand how maps can offer valuable insights while also sparking fear. He created the website Washington Tunnels after spending time giving tours during a Hill internship and becoming interested in history, architecture and infrastructure.

He described a “chilling effect” on wayfinding in the nation’s capital after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

## CITY

From A1

still within the same year cycle, nothing about it was unexpected,” Greenwood said. “All of the things they said were previous concerns we’ve met. Going forward we anticipate our bond rating to be better in time for the roll.”

Greenwood said the city plans on rolling part of its \$31 million bond anticipation notice (BAN) into a bond, giving it a lower interest rate for the city.

“We’ll pay off a huge chunk of that, about \$16 million worth of the BAN, it’ll revert over to that WIFIA bond,” Greenwood said.

She said the specific amount that will be rolled into a bond will be determined closer to that happening in May.

“I’m not sure that we

will only do part of it. We may do the full thing. It’ll depend on the interest rates. There’s a whole lot of background work going into that to make that decision,” Greenwood said.

The next credit rating, also releasing in May, will impact the interest rates and who decides to take on the debt. Greenwood said the rating looks to be positive based on what she’s heard from the companies.

“Based on the conversations I’ve been having with all of the different rating agencies, they feel confident based on what they’re seeing that’ll be the case. I’ve been keeping up to date with the rating agencies,” Greenwood said. “It’s a pretty good relationship. The data tells a story, but they

have to understand the intention of what we’re doing moving forward to get a full picture of how the city is doing.”

Greenwood said in the last couple years, the city has added more internal controls to help the city to stay on track financially. Late audits have contributed to the downgraded credit ratings, which Greenwood said were due to a change in the city’s auditing firm and new staff at the time. She said the city’s budget plans to be balanced well, and they have plans to start the 2025 audit in May so it can be done by September.

“We’ve tightened up some of our processes,” Greenwood noted. “It’s a lot of small things that add up when you put them all together.”

## MEETING

From A1

knowing the home rules don’t matter to the state,” Potter-Masler said.

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) regulates permitting for major renewable generating facilities greater than or equal to 25 megawatts, while municipalities approve and go through the processes for smaller facilities. Reisweber said NYSERDA does look through municipalities’ comprehensive plans to see if it includes solar and the regulations within it, taking them into consideration.

“Pressure from New York State is going to be changing,” Reisweber said.

Reisweber said the current town solar laws were put into place before more information about solar facilities was received.

“I would say that our current solar laws cover about 90% of the issues, but we’re trying to increase that to 97%,” Reisweber said.

Between now and the next public meeting on Jan. 7, Reisweber said the committee will be working in small teams to gather further informa-

tion needed to access all information on the nine solar pilot projects within the town, as well as other organization’s regulations. The committee will be looking at information like NYSERDA’s updated information on solar and battery energy storage systems, an updated firefighting document on handling solar and battery fires, the county’s solar law template, how much money the county and the town has received from the solar pilot projects compared to its contracts.

## 1890

From A1

the past and educate through immersion, and while there won’t be any tours happening during the wassail open house, the hope is for people to enjoy themselves and be enchanted by the house in all its holiday glory.

“People just love the fact that each room is decorated in a different style,” Howlett said. “You can just leisurely walk through and enjoy the ambience of being in a beautiful old home. We’ve had people come back after the fact for tours and want to hear more of the historical background of the house,

too. It brings people in that may not have known what the inside of the place looked like before.”

The tradition of this event for the museum has been going for at least 20 years, though no one can recall the exact start date.

Events like it may have inspired the wassail open house into what it is today, but the true inspiration is the Christmas festivities of the 19th century.

Inspiring togetherness and community involvement doesn’t only mean showing off the museum, it also means bringing

in performing groups from Cortland, Homer and more to add to the holiday ambience and merriment throughout the day.

Performers from Cortland and Homer high schools will be joined by a flute ensemble and many more musical surprises throughout the day.

The festivities will start at the 1890 House Museum at noon Sunday, where the house will be transformed and shown off as a warm and cozy oasis from the blustering and snowy cold.

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High School Boys Basketball



Brennen Harris/Sports Editor

Kameron McClain dribbles up the court in Wednesday's 71-57 opening season win over Newark Valley. He finished with a team leading 23 points.

Groton kicks season off with big victory

Brennen Harris  
Sports Editor

GROTON — The Groton boys basketball team got off to a hot start and never looked back in its dominating 71-57 win over Newark Valley on Wednesday at Groton High School to begin the 2025-26 season.

Kameron McClain had an all-around complete game for the Red Hawks in the first game of the new year. He led the team with 23 points and found ways to dish the ball out to teammates to help Groton start the season 1-0.

“(Kameron) is an extraordinary player. There’s no question about that,” Groton head coach Mike Holl said. “He’s going to be a major component to the help of our team this year. I know that because I coach him, every other coach knows who he is too. He’s going to face some of the best defenders in the world. He finds ways to get shots, find teammates. He handles pressure excellent. He’s a great player.”

Groton began its season later than other teams have. Holl said the team had played in a scrimmage and had another scheduled on Dec. 2, but that was canceled due to the weather.

“We haven’t ever had this much time before our first game was played,” Holl said. “I was a little concerned about that. It would have been nice to have a couple game-like scenarios before we jumped into our first game. But given the fact that we’ve just been beating up on each other in practice up to this point for the last three weeks, I was happy with they way they played.”

Colin Brockway also had a strong performance on the floor for Groton, finishing with 14 points. Lane Darling tallied nine points, Jerome Turner added eight points, Nicholas Sill pitched in with six, Talan O’Connor had four points, Marley Antrum had three and Tristin Weeks and Abraham Bishop each tallied two points.

“We have a deep bench this year,” Holl said. “Every week I have to decide who’s going to start because I have six or seven guys who could enter that starting lineup. They’re a talented bunch, all of



Brennen Harris/Sports Editor

Abraham Bishop, right, takes the ball down the court for a basket after getting a steal in Wednesday’s game.

them. I can’t even single out one kid.”

Cooper Davis led the Cardinals with 20 points. Tristan Veruto and Timothy Wojtyasiak each tallied 12 points. Joshua Benjamin added four points. Austin Green pitched in with three points and Wyatt Welch, Carter Smith and Nathan Hinckley each notched two points.

The first quarter was back and forth, with neither team getting the advantage over the other to start the game. After a pair of free throws by Green that tied it 12-12, the Red Hawks then went on a 12-2 run to go up by 10. McClain finished the opening quarter with 11 points and three 3-pointers.

Groton didn’t let up in the second picking up another 14 points, while only allowing six from Newark Valley to head into halftime up 38-20.

Benjamin slammed the ball after a foul call and got an additional technical foul called on him that gave McClain four free throws — he knocked down three out of the four — and tallied a mid-range basket to tack on five more points to start the second half. McClain showed his passing ability with a bounce pass to O’Connor while finishing the quarter with 10 points.

Davis highlighted Newark Valley’s third quarter performance hitting

three 3-point baskets for a total of 11 of the teams 16 points in the quarter — the most amount of points the Cardinals had put up in quarter at the time.

Brockway scored a basket early in the third and landed hard on his back following the basket. He showed visible signs of pain and was taken out shortly after. Brockway did return in the fourth quarter looking like he did coming out of the gate and was able to tack on seven of the Red Hawks 12 points.

With a majority of Groton’s starters taken out, Newark Valley was able to have its most productive quarter with 21 points. Veruto tallied 10 of those points after being held to just two throughout the entire game.

“It’s nice to kind of be able to see some of those different rotations this early in the season to see how guys are going to play together,” Holl said. “That was nice to start working some different guys in. They worked hard in the offseason. They do their own stuff and it shows. So I can’t take credit.”

Groton will begin league play when it hosts Southern Cayuga at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

“(The team) all knows we have a tough conference,” Holl said. “Our small IAC North has some pretty good basketball teams. But we got a

lot of basketball to play.”  
**BOYS WRESTLING  
MARATHON 60,  
CORTLAND 18**

Cortland’s Triston Allen (118 pounds) and Jackson Marks (150 pounds) won their matches by pin. Wyatt Robertson (110 pounds) won via forfeit.

Gabriel Spizzirri (144 pounds), Brendan Gumaer (165 pounds), Kaream Truitt (175 pounds), John Irwin (190 pounds) and Trenton Vinson (215 pounds) all won their matches for Marathon via pin. Zander Gleason (103 pounds), Christopher Brickner (126 pounds), Sitota Boring (132 pounds), Adalyn Vandee (138 pounds) and Ayden Odonnell (285 pounds) won by forfeit.

**MORAVIA 60,  
GROTON 11**

John-Michael Fanning (110 pounds) won his match by pin for Groton. Braelin Kreider (132 pounds) picked up the win by a score of 17-2.

Anthony Endres (175 pounds) tallied a win via pin fall. Dodge Mcpherson (103 pounds), Trever Lafleur (118 pounds), Aden Myers (126 pounds), Jacob Endres (138 pounds), Brayden Perreault (150 pounds), Levi McDonald (157 pounds), Carter Wiley (190 pounds), Jake Bushey (215 pounds) and Logan Hughes (285 pounds) all won their matches by forfeit.

MLB

All of the twists that led to Pete Alonso’s exit from the Mets

Peter Sblendorio  
New York Daily News  
(TNS)

NEW YORK — Pete Alonso’s departure from the Mets played out in slow motion.

For more than two years, uncertainty surrounding Alonso’s future hung over the fan-favorite first baseman and the franchise.

There was an extension offer in 2023, Alonso’s first foray into free agency in 2024, his return to the open market this offseason, and plenty of hand-wringing in between.

But the drawn-out saga finally reached its conclusion Wednesday as Alonso agreed to a five-year, \$155 million contract with the Baltimore Orioles, securing the type of long-term deal he had sought from the Mets.

It’s too early to tell whether president of baseball operations David Stearns was wise not to commit to Alonso into his mid-30s. But in the immediate, the slugger’s exit leaves a gaping hole in the

heart of the Mets’ lineup and in the hearts of Mets fans.

Here’s how Alonso and the Mets got to this point:

Extension offer

During the summer of 2023, the Mets offered Alonso a contract extension worth \$158 million over seven years, or about \$22.5 million annually.

At the time, the Mets were run by general manager Billy Eppler, while Alonso was about a year and half away from free agency.

Alonso, who would finish with 46 home runs and 118 RBIs that season, turned the offer down in search of a larger payday.

Trade rumors

That same summer, The Athletic reported the Milwaukee Brewers had discussed an Alonso trade with the Mets before the 2023 deadline, with an anonymous source saying the Brewers got within “field-goal range” of making one happen.

The Mets traded Max Scherzer and Justin See **METS B3**

College Football

Ex-Michigan coach Moore in jail shortly after firing Police investigating alleged assault

Tony Paul  
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — Former Michigan head football coach Sherrone Moore was in jail on Wednesday night, hours after his firing.

Moore was in police custody minutes before Michigan publicly announced his firing.

After 10 p.m.

Wednesday, Pittsfield Township police confirmed it was investigating an alleged assault, without naming Moore, but in response to multiple media queries from The Detroit News about Moore on Wednesday. Police said an investigation began around 4:10 p.m.; Michigan publicly announced See **MOORE B3**



David Guralnick/The Detroit News/TNS

Michigan head coach Sherrone Moore seen before the start of a game against Purdue at Michigan Stadium on Nov. 1 in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



# Sports

## National Football League

# The NFL has outlined plan for a more performance-driven officiating program

**Sam Farmer**  
**Los Angeles Times (TNS)**

LOS ANGELES — The NFL is advocating a more performance-driven model for its game officials, one linking bonuses and postseason assignments to regular-season grades as opposed to seniority.

The plan was outlined in a memo distributed to the league's 32 teams Wednesday and obtained by the Los Angeles Times. It comes with the NFL's collective bargaining agreement with game officials expiring at the end of May and negotiations slowed to a crawl.

The topic was part of a two-hour virtual owners meeting on Wednesday.

In the memo, sent by NFL Executive Vice President of Football Operations Troy Vincent and Management Council General Counsel Lawrence Ferazani Jr., the league said it is looking to implement changes that will "improve the performance of game officials, increase accountability, and ensure that the highest-performing officials are officiating our highest profile games."

The NFL is pushing for

mandatory training and development programs for low-performing and probationary officials, and contends the union is "resisting our efforts to give these officials access to more practice repetitions."

The league is also seeking to extend the probationary period for assessing new game officials to have more flexibility to identify and remove those who are underperforming. According to the document, the union's latest proposal seeks to eliminate the probationary period entirely.

"Our union's negotiating committee is working diligently on behalf of members, and we will continue to respect that process," said Scott Green, Executive Director of the NFL Referees' Association, in a statement. "We look forward to our continued conversations with the league as we make progress towards a new CBA."

As it stands, the NFL has no communication with game officials following the Super Bowl through May 15. The league wants to shorten that so-called "dead period" and in-



Greg Fiume/Getty Images/TNS

**Washington Commanders head coach Dan Quinn, left, talks with referee Bill Vinovich, center, and back judge Todd Prukop prior to a game against the Seattle Seahawks at Northwest Stadium on Nov. 2 in Landover, Maryland.**

crease access to officials for rules discussions, video review and the like.

The league is also proposing a practice squad for game officials to deep-

en the bench of talent.

The next formal bargaining session between

the NFL and officials union is scheduled for Dec. 30 in Atlanta.

# Rivers talks coming out of retirement for Colts

**Sam Farmer**  
**Los Angeles Times (TNS)**

LOS ANGELES — Philip Rivers has never been quick on his feet, but he can make quick decisions. That's what made him such an outstanding NFL quarterback, and it's part of the reason he's a Hall of Fame semifinalist.

So it's not surprising that, even at 44 and a grandfather, he didn't linger long when the Indianapolis Colts called to take his temperature on coming back to play quarterback for them.

Rivers was at home

in Alabama on Sunday night when he got a call from Colts coach Shane Steichen and general manager Chris Ballard. They had just lost starting quarterback Daniel Jones to a torn Achilles tendon, and rookie backup Riley Leonard suffered an undisclosed knee injury in relief.

"We said, 'What do you think?' " Steichen said Wednesday of phoning Rivers, the Chargers great who finished his career with the Colts. "He said, 'Heck yeah, I'm interested. Heck yeah.' So he slept on it and then we called

him back Monday morning and he said, 'I need to get up there and throw in that building. Start moving around.' "

The quarterback, five years removed from his last game, threw at the Colts facility Monday and Tuesday then went back to his hotel to think it over. When Steichen and Ballard called again, Rivers — in true Philip Rivers style — said, "Dag-gummit, let's freaking go."

Said Steichen, Rivers' onetime quarterbacks coach and later offensive coordinator with the Chargers: "He's one of the

most passionate players I've ever been around. The obsession for the game is off the charts."

Amazingly, there's a chance he could start Sunday at Seattle. Steichen wanted to get a good look at him in practice Wednesday but conceded that sending him out on the field is a possibility.

NFL quarterbacks who have played in their 40s is an exceedingly small club, and includes George Blanda, Tom Brady, Brett Favre, Steve DeBerg, Vinny Testaverde, Warren Moon, Drew Brees, Matt

Hasselbeck — currently Aaron Rodgers — and a handful of others.

Hasselbeck was 40 in 2015, his final season with the Colts. His body felt good. He could still throw. He was having fun, and his team was 4-0 with him as the starter.

"Then I got hurt," he said. "I separated a couple ribs. I got hit in the jaw so hard I sprained my jawbone and lost hearing in my ear. I got sick. ... I got beat up, and it wasn't anywhere near as fun. I separated my shoulder. It was brutal."

He decided that was it.

He retired and went to work for ESPN. He had outlasted the rest of his draft class. His playing days were over.

Did he want to play again?

"That first year out, no chance," he said. "There was no dollar number that would have been a yes."

Football, though, is a seductive siren. He had been out a year and was feeling great. Training camps came around and he felt that familiar urge to step back onto the field. That stuff doesn't go away easily.

# Seahawks' Schneider rediscovered draft touch

**Matt Calkins**  
**The Seattle Times (TNS)**

SEATTLE — They say that comparison is the thief of joy, but sometimes it can be the source of it.

Nobody here is arguing that the Seahawks will ever see a three-year draft stretch like the one that spawned the Legion of Boom era, but these past

few springs might not rank too far behind.

There was a little lull regarding what this team accomplished in the war room between the championship days and the turn of the decade — a noticeable lack of Pro Bowl game-changing talent being selected in the draft.

But based on what we're

seeing now, it's safe to say that Seahawks general manager John Schneider rediscovered his touch.

It's not that Seattle (10-3) stopped being competitive after winning a Super Bowl for the 2013 season and returning to the Big Game a year later. They were almost always above .500 and regularly stacked double-digit win seasons.

Much of this was due to Schneider's ability to offload talent before it became too expensive and make key offseason (or midseason) acquisitions. However, the difference between a first-round playoff exit and a legitimate run at a title always seemed to lie in who they failed to acquire during the draft.

It wasn't necessarily disastrous. Yes, there was No. 35 overall pick Malik McDowell ending his Seahawks career via an ATV accident shortly after being selected in 2017. And there was first-round pick L.J. Collier playing just one season in which he was a starting defensive lineman. But there was also Tyler Lockett and

DK Metcalf and Michael Dickson — Pro Bowlers that tangibly helped this football team. Still ... first- or second-team All-Pro position players? Sorely lacking. An appearance in the NFC Championship Game? Nonexistent. Seattle has just one playoff win since the 2016 season. The draft had a lot to do with that.

# Tomlin's 'hot seat' has never reached lukewarm

**Paul Zeise**  
**Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)**

PITTSBURGH — The Steelers as a collective have come out in defense of Mike Tomlin after they beat the Ravens on Sunday. And many among his legion of national media shills have come to his defense, as well.

Aaron Rodgers said he hopes the win over the Ravens will get everyone criticizing Tomlin to "shut the hell up," and Ryan Clark went on some weird rant about how Tomlin might actually be underrated.

There were some people outraged after last Sunday, when the Steelers lost to Buffalo. Fans were chanting "Fire Tomlin." And of course there have been the tired discussions about how he would get a job "in five minutes" if he were fired.

Tomlin was asked about all of this at his Tuesday

news conference, and he answered in a way that actually made me chuckle.

"Man, I've been in the hot seat for 19 years," he said. "I always feel like I've got something to prove, not necessarily to anyone in particular, but that's just the spirit in which I go about what I do professionally."

I can absolutely appreciate Tomlin's insistence that he is motivated to continually prove himself, but those of us who have watched this show play out over the years understand he doesn't have to prove himself to keep his job, and that is probably the problem.

Art Rooney II will never fire Tomlin, and Tomlin knows this and has known this his entire career. That isn't the Steelers' way. It isn't the way Rooney's dad did it, and it isn't the way his granddad did it, either.

The Steelers don't fire

coaches, which means the only people with more job security than a Steelers coach are Supreme Court justices.

I should add that I don't

**"I always feel like I've got something to prove."**

— Mike Tomlin, Pittsburgh Steelers coach

necessarily know if Tomlin should be fired or not because there are arguments on both sides I can listen to.

The ridiculous part is he has never felt any heat despite not winning a playoff game since the Killer B's era, and he won't after this season which will almost assuredly end with a division title. The AFC North stinks. The Ravens are in shambles, and the Steelers are going to win

the division, and that is how Tomlin will be judged by his fanboys in the media. It won't matter what happens in the playoffs, what will be relevant is the

whole "never had a losing season" remains intact.

That is lunacy because I can't for the life of me think of another organization that would continue to employ a coach who goes nine seasons without a playoff victory. Tomlin has never had a losing season, for sure — unless you count the postseason, where he is 8-11.

Tomlin's postseason record since he last won the AFC championship

game (2010) is 3-10, which means he is the modern day equivalent of Marty Schottenheimer or Marvin Lewis. That isn't good enough, and it is something that should have put him on the hot seat a few years ago.

The Steelers operate in a way that suggests stability counts more than anything else, and that is just silly. I don't think in 2025 the discussion should be stability. It should be about results and winning at a higher level than we have seen in recent years.

I am not saying Tomlin would necessarily have better results if he actually did feel some heat from above, but it is amazing the kind of motivator that could be. Tomlin has operated as if he knows all he needs to do is be right around .500, make the playoffs more than he misses, and he will be free to coach as long as

he wants. That is the way the Steelers do things, and Tomlin has taken advantage of them. The amazing thing is the Steelers could actually lose the rest of their games and finish 7-10, and not only would Tomlin be safe, his entire coaching staff would be, too. Tomlin might decide on his own to sacrifice a coach or two to throw a bone to those demanding change, but that is the extent of it. And if Tomlin didn't decide to fire anyone, his staff would return despite a season that would be an epic failure.

I like Tomlin as Steelers coach and understand why so many like him as well, but the idea that a Super Bowl he won 17 years ago should give him a lifetime contract is a big reason why this organization seems to be stuck in a cycle of "just above mediocrity" for a number of years.



College Football

Some candidates to replace Moore as Michigan coach

Connor Earegood  
The Detroit News (TNS)

Possible candidates to replace Sherrone Moore as Michigan’s football coach. Moore was fired after the university found he had engaged in an inappropriate relationship with a football staff member.

Kalen DeBoer

■ Head coaching experience: Sioux Falls, 2005 to 2009 (67-3); Fresno State, 2020 to 2021 (12-6, 9-5 Mountain West); Washington, 2022 to 2023 (25-3, 16-2 Pac-12); Alabama, 2024 to present (19-7, 12-4 SEC)

■ Accolades: Pac-12 Coach of the Year (2022, 2023); AFCA Coach of the Year (2023); AP Coach of the Year (2023); Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year (2023); Walter Camp Coach of the Year (2023)

■ Bio: DeBoer is as familiar with Michigan’s current program as anyone can be. His Washington team suffered a 34-13 loss in the national championship game to Jim Harbaugh’s Wolverines in 2023. After a move to Alabama, DeBoer lost to Michigan in last year’s ReliaQuest Bowl, too. He’s got the Crimson Tide back in the College Football Playoff, but there’s been tension between DeBoer and Alabama when losses occur. DeBoer also knows southeast Michigan well after working as Eastern Michigan’s offensive coordinator from 2014 to 2016.

Jedd Fisch

■ Head coaching experience: UCLA interim, 2017 (1-1, 1-0 Pac-12); Arizona, 2021 to 2023 (16-21, 11-16 Pac-12); Washington, 2024 to present (14-11, 9-9 Big Ten)

■ Bio: A former offensive assistant under Jim



Butch Dill/Getty Images/TNS  
Head coach Kalen DeBoer of the Alabama Crimson Tide looks over his plays during the first quarter of a football game against the Florida State Seminoles at Doak Campbell Stadium on Aug. 30 in Tallahassee, Florida.

Harbaugh from 2015 to 2016, Fisch has gotten a lot of experience running programs out west with former Pac-12 programs. He won 11 games with Arizona in 2023 for an 11th place finish in the AP poll. His Huskies were 8-4 this season, 5-4 in Big Ten play, and will play Boise State in the LA Bowl this month.

P.J. Fleck

■ Head coaching experience: Western Michigan, 2013 to 2016 (30-22, 21-11 MAC); Minnesota, 2017 to present (65-44, 39-40 Big Ten)

■ Accolades: MAC Coach of the Year (2014, 2016), Big Ten Coach of the Year (2019)

■ Bio: The architect of

Western Michigan’s captivating 13-1 season in 2016, Fleck is in his ninth season with Minnesota. His Gophers finished 7-5 and will play New Mexico in the Rate Bowl, his seventh bowl in nine seasons, the previous six all wins. Famous for his “Row the Boat” motto, Fleck is a program builder, and that is what Michigan should be looking for. He also has a ton of connections across the Midwest, from his upbringing in the Chicago suburbs to time spent coaching in the MAC. Fleck did serve as a GA for Ohio State in 2006. Then again, so did Bo.

Jason Eck

■ Head coaching experience: Idaho, 2022 to

2024 (26-13, FCS); New Mexico, 2025 to present (5-3, 2-2 Mountain West)

■ Accolades: AFCA Division I FCS Assistant Coach of the Year (2019)

■ Bio: Eck has been coaching up and down the FBS and FCS levels since he first took a GA gig at his alma mater Wisconsin in 1999. Twenty six years later, he got his first FBS head coaching job at New Mexico. In a single year, he took a program that had two winning seasons since the Great Recession to its first bowl bid since 2016. It was Eck who coached New Mexico in this season’s opener against Michigan, a 34-17 loss that pushed the Wolverines hard.

METS

From B1

Verlander, among other veterans, before that deadline, but an Alonso deal never transpired.

“I love representing this organization,” Alonso told reporters at the time. “Being a Met is the only thing I know. ... I don’t know what the future holds but right now I’m a Met and I love being a Met.”

Scott Boras and David Stearns

Following the 2023 season, Alonso hired Scott Boras to represent him.

Boras, the most prominent agent in baseball, is known for commanding top dollar for his clients, who also include Juan Soto, Scherzer, Gerrit Cole and Cody Bellinger.

The Mets, meanwhile, hired Stearns around that same time, which would prove to be a similarly consequential factor in the contract negotiations.

2024 season

Alonso delivered a down season in his walk year, at least by his lofty standards.

He batted .240 with 34 home runs, 88 RBIs and a career-low .788 OPS in 2024, and by the end of the season, Mets fans seemed resigned to the possibility that Alonso’s time in Queens was nearing its end.

In the Mets’ regular-season home finale that September, a sellout crowd at Citi Field showered Alonso with a standing ovation.

2024 postseason

But Alonso and the Mets weren’t done yet.

After clinching a playoff spot during a season-ending road trip, the Mets found themselves on the brink of elimination in a winner-take-all Game 3 in their wild-card series in Milwaukee.

Trailing 2-0 in the ninth inning, Alonso struck a go-ahead three-run home run against now-Mets closer Devin Williams in one of the biggest moments in franchise history.

The Mets would go on to win that game, and the NLDS, before being eliminated by the Los Angeles Dodgers in Game 6 of the NLCS.

2024-25 offseason

Now a postseason hero, Alonso entered free agency with a bit more leverage, yet the market proved bare for the Polar Bear.

Analytically driven teams have become more and more adverse to signing righty-swinging first baseman over 30 to long-term contracts, as that player profile traditionally does not age well.

Among them were the Mets, who were said to be reluctant to go beyond a three-year deal for Alonso as he entered his age 30 season.

The talks took a dramatic turn in January at the Mets’ Amazin’ Day event at Citi Field, where owner Steve Cohen described the “exhausting” nature of the Alonso negotiations amid chants of “We Want Pete” from fans in attendance.

“As we continue to bring in players, the reality is it becomes harder to fit Pete into what is a very expensive group of players that we already have,” Cohen said at the time. “That’s where we are, and I’m being brutally honest. I don’t like the negotiations. I don’t like what’s been

presented to us.”

Cohen continued, “If it stays this way, I think we’re going to have to get used to the fact that we may have to go forward with the existing players that we have.”

Alonso re-signs

In the end, Cohen found a way to retain Alonso in 2025.

Cohen and Stearns met with Alonso and Boras in Tampa, Fla., where the first baseman is from.

“It was my idea,” Cohen later said of that meeting on the Mets’ “Meet at the Apple” podcast. “I just felt that the negotiation had gone on so long, I just wanted to make sure that he heard from us how we felt about him.”

Despite interest from the Toronto Blue Jays, Alonso agreed to a two-year, \$54 million contract with the Mets that included an opt-out after the first season.

2025 season

Alonso delivered a resurgent year in 2025, starting with a home run in his first at-bat of the home opener.

In August, Alonso hit the 253rd homer of his career, breaking a tie with Darryl Strawberry for the Mets’ franchise record.

“I have a goal to play baseball until I’m through my age 40 season, and for me, I’m gonna work hard and do that,” Alonso said after that milestone. “Business side, Steve and David, they’ve got to come through.”

Alonso finished the season with a .272 average, 38 home runs, 126 RBIs and an .871 OPS, improving across the board from his 2024 campaign.

But Alonso made multiple defensive miscues over the course of the year, particularly when it came to throwing the ball.

2025-26 offseason

Despite his bounce-back campaign, Alonso’s fit with the Mets came into question again when Stearns held his end-of-season press conference.

While Stearns said he “would love” to have Alonso back, he also cited the need to improve the Mets’ run prevention, which includes defense.

“We’re going to have to be open-minded on our position-player grouping so that we can improve our run prevention,” Stearns said. “Does that mean there are robust changes? I don’t know. Does it mean people will be playing different positions? Maybe. Does it mean we ask people to play different roles? Maybe.”

Signs with O’s

As expected, Alonso opted out of his contract and returned to free agency.

It proved to be a more fruitful market for Alonso, as his new \$31 million annual salary with Baltimore is the largest ever for a first baseman.

Alonso, 31, is now set to anchor a loaded O’s lineup that also features Gunnar Henderson, Jackson Holliday and fellow offseason addition Taylor Ward.

The work-in-progress Mets, meanwhile, are going to look much different in 2026. Alonso is the latest franchise staple to depart this offseason, following Brandon Nimmo and Edwin Diaz.

Media

YouTube TV will offer new sports package to customers

Stephen Battaglio  
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — YouTube TV is promising subscribers “more choice and flexibility” in their video plans next year.

Will it mean lower prices? That remains to be seen.

But it appears YouTube is following the approach of other pay-TV providers in offering smaller, genre specific packages — including one for sports — that come with a smaller bill.

The Google-owned platform said Wednesday in a blog post that it will offer 10 packages starting next year.

“Our goal is to let you tailor your subscription with more options. Whether you stick with our main YouTube TV plan with 100+ channels, focus on sports, combine sports and news, or select a plan centered on family



Dreamstime/TNS

YouTube TV next year will have a sports plan that offers the major broadcast networks, and sports cable channels FS1, NBC Sports Network and ESPN.

and entertainment content, subscribers will be able to easily choose the plan that works best for them,” the company said.

No details were given on pricing.

The company said it will have a sports plan that offers the major

broadcast networks, sports cable channels FS1, NBC Sports Network and ESPN. The plan would compete with the combination of the Fox One and ESPN streaming services, which are being offered together for \$39.99 a month.

Over the past year, El Segundo-based DirecTV rolled out smaller packages of channels aimed at consumers who no longer want a big monthly bill for networks they don’t watch. The satellite TV service now offers smaller genre packages of channels and streaming apps that cater to a particular interest available at a lower price — designed for news junkies, sports fans, children and Spanish-language speakers.

YouTube TV is likely looking at that model as it is clearly feeling the squeeze from rising programming costs.

MOORE

From B1

his firing at 4:43 p.m. Pittsfield Township police said “a suspect” was taken into custody, and Moore was in the Washtenaw County Jail as of 11 p.m. Wednesday, according to online court records. He was booked at 8:30 p.m., according to

court records. “The incident does not appear to be random in nature, and there appears to be no ongoing threat to the community,” Pittsfield Township police said in a media statement Wednesday night, released by chief of police Patrick

Gray.

“At this time, the investigation is ongoing. Given the nature of the allegations, the need to maintain the integrity of the investigation, and its current status at this time, we are prohibited from releasing additional details.

“Further details regarding the incident will be released as soon as possible.”

Saline police chief Marlene Radzik confirmed to The News earlier Wednesday that Pittsfield Township’s police department was handling a complaint

involving Moore.

Pittsfield Township police said an investigation began in the 3000 block of Ann Arbor Saline Road, according to the release Wednesday night. There is an apartment complex in that vicinity.

Additional details, in-

cluding on any potential charges, were not immediately known Wednesday night. Moore, 39, was fired by Michigan on Wednesday after two seasons as head coach, after an investigation into an alleged inappropriate relationship with a staff member.



Dear Abby

FAMILY’S MENTAL HEALTH IS DECLINING RAPIDLY

**Abigail Van Buren**

**DEAR ABBY:** As my parents have aged, my father has been misremembering things or making wrong assumptions. It has increasingly gotten on my mom’s nerves (she has also become more impatient and snappy lately), and she has been yelling at him in response. Sometimes, he responds back, but usually he doesn’t.

My sister snapped at them, saying she is tired of their bickering, so they don’t do that around her as often anymore. But anytime I have gotten upset about it or tried to suggest to them how to resolve things, Mom gets upset with me. My mental health isn’t the best right now, so continuing to do that doesn’t seem like a good idea, but I’m at a loss about what to do. Any thoughts? — UNCERTAIN IN IOWA

**DEAR UNCERTAIN:** Before this situation grows worse, please understand that it may be necessary for both of your parents to have physical and neurological examinations. If you can arrange for that, PLEASE do.



**DEAR ABBY:** My 13-year-old son was getting off the school bus. His friend was in front of him. My son thought it would be funny to take his friend’s water bottle out of his backpack and drop it on the pavement. A few days later, my son got sent to the principal’s office, not because he was in trouble but because the parents had called the school to complain about their son’s scuffed water bottle and wanted it replaced. They asked for \$23. I wrote a check and was tempted to add a snarky comment, but I didn’t. Yes, my son should keep his hands to himself, but the water bottle is still functional. My son apologized. Am I living my life wrong, or is it OK that they just invoiced me like that? — UNSURE

**DEAR UNSURE:** Your son may have been trying to be funny when he damaged another student’s property, but the boy’s parents didn’t see the humor in it.

The bottle wasn’t the disposable kind, and the parents were not out of line to expect to be reimbursed for your son damaging it. Perhaps HE can reimburse YOU.

**DEAR ABBY:** Our family is already picking out items they want after my wife and I pass. They bring the subject up at every gathering. They have even started marking the items they want. My wife and I are 67 and 68. We are healthy and don’t plan on dying for a while. This is starting to upset us both. How to shut them up is my question. — ANNOYED IN TEXAS

**DEAR ANNOYED:** Your family gatherings remind me of a pack of slavering wolves surrounding their potential prey. Here’s how to shut them up: At the next gathering, tell your kin that if they keep this up, when you and your wife depart this earthly plane, ALL of your possessions will be going to charity.

Cryptoquote

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L’s, X for the two O’s, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-12 CRYPTOQUOTE

L URV PK WRRV AYRXB HA

ULVVUR VLPR CX VQR SJCOXB

HA YCAALNUR. — IRAAR CMRXA

**Yesterday’s Cryptoquote:** THE ARTIST MUST BOW TO THE MONSTER OF HIS OWN IMAGINATION. — RICHARD WRIGHT

Whatzit?

@WhatzitGame December 12, 2025

**WHATZIT?**™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

**SOLUTION:** Lunatic fringe

www.facebook.com/dingbatgame

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CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

**1** Post-workout woes

**6** Get naked

**11** English county

**12** Grand, for one

**13** Monopoly buy

**14** Pecks and pounds

**15** Nonsense

**16** “Hmmm ...”

**18** Sturdy wood

**19** Japanese honorific

**20** Screw up

**21** Come together

**23** Orange coats

**25** Bounder

**27** Model buy

**28** Bona fide

**30** Turn to slush

**33** Luau dish

**34** Through

**36** Stretch of years

**37** Came from behind

**39** Louis XIV, e.g.

**40** Labor group

**41** In the area

**43** Tightly packed

**44** Canada grazer

**45** Borders

**46** Less dangerous

**DOWN**

**1** Religious retreat

**2** Pick

**3** Became furious

**4** Before, in poems

**5** Hawks

**6** 1957 satellite

**7** Mint containers

**8** Celebrated boisterously

**9** Buries

**10** Tricky puzzle

**17** Lobe spot

**22** Price place

**24** Tiny complaint

**26** Figures out

**28** Gave for a time

**29** Tether

**31** Stir up

**32** Bistro worker

**33** Priggish person

**35** Second president

**38** Finish last

**42** Frilly wrap

B	A	E	Z			S	W	E	E	P
A	C	M	E			S	H	E	L	V
A	R	M	S			P	O	L	L	E
L	E	A	T	H	E	R	S			
		F	E	A	T	H	E	R	S	
S	H	R	U	N	K			R	O	I
H	A	I	L	S		C	I	G	A	R
A	R	T			M	A	N	O	R	S
W	E	A	T	H	E	R	S			
		H	E	A	T	H	E	R	S	
S	P	I	R	A	L		A	L	O	E
O	R	D	E	R	S		P	L	O	W
W	O	O	E	D			E	A	T	S

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10
11						12				
13						14				
15				16	17					
18				19				20		
21			22		23		24			
		25		26		27				
	28				29		30		31	32
33				34		35		36		
37			38					39		
40						41	42			
43						44				
45						46				

12-12

Sudoku

**SUDOKU**

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

**King Classic Sudoku**

9	4	6			1			
					4			
				9	2		3	
4				1		2		6
	6	9						5
					3		1	8
				5		8		
				4				3
		3	8			6		

Difficulty: ★★★★★ 12/12

**Answer to previous puzzle**

8	7	4	5	6	3	2	9	1
1	3	5	2	9	8	7	4	6
2	9	6	7	1	4	5	3	8
3	6	1	4	7	9	8	2	5
7	5	9	8	2	1	3	6	4
4	8	2	3	5	6	1	7	9
6	1	7	9	3	5	4	8	2
5	2	8	6	4	7	9	1	3
9	4	3	1	8	2	6	5	7

Difficulty: ★★★ 12/11

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Astrological Forecast

Saturday, December 13, 2025

**By Magi Helena**

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):** When mind and heart work together, someone becomes unconquerable, a partner could offer just this combination now. Deception or self-deception are a risk for a few more days.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20):** If you’ve been looking for a way to pay it forward, a great idea could arise that really speaks to your heart. If considering a financial deal or major purchase, read all the fine print, twice.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** Unleash your art, music, or hobby, you could find a near-perfect creative flow within yourself today. A partner could be unclear in communication, be uncertain within themselves, or be less than transparent.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** A new clarity of mind or a new form of comfort could come into your home space. Something may not fully add up in the next few days,

move slowly until you identify the disconnect.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** Your communications could be especially resonant and relatable today, this could be an opportunity to build greater understanding. Imagination could drive off-the-charts levels of creative vision now.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** Financial matters could improve as you receive helpful new insights. Something could obscure the truth around your home, try to separate facts from wishful thinking or obfuscation.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** When it all aligns — mind, heart, and soul — you know what you’re here for. Speak carefully, facts could easily get confused or misunderstood; take time to clarify anything that seems unclear.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** This could be a great day to get a killer insight or an answered prayer, block some time for a quiet check-in with your inner self. Power

dynamics could surface in a financial situation.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Friends can stimulate your mind and ease your heart. If your circle delivers something else, consider if you’re in the right circle. Always represent yourself with integrity, no faking it.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Separate logic from emotion when considering a situation, then integrate them back again once you’ve listened separately to each inner voice. Use this technique for decisions that are truly holistic.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** You have a chance to not just be heard, but to be seen, to be understood, to be felt. The potential window for this is today and tomorrow, not Monday or Tuesday. A friend might be casual with facts.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):** A light-house could appear in the darkness of a money matter to guide you more safely.

To Your Good Health

Investigating whether vaccine side effects are underreported

**By Keith Roach, M.D.**

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** You recently posted a couple of articles about the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine and the benefits versus the risks. I know the risks are based on data. But I wonder how many people have severe reactions to the vaccine, and it doesn’t get reported because they don’t end up going to the hospital or the doctor.

I recently received the

latest COVID and RSV vaccines, and four days later, I started experiencing extreme nausea and vomiting for two days, along with muscle aches, tingling, and hot and cold flashes.

I was miserable and couldn’t sleep. This happened over the weekend. If it had lasted until Monday, I would have gone to urgent care. But by Monday morning, I was feeling better, so it was never

reported.

I’m a 67-year-old female in relatively good health. But I feel like someone older experiencing what I experienced over the weekend could be very dangerous. I tried to drink as much water as I could, but it made me nauseous, as did any food. So, I ended up being pretty dehydrated. My point is that my fairly severe reaction was not reported, and I wonder how underre-

ported these data really are. — T.B.

**ANSWER:** I am sure you are right that many adverse vaccine events are not reported. Most patients don’t report expected side effects from vaccines, and even when they do, a minority of providers will make a report to VAERS, the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System at the Centers for Disease Control.

However, providers

are mandated by law to report certain serious adverse events from vaccines (those that are listed in the table of reportable events, which is vaccine-specific) or any adverse event that is listed by the manufacturer, which would prevent the person from getting any more doses of this vaccine.

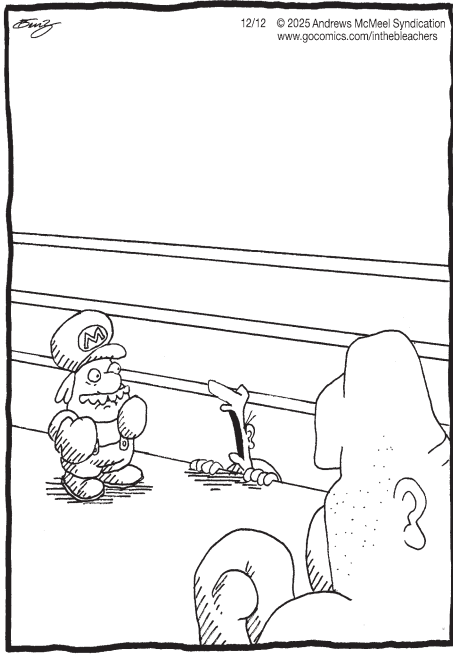
I report unexpected side effects to VAERS, although most of my col-

leagues do not always do so. Many people do not know that they can also self-report to the VAERS system by going to VAERS. HHS.gov/reportevent.html.

The data on adverse events that I generally use for my column do not come from self-reports or physician reports; they come from the original studies on the vaccines, where all adverse events are carefully reported.



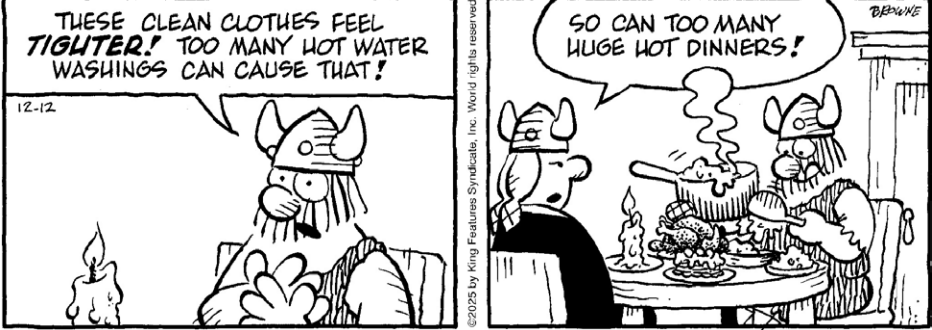
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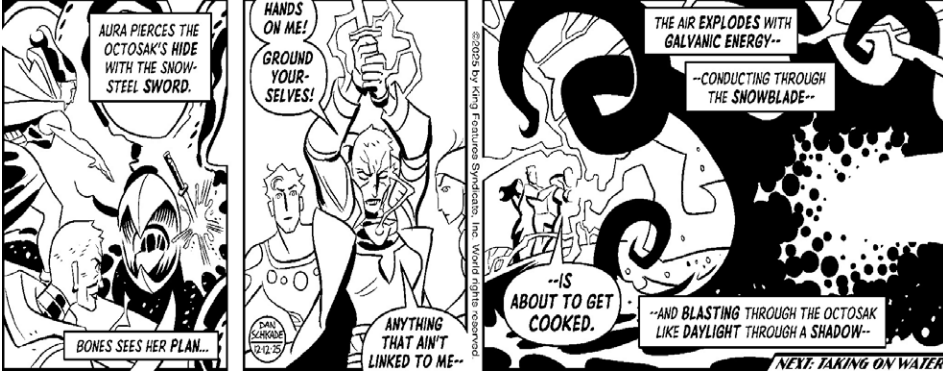
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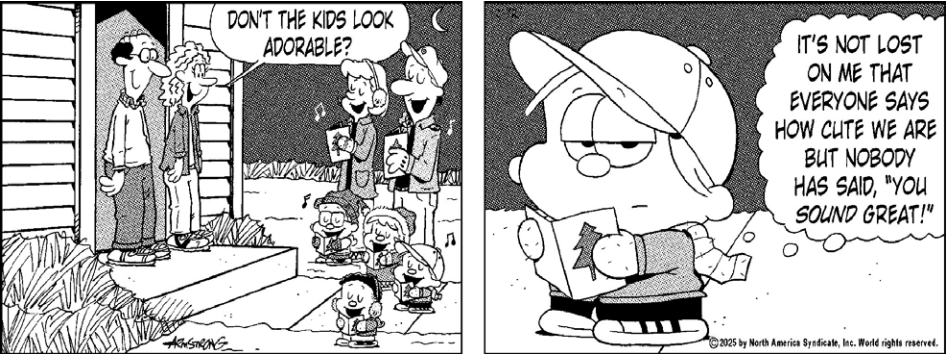
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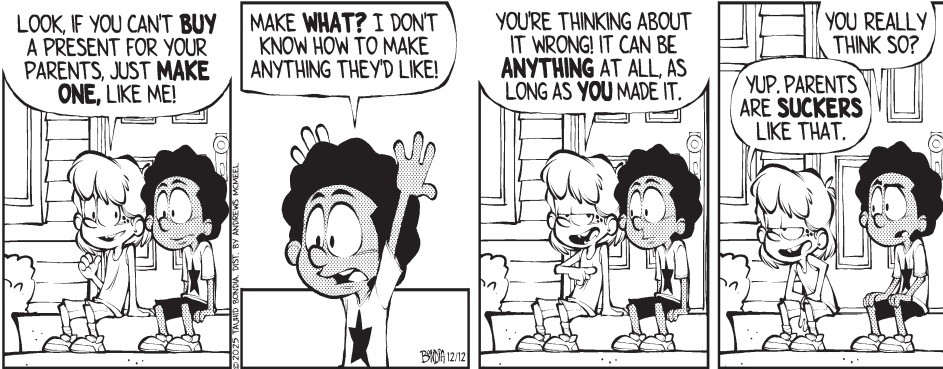
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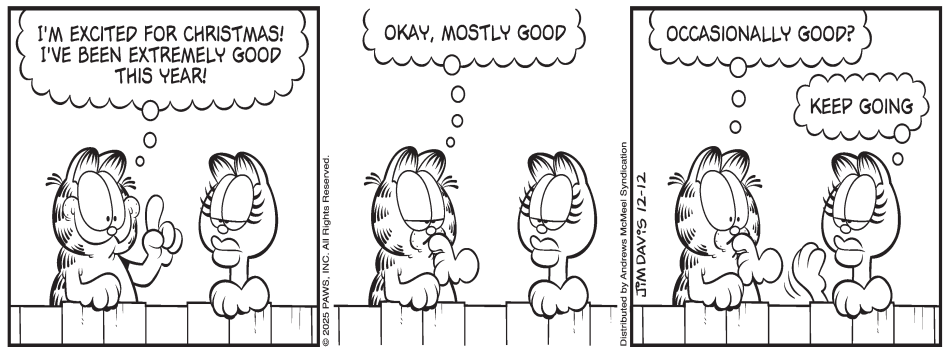
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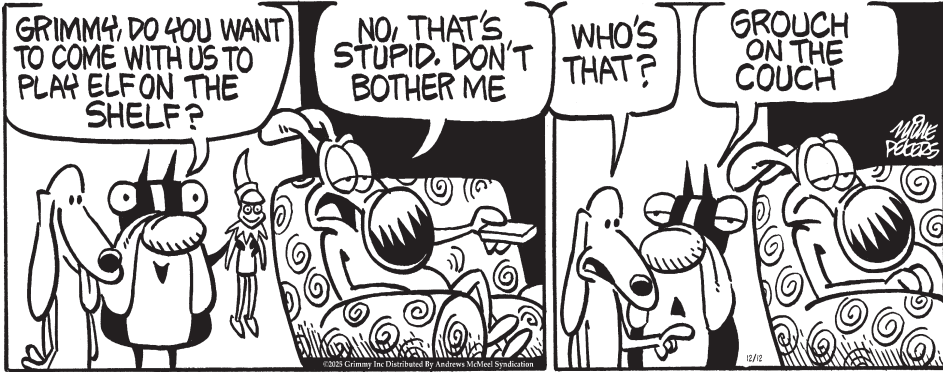
POPEYE



TIGER



MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM



NON SEQUITUR



ZITS



BABY BLUES



PEANUTS



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FAMILY CIRCUS

12-12

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"If my true love gave me five gold rings, he could keep all that other stuff."



# Scientists race to study measles spread in US

**Amy Maxmen**  
**KFF Health News (TNS)**

The United States is poised to lose its measles-free status next year. If that happens, the country will enter an era in which outbreaks are common again.

More children would be hospitalized because of this preventable disease. Some would lose their hearing. Some would die. Measles is also expensive. A new study— not yet published in a scientific journal — estimates that the public health response to outbreaks with only a couple of cases costs about \$244,000. When a patient requires hospital care, costs average \$58,600 per case. The study’s estimates suggest that an outbreak the size of the one in West Texas earlier this year, with 762 cases and 99 hospitalizations, costs about \$12.6 million.

America’s status hinges on whether the country’s main outbreaks this year stemmed from the big one in West Texas that officially began Jan. 20. If these outbreaks are linked, and go on through Jan. 20 of next year, the U.S. will no longer be among nations that have banished the disease.

“A lot of people worked very hard for a very long time to achieve elimination — years of figuring out how to make vaccines available, get good vaccine coverage, and have a rapid response to outbreaks to limit their



**Arielle Zionts/KFF Health News/TNS**  
**A sign outside of a hospital in Rapid City, South Dakota, asks people with measles symptoms to wait outside, because infections are extremely contagious.**

spread,” said Paul Rota, a microbiologist who recently retired from a nearly 40-year career at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Instead of acting fast to prevent a measles comeback, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a lawyer who founded an anti-vaccine organization before taking the helm at the Department of Health and Human Services, has undermined the ability of public health officials to prevent and contain outbreaks by eroding trust in vaccines. The measles vaccine is

safe and effective: Only 4% of more than 1,800 confirmed U.S. cases of measles this year have been in people who had received two doses.

Kennedy has fired experts on the vaccine advisory committee to the CDC and has said, without evidence, that vaccines may cause autism, brain swelling, and death. On Nov. 19, scientific information on a CDC webpage about vaccines and autism was replaced with false claims. Kennedy told The New York Times that he ordered the change.

“Do we want to go back into a prevaccine era where 500 kids die of measles each year?” asked Demetre Daskalakis, a former director of the CDC’s national immunization center, who resigned in protest of Kennedy’s actions in August. He and other scientists said the Trump administration appears to be occupied more with downplaying the resurgence of measles than with curbing the disease. HHS spokesperson Andrew Nixon said in a statement that vaccination remains the most

effective tool for preventing measles and that the “CDC and state and local health agencies continue to work together to assess transmission patterns and ensure an effective public health response.”

**Looking for Links**  
CDC scientists are indeed tracking measles, alongside researchers at health departments and universities. To learn whether outbreaks are linked, they’re looking at the genomes of measles viruses, which contain all their genetic information. Genomic analyses could

help reveal the origin of outbreaks and their true size, and alert officials to undetected spread.

Scientists have conducted genomic analyses of HIV, the flu, and COVID for years, but it’s new for measles because the virus hasn’t been much of a problem in the U.S. for decades, said Samuel Scarpino, a public health specialist at Northeastern University in Boston. “It’s important to get a surveillance network into place so that we could scale up rapidly if and when we need it,” he said.

“We are working with the CDC and other states to determine whether what we’re seeing is one large outbreak with continued spread from state to state,” said Kelly Oakeson, a genomics researcher at the Utah Department of Health and Human Services.

At first glance, the ongoing outbreak in Utah and Arizona, with 258 cases as of Dec. 1, seems linked to the one in Texas because they’re caused by the same strain of measles, D8-9171. But this strain is also spreading throughout Canada and Mexico, which means the outbreaks could have been sparked separately from people infected abroad. If that happened, this technicality could spare the U.S. from losing its status, Rota said. Being measles-free means the virus isn’t circulating in a country continuously year-round.

## Officials: SC’s measles outbreak shows effect of vaccine misinformation

**Lauren Sausser**  
**KFF Health News (TNS)**  
**BOILING SPRINGS, S.C.** — Near the back corner of the local library’s parking lot, largely out of view from the main road, the South Carolina Department of Public Health opened a pop-up clinic in early November, offering free measles vaccines to adults and children.

Spartanburg County, in South Carolina’s Upstate region, has been fighting a measles outbreak since early October, with more than 50 cases identified. Health officials have encouraged people who are unvaccinated to get a shot by visiting its mobile vaccine clinic at any of its several stops throughout the county. But on a Monday afternoon in Boiling Springs, only one person showed up.

“It’s progress. That progress is slow,” Linda Bell, the state epidemiologist with the Department of Public Health, said during a recent press briefing. “We had hoped to see a more robust uptake than that in our mobile health units.”

As South Carolina tries to contain its measles outbreak, public health officials across the nation are concerned that the highly contagious virus is making a major comeback. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has tallied more than 1,700 measles cases and 45 outbreaks in 2025. The largest started in Texas, where hundreds of people were infected and two children died.

For the first time in more than two decades, the United States is poised to lose its measles elimination status, a designation indicating that outbreaks are rare and rapidly contained.

South Carolina’s measles outbreak isn’t yet as large as those in other



**Lauren Sausser/KFF Health News/TNS**  
**In early November, the South Carolina Department of Public Health opened a pop-up mobile vaccine clinic in a library parking lot in Boiling Springs.**

states, such as New Mexico, Arizona, and Kansas. But it shows how a confluence of larger national trends — including historically low vaccination rates, skepticism fueled by the pandemic, misinformation, and “health freedom” ideologies proliferated by conservative politicians — have put some communities at risk

it being the canary in the coal mine because it’s the most contagious infectious disease out there,” said Josh Michaud, associate director for global and public health policy at KFF, a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News. “The logic is indisputable that we’re likely to see more outbreaks.”

## Classifieds

### Garage Sales

**FREE CLOTHING GIVEAWAY**  
All sizes. 2nd Saturday of every month (except January and February). First United Methodist Church, 734 State Route 222, Cortland, 9AM-Noon.

### Apartments Unfurnished

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**SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST**  
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Assigned to the Onondaga Nation School. Valid NYS School Psychologist Certification. Strong commitment to children. Strong interpersonal, communication, and organizational skills. Experience with testing, counseling, and academic intervention. Salary per LTA Negotiated Agreement.

**INTERESTED CANDIDATES APPLY ON OLAS:**  
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Please submit cover letter, resume, certification, transcripts along with application

**DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS:**  
**January 2, 2026**  
Or Until Position is filled

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### Legal Ads

#### CORTLAND COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of Mowgli Industries LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 10/23/2025. Office location: Cortland County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to United States Corporation Agents, Inc.: 7014 13th Avenue, Suite 202, Brooklyn NY 11228. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

#### TOWN OF VIRGIL NOTICE OF MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING OF THE VIRGIL PLANNING BOARD MEETING

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that a meeting and a public hearing will be held before the Virgil Planning Board on Monday December 22, 2025, at the Virgil Town Hall 1176 Church Street, Virgil NY 13045 at 7:00 PM. The meeting and public hearing is being held to consider the following application: Applicant Megan Hayden Esq. is seeking a site plan review of a minor subdivision on behalf of Marilyn Inman, George Craig and Glen Craig. The applicant and owners propose to subdivide the existing tax parcel 118.00-01-08.000, located at 2791 W. River Road, which is approximately 172.29 acres, into three separate parcels: Parcel 1: Approximately 10.83 acres, with about 1,041 feet of road frontage on West River Road and about 447 feet of frontage on Stafford Road. This parcel includes the existing structures. Parcel 2: Approximately 37.81 acres, with roughly 1,900 feet of road frontage along West River Road. Parcel 3: The remaining approximately 123.65 acres, with road frontage along West River Road, Stafford Road, and Snyder Hill Road, all exceeding the required 250 feet of road frontage under the zoning law. The above application is available at [www.virgilny.gov](http://www.virgilny.gov) or contact the office of the Town Clerk at (607) 835-6174, Ext. 2. Those wishing to speak may do so in person, by attorney, or by another representative. Communications in writing in relation thereto may be filed ahead of time with the Board or at such hearing.

Alane Van Donsel  
Virgil Town Clerk on Behalf of  
The Virgil Planning Board

#### CORTLAND COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE

##### JOB OPENING

##### BUILDING MAINTENANCE FOREPERSON

The Cortland Housing Authority has an opening for a full-time Building Maintenance Foreperson. Must possess 3 years of full-time or its' part-time equivalent experience in general building maintenance or skilled trades. Position requires a high school diploma or GED and a valid driver's license. The hourly rate will be \$26.00 per hour plus over-time and on call pay plus an excellent benefits package, including New York State Retirement.

Applicants must complete a Cortland County Civil Service Application, which can be obtained from the Cortland County Personnel Department, 60 Central Avenue, Cortland, NY 13045 or by calling 753-5076. Applications are available online at <https://www.cortlandcountyny.gov/266/JobExam-Application>

#### CORTLAND COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE

##### Tenant Relations Assistant

The Cortland Housing Authority is currently accepting applications for a Tenant Relations Assistant. The position accepts applications, conducts interviews, property inspections, and determines eligibility for the CHA Public Housing and Section 8 programs. Work is performed in the CHA offices and out in the field at various sites. This position is 35-hour work week and pays \$20.50 per hour with an excellent benefit package, including New York State Retirement.

A Cortland County Civil Service Job Application must be filed. For an application and complete job description, please go to Cortland County Civil Service, 60 Central Avenue, Cortland, NY 13045 or [www.cortland-co.org/personnel](http://www.cortland-co.org/personnel).

#### CORTLAND COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of LCGraphics LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 10/19/2025. Office location: Cortland County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to Liam Chase: 6 Madison St Cortland, NY 13045. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

#### BUYING? SELLING? Check the Classifieds!

#### CORTLAND COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

SEASONAL SOLUTIONS OF NY LLC Arts of Org. filed SSNY 11/5/2025 Cortland Co. SSNY design agent for process & shall mail to 41 STATE ST, # 112, ALBANY, NY, 12207 General Purpose

#### CORTLAND COUNTY NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Notice of formation of TRACT 19 BUILDING GROUP LLC. Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of State of NY (SSNY) on 11/18/2025. Office location: Cortland County. SSNY designated as an agent of Limited Liability Company (LLC) upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY should mail process to Jacob S Hollister: 18 Elm Ave, Homer, NY 13077. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

#### CORTLAND COUNTY BID NOTICE

##### LEGAL NOTICE TO BIDDERS

The Virgil Fire Department of Virgil, New York is seeking sealed bids for furnishing “Ford F350 4x4 Crew ” as specified.  
For detailed specifications, Contact Commissioner Michael TenKate  
Virgil Fire District  
1195 West State Road  
Cortland, NY 13045  
Mike\_tenkate@yahoo.com  
607- 543-1803  
Bids will be received until 7:00 P.M.  
on January 5th, 2026 at the Virgil Fire Station:  
1195 West State Rd  
Virgil, NY 13045





Leila Navidi/The Minnesota Star Tribune/TNS  
Kindergarten teacher Nicole Kizer goes over the lockdown drills with her students at Talahi Community School in St. Cloud, Minnesota, on Monday, Oct. 20, 2025.

# Minnesota districts work to take the trauma out of school shooter drills

**Jenny Berg and Jana Hollingsworth**  
**The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)**

DULUTH, Minn. — A couple of minutes into a recent school lockdown drill, a group of 11th-graders huddled in the back of a darkened classroom in complete silence.

The door handle suddenly jiggled, cracking through the quiet and sending a tremor through the students.

Lee Kruger’s international studies class at Duluth East High School had scurried from their desks and away from the door after a voice over the intercom announced the drill. Minutes later, the school’s assistant principals and other staff moved through the building to test door locks.

Unlike drills in some schools across the country, there was no pretend shooter carrying a Nerf gun here. Students weren’t instructed to drag heavy furniture in front of the door as a barricade. Nobody practiced throwing objects at a fake assailant.

As school leaders try to balance safety preparedness with the trauma that just practicing for a shooting may cause students, the blueprint for school shooting drills has begun swinging in a gentler direction in recent years.

The new approach emphasizes muscle memory in a mindful way. It’s a marked difference from some drills across the country — which have even included fake blood and pellet guns — that sprung up more than a dozen years ago after 20 first-graders were gunned down at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut.

“Our intent was to try to make sure we were the most prepared we could be, and I think we were misguided,” said Pat Hamilton of the I Love U Guys Foundation, a national nonprofit that provides free active threat training materials to schools.

“We don’t light our gym on fire to practice a fire drill,” he said. “You don’t have to introduce that trauma and drama to have the same effect.”



Leila Navidi/The Minnesota Star Tribune/TNS  
Principal Samuel Court holds the lockdown magnet that can be removed from doors to quickly lock them at Talahi Community School in St. Cloud, Minnesota, on Monday, Oct. 20, 2025.

Student safety has been top of mind for many in Minnesota since the August shooting at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis that claimed the lives of two children and injured more than two dozen people.

In recent years, several Minnesota districts — including Duluth, Brainerd, St. Louis Park and Prior Lake — have implemented the gentler active-threat protocol from the I Love U Guys Foundation, considered a national leader on training institutions how to respond to threats. Other districts, such as St. Cloud, are looking to make the switch.

**Training for a range of situations**

School lockdown drills have become commonplace across Minnesota in the last two decades, after deadly shootings at Roco-ri High School in central Minnesota in 2003 and Red Lake High School in northern Minnesota in 2005.

Typically, that has meant locking doors, turning off lights and crouching under desks or behind shelves.

Then around 2012, federal agencies started

promoting “run-hide-fight” training, as well as a similar protocol called ALICE (alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate). They expanded responses to include the options of running to safety or fighting, if necessary.

But as more and more shootings happened around the country, many educators and families discovered a communication barrier between schools and first responders in emergency situations. A number of studies found active shooter drills made a majority of students feel “scared and hopeless.”

The parents of 16-year-old Emily Keyes, who was shot and killed by a gunman at Platte Canyon High School in Colorado two decades ago, created the I Love U Guys Foundation to design a common language and set of actions for responding to emergencies. It’s named after the last message Emily sent parents Ellen and John-Michael Keyes.

The organization launched a standard response with simple actions for different types of scenarios: hold in place to keep hallways clear,

secure people inside the building, lockdown inside classrooms, evacuate the building or shelter in cases of severe weather.

The system is more nuanced to differentiate between responses for a police chase in a neighborhood vs. medical incidents inside the school. Students can go into “hold” or “secure” and continue activities in the classroom without going into lockdown.

“Not every crisis in a school is going to be related to an active assailant,” Hamilton said.

But when they do need to go into a lockdown, the protocol teaches a simple phrase — “locks, lights, out of sight” — based on recommendations from the Sandy Hook Advisory Committee, which found the safest place in a school shooting was behind a locked classroom door.

**New law offers fixes**

Minnesota officials say they don’t know whether any districts went so far as to include young children in live simulations. But there was enough variation among districts to prompt the Legislature to pass a law on active threat drills two

years ago.

“We were kind of seeing things all over the place,” said Sen. Erin Maye Quade, DFL-Apple Valley.

The law restricts active shooter simulations with officers and staff to times when a majority of students aren’t at school. It also requires that districts provide advance notice of active shooter drills, lets families opt their children out of the drills and mandates that staff debrief students.

Maye Quade said she’s heard from parents that young students, seeing reports of a mass shooting, might say, “That happened at my school last week.” But “what they’re reporting is actually a drill but they were too young to know the difference. They thought it was real, which can be traumatic.”

The St. Cloud school district moved away from intense physical drills about six years ago. Now, students and teachers simply have conversations about what to do in the case of an active threat.

But the district plans to add back physical drills next year using the I Love U Guys system, said

Matthew Boucher, district operations director.

“We want them to practice physically,” Boucher said. “We also want their brain to be fully engaged and not hijacked by emotions and fear.”

**Practices differ by district**

The state Education Department recommends the I Love U Guys system.

At GFW Public Schools in south-central Minnesota, staff will be training with I Love U Guys in January and combining it with the district’s existing ALICE response that focuses on the hands-on reactions needed in the heat of the moment, said Superintendent Allen Berg.

“The I Love U Guys, it’s a little more friendly for the kids,” he said. “And then ALICE will be the supplemental pieces with what we need to do for fighting back.”

In Brainerd, Superintendent Peter Grant said the district is working closely with county emergency management officials to prepare for shootings like a natural disaster. As it implements I Love U Guys, a big component is sharing a reunification plan.

“The first thing [parents] want to do is rush to the school. Well actually, that’s the worst thing to do,” Grant said. “But we have to give them the terminology and the procedure we’re going to use so that they understand ... should we ever have to use it.”

In Duluth, in its second year with the I Love U Guys program, junior Abigail Schommer said she’s been practicing drills since she was in kindergarten. They’ve always induced a little anxiety, but she feels more empowered in recent years.

“At the same time, I think you’re going to do whatever your instincts tell you,” she said.

Kruger, the Duluth teacher, keeps a box of hockey pucks and rope in his classroom in case he ever needs to defend his students or help them escape.

“I think they get annoyed with drills,” he said. “But I also think they know it’s part of their life.”





**Gina Ferazzi/Los Angeles Times/TNS**  
**Mail handlers use long tools to drag packages out of a bin onto a conveyer belt for sorting at the Los Angeles Processing & Distribution Center on Dec. 2, 2025, in Los Angeles.**

# Holiday shipping deadlines announced

**Karen Garcia**  
**Los Angeles Times (TNS)**

Time is running out for you to ensure your shipped gifts arrive on time for such end-of-the-year celebrations as Christmas, Hannukah and Kwanza.

Mail carriers say they're more than prepared to handle the increased volume in deliveries — but only if you get postage on your packages and ship them quickly.

With automation and AI-driven planning and upgrades, UPS said it's able to predict demand and prevent disruptions for the holidays and beyond.

At the United States Postal Service, planning to handle the influx of holiday packages takes place throughout the year, "and we are well prepared and ready to deliver for the American public," Postmaster General David Steiner said in a statement.

In anticipation of the peak delivery season, the Postal Service increased daily processing from 60 million to 88 million packages by deploying more than 600 package sorters, hiring 14,000 seasonal workers, debuting new facilities and deploying 24,000 delivery vehicles.

All mail carriers have expanded their operations in some ways in anticipation of the holiday rush. Despite these investments, there are still deadlines they recommend you abide by so your gift arrives on time.

**USPS**

The Postal Service recommends the following send-by dates for expected delivery before Dec. 25 within the United States, excluding Alaska and Hawaii.

■ Dec. 17 for packages sent as Ground Advantage service

■ Dec. 17 for packages sent as First-Class Mail service

■ Dec. 18 for packages sent as Priority Mail service

■ Dec. 20 for packages sent as Priority Mail Express service

The deadlines for packages sent to Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and U.S. territories:

■ Dec. 16 for packages sent as Ground Advantage service

■ Dec. 17 for packages sent as First-Class Mail service

■ Dec. 18 for packages sent as Priority Mail service

■ Dec. 20 for packages sent as Priority Mail Express service

International destinations vary. Parcels sent to Canada and Mexico have the following deadlines:

■ Dec. 9 for packages sent as First-Class Package International service

■ Dec. 9 for packages sent as Priority Mail International service

■ Dec. 16 for packages sent as Priority Mail Express International service

**FedEx**

FedEx recommends the following shipping dates for its Ground (for businesses) and Home Delivery (for residential) services for packages within the United States. Packages sent by the deadlines are expected to arrive on or before Dec. 24.

The last day to ship for FedEx Home Delivery:

■ Dec. 17 for 5-day shipping.

■ Dec. 18 for 4-day shipping.

■ Dec. 19 for 3-day shipping.

■ Dec. 22 for 2-day shipping.

■ Dec. 23 for 1-day shipping.

The last day to ship for FedEx Ground:

■ Dec. 15 for 5-day shipping.

■ Dec. 18 for 4-day shipping.

■ Dec. 19 for 3-day shipping.

■ Dec. 22 for 2-day shipping.

ping.

■ Dec. 23 for 1-day shipping.

To send packages estimated to arrive before Dec. 24, you must ship them through the FedEx Overnight, Priority Overnight and Standard Overnight services by Dec. 23.

The last day to ship packages to Canada:

■ Dec. 18 for FedEx International Connect Plus.

■ Dec. 19 for FedEx International Economy.

■ Dec. 22 for FedEx International Priority Distribution.

■ Dec. 22 for FedEx International Priority.

■ Dec. 23 for FedEx International First.

■ Dec. 23 for FedEx International Next Flight.

The last day to ship packages to Mexico:

■ Dec. 18 for FedEx International Connect Plus.

■ Dec. 19 for FedEx International Economy.

■ Dec. 22 for FedEx International Priority.

■ Dec. 22 for FedEx International First.

■ Dec. 23 for FedEx International Next Flight.

**UPS**

These are UPS' recommended last days to ship for a Dec. 24 expected delivery.

To send a package through the UPS Ground service, the company recommends checking the UPS website for details. However, the last day to send a package within the United States is:

■ Dec. 19 for the 3-day select service.

■ Dec. 22 for the 2nd Day Air service.

■ Dec. 23 for the Next Day Air service.

Last day to send a package to Canada:

■ Dec. 22 for the Worldwide Expedited service.

■ Dec. 23 for the Worldwide Express.

Last day to send a package to Mexico:

■ Dec. 19 for the Worldwide Expedited service.

■ Dec. 22 for the Worldwide Express.

# US farmers say \$12 billion bailout won't end industry slump

**Erin Ailworth**  
**Michael Hirtzer**  
**and Ilena Peng**  
**Bloomberg News (TNS)**

U.S. growers say the Trump administration's \$12 billion aid package brings temporary relief, but is unlikely to kick-start a lasting recovery for the American farm economy.

President Donald Trump on Monday unveiled a package to a key base of support that includes as much as \$11 billion in one-time payments to crop farmers who have been hit hard by his tariff regime and low crop prices.

"This is kind of a Band-Aid — we need more markets more than we need aid," said Missouri farmer Marty Richardson, adding that he feels like 2026 will be just as bad as this year. "We're already buying seed for next year and fertilizer, and we're behind the eight ball."

It's a familiar sentiment across the Farm Belt, as farmers have been struggling for years with weak exports, falling crop prices and rising costs. The effects of the president's trade wars, which have squeezed demand and raised costs further, have left the sector in a state of extended uncertainty.

Meryl Kennedy Farr, a rice farmer from Louisiana who sat between the president and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins when the farm aid was announced on Monday, said rice prices are the lowest she has ever seen.

"What we are seeing and facing right now is astronomical, and rice is not the only commodity," she said, adding that the financial issues are taking a mental health toll on growers. "I've had farmers calling me for weeks just almost in tears about what is going to happen."

Some growers, who are longtime supporters of Trump, are still optimistic about a recovery beginning next year, and farmer sentiment is at the highest level since June on hopes for trade with China. But the fundamentals aren't pointing to a turnaround anytime soon.

Federal data shows farm bankruptcies on the rise, while income from selling corn, soybeans and wheat crops has declined since 2022. The U.S. Department of Agriculture forecasts net farm income will increase this year, but that is largely



**Scott Olson/Getty Images/TNS**  
**Soybeans are loaded into a truck so they can be hauled to an elevator and sold on Aug. 1, 2025, in Dwight, Illinois.**

driven by government assistance.

Barry Evans, who grows grain sorghum, cotton and wheat in Texas, was seated not far from Trump on Monday. He said timing is of the essence for South Texas farmers who are just several weeks away from planting, and need to make plans and secure bank loans.

"Cotton and wheat all depend on export markets and they are in the tank right now," he said. "Definitely need this relief." While he echoed many farmers who say they wished they didn't need federal aid, Evans said he was grateful for it.

"As a farmer, we can't control what the markets do. We can't control what other governments do," he said. "They don't all play fair, and so sometimes it's necessary to have support."

Many growers were seeking clarity on how much they might get from Trump's bailout, as the announcement Monday didn't include crop-specific breakdowns for aid. Analyst and trader Ken Morrison estimated payments could be as much as roughly \$50 per acre for farmers of crops such as soybeans, cotton and sorghum.

"That's substantial and would be enough to matter and help out cash flow," said Ryan Wagner, a South Dakota grains grower. "As far as whether or not that's enough to compensate for lost export business and a damaged reputation as

a reliable trade partner, that's another question entirely."

Stress has been particularly acute among soybean farmers after China, the world's top importer, avoided buying U.S. supplies this year to gain leverage in trade talks. Though China has resumed purchases following recent diplomatic agreements, its commitment has yet to fully pan out.

The reality is that America's agricultural dominance is dwindling. Trump's first trade war resulted in China accelerating a diversion of its supply chain away from the U.S. to places like South America. U.S. farmers have lost crucial market share to competitors, particularly Brazil.

"Economics 101: trade wars, nobody wins," said Ryan Loy, an agricultural economist at the University of Arkansas. "We can point at politics, but really for many reasons at the end of the day, China goes, 'They're cheaper, I'm gonna buy it from them.'"

The difficulty in predicting a recovery in the U.S. farm economy was underscored last month as equipment makers including Deere & Co. gave disappointing outlooks for the year ahead, as farmers continue to hold back on buying tractors, despite Trump's urging. The president on Monday pressured the companies to drop prices for their machines, blaming them for driving up costs for farmers.

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# US job openings rise to five-month high

**Jarrell Dillard**  
**Bloomberg News (TNS)**

U.S. job openings picked up in October to the highest level in five months, though less hiring and more layoffs pointed to a continued slowdown in the labor market.

The number of available positions rose slightly to 7.67 million in October

from 7.66 million in the prior month, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data published Tuesday. Vacancies exceeded all estimates in a Bloomberg survey of economists. The release of both monthly figures was delayed because of the government shutdown.

While openings ad-

vanced, it was only was driven by a handful of industries like retail and wholesale trade industries, as well as health care. The latter has been the biggest driver of job growth this year.

Meanwhile, the number of layoffs in October rose to 1.85 million, the highest since the start of 2023.