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## Facing a Republican revolt, House Speaker Johnson pushes ahead on U.S. aid for Ukraine, allies

By LISA MASCARO

AP Congressional Correspondent

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Defiant and determined, House Speaker Mike Johnson pushed back Tuesday against mounting Republican anger over his proposed U.S. aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other allies, and rejected a call to step aside or risk a vote to oust him from office.

"I am not resigning," Johnson said after a testy morning meeting of fellow House Republicans at the Capitol Johnson referred to himself as a "wartime speaker" of the House and indicated in his strongest self-defense yet he would press forward with a U.S. national security aid package, a situation that would force him to rely on Democrats to help pass it, over objections from his weakened majority. "We are simply here trying to do our jobs," Johnson said, calling the motion to oust him "absurd ... not helpful." Tuesday brought a definitive shift in tone from both the House Republicans and the speaker himself at a pivotal moment as the embattled leader tries, against the wishes of his majority, to marshal the votes needed to send the stalled national security aid for Israel, Ukraine and other overseas allies to passage.

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Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., and the House Republican leadership meet with reporters following a closed-door Republican strategy session as Johnson pushes towards separate votes on aid for Israel and Ukraine, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Associated Press  
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# Facing a Republican revolt, House Speaker Johnson pushes ahead on U.S. aid for Ukraine, allies

Continued from Front

Johnson appeared emboldened by his meeting late last week at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida when the Republican former president threw him a political lifeline with a nod of support. At his own press conference Tuesday, Johnson spoke of the importance of ensuring Trump, who is now at his criminal trial in New York, is re-elected to the White House.

Johnson also spoke over the weekend with President Joe Biden as well as other congressional leaders about the emerging U.S. aid package, which the speaker plans to move in separate votes for each section — with bills for Ukraine, Israel, the Indo-Pacif-

ic region. He spoke to Biden about it again late Monday. After Johnson briefed the president, White House officials said they were taking a wait-and-see approach until the text of the speaker's plan is released and the procedural pathway becomes more clear. "It does appear at first blush, that the speaker's proposal will, in fact, help us get aid to Ukraine, aid to Israel and needed resources to the Indo-Pacific for a wide range of contingencies there," John Kirby, the White House's national security spokesman, told reporters on Tuesday. The speaker is considering a complicated approach that would break apart the Senate's \$95 billion aid package for separate votes, and then

either stitch it back together or send the components to the Senate for final passage, and potentially onto the White House for the president's signature. All told, it would require the speaker to cobble together bipartisan majorities with different factions of House Republicans and Democrats on each measure. Additionally, Johnson is preparing a fourth measure that would include various Republican-preferred national security priorities, such as a plan to seize some Russian assets in U.S. banks to help fund Ukraine and another to turn the economic aid for Ukraine into loans. It could also include provisions to sanction Iran over its weekend attack



Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., center, and the House Republican leadership, from left, Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., chair of the House Republican Conference, House Majority Whip Tom Emmer, R-Minn., and House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., depart after meeting with reporters as Johnson pushes towards separate votes on aid for Israel and Ukraine, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Associated Press

on Israel, among others. The speaker's emerging plan is not an automatic deal-breaker for Democrats in the House and Senate, with leaders refraining from comment until text details are released. They were due later Tuesday — though as the afternoon dragged on that was uncertain. During their own closed-door meeting, Leader Hakeem Jeffries said House Democrats would not accept a "penny less" than the \$9 billion in humanitarian aid that senators had included in their package with money for Gaza, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss it. Johnson will need Democratic votes to pass aspects of his package, but Democratic support for Israel is slipping in both the House and Senate amid the Netanyahu government's retaliatory bombardment of Gaza that has left 30,000 people dead. A previous House GOP bill for Israel gutted the assistance for Gaza. House Republicans, meanwhile, were livid that Johnson would be leaving their top priority — efforts to impose more security at the U.S.-Mexico border — on the sidelines. Some predicted Johnson will not be able to push ahead with voting on the package this week, as planned. Rep. Debbie Lesko, R-Ariz., called the morning meeting an "argument fest." When the speaker said the House GOP's priority border

security bill H.R. 2 would not be considered germane to the package, Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a chief sponsor, said it's for the House to determine which provisions and amendments are relevant. "Things are very unresolved," Roy said. Roy said said Republicans want "to be united. They just have to be able to figure out how to do it." The speaker faces a threat of ouster from Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., the top Trump ally who has filed a motion to vacate the speaker from office in a snap vote — much the way Republicans ousted their former speaker, Kevin McCarthy, last fall. While Greene has not said if or when she will force the issue, and has not found much support for her plan after last year's turmoil over McCarthy's exit, she drew at least one key backer Tuesday. Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., rose in the meeting and suggested Johnson should step aside, pointing to the example of John Boehner, an even earlier House speaker who announced an early resignation in 2015 rather than risk a vote to oust him, according to Republicans in the room. "Speaker Johnson must announce a resignation date and allow Republicans to elect a new Speaker to put America First and pass a Republican agenda," Greene wrote on social media, thanking Massie for his support for her motion to vacate. □

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# The Biden administration recruits 15 states to help enforce airline consumer laws

By DAVID KOENIG  
AP Airlines Writer

The Biden administration is enlisting the help of officials in 15 states to enforce consumer-protection laws covering airline travelers, a power that by law is limited to the federal government. The U.S. Department of Transportation said Tuesday that the states, which include California, New York and Illinois, will help ensure that government enforcement activities keep up with a current boom in air travel. Under an agreement announced by Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, state attorney general offices will be able to investigate complaints about airline service. If they believe an



A "We stand with the UAW" sign appears outside of the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tenn., on Dec. 18, 2023.

Associated Press

airline violated the law or is refusing to cooperate with investigators, the states could refer cases to the Transportation Department for enforcement. In return, the Transportation Department, or DOT, will give the states access to its consumer-complaint system and train state employees about federal consumer laws covering airlines. "This is a partnership that will greatly improve DOT's capacity to hold airlines accountable and to protect passengers," Buttigieg told reporters. Buttigieg pointed to travelers whose flights are canceled and then must wait days for another flight or pay more to fly home on another airline. □

## Garland defends Biden's mental fitness and says he has 'complete confidence' in him

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Merrick Garland told lawmakers on Tuesday that President Joe Biden has shown no signs of cognitive impairment while defending Biden's ability to serve as commander in chief. Garland, appearing before a House committee overseeing funding for the Justice Department, was answering questions on the report from special counsel Robert Hur about Biden's handling of classified material. Hur's report concluded in no criminal charges yet made some observations about Biden's mental state that infuriated the Democratic president and his aides. The attorney general, while stressing that he was not commenting on the specifics of Hur's analysis, said that based on his own observations while interacting with Biden, he has "complete confidence in the president" when it comes to questions about his mental fitness. □



Attorney General Merrick Garland testifies before the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies budget hearing on Capitol Hill, Monday, April 15, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press



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# Only 1 in 3 US adults think Trump acted illegally in New York hush money case, AP-NORC poll shows

By **THOMAS BEAUMONT** and **AMELIA THOMSON-DE-VEAUX**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The first criminal trial facing former President Donald Trump is also the one in which Americans are least convinced he committed a crime, a new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll finds.

Only about one-third of U.S. adults say Trump did something illegal in the hush money case for which jury selection began Monday, while close to half think he did something illegal in the other three criminal cases pending against him. And they're fairly skeptical that Trump is getting a fair shake from the prosecutors in the case or that the judge and jurors can be impartial in cases involving him.

Still, half of Americans would consider Trump unfit to serve as president if he is convicted of falsifying business documents to cover up hush money payments to a woman who said he had a sexual encounter with her.

While a New York jury will decide whether to convict Trump of felony charges, public opinion of the trial proceedings could hurt him politically.

The poll suggests a conviction could hurt Trump's campaign. Trump enters a rematch with President Joe Biden as the first presumptive nominee of a major party and the first former president to be under indictment. A verdict is expected in roughly six weeks, well before the Republican National Convention, at which he will accept the GOP nomination.

Trump has made the prosecutions against him a centerpiece of his campaign and argued without evidence that Biden, a Democrat, engineered the cases. That argument helped him consolidate GOP support during the Republican primary, but a conviction might influence how many



**Former President Donald Trump sits in Manhattan criminal court with his legal team in New York, April 15, 2024.**

Americans including independent voters and people long skeptical of Trump perceive his candidacy.

"Any conviction should disqualify him," said Callum Schlumpf, a 31-year-old engineering student and political independent from Clifton, Texas. "It sets a bad example to the rest of the world. I think it misrepresents us, as a country, as to what we believe is important and virtuous."

Yet, a cloud of doubt hangs over all the proceedings. Only about 3 in 10 Americans feel that any of the prosecutors who have brought charges against Trump are treating the former president fairly. And only about 2 in 10 Americans are extremely or very confident that the judges and jurors in the cases against him can be fair and impartial.

"It's very obvious political persecution," said Christopher Ruff, a 46-year-old political independent and museum curator from Sanford, North Carolina. "I'm no fan of Trump in any way, shape or form. Didn't vote for him, never will. But it's obviously all political."

Consistent with AP-NORC

polls conducted over the past year, the new poll found that about half of Americans say Trump did something illegal regarding the classified documents found at his Florida home, and a similar share think he did something illegal regarding his alleged attempt to interfere in Georgia's vote count in the 2020 presidential election. The poll also found that nearly half of Americans believe he did something illegal related to his effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Prosecutors in New York will argue that Trump falsified his company's internal records to hide the true nature of a payment to his former lawyer Michael Cohen. Cohen alleges he was directed by Trump to pay adult film actor Stormy Daniels \$130,000 one month before the 2016 election to silence her claims about an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to the 34-count indictment and denied any sexual encounter with Daniels.

The poll found that 35% of Americans say Trump has

done something illegal with regard to the hush money allegations. Slightly fewer, about 3 in 10, think he did something unethical without breaking the law. Fourteen percent think he did nothing wrong at all. Those numbers haven't shifted meaningfully in the year since he was first charged in the case.

Republicans are much less likely than Democrats and independents to say Trump committed a crime in the hush money case.

"He's done nothing wrong," said Louie Tsonos, a 43-year-old sales representative and Republican from Carleton, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. "Because Trump has a lot of money and fame, they want to destroy his reputation. Or at least they are trying to."

"Fewer than one in 10 Republicans say Trump did something illegal in the case, while 4 in 10 Republicans think he did something unethical but did not break the law. About 3 in 10 Republicans, like Tsonos, say he did nothing wrong. By contrast, about 6 in 10 Democrats and roughly 3 in 10 independents believe he did something illegal.

Monica Brown, a Democrat from Knoxville, Tennessee, thinks Trump did something unethical, though not illegal, in the New York criminal case under way. But a conviction would ruin his credibility to serve as president, she said.

"I don't believe any president whether it's Donald Trump or anyone else should have a criminal conviction on his record," said Brown, a 60-year-old veterinary technician and social worker. "Even if it's related to something like hush money, what respect are they going to get from anyone? Citizens of the country or world leaders, they aren't going to respect you."

Nearly 6 in 10 Republicans say they would consider Trump fit to be president even if he were to be convicted of falsifying business documents in the hush money case. About 8 in 10 Democrats say Trump would not be fit to serve in the event of a conviction. About half of independents think he would be unfit to serve, with 22% saying he would be fit and 30% saying they didn't know enough to say.

"I don't think any of that stuff has any relevance to his ability to lead this country," said Jennifer Solich, a Republican from York, Pennsylvania, and retired nuclear engineer who believes Trump would be fit to serve if convicted in the New York case.

"There may be some unethical aspects to it. I just think it's more trivial than what we're facing as a nation." □

## Former UK leader Liz Truss backs Trump and blames others for her ouster after 49 days

By JILL LAWLESS  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — During her 49 days as Britain's shortest-serving prime minister, Liz Truss sparked mayhem on the financial markets and turmoil within her Conservative Party.

Now she is speaking up, and her message is: It wasn't me.

In interviews and a new book, Truss robustly defends her economic record, blaming the "deep state," "technocrats," "the establishment," civil servants and the Bank of England for her downfall.

"I'm not saying I'm perfect," Truss told the BBC. But, she added, "I'm frankly not going to let them get off the hook."

Traditionally, former British prime ministers keep quiet for an extended period after leaving office. Not Truss. In her grandly titled tome "Ten Years to Save the West" which is being released on Tuesday the former prime minister defends her actions, excoriates her many critics and offers her prescription for a better world.

Her ideas include abolish-



Former British Prime Minister Liz Truss speaks during the Conservative Political Action Conference, 2024 CPAC, at the National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Md. on Feb. 22, 2024.

Associated Press

ing the United Nations and backing Donald Trump for reelection a departure from the convention that senior British politicians stay out of U.S. elections.

"I believe that we need a strong America," Truss told the BBC, adding that "the world was safer" when Trump was president.

"I think that our opponents feared the Trump presiden-

cy more than they fear the Democrats being in office," she said.

Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London, said Truss' media onslaught "confirms her transformation into a radical right-wing populist." Truss became prime minister in September 2022 when she was elected by the governing Conserva-

tive Party to replace Boris Johnson after he was toppled by scandals.

Her promise to spur economic growth with tax cuts and deregulation enthused Tory members, but a budget containing 45 billion pounds (\$54 billion) in unfunded tax cuts rocked the financial markets, drove up the cost of government borrowing and sent the

pound to its lowest-ever level against the dollar.

The Bank of England had to step in to prop up the bond market and prevent a wider economic meltdown. Millions of people still have higher mortgage payments because of the soaring interest rates.

A tabloid newspaper set up a live camera on a head of lettuce and a photo of Truss and asked which would last longer.

The salad leaf won, and the nickname "Lettuce Liz" was born.

In October 2022, Truss resigned and was replaced by Rishi Sunak, the rival she'd defeated just a couple of months earlier.

Truss has found plenty of other people to blame. She said that the central bank had kept interest rates too low, while the Office for Budget Responsibility which provides the government with economic forecasts had failed to warn her that British pension funds were heavily exposed to interest-rate fluctuations.

She is calling for the OBR to be abolished and for Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey to resign. □

## No weed, just beer: Bavaria bans smoking cannabis at Oktoberfest and beer gardens

**BERLIN (AP)** — You can get drunk at Bavaria's world-famous Oktoberfest, but don't get high.

The southern German state will ban smoking cannabis at public festivals, inside beer gardens, and even at the Oktoberfest, the world's most popular beer festival, the state's government announced Tuesday.

Local authorities in Bavaria will also be allowed to prohibit cannabis consumption in public areas such as outdoor swimming pools and leisure parks such as Munich's Englischer Garten, German news agency dpa reported.

"Our aim is to limit cannabis consumption in public spaces," said Bavarian

Health Minister Judith Gerlach. "That is important for health protection and especially for protecting children and young people."

Bavaria's move comes after Germany legalized possession of small amounts of cannabis for recreational use all over the country at the beginning of this month. Bavaria's conservative-led state government has been particularly vocal in its opposition to the partial legalization of cannabis.

Germany's nationwide new rules went into force on April 1, legalizing possession by adults of up to 25 grams (nearly 1 ounce) of marijuana for recreational purposes and allowing individuals to grow up to three

plants for their personal use.

A second part of the legislation, under which German residents age 18 and older will be allowed to join nonprofit cannabis-growing clubs from which they can buy marijuana, takes effect July 1.

In its strict interpretation of the cannabis law, Bavaria's state government also wants to ban smoking cannabis in designated smoking rooms and smoking areas such as the outdoor areas in restaurants and cafes.

The ban will also extend to the heating and vaporization of cannabis and cannabis products, dpa reported.

Bavaria's state govern-



Women with glasses of beer pose for a photo on day one of the 188th 'Oktoberfest' beer festival in Munich, Germany, Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023.

Associated Press

ment argues that the ban of weed consumption at public festivals including the Oktoberfest is needed because consumers are

not allowed to smoke cannabis near minors, and children and young people are regularly present there. □

# Venezuela closes embassy in Ecuador to protest raid on Mexican embassy there

By REGINA GARCIA CANO  
Associated Press

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro ordered the closure of his country's embassy and consulates in Ecuador on Tuesday in solidarity with Mexico in its protest over a raid by Ecuadorian authorities on the Mexican embassy in Quito.

Venezuela also "fully supports" Mexico's request to have the United Nations suspend Ecuador from the world body, Maduro said during a virtual meeting of the leaders of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa ordered authorities to raid the Mexican diplomatic outpost April 5 to arrest the country's former Vice President Jorge Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive who was holed up at the embassy since December. Mexico granted him asylum hours before the raid.

The extraordinarily unusual use of force drew immediate condemnation from governments around the world, because diplomatic premises are considered foreign soil and "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties.



People stand outside the Venezuelan embassy in Quito, Ecuador, Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Associated Press

Noboa has said he authorized the raid "to protect national security." He argued that Glas was wanted for his criminal convictions for corruption and not political reasons, and accused Mexico of violating the Vienna treaties by granting asylum to someone convicted of "very serious crimes."

Mexico immediately expressed its outrage over the raid, severed diplomatic relations with Ecuador and recalled its diplomatic

mission.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Tuesday before the meeting of the regional body that Mexico wants Ecuador's temporary expulsion from the United Nations until it apologizes and admits that it violated Mexico's sovereignty in the embassy raid.

"It was a very serious affair," López Obrador said. Mexico had hoped to use the CELAC meeting to rally a unified front to advance

its case both at the U.N. and before the International Court of Justice.

Maduro said he has ordered all diplomatic personnel back to Venezuela "until international law is expressly restored in Ecuador." "Venezuela fully supports Mexico's proposal to expel Ecuador from the United Nations organization until it apologizes to the international community and restores the situation to its original legal status," Maduro said.

Maduro said that Glas, who is now being held at a maximum-security prison in the port city of Guayaquil, "must be returned to the Mexican embassy and have his political asylum recognized."

Noboa drew additional criticism Tuesday for not appearing at the virtual gathering of regional leaders. He posted an Instagram video promoting improvements to law enforcement infrastructure and another one announcing an emergency declaration covering the country's electricity sector amid hours-long power outages in Quito.

"He should have shown up and assumed responsibility for himself in front of Ecuador, in front of Latin America, in front of the Caribbean, in front of the world and he has not shown his face," Maduro said. "I can say from Venezuela that he has gone into hiding and the people of Ecuador should know it."

Mexico's embassy in Quito appeared already closed Tuesday afternoon. Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Venezuela's announcement. □

# The U.S. ambassador to Japan says boosting arms industry ties is key to a stronger security alliance



In this photo provided by U.S. Embassy in Japan, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, center left, poses with the officials of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) and Lockheed, during his visit to a MHI's F-35 fighter jet final assembly and inspection plant in the town of Toyoyama in the Aichi prefecture, western Japan, Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Associated Press

By MARI YAMAGUCHI  
Associated Press

**TOKYO (AP)** — The U.S. ambassador to Japan urged Tokyo on Tuesday to take a greater role in developing, producing and supplying weapons "to enhance our collective security" amid conflict in Ukraine, Gaza and elsewhere.

The United States alone can no longer supply all democracies, Ambassador Rahm Emanuel said during a visit to a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' F-35 fighter jet factory. He stressed the importance of stronger defense industry cooperation between the allies.

The visit came after Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's trip to Washington, where he met with President Joe Biden and highlighted Japan's commitment to do more as a reliable partner, especially in defense cooperation.

The countries will now look at what Japan can co-license, co-produce and co-develop, Emanuel told reporters. "It's extremely exciting to bring Japan's industrial capability, its engineering smarts, onto the field on behalf of the alliance," he said.

Japan, due to its wartime past as aggressor, had long banned most arms exports, a principle that left its defense industry with high prices, aging technology and scant government support. A number of Japanese arms makers left the business.

But under the national security strategy that Kishida's government adopted in 2022, Japan is accelerating its military buildup and increasing its defense budget in the face of threats from China, North Korea and Russia. Japan pledged to acquire what it calls counter-strike capability and purchased 400 Tomahawk long-range cruise missiles. □

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## Let's take care of our precious Patrishi bird Together we can provide a healthy environment for the growth of Aruba's flora and fauna

(Oranjestad)—Recently, through his Facebook page, renowned activist Greg Peterson from the Aruba Birdlife Conservation posted a sad message, indicating that another type of bird in Aruba, the Patrishi, has started to disappear due to UTV and ATV activities around the island's wildlife territories.



"The last call of the Patrishi. Around the area of the Lighthouse where adventure tourism has caused great disturbance to a historic breeding ground of Aruba's Burrowing Owl (Shoco), we have now noticed that the Crested Bobwhite (Patrishi), which once roamed this area in respectable numbers, has

now disappeared," the post indicates.

Peterson, who is an activist firmly standing in the fight to safeguard Aruba's nature and environment, emphasizes that the manner of use of the UTV and ATV,

used for off-roading adventures, currently has a serious impact on Aruba's nature.

He stresses that this type of tourism is not sustainable and needs to be regulated long before it causes more damage to Aruba's flora

and fauna. This is not the first time this tourist activity has been denounced. For a long time now, citizens and organizations have expressed their dissatisfaction with the damage caused by ATV and UTV to nature, but nonetheless,

some companies continue to give tours using these vehicles in different locations without providing clear guidelines and rules for off-roading activities.

Our local fauna and flora is especially important for the preservation of our nature. Visitors and locals alike have always expressed their love and admiration for Aruba's nature, and so it is important that we work together to address and safeguard the island's nature reserves. A healthy environment insures not only the growth of our local flora and fauna, but also provides an enjoyable experience for tourists visiting the island as well the locals receiving the visitors. □

## How Aruban beaches came to be!

(Oranjestad)—We've talked about the best beaches to visit on the island before, but have you ever wondered how Aruba got its white, sandy beaches, and why there's a clear difference between the northern and southern shores? Here are some fun facts about the development of Aruban beaches.

**How did Aruba get its white, sandy beaches?**  
 Aruba's beaches have de-

veloped over the span of thousands of years. Waves crashing on the rocky formations along our coast line (which consists mainly of coral reefs) have started to wear and tear the reefs over time, resulting in its gradual breakdown. Fish that feed off corals also contribute to this, one small bite at a time. Over the course of thousands of years, as waves continue to crash and fish continue to eat off the corals,

sand starts to accumulate around the area. However, whether the sand stays there is another question to be answered, and this is where we highlight the biggest difference between the northern and southern coast of the island.

The sand that accumulates around a torn coral reef is swept away along with the debris by the ocean stream. However, in areas where it's shallow and the



stream is weaker, the sand tends to stick to the bottom faster. This is why the beaches in the south—the areas with weaker stream and shallower ocean floors—has sand that stretches for miles. In contrast, the northern area, where the stream is much stronger and the ocean floor is much deeper, there is no sand present—they were swept away with the current!

interesting phrasing. Aruba is a continental island. The island actually forms part of South America, and the space between Aruba and the South American continent is simply referred to as land that runs under the ocean. This is why it gets gradually deeper in the south, whereas the ocean floor in the north runs steeply to the bottom.



**Why north deep, but south shallow?**  
 Ah! Good question...and

Source: archival document provided by the National Archive of Aruba (ANA). □

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## Aruba to me



**ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.**

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: [news@arubatoday.com](mailto:news@arubatoday.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank

you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from our awesome visitors H&H Nelsbach.

They wrote to us saying: "it was the year 1993 when we felt right away in love with this beautiful Island and we bought Time Share at DIVI VILLAGE. We've been coming every year for 4 weeks. we admired the big improvement the Island had done, some are very good and some are not. Aruba is a special place and our gas station of energy and also a big help in aging."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! ☐



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**The legend of the Kibrahacha tree**

(Oranjestad)—The Kibrahacha is a famous tree known locally for its bright, yellow flowers that blooms for just three days. Scientifically known as *Tabebuia billbergii*, and in English as the Yellow Poui, this tree is native to the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, and is considered among locals as one of the most spectacular trees on the island. But did you also know that the beautiful yellow flowers have a story behind them?

The Kibrahacha is said to have extremely hard wood—so hard that it can break an axe. In fact, that's what its name means in Papiamentu: "kibra" (break) "hacha" (axe). The flowers bloom around April and May, but this only last for about three days, as the flowers start to fall off and the tree starts growing its green leaves. The Kibrahacha is especially particular, as it's the only one among its neighboring trees to starts blooming first.

The legend of the Kibrahacha  
Written by Hubert (Lio Booi)

One day Aterima, who lived west of the hill Sero Warawara, woke up one day to find her father sleeping in his hammock, suffering a bout of terrible fever. Her mother was very worried, and as was the custom in the olden days, asked Aterima to go fetch Kudaweche, who was an epistemophile, to come see his father.

Aterima wasted to time and went to go fetch Kudaweche. Upon telling Kudaweche that her father was sick, he immediately accompanied Aretima back to her hut, where he encountered her father in a bad state. Not willing to waste any time, he told Aretima that the only thing that can cure her father is a home-made potion made out of the Kibrahacha flower. At the time the Kibrahacha was not yet in her blooming season, but the stubborn Kudaweche was determined to bring back Aretima's father back to health, and so off they went to the nearest Kibrahacha tree.

When they arrived at the tree,

they saw that it was covered head to toe in thorns, with only a few closed flowers at the very top. Kudaweche, experienced veteran in all things Aruban flora and fauna, told Aretima to start plucking the thorns of the tree to climb to the top where the flowers are. Aretima, just as determined to save her father, didn't hesitate to start.

To her surprise, every time she plucked a thorn of the tree, a bright, yellow flower bloomed in its place. The thorns were hard to pluck out, but Aretima continued plucking with enthusiasm and wonder at the unfolding sight before her. Not too long after she was able to fill her entire satchel with the yellow flowers. Kudaweche, satisfied to see Aretima so happy and encouraged to help her father, took her back to her hut.

Upon arriving back at the hut, Aretima's mother quickly made a tea out of the flowers and gave it to her sick husband. Miraculously, after just one sip of the tea, the



father's fever left his body immediately, and he opened eyes and sprung up feeling new.

The next morning, they all visited the same Kibrahacha tree that saved the life of Aretima's father and they saw another miracle. The tree was covered again in the same bright, yellow flowers, with not a thorn in sight. And as the legend goes, from that day on, the Kibrahacha tree no longer produced any more thorns. □

**Aruba to me**



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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from our awesome visitors Teresa and Darrell from Massachusetts, USA.

They wrote to us saying: "Aruba to us is the best way to forget your troubles, be carefree, and to relax and regroup! The best vacation spot on the planet!"

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □



Article by Etnia Nativa  
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## Fake identity

Each week, Island Insight shares a story of Aruba through the eyes of Etnia Nativa, involving you with the mystical aspects of the island, its ethnic as well as colonial heritage, sharing ancestors' histories and their survival challenges, and at the same time, repudiating any attack on it.

During this episode, we focus on some photos captured by the lens of Andrew Supera and labeled online as fake petroglyphs. His post caught our attention and sparked our subsequent outrage. This represents significant damage to our cultural identity and a clear attack on the geological as well as the archaeological heritage of the island. This type of damage must be treated with great care and know-how in order to recover the affected area's original state. It is the primary obligation of local officials to protect the area in question in order to preserve our heritage. We believe that this attack has been premeditated since the vandalism occurred in a tourism-representative area such as Casibari.

Art, in its oldest expression, was essential as a form of communication. Rock art depicted everyday life, from hunting to belief systems, and was a way to document history and communicate culture; however, it was not to be compared with what later became street art or graffiti, which initially was considered a vandalic act.

Vandalism of public property is a criminal activity

that has been growing over the years around the world. These acts originated in popular revolts that sought to reach the "state" through the deprecation of statues, buildings, and urban artistic performances. They are human actions based upon dissatisfaction within democratic and ethical behavior.

In general, the causes of vandalism are related to communication difficulties and feelings of exclusion and injustice; the individual practices it as a "defense" against the feeling of frustration and helplessness. It is obvious that Aruba is being overexploited without considering the negative consequences that may result from practices that damage the ecosystem, the demographics, and the attitude of our population. The negative impact is being expressed through passive vandalism that gives voice to the desperate cry of our citizens through expressions like NO MORE HOTELS, a cry that can be erased with a little paint, but that does not change the regrettable reality that many locals feel when they justify the unjustifiable through a vandalistic expression.

## Episode CCLIII - 253

To combat vandalism, it is necessary to invest in integration, education, awareness, and monitoring actions. To involve the population in the preservation and care of public property and review laws that have strict punishment for those who commit this type of crime. Periodic inspections by qualified personnel are essential all around the island to raise awareness of the situation by acting as soon as possible in such events of damage.

It is necessary to value our history and culture forged by our ancestors, take care of the iconic places that represent identity and collective memory, promote the care of public spaces, and value our existence. It is urgent to promote civility towards collective enjoyment

While rock art is expressed through simple symbols like lines, open-hand palm expressions, or more complex scenes with animals and objects, this continues to represent the daily reality of primitive man and its mystical motifs. Graffiti, although positioned as an element of urban decoration, contributes a parallel artistic outcry to the unfortunate reality that Aruba experiences, becoming a silent scream in response to the deterioration of the moral, ethical, and civic conduct of a democratic society that we once lived in as an island nation.

Let's create awareness that rock art is our heritage. Contrary to popular belief, it was not created by some underdeveloped cannibal inhabitants of the mythical epoch, and it does not reflect buried treasure maps. What rock art does provide is a means of understanding the sacred and mundane perspectives of life.



Photo by Andrew Supera



Photo by Andrew Supera

If knowing more about Aruba is on your itinerary, Etnia Nativa is your only choice—a unique native gem! Let Anthony, our acclaimed cultural columnist, guide and lecture you regarding the most interesting and revealing stories regarding Aruba's uncovering knowledge acquired through generations of native ethnic presence, an beyond beaches learning adventure. Visit his magnificent dwelling that integrates reused materials with nature, bursting with culture and island heritage! Whats App +297 592 2702 etnianaativa03@gmail.com

## Short history of the beginnings of baseball in Aruba

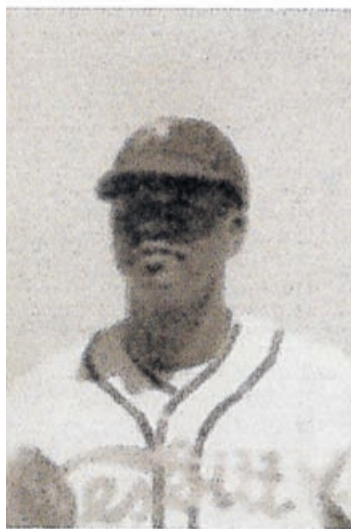
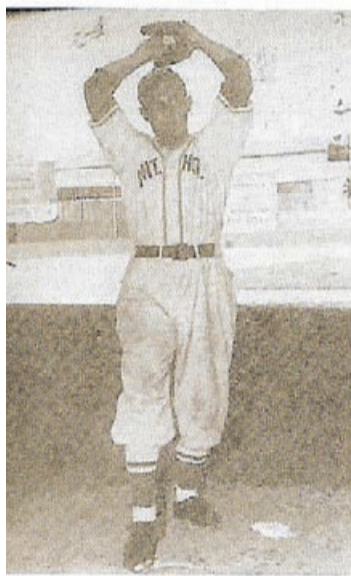
**ORANJESTAD —** Baseball was played on the island of Aruba in the 1930's, but only by United States expatriates working for LAGO and living inside the LAGO colony. Jim Bluejacket, the legendary US Indian who had played in two major league teams, worked for LAGO during 14 years and was a key factor in the growth of the popularity of the game in the colony. There is no record of Bluejacket ever playing outside the colony.

Outside the colony, the game of baseball was introduced to Aruba by Venezuelan immigrants and sailors on the Venezuelan fishing boats that used Aruba as their home port. They formed pick-up teams and played games on Sundays on an open field behind what is now the Court of Justice. One of the Venezuelans that comes to mind is Felix Garrido, grandfather of our current Prime-Minister.

In the late 30s the leader of this group was Raúl Aparicio, a cousin of Luis Aparicio who is now enshrined in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The Aparicios were evidently very good at sports. Raúl had two brothers who also played baseball, René and Roman. Rosendo, his only brother who did not play baseball became a professional soccer player in the Venezuelan league. Rosendo was nicknamed "Cabeza de oro" (golden head) for a memorable header he scored to win a game for his team.

Interestingly, it was in Aruba that Luis Aparicio played his first game outside of Venezuela. This took place in 1950 when he played shortstop for the school he attended. Later he played for "Cabimas" in a doubleheader of the Venezuelan Western League. These official games of the league were authorized to be played in Aruba by the Professional Baseball Organization of Venezuela. Several others who played in those games have also been enshrined.

Luis Aparicio's father was



the super popular Luis "El Grande" (the great one) after whom the baseball stadium in Maracaibo is named. He and his brother owned the professional baseball teams "Gavilanes" which later became the "Aguilas", and the "Cabimas".

In the early '40s, another group, mostly immigrants from the Dominican Republic also became very active with pickup teams. Some of these remained active in baseball well into the early '50s; as umpires, managers even as players. Among these were Nestor "Pantin" Guerrero who also had a musical band. Perhaps not so coincidentally, many of Pantin's players were also musicians. Luthai Pantophlet who umpired many years was a well-known drummer. Gaston Hazel was a bongo player; José Bryson and the brothers Nicholson, Teddy and Julio, all played several instruments.

In San Nicolas, baseball was played on the grounds next to where the LAGO Sport Park (now Laveist Sport Park) was officially inaugurated in March 1941.

During the WWII years, baseball got a big lift from the influx of Puerto Rican and US soldiers stationed here. As LAGO was playing a very important role in the struggle against Hitler, it was able to get all the sports equipment needed here to allow more people to participate.

In the '40s only the Lago Sports Park organized baseball championship games. The first teams to participate were Artraco, (Aruba Trading Co.), Esso Garage and Botica San Lucas. In 1945 Venezuelan employees of the Lago refinery participated under the name of "Cafenol", a very popular Venezuelan coffee brand. Two other groups of Venezuelan immigrants formed the teams "Cerveceria" (named after the iconic team Cerveceria Caracas), and "Venezuela", although not all members of these teams were Venezuelans. This was also the year that the team



sponsored by Roxy Café started to play as "Dodgers". Dodgers became the dominant baseball powerhouse till the 1950s.

Other teams that entered the baseball scene in the late 1940s: Pepsi Cola (Oranjestad) and St. Thomas Boys (former students of St. Thomas College, Oranjestad). "Baby Ruth" in San Nicolas played initially under the name "Camel" and "Barnes' Ramblers" the only team consisting of Lago Colony players to participate in the Lago Sport Park championships. "Red Rock Cola" was formed in Oranjestad in 1950.

In 1952 the team Pepsi Cola became "Nesbitt's" and had players of seven countries, including two American expats from Lago Colony.

In 1950 a group of prominent members of the Aruba community founded the Amateur Baseball Bond of Aruba (ABBA) to give structure to the management of the sport and became the organizers of official championship games. While maintaining the existing teams in a league that was referred to as A-class, ABBA established a B-class league in which the "Budweiser" and "Braves" played the first years.

By 1952 Aruba became a member of the International Amateur Baseball Association and fielded a team managed by Joe Proterra, (former pitcher of "Barnes' Ramblers"), that would play for the first time ever in the Amateur Baseball World Se-

ries that took place in Havana, Cuba in September. Surprisingly, Aruba won two of its six games and became the darling of the Havana fans. Nell Harms of the Aruban team was named the "Outstanding player of the week" for his performance against Honduras. He allowed just two hits, struck out 15 and hit the only homerun of the game. Joe Cambria, the famous scout for the Washington Senators offered him a contract, but Nel was not interested, but the next year, at the Amateur Baseball World Series in Caracas, Venezuela, Nel and Ruben Phillips did sign and in 1954 they played professional baseball the Georgia-Florida League and the Texas-New Mexico League. They were the first Arubans to play professionally, but not the only ones.

During the games in Havana, contacts were made with the organizers of Little League Baseball in Cuba which eventually resulted in the introduction of Little League in Aruba. Little League of Aruba has been extremely successful: It has produced many players who earned baseball scholarships at universities in the United States, a few who played professionally in the Netherlands and different countries in the Caribbean and five who reached the major leagues: Calvin Maduro, Eugene Kingsale, Radhames Dijkhoff, Sydney Ponson, and Xander Bogaerts one of the brightest stars of Boston Red Sox. □

Written by Mr. Clyde Harms

**CROSSWORD**

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS** 41 Fast  
1 Nonsense runner  
6 "— bien!"  
10 Boxing ring  
border  
11 Flour source  
12 Let up  
13 Kitchen cooker  
14 Vanished number  
16 Rink material  
17 Model buy  
18 Was a pioneer  
19 Vies  
22 Skating group  
23 River of Russia  
26 Fruit desserts  
29 Morse bit  
32 Urgent call  
33 Road rescue  
34 "Lose Yourself" rapper  
36 Selfish cry  
37 Heathen  
38 Dwight's wife  
39 School paper  
40 Deal maker
- DOWN**  
1 Like "Hamlet"  
2 Peter Weller film role  
3 Beach in a 1964 song  
4 Fountain of jazz  
5 Jargon suffix  
6 Compared with  
7 Of the kidneys  
8 National symbol  
9 Spirited horse  
11 News-paper reports  
15 Suitable  
17 Lamp fuel  
20 Snap  
21 Hit show letters  
24 Now and then  
25 Like a pride  
27 May honoree  
28 Candy  
29 Ocean measure  
30 Nebraska city  
31 Bengal cat  
35 New-born's need  
36 Star followers  
38 Ruin

L	A	S	S	O		C	O	S	T	A
A	R	T	U	R		A	U	T	O	S
D	O	O	R	B	U	S	T	E	R	S
E	M	O		I	S	T		A	R	E
S	A	L	U	T	E	S		M	E	N
			G	A	S		S	E	N	T
D	R	I	L	L		D	A	R	T	S
R	E	M		P	I	G				
E	L	M		R	E	G	A	T	T	A
D	I	E		O	R	E		R	E	P
G	A	N	G	B	U	S	T	E	R	S
E	N	S	U	E		T	E	A	S	E
S	T	E	M	S		S	A	T	E	S

**Yesterday's answer**

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		

4-17

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.

**4-17 CRYPTOQUOTE**

LZ TZG BRCZFW ZT ZGSWIF

VSDG NZQ NZQIFWAP LZ TZG

LWFB IW. — MZTPQMBQF

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IF YOU WANT TO SHINE LIKE A SUN, FIRST BURN LIKE A SUN. — A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM

**Cruise Schedule**

TUE	09	SYMPHONY OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	I	1
WED	10	CARNIVAL MAGIC	07.00	15.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN PRIMA	10.00	20.00	C	1
		MARELLA VOYAGER	08.00	20.00	I	1
THU	11	MSC DIVINA	07.00	14.00	B	1
		RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	08.00	18.00	C	1
FRI	12	CARNIVAL PRIDE	09.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	10.00	20.00	I	1
SAT	13	NORWEGIAN JADE	07.00	20.00	C	1
TUE	16	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1
WED	17	ODYSSEY OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
SAT	20	NORWEGIAN PRIMA	10.00	19.00	C	1

**Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba**

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

**Supermarket hours**



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

**Electrical power**



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

**Drinking water**



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

**Safety**



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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# Retirement could come sooner than you think how to plan for it

By **KATE ASHFORD**  
of NerdWallet

**NEW YORK (AP)** — American workers expect to retire at a median age of 65, according to a 2023 survey from the Employee Benefit Research Institute, or EBRI. But the actual median age for retirement is 62, the survey found.

That may not seem like a big gap, but if you retire three years earlier than planned, that's three fewer years of savings and three more years of retirement to fund.

This could happen for all sorts of reasons: You (or your partner or your parents) could get sick or disabled, there could be changes at your company, or you could simply burn out on the job. Forty-six percent of retirees exit the workforce sooner than they had planned, according to the EBRI survey, and of those, 35% say they did so due to a hardship (like health issues or disability). Liz Windisch, a certified financial planner in Denver, has two clients who were laid off in their early 60s and who both ended up retiring.

"They looked for a couple of years and finally just gave up," Windisch says. "It is more likely than not that you won't get to work as long as you're planning." With this in mind, it's help-



A couple watches the sun set from a park, July 10, 2021, in Kansas City, Mo.

ful to prepare financially for an earlier retirement, even if you plan to work forever. Here are some moves that will help.

### SAVE AGGRESSIVELY

The more you can save now, the less you'll be pressed if you can't work as long as you'd like. Be realistic about how much you'll need to maintain the lifestyle you want.

Ashley Folkes, a CFP in Hoover, Alabama, has clients test-drive living on less for a month or two to see what it might be like in retirement. "A lot of them realize that they really can't get by, or they don't want

to have to lower their standard of living to that degree," he says. "It reinforces the fact that they need to save more money now." Once you're 50 or older, you can make catch-up contributions to your retirement accounts. In 2024, you can contribute an extra \$7,500 to your 401(k) and an extra \$1,000 to a traditional or Roth IRA. If you're 55 or older, you can also put an extra \$1,000 into a health savings account, or HSA, if you have access to one.

### AVOID LIFESTYLE CREEP

If you bump up spending every time you get a raise,

you're making it more expensive to maintain your lifestyle later. Rather than buying a bigger house, consider paying off your mortgage instead, says Michael Hausknost, a CFP in Long Beach, California. "Don't think (that) just because you can afford to buy a \$100,000 car that you have to buy a \$100,000 car," Hausknost says. "Live below your means." Folkes notes that clients expand their spending to match their new paycheck but don't boost their savings rate accordingly. "You've got to show them they've got to live off

Associated Press

about 40% of this inflated lifestyle," he says.

### INCLUDE HEALTH CARE IN YOUR SAVINGS GOAL

Unless you've got retirement health benefits or a spouse who's still working, retiring before 65 means paying for your own health insurance until you're eligible for Medicare. This can be done, but you should account for it in your savings plan.

Donnie LaGrange, a CFP in Dallas, estimates that a couple should expect to spend at least \$15,000 a year on a health insurance policy that covers both of them before age 65. If someone retires early without taking this expense into account, he says, "it can really drain the portfolio."

### PRIORITIZE RETIREMENT OVER COLLEGE

Don't skimp on retirement savings in favor of funding your child's education. You can finance college — but you're on your own for your golden years.

"We are so focused typically, as parents, to provide for our kids' education that we abandon all logic and common sense," Hausknost says. "You have to first be taking care of yourself."

Folkes has worked with clients who want to retire at a certain age but pull six-figure amounts out of their portfolios to pay for college for their children. □

## Business boom: Record numbers of people are starting up new small businesses



A shop holds a sidewalk sale on Feb. 10, 2023, in Providence, R.I.

Associated Press

By **MAE ANDERSON**  
AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Record numbers of people are starting new businesses, and more and more of them are women and minorities, according to a new study. New business applications jumped in 2020 as the pandemic started, and have continued to be filed at a record pace. More than 5 million applications were filed in 2021 and 2022 and a record 5.5 million new business applications were filed in 2023. Payroll firm Gusto surveyed 1,300 owners who started their small business last year to discover their characteristics.

Women made up 49% of the new business owners surveyed. That's in line with the past several years, but up starkly from 2019, when just 29% of new business owners were women.

Still, women do not receive as much interest from investors as men. In 2023, just 3% of women entrepreneurs received a private capital investment to start their business, compared to 9% of male entrepreneurs.

Black entrepreneurs made up 6% of new business owners in 2023, double the 3% rate seen before the pandemic. Hispanic entrepreneurs made up 13% of new owners, compared to 8% last year. □

## Caitlin Clark taken No. 1 in the WNBA draft by the Indiana Fever, as expected

By **DOUG FEINBERG**  
AP Basketball Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Caitlin Clark admitted she was a bit nervous before being chosen with the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft by the Indiana Fever, even though it was no surprise.

"I dreamed of this moment since I was in second grade, and it's taken a lot of hard work, a lot of ups and downs, but more than anything, just trying to soak it in," Clark said.

The former Iowa star became a household name among basketball fans during her record-breaking college career, and she will now try and help revive the Indiana franchise along with last season's No. 1 pick, Aliyah Boston, who previously played with Clark on a USA Basketball Under-19 team.

"Obviously going to an organization that has, in my eyes, one of the best post players in the entire world," Clark said. "My point guard eyes just light up at that. And obviously, Aliyah has been one of my teammates before. I'm excited. I can't wait."

The Fever taking Clark had been a foregone conclusion since she announced on Feb. 29 she would turn pro. Nearly 17,000 tickets



Iowa's Caitlin Clark, left, poses for a photo with WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert, right, after being selected first overall by the Indiana Fever during the first round of the WNBA basketball draft, Monday, April 15, 2024, in New York.

were claimed to watch the draft at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, home to the Fever and the NBA's Indiana Pacers.

Clark has helped bring millions of fans to the women's game with her signature shots from the midcourt logo and passing ability. The NCAA's all-time scoring leader was a big reason why a record 18.9 million viewers tuned in to the national championship game, which Iowa lost to

unbeaten South Carolina. The Hawkeyes were also the national runners-up to LSU a year earlier.

It's been a whirlwind few weeks for Clark. After the title game, she flew to Los Angeles to receive the John R. Wooden Award and then came to New York for an appearance on "Saturday Night Live."

"I think obviously the course of the last few weeks has been pretty insane in my life, the last two months

playing basketball as long as I possibly could in my college career," Clark said. "I think the biggest thing is I'm just very lucky to be in this moment, and all these opportunities and these things, they're once in a lifetime."

Clark, who wore a white Prada jacket and skirt, hugged her parents and brothers and Iowa coach Lisa Bluder after she was drafted.

The draft was held at the

Brooklyn Academy of Music in front of 1,000 fans, who bought all the tickets within 15 minutes of them going on sale a few months ago.

Los Angeles chose Stanford's Cameron Brink at No. 2. She'll get to stay in California and gives the Sparks a two-way player.

"When they called my name, a huge wave of emotions hit me," Brink said. "I saw my mom tearing up and my dad and it hit home."

A prolific scorer, Brink was also the Naismith Defensive Player of the Year. The Sparks needed to replace franchise player Nneka Ogwumike, who left for Seattle in free agency. Brink's godmother, Sonya Curry, is the mother of Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry.

"I FaceTimed Steph five minutes before the show started and he said have fun with it," Brink said. "He can share so much great advice since he's been through this. Make stuff like this fun as it can be stressed."

Chicago had the third pick and chose South Carolina's Kamilla Cardoso before the Sparks were on the clock again and selected Tennessee's Riquea Jackson. □

Associated Press

## Travis Kelce named host of 'Are You Smarter than a Celebrity?' for Prime Video

By **ALICIA RANCILIO**

Associated Press

Travis Kelce's NFL off-season with the Kansas City Chiefs has been a busy one. The Super Bowl LVIII-winning tight end is the host of a new game show called "Are You Smarter than a Celebrity?" for Prime Video, the streaming service confirmed Tuesday. Filming for the 20-episode season has already completed.

The premise is a twist on "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?", which debuted on Fox in 2007 and was hosted by Jeff Foxworthy. It also aired in syndication. John Cena hosted a 2019 revival for Nickelodeon.

In Kelce's show, an adult contestant will be given 11 elementary-level questions where they can ask a classroom of various celebrities for help answering. The final question is from the 6th grade curriculum and is worth \$100,000. Only one celebrity is allowed to talk through the answer to the last question with the contestant.

Kelce, who is dating music superstar Taylor Swift, said in a statement he grew up watching game shows and is "excited to be following in the footsteps of so many TV icons."

This isn't Kelce's first TV gig.

He starred in his own 2016 dating competition show for E! called "Catching Kelce" and hosted an episode of "Saturday Night Live" last year. □



Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce (87) waves after the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game against the San Francisco 49ers Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

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## Hockey business is booming as the NHL bounces back from the pandemic in a big way

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**  
AP Hockey Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Arenas are full, the NHL is a fixture on TV screens across North America, highlight-reel goals are talking points on a near-daily basis and “The Pat McAfee Show” even has a segment called “Hockey is Awesome.” Piece it all together, and more eyes are on the puck than ever before with the playoffs beginning this weekend.

Business is booming for the NHL, which has bounced back in a major way from the pandemic. Back-stopped by new media rights deals, digital dasher boards and helmet and jersey ads, and buoyed by an overlap of generational stars, ratings are up, attendance set a record and revenue is at an all-time high an estimated \$6.2 billion annually.

“The league is going through a bit of a renaissance,” said Tom Gargiulo, chief marketing officer at Bodyarmor, whose deal to be the league’s sports drink is the latest sponsorship agreement inked in recent years. “This sport is moving into the next phase of its evolution and is on a tremendous trajectory.”

Commissioner Gary Bettman says it starts with the game on the ice, which he believes has “never been more exciting, more competitive, more skillful, never been faster.” There are nearly six goals a game on average, and while Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin are still producing, Connor McDavid, Auston Matthews and Nathan MacKinnon are in their prime with another wave of talent led by the likes of Connor Be-



The New York Rangers and fans celebrate a shootout victory over the New York Islanders in an NHL hockey game April 13, 2024, in New York.

Associated Press

dard not far behind.

### NEW FANS

Showcasing star players better than before in the team-first sport has helped, and 22.5 million fans have filled arenas to 97% capacity. League officials are quick to credit ESPN and Turner for buying in, and viewership is up 7% for the most-watched NHL season on cable in 30 years.

“We’ve seen an influx and a growth of female fans, diverse fans,” senior VP of North American business development Kyle McMann said. “They’re finding our product, they’re falling in love with it, they’re starting to watch more.”

Trying new things, including puck and player tracking and cartoon versions of games to draw in younger fans, has set the table for this success. Decades since the experiment of the glowing puck, experts credited the league for attracting and retaining a bigger au-

dience in a crowded sports marketplace.

“They keep doing stuff that’s innovative to keep their audience engaged,” said Lauren Anderson, director of the Warsaw Sports Business Center at the University of Oregon. “The NHL could’ve fallen back on being pretty traditional, and I think they haven’t been afraid to try some things and pivot even when it didn’t work.”

Salvatore Galatioto, who runs a sports finance and advisory firm and is a marketing professor at Columbia, said the league has done a good job reaching beyond traditional markets, overcoming some of the unavoidable shortcomings of being expensive to play.

“It’s not rocket science: It’s the number of eyeballs watching your product,” he said. “They have done a really good job of expanding their fanbase, and

that’s the key.”

### SELLING THE GAME

Chief NHL Content Officer Steve Mayer has made that his life’s work since joining in 2016, coming up with new and different ways to present a more-than-century-old sport, from the 2020 playoff bubble to outdoor games and a reimagined All-Star weekend.

“We’re not here to change the game,” Mayer said. “We’re here to enhance what is out there and to get it in front of more people because we know that if people watch our game, they’re going to fall in love with it.”

Central to the game are the players, and none of this would be possible without a constructive working relationship with the NHL Players’ Association, which may be at its most cooperative stage in decades. The league and union found common ground in extending the collective bargain-

ing agreement through 2026, getting back to the Olympics and launching another international competition next year featuring the U.S., Canada, Sweden and Finland.

“It’s a key to moving forward,” union executive director Marty Walsh said. “When I first started, I had a conversation with Gary Bettman, and our teams talked about working together and growing hockey-related revenue, growing the sport. ... We’re all vested in one direction.”

### WORK TO DO

The NHL still has work to do to catch up with the NFL (\$18.6 billion in revenue in 2022), NBA (\$12 billion) and Major League Baseball (\$11.6 billion), but it’s not unrealistic to think \$10 billion is attainable before the end of the decade.

“We plan on getting there how and when, obviously, will take some time,” chief business officer Keith Wachtel said. “Looking at hockey a bit differently than perhaps it was looked at a decade ago. It’s still the ultimate team sport, but we have such great players and personalities.” One challenge is getting fans who are focused on their own team to watch others. There’s evidence that is also starting to turn, with Bedard (Chicago) and Artemi Panarin (New York Rangers) jerseys the highest-selling this season and good ratings even when Canadian teams are on national television in the U.S.

Executive VP Marketing Brian Jennings, who has been at the NHL for 33 years, said there is no shortage of people “knocking on the door” to get in on the boom. □