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CDC nominee Susan Monarez sidesteps questions about disagreements with RFK in Senate hearing

By JONEL ALECCIA

AP Health Writer

Susan Monarez, President Donald Trump's pick to lead the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told senators Wednesday that she values vaccines, public health interventions and rigorous scientific evidence, but largely sidestepped questions about widespread cuts to the agency, elimination of programs and whether she disagreed with any of Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s actions to date.

"The secretary is doing the important work of leading a complex agency," Monarez told members of a Senate health committee that will decide whether to advance her nomination.

Monarez, 50, is the first nominee for CDC director to require Senate confirmation. She was named acting director in January and the nominee for the post in March after Trump abruptly withdrew his first choice, David Weldon. Monarez is the former director of a federal biomedical research agency and a respected scientist, though she would be the first nonphysician to lead the CDC in decades. Monarez repeatedly said she had not been involved in decisions earlier this year



Susan Monarez, President Donald Trump's nominee to be director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, arrives to testify before the Senate HELP Committee, at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

Associated Press

to cut hundreds of staff and eliminate CDC programs, but that she would work to retain the agency's core functions and transition key programs to other parts of the Health and Human Services department.

Her answers appeared to frustrate some senators, including Virginia Democrat Tim Kaine, who said he had no questions about her qualifications.

"I've got questions about your willingness to follow

through on your values," he said.

In the two-hour hearing, Monarez was sharply questioned about Kennedy's recent move to fire all 17 members of a crucial committee that evaluates and recommends vaccines, his downplaying of the risks of measles during a nationwide outbreak and staffing cuts to a program that investigates lead poisoning in children.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, a Louisiana

Republican who is chairman of the committee, sought assurances about the scientific integrity of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which was reconstituted by Kennedy to include vaccine skeptics.

"Someone can speak as a critic, but there should be someone who's reviewing the overwhelming evidence of the safety of vaccines," Cassidy said.

Monarez said she strongly

supported public health interventions, including immunizations, saying, "I think vaccines save lives."

"The ACIP has a very vital role to play," she added. "And it must make sure that it is using science and evidence to drive that decision-making."

She vowed to prioritize innovation, "evidence-based rapid decision-making" and clear communication at the \$9.2 billion agency tasked with evaluating vaccines, monitoring diseases and watching for threats to Americans' health.

Monarez declined to say whether she had disagreed with any of Kennedy's decisions regarding the agency to date, saying he has "laid out a very clear vision."

"I think he has prioritized key public health activities for preventing chronic diseases," she added.

If Monarez is confirmed, it would end a stretch of confusion at the Atlanta-based CDC, where, for months, it wasn't clear who was running the agency.

The acting director's role was filled in part by Matthew Buzzelli, the CDC's chief of staff who is a lawyer and political appointee with no medical experience. □

Trump gets 'golden share' power in U.S. Steel buyout

By MARC LEVY
Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — President Donald Trump will control the so-called "golden share" that's part of the national security agreement under which he allowed Japan-based Nippon Steel to buy out iconic American steelmaker U.S. Steel, according to disclosures with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

The provision gives the president the power to appoint a board member and have a say in company decisions that affect domestic steel production and com-

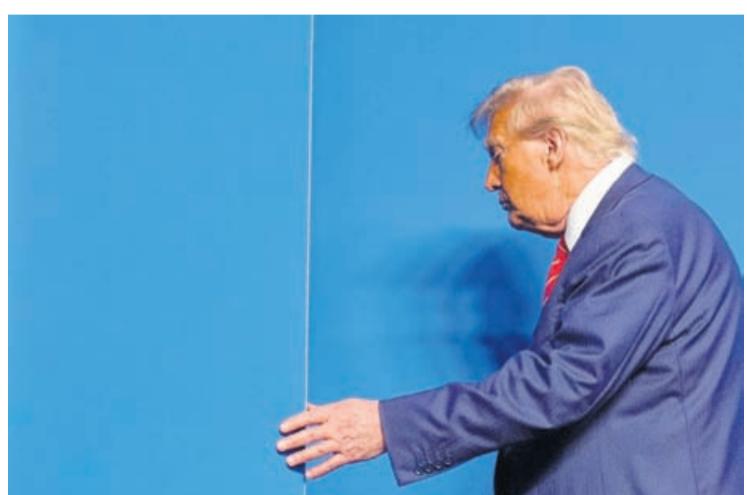
petition with overseas producers.

Under the provision, Trump or someone he designates controls that decision-making power while he is president. However, control over those powers reverts to the Treasury Department and the Commerce Department when anyone else is president, according to the filings.

The White House didn't immediately respond to questions Wednesday about why Trump will directly control the decision-making and why it goes to the Treasury and Commerce departments under future

presidents. Nippon Steel's nearly \$15 billion buyout of Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel became final last week, making U.S. Steel a wholly owned subsidiary.

Trump has sought to characterize the acquisition as a "partnership" between the two companies after he at first vowed to block the deal as former President Joe Biden did on his way out of the White House before changing his mind after he became president. The national security agreement became effective June 13 and is between Nippon Steel, as well as its



President Donald Trump leaves after a media conference at the end of the NATO summit in The Hague, Netherlands, Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

Associated Press

American subsidiary, and the federal government, represented by the departments of Commerce and Treasury, according to the disclosures. The complete national se-

curity agreement hasn't been published publicly, although aspects of it have been outlined in statements and securities filings made by the companies, U.S. Steel said Wednesday. □

Bipartisan bill aims to block Chinese AI from federal agencies

By DIDI TANG
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Legislation introduced Wednesday in Congress would block Chinese artificial intelligence systems from federal agencies as a bipartisan group of lawmakers pledged to ensure that the United States would prevail against China in the global competition over AI. "We are in a new Cold War, and AI is the strategic technology at the center," said Republican Rep. John Moolenaar of Michigan, chairman of the House Select Committee on China, as he opened a hearing on the matter. "The future balance of power may very well be determined by who leads in AI."

About five months ago, a Chinese technology startup called DeepSeek introduced an AI model that rivaled platforms from OpenAI and Google in performance, but cost only a fraction to build. This raised concerns that China was catching up to U.S. despite restrictions on chips and other key technologies used to develop AI.

That race is now a central part of the U.S.-China rivalry, and so much is at stake that the U.S. must win, witnesses told the committee. The two countries are "in a long-term techno-security



The smartphone apps DeepSeek page is seen on a smartphone screen in Beijing, Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025.

Associated Press

competition that will determine the shape of the global political order for the coming years," said Thomas Mahnken, president and CEO of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

Jack Clark, co-founder and head of policy at Anthropic, said AI has built-in values.

"I know that AI systems are a reflection of the societies that are built from.

AI built in democracies will lead to better technology for all of humanity. AI built in authoritarian nations will

... be inescapably intertwined and imbued with authoritarianism," Clark said. "We must take decisive action to ensure America prevails."

Earlier this year, Chris Lehane, OpenAI's head of global affairs, told reporters that the U.S. and China were the only two countries in the world that could build AI at scale. The competition, which he described as one between democratic AI and autocratic AI, is "very real and very serious," and the stakes are "enormous," he said, for

"the global rails of AI will be built by one of those two countries."

The 2025 AI Index Report by Stanford University's Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence center has the U.S. in the lead in producing top AI models. But the report noted China is rapidly closing the performance gap, reaching near parity in 2024 on several major benchmarks. It also showed that China leads in AI publications and patents.

At the hearing, Clark urged the lawmakers to maintain and strengthen export con-

trols of advanced chips to China.

"This competition fundamentally runs on compute," he said. The U.S. must control the flow of powerful chips to China, Clark said, "or else you're giving them the tools they will need to build powerful AI to harm American interests."

Mark Beall, Jr., president of government affairs at The AI Policy Network, said there are "a number of very glaring gaps" in the U.S. export controls that have allowed China to obtain controlled chips. Lawmakers earlier this year introduced a bill to track such chips to ensure they would not be diverted to the wrong hands.

The bill announced Wednesday would ban Chinese AI systems in the federal government. Sponsors are Reps. Ritchie Torres, D-N.Y., and Darin LaHood, R-Ill., and Sens. Rick Scott, R-Fla., and Gary Peters, D-Mich.

"The U.S. must draw a hard line: hostile AI systems have no business operating inside our government," Moolenaar said.

Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi of Illinois, the committee's top Democrat, said AI controlled by foreign adversaries "poses a direct threat to our national security, our data and our government operations." □

Faith leaders and families sue to block Texas' new Ten Commandments in schools law



A copy of the Ten Commandments is posted along with other historical documents in a hallway at the Georgia Capitol on June 20, 2024, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

By JIM VERTUNO
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A group of Dallas-area families and faith leaders have filed a lawsuit seeking to block a new Texas law that requires copies of the Ten Commandments be posted in every public school classroom.

The federal lawsuit, filed Tuesday, claims the measure is an unconstitutional violation of the separation of church and state.

Texas is the latest and largest state to attempt a mandate that has run into legal challenges elsewhere. A federal appeals court on Friday blocked a similar law in Louisiana. Some families have sued over Arkansas' law.

The plaintiffs in the Texas lawsuit are a group of Christian and Nation of Islam

faith leaders and families. It names the Texas Education Agency, state education Commissioner Mike Morath and three Dallas-area school districts as defendants.

"The government should govern; the Church should minister," the lawsuit said. "Anything else is a threat to the soul of both our democracy and our faith."

Ten Commandments laws are among efforts, mainly in conservative-led states, to insert religion into public schools.

Supporters say the Ten Commandments are part of the foundation of the United States' judicial and educational systems and should be displayed.

Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott signed the Ten Commandments measure into law on June 21. □

Federal judge orders Trump administration to release EV charger funding in 14 states

By SUDHIN THANAWALA and SOPHIE AUSTIN
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— A federal judge Tuesday ordered the Trump administration to release billions of dollars in funding for the build out of electric vehicle chargers in more than a dozen states.

U.S. District Judge Tana Lin in Washington state partially granted a preliminary injunction that sought to free up the money approved under then-President Joe Biden that the Trump administration withheld earlier this year. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia sued over the move, arguing that the administration did not have the authority to block the congressionally approved funds. The program was set to allocate \$5 billion over five years to various states, of which an estimated \$3.3 billion had already been made available. Lin ordered that funding be released in 14 of the states, including in Arizona, California and New York. But she denied granting the preliminary injunction for D.C., Minnesota and



Electric vehicle chargers sit outside a Ford dealership, Jan. 21, 2024, in Broomfield, Colo.

Associated Press

Vermont, saying that they did not provide enough evidence that they would face "irreparable harm" if the money wasn't immediately freed up.

Lin said the Trump administration overstepped its constitutional authority when it froze the funding previously approved by Congress in 2021 as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

"When the Executive Branch treads upon the will of the Legislative Branch, and when an administrative agency acts contrary to law, it is the Court's responsibility to remediate the situation and restore the balance of power," she wrote.

The order will go into effect July 2 unless the Trump administration appeals. The

Federal Highway Administration did not immediately respond to an email request for comment on the decision.

The Trump administration in February directed states to stop spending money for electric vehicle charging under the program. The move was part of a broader push by the Republican president to roll back en-

vironmental policies advanced by his Democratic predecessor.

States suing the Trump administration said the decision to freeze funding halted projects midstream, requiring immediate court intervention.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta, a Democrat, said after the ruling that the Trump administration could not "dismiss programs illegally."

"We are pleased with today's order blocking the Administration's unconstitutional attempt to do so, and California looks forward to continuing to vigorously defend itself from this executive branch overreach," he said in a statement. The Trump administration argued that it was working on new guidance for the program and was only pausing future funding in the meantime.

The program was meant to assuage concerns about electric vehicles and build infrastructure along highway corridors first, then address gaps elsewhere once the state highway obligations were met. □

California official criticized for appearing to call on gangs to intervene in immigration raids

CUDAHY, Calif. (AP) — The vice mayor of a tiny Southern California city is under fire after appearing to call on street gangs to organize in the face of immigration sweeps by federal agents in and around Los Angeles. In a video post on social media that's since been deleted, Cynthia Gonzalez, vice mayor of Cudahy, referenced two well-known street gangs and questioned why gang members were not protesting or speaking up about the immigration raids. She said ordinary citizens are the ones on the streets protesting the presence of federal agents.

"You guys tag everything up, claiming hood, and now that your hood's being invaded by the biggest

gang there is, there ain't a peep out of you," Gonzalez said.

She referenced "18th Street" and "Florence," two infamous street gangs and appeared to be speaking

directly to their members. She said U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents are "running amok all up in your streets."

"We're out there fighting our turf, protecting our turf,

protecting our people and, like, where you at?" she said.

The video comes as President Donald Trump's administration has aggressively stepped up immigration arrests in the Los Angeles area in recent weeks. Agents from ICE, as well as Border Patrol, have been seen arresting and detaining people at their workplaces, and Trump has deployed the National Guard and Marines to protect federal buildings and guard officers making arrests.

The Department of Homeland Security called Gonzalez's comments "despicable" and said the remarks will contribute to rising assaults against federal ICE agents.

"She calls for criminal



People march along a street during a protest on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, in Paramount, Calif.

Associated Press

gangs including the vicious 18th street gang to commit violence against our brave U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement law enforcement," the department said in a post on X that included Gonzalez's video. "Secretary Noem has been clear: If you assault a federal officer, you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Gonzalez did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The city of Cudahy said in a statement Tuesday that it was aware of the video.

"The comments made by the Vice Mayor reflect her personal views and do not represent the views or official position of the City of Cudahy," the statement read. □

Bezos arrives in Venice as protesters say his star-studded wedding highlights growing inequality

By COLLEEN BARRY and LUCA BRUNO

Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Multi-billionaire Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Lauren Sanchez arrived in Venice on Wednesday ahead of their star-studded weekend wedding, an event that has galvanized a wide assortment of activist groups protesting it.

Bezos waved from a water taxi as he and Sanchez arrived at the dock of the Aman Hotel, a five-star hotel on the Grand Canal, with two security boats in tow.

The event has drawn protests by groups who view it as a sign of the growing disparity between the haves and have-nots, while residents complain it exemplifies the way their needs are disregarded in the era of mass tourism to the historic lagoon city.

About a dozen Venetian organizations including housing advocates, anti-cruise ship campaigners and university groups have united to protest the multi-day event under the banner "No Space for Bezos," a play on words also referring to the bride's recent space flight.



This photo released by Greenpeace shows a large banner against Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' planned wedding, in St. Mark Square, in Venice, Italy Monday, June 23, 2025.

Associated Press

They have staged small-scale protests, unfurling anti-Bezos banners on iconic Venetian sites. They were joined Monday by Greenpeace and the British group "Everyone Hates Elon," which has smashed Teslas to protest Elon Musk, to unfurl a giant banner in St. Mark's Square protesting purported tax breaks for billionaires.

On Wednesday, other activists launched a float

down the Grand Canal featuring a mannequin of Bezos clinging onto an Amazon box, his fists full of fake dollars. The British publicity firm that announced the stunt said it wasn't a protest of the wedding "but against unchecked wealth, media control, and the growing privatisation of public spaces."

There has been no comment from Bezos' representatives on the protests.

The local activists had planned a more organized protest for Saturday, aiming to obstruct access to canals with boats to prevent guests from reaching a wedding venue. They modified the protest to a march from the train station after claiming a victory, asserting that their pressure forced organizers to change the venue to the Arsenale, a more easily secured site beyond Venice's

congested center.

"It will be a strong, decisive protest, but peaceful," said Federica Toninello, an activist with the Social Housing Assembly network. "We want it to be like a party, with music, to make clear what we want our Venice to look like."

Among the 200 guests confirmed to be attending the wedding are Mick Jagger, Ivanka Trump, Oprah Winfrey, Katy Perry and Leonardo DiCaprio.

Venice, renowned for its romantic canal vistas, hosts hundreds of weddings each year, not infrequently those of the rich and famous. Previous celebrity weddings, like that of George Clooney to human rights lawyer Amal Al-Amuddin in 2014, were embraced by the public. Hundreds turned out to wish the couple well at City Hall. Bezos has a different political and business profile, said Tommaso Cacciari, a prominent figure in the movement that successfully pushed for a ban on cruise ships over 25,000 tons traveling through the Giudecca Canal in central Venice.

"Bezos is not a Hollywood actor," Cacciari said. □

Thailand takes further step to tighten control on sales of cannabis

By JINTAMAS SAKORN-CHAI

Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Thai authorities said Wednesday the country is taking further steps to tighten control of cannabis sales after the health minister signed an order banning sales of the plant to those without prescriptions.

Thailand became the first country in Asia to decriminalize cannabis in 2022, in a move that boosted Thailand's tourism and farming, and spawned thousands of shops. But the country has faced public backlash over allegations that under-regulation has made the drug available

to children and caused addiction.

Health Minister Somsak Thepsutin on Monday signed an order that bans shops from selling cannabis to customers without a prescription. It also seeks to reclassify cannabis buds as a controlled herb.

Phanurat Lukboon, secretary-general of the Office of the Narcotics Control Board, said Wednesday that his agency is ready to study and implement the change in regulations.

The order is set to be effective as soon as it is published in the Royal Gazette, although it is unclear when this will happen.

The ruling Pheu Thai Party

previously promised to criminalize the drug again, but faced strong resistance from its former partner in the coalition government, the Bhumjaithai Party, which supported the decriminalization. Bhumjaithai quit the coalition last week over a leaked phone call between Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and a former Cambodian leader Hun Sen.

Somsak told reporters on Tuesday that he would like to relist cannabis as a narcotic in the future. The move came after officials last month revealed that cannabis smuggling cases involving tourists had

soared in recent months. Phanurat said that a study done by his agency last year found the num-

ber of people addicted to cannabis had spiked significantly after it was decriminalized. □



A worker tends to cannabis plants at a farm in Kanchanaburi province, west of Bangkok, Thailand, July 16, 2024.

Associated Press

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Trump grapples for upper hand in debate over damage caused by U.S. strikes on Iran

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and SEUNG MIN KIM

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday rejected an early intelligence assessment that U.S. strikes inflicted only a marginal setback on Iran's nuclear program, insisting that his country's spies did not have the full picture and defending his own swift conclusion that American bombs and missiles delivered a crushing blow.

"This was a devastating attack, and it knocked them for a loop," Trump said as his administration scrambled to support his claims, made only hours after the attack, that Iranian nuclear facilities were "completely and fully obliterated."

The issue dominated Trump's attendance at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's annual summit in the Netherlands, which was otherwise focused on European security.

The White House highlighted an Israeli statement that Iran's nuclear efforts were delayed by years, much longer than the few months determined by American intelligence. A spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry also said the facilities had suffered significant damage.

But those comments fell short of Trump's hyperbole and did little to suggest that U.S. strikes had eliminated the threat of Iran developing a nuclear weapon.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking in an interview with Politico, limited his own assessment to saying Iran was "much further away from a nuclear weapon today than they were before the president took this bold action."



President Donald Trump speaks as he meets with Netherlands' Prime Minister Dick Schoo on the sidelines of a NATO summit in The Hague, Netherlands, Wednesday, June 25, 2015.

Associated Press

Drawing reliable conclusions about the impact of the U.S. strikes remains difficult, especially only days after they took place. That makes the issue a breeding ground for competing claims that could determine how American voters view Trump's risky decision to join Israel's attacks on Iran.

Jeffrey Lewis, a professor of nonproliferation at the Middlebury Institute, said Trump was trying to have it both ways.

"If it's too early to know, why is Trump saying it's obliterated?" he said. "Either it's too early to know, or you know."

Also at stake are Trump's next steps in the Middle East, where diplomatic efforts could be required to prevent Iran from rebuilding its nuclear program. Trump said U.S. and Iranian officials would meet soon, resuming a dialogue that was interrupted by nearly two weeks of war, even as

he suggested that negotiations were no longer necessary.

"I don't care if I have an agreement or not," Trump said, because Iran was too badly damaged to even consider rebuilding its program. "They're not going to be doing it anyway. They've had it."

Iran maintains that its atomic ambitions are for peaceful purposes, while U.S. and Israeli leaders have described the country's nuclear program as the precursor to obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The episode has triggered some of Trump's longstanding vendettas against leaks and intelligence officials, whom he has often viewed as a part of a "deep state" dedicated to undermining his agenda. He also lashed out at media outlets that reported on the classified assessment, describing them as "scum" and "disgusting."

The intelligence assessment

was produced by the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is part of the Pentagon.

Out of all the country's spy services, it's usually "the fastest on the draw" to produce preliminary results, said Frank Montoya, a former counterintelligence leader.

"They have to respond quickly to what the war fighters are looking for, but those preliminary assessments are still based on information that's out there," Montoya said.

Leon Panetta, who held top national security roles under President Barack Obama, said it's too soon to have a more complete understanding of the strikes' impact.

"Bottom line is, that's going to take an extended period of time, at least a number of weeks, before we have a full assessment of the damage done by the attack," Panetta said.

Trump said questioning the

effectiveness of the strikes was disrespectful to the military, which flew stealth bombers halfway around the world to attack the nuclear facilities with weapons designed to penetrate deep underground.

The reports, he said, were "very unfair to the pilots, who risked their lives for our country."

He described the American attack as a definitive conclusion to what he's dubbed "the 12-day war," much like the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki heralded the end of World War II.

"That ended that war," he said. "This ended the war."

During a news conference, Trump briefly ceded the stage to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who also lashed out at the media.

"There's a reason the president calls out the fake news for what it is," he said. Hegseth said reporters were using a leaked intelligence assessment to politically damage Trump.

"They want to spin it to try to make him look bad," he said.

Trump pointed to satellite photos that showed the area around the nuclear facilities was "burned black," and he said that underground tunnels where uranium was enriched and stored were "all collapsed." He also suggested that Israel had sources on the ground in Iran, saying "they have guys that go in there after the hit" to evaluate the damage.

The bombing "rendered the enrichment facility inoperable," according to a statement distributed by the White House and the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. □

Best spots to view the sunset

(Oranjestad)—What can be more romantic than surprising your partner with a date watching the sunset. Aruba's sunset leave many speechless, and luckily, the best spots to view the sunset are entirely accessible and easy to find. Here are some of the best places to view the sunset on the island.

California Light House

Of course, being one of the highest point easily accessible to locals and tourists, the California Light House hill not only offers a tremendous view of the sunset, but

also a breath taking scenery of most of the island. In the distance you can spot all the hotels, the western shoreline and the wild waves that crash on the northern side of the island.

Manchebo & Eagle Beach

Speaking of the western shoreline, the best spots for viewing the sunset on the beach has to be either Manchebo Beach or at Eagle Beach, which stretch along the entire western coast of the island starting from behind Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort up to the Amsterdam Manor round-

about. The sunset on these beaches is truly breathtaking; the sky and ocean look so big and spacious, and paired with the orange/pink hue of the sunset, the white sandy beaches and the soft sounds of waves crashing—it can only be described as an experience!*

Arashi Beach

Another beach that has to be considered as another great spot to view the sunset. Arashi Beach is the last beach you will find along the western coast line, just before you drive up the



for more active couples. If you and your partner like to hike, the Hooiberg Hill may be a great place for you to get your daily workout in and enjoy a beautiful view of the sunset and the island as a little reward. Climb on

fer not to get your hands a little dirty, you can always use the stairs in the back.

Editor's note: This spot may be my personal favorite, if you couldn't already tell... □

Unique fauna of Aruba: Conew

Aruba Birdlife Conservation



For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per

year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/> □



Don't miss out on L'Avenue's Early Bird Special!



(Oranjestad)—Up to grab an early dinner after a day of shopping or cruising? Take advantage of L'Avenue's Early Bird Special, and experience their innovative twist of traditional Belgian cuisine!

Located in a cozy nook at The Cove Mall—a short walking distance from the Holiday Inn and Paseo Herencia, this Belgian and French bistro offers a delicious and rich menu available through lunch and dinner from 11am to 10pm. Enjoy your lunch and/or dinner in a cool, air-conditioned interior area of the restaurant, accompanied by the warm lights and chic design that emphasizes the restaurant's laid-back, yet sophisticated ambience.

Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches—with a healthy selection of bread options—if you're going for a light meal, but just like their dinner selection, also includes steak, chicken, fish, and even mussels and rabbit if

you're craving a bit more of L'Avenue's exquisite menu. And let's not forget their wide selection of Belgian beer and European wine to complete the tasty experience!

But that's not all! L'Avenue is offering their guests their Early Bird Special, available every day from 4pm to 7pm. Enjoy this affordable and delectable 3-course meal special at a comfortable price of \$29.50 per guest, which includes a selection of their fine in-house wine.

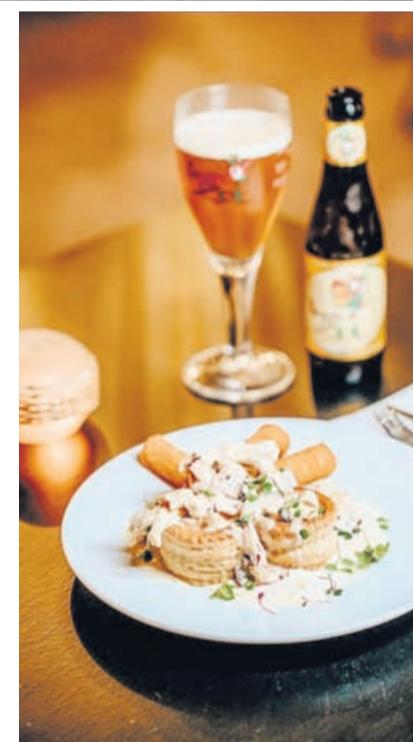
L'Avenue honors and takes pride in serving the traditional Belgian and French fla-



vors, but does not shy away from offering a flexible menu for their guests' needs. That's right, L'Avenue also offers to cater for their guests' dietary restrictions, making sure that each guest gets well taken care of!

More information

L'Avenue is situated at The Cove Mall in Palm Beach and is open every day from 11am to 10pm for lunch and dinner. To book a reservation or ask for more information, please contact their phone line at +297 6996400, send an e-mail info@lavenuearuba.com, or visit their website at lavenuearuba.com □



Fun facts about cacti hedges “Trankera”



(Oranjestad) - When off-roading in inland Aruba, you may notice some cacti hedges around various properties or lined up by certain pathways. These man-made hedges are called “trankera” and play an important role in maintaining our flora and fauna.

The trankera dates to colonialism, where settlers established several ‘cunucu’ (farm) on the island. People either used stone walls or trankera as a fence to ward off strangers and wild animals that can feed on the cunucu vegetation or cattle.

Nowadays, trankeras are less common, and those that still stand are often not maintained. On the surface this seems like a bad development, however this proved to be beneficial for our flora and fauna. Naturally developed flora around the hedges offers more shelter for fauna. Another aspect is the propagation process. When pruning hedges, flowers and seeds were removed, which limits propagation to a minimum.

So, though trankeras don't play that big of a role in Aruba's agriculture anymore, our environment still reaps the benefits of these long-standing natural structures. □

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Today Is Going To Be A Good Day

Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Nature Calls



The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

The Lighthouse

No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is

now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. www.arubalighthouse.com will give you more information.

Kayak in the Mangroves

Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak.



While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. It's fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook. □

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A brief history of the California Light House



(Oranjestad)—At the furthest western point of the island, there lies the tallest structure on the island: The California Light House. Standing on top of a limestone cliff, this lighthouse oversees the entire island, offering one of few best views of the island and the surrounding sea. It is also one of the few monuments that hold a rich history.

The lighthouse was constructed in between 1914-1916, and its first keeper was a young trained lighthouse keeper from Curacao names Jacob Jacobs. Mr. Frederico Fingal was the last man to have occupied this position until 1962. Though his son, Mr. Romulo Fingal did not continue in his father's footsteps, he does have a special connection to the lighthouse. He sat down with our reporter and shared a bit of its history.

As Mr. Fingal explains, "In 1915, cargo donkeys were hired from Figaroa di Noord to help build the Lighthouse at Westpunt. The donkeys had to walk along the beach all the way to Westpunt carrying the cargo, poles, cement, and all these things. At that time, it was a difficult task until Aruba got its first truck. These things reflect how people could have accomplished this tremendous job with so little." Mr. Fingal said, "At that time, it wasn't a place for people to work. It was very challenging because it was full of goats and donkeys, and it was very isolated. There were no hotels or roads to get there. There was only a donkey trail. Those were the only means of transportation."

Mr. Fingal continues, "In 1939, I was born in the lighthouse, and my father was the last lighthouse keeper until he retired in 1962. Af-

ter that, they removed the power cables all the way to the top. According to the story, we couldn't have the light ourselves because they dismantled it, and after many years, I heard that it is in a train museum in San Nicolas, where we found this very special lens that, when the light shines through it, it reaches 30 kilometers out to sea." Mr. Fingal told our reporter.

The lighthouse has a long and very interesting history. The reason why the lighthouse was built, according to Mr. Fingal, dates back to the day when the cargo ship S.S. California sank because of the lack of light. In 1913, Aruba made a request to Curacao to build a Lighthouse at Westpunt, and the governor of Curacao responded to Aruba to come back in 1915 with a well-detailed plan. "During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, they had to

wait for the light to be transported to Aruba because it was manufactured in France. At that time, there was no electricity, and the light was very interesting because it rotated with a kerosene lamp that planes used; clean kerosene," Mr. Fingal said.

Mr. Fingal discovered something very interesting about the lighthouse after much research was documented in his book 'History of the Lighthouse at Westpunt.' He found many details: "I found out that the height of the lighthouse was due to the absence of electricity. There was also the presence of coral. There is a long steel cable from where the light is, and under the light, at the highest point, there is a hanging weight, a sort of pendulum that swings like that, with a weight that measures about 1 meter by 30 centimeters wide, which is a block

of solid iron attached to a cable. When you release it upwards, it comes down, and the weight that comes down pulls it up, gradually. And while it comes down, the same weight that is descending causes many small wheels to turn in the opposite direction. The Lighthouse rotates from 6 pm in the evening, when the sun sets, until 6 am in the morning. During the entire night, the light shines on the lantern, it goes down 24 meters, and the Lighthouse is 30 meters high. It is designed not to collapse," Mr. Fingal explains.

Mr. Fingal further explains that in one night, the lighthouse rotates 4,320 times and consumes one gallon of kerosene for the whole operation. "At that time, the kerosene was supplied from the Lago refinery. Every day it was brought down, and to start the light again, they had to lift the weight up, so our job as children was to crank it and raise the weight back up in the evening when the light stuck, they would take it down again, and the light stayed down. That's how it worked for a very long time," Mr. Fingal explains.

Thanks to the Monument Fund Aruba, which worked hard and is currently in charge of the Lighthouse, Mr. Fingal is very happy with its preservation, along with all the renovations that have taken place. He hopes that the story of the lighthouse will continue to live on for future generations. □



Aruban legends: Frenchman's Pass

(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman's Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman's pass (known to locals as "Franse Pas") remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to generation.

The history of the Frenchman's pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing to give up their land. However, as the French were heavily equipped with fire arms, the indigenous settlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves.

From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman's Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to hitchhike, the man saw a car approaching, appearing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn't think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitchhiker braced for impact, but just



when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the window and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began to tell everyone about

his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they realized he wasn't some drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: "Look, there's the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!"

French man's pass is one of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass contributes a lot to our culture of folkloric story-telling. □

Source: visitaruba.com

Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use

(Oranjestad)—Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that are passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

Sweet potato

According to our elders,

sweet potato is mostly useful for low blood pressure. People who suffer from low blood pressure were advised to eat sweet potato 2 to 3 times a week. However, if you have high blood pressure, it is best not to eat too much sweet potato, as this raises blood pressure. Sweet potatoes are also great for people who work hard labor jobs, and it's been said to be aid blood circulation in the body, as well as help those with hemorrhoids or diarrhea.



Many of our elders opted to plant sweet potatoes themselves, mostly because of how easy it was to do so. Cut the end of a sweet potato let it sit in shallow water until it starts to sprout. Then you may plant it in the ground. Sweet potatoes need plenty of water to grow, especially in the first week in the ground. It was said that once you start to notice the ground crack underneath the flowers, it is time to harvest. This should happen around month 3.

Pomegranate

Pomegranates are also one of the easier fruits to plant and harvest. Originated from Persia, this plant can grow almost everywhere. In Aruba, there are many homes that have a tiny or big pomegranate tree. You may be wondering what the difference is between a small and big pomegranate tree, for which the answer is based on harvest time. Tiny trees



produce tinier pomegranates that can be harvested early on. Contrarily, big trees produce bigger pomegranates, but they need enough time to fully ripen before harvesting, otherwise you might end up with bitter seeds. Pomegranate trees are also very easy to plant. In essence, if you just throw the seeds on the ground, they could grow into a tree.

In terms of medicinal use, pomegranate skins are said to have a few benefits for our health. According

to customs, pomegranate skin tea can help those that suffer from diarrhea. Dried pomegranate skin tea is also good for people who have worms. Pomegranate flowers can be boiled to make a drink and this can be used for irritated gums; just take a swig and let the tea sit in your mouth for a couple minutes.

Source: *Remedi i Kustumber di nos Bieunan (Medicine and Customs of our Elderly)* by Dinaah Veeris

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Loosen,

1 Cut's counter- part 43 Rural sights

6 Buttes' cousins 44 Quick snacks

11 Mink's cousin 45 Foot parts

12 Chosen few

13 Window cover

14 Supple

15 High rating

16 Table protector

18 Complete

19 Bauxite product

20 They hold power

21 Speaker's stand

23 Property claims

25 Decrepit horse

27 Chick holder

28 Radiant

30 Chooses

33 Billboards,

e.g.

34 Film noir classic

36 Go bad

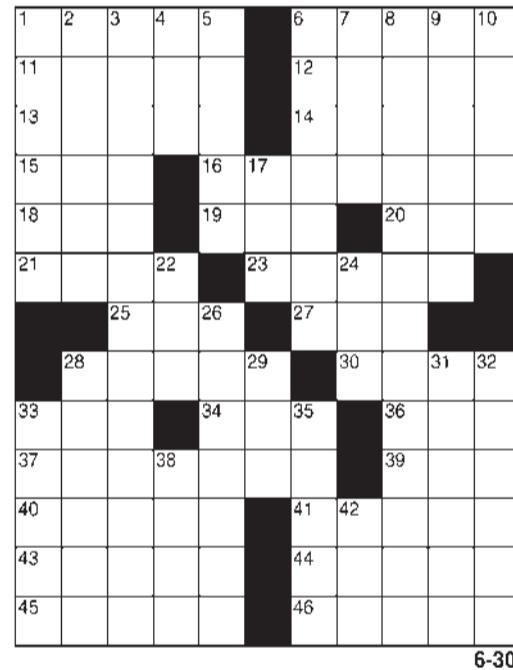
37 Bullfight hero

39 Mess up

40 Nimble



DOWN 8 In a good position 28 Slow tempo
 1 Put online 9 Acropolis 29 Court setting
 2 Helper of Perseus 10 Clair-voyants 31 British party
 3 Unmoving 4 Baseball's 17 Gusher Williams 32 Emphasis output
 5 Put up 22 Mineo of 35 Curaçao's neighbor
 6 "Brand New Key" 24 Freud singer topic 38 Balm ingredient
 7 Yale 26 2-Down, 42 Pen students for one point



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONG FELLOW

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.

6-30

CRYPTOQUOTE

QD Q PON FX ZOX, Q'N EKFGJK
SOCHOEX DEGF YPK BOUKCNOE
OUGWKYPKE OCN POJK OC
KVYEO SHUX QCIYKON.
— EGOUN NOPU

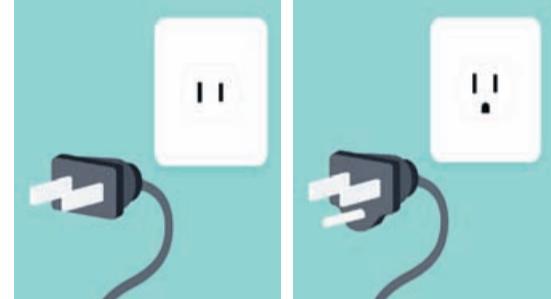
Cryptoquote: FOOD BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER ON MANY DIFFERENT LEVELS. IT'S NOURISHMENT OF THE SOUL AND BODY; IT'S TRULY LOVE. — GIADA DE LAURENTIIS

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			ARR	DEPT	BERTH
SUN	01	SILVER SHADOW FREEWINDS - Dept.	08.00 ****	23.00 22.30	C E 1
WED	04	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C 1
TUE	10	CARNIVAL HORIZON CARNIVAL MARDI GRAS	09.00 13.00	23.00	C I 1
TUE	17	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL VISTA	07.00 13.00	16.00 23.00	B C 1
WED	18	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00 08.00 07.00	22.00 23.00 16.00	C B I 1
TUE	24	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	23.00	C 1
FRI	27	SEVEN SEAS MARINER	10.00	21.00	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.



Electrical power

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



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.



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.



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 occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

Global vaccination efforts stall, leaving millions of children vulnerable to preventable diseases



A health worker administers a polio vaccine to a child in Karachi, Pakistan, Jan. 8, 2024.

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Efforts to vaccinate children globally have stalled since 2010, leaving millions vulnerable to tetanus, polio, tuberculosis and other diseases that can be easily prevented.

Protection from measles in particular dropped in 100 countries between 2010 and 2019, unravelling decades of progress, including in rich countries that had previously eliminated the highly infectious disease, according to a new analysis of global vaccination trends published Tuesday in the journal Lancet. "After clean water, vaccination is the most effective intervention for protecting the health of our children," said Helen Bedford, a pro-

fessor of children's health at University College London, who was not connected to the research. She warned there has been a small but worrying rise in the number of parents skipping vaccination for their children in recent years, for reasons including misinformation.

In Britain, Bedford said that has resulted in the largest number of measles recorded since the 1990s and the deaths of nearly a dozen babies from whooping cough. Vaccination rates in the U.S. are also falling, and exemptions from vaccinations are at an all-time high.

After the World Health Organization established its routine immunization pro-

gram in 1974, countries made significant efforts to protect children against preventable and sometimes fatal diseases; the program is credited with inoculating more than 4 billion children, saving the lives of 154 million worldwide.

Since the program began, the global coverage of children receiving three doses of the diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough vaccine nearly doubled, from 40% to 81%. The percentage of kids getting the measles vaccine also jumped from 37% to 83%, with similar increases for polio and tuberculosis. But after the COVID-19 pandemic, coverage rates dropped, with an estimated 15.6 million children missing out on the diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough vaccine and the measles vaccine. □

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Seroe Preto:Tel.584 4833

OTHER

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
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EMERGENCY

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Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

How ChatGPT and other AI tools are changing the teaching profession

By JOCELYN GECKER

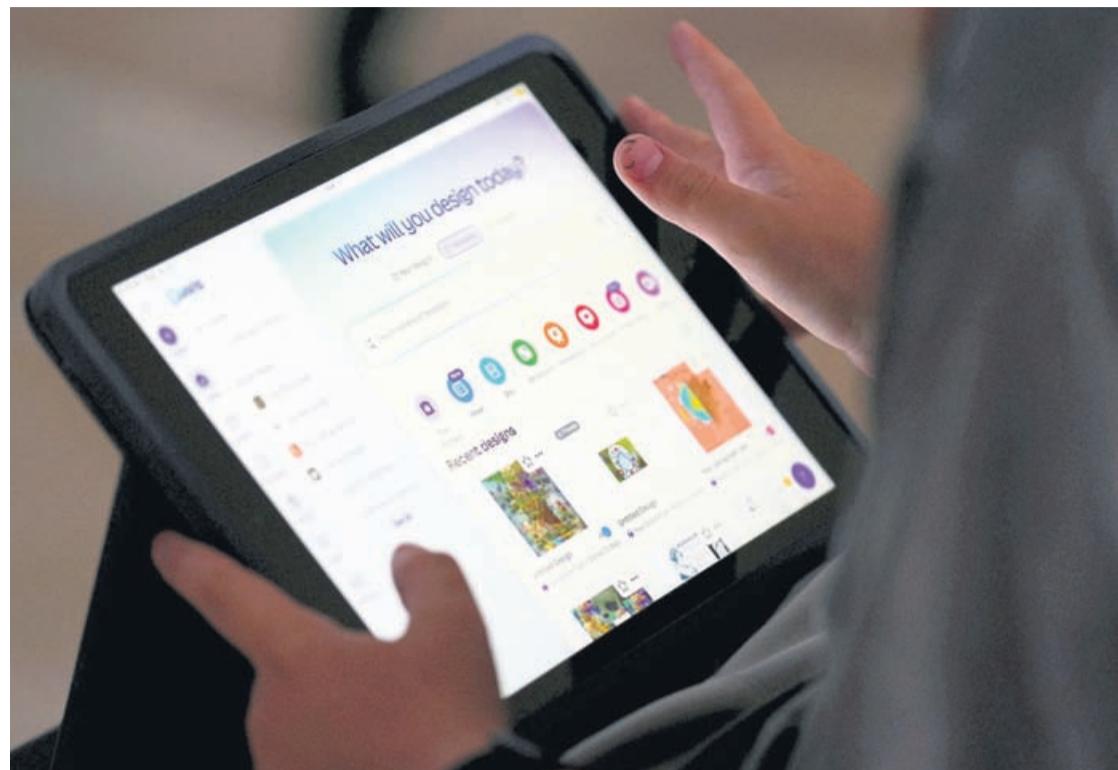
AP Education Writer

For her 6th grade honors class, math teacher Ana Sepúlveda wanted to make geometry fun. She figured her students "who live and breathe soccer" would be interested to learn how mathematical concepts apply to the sport. She asked ChatGPT for help.

Within seconds, the chatbot delivered a five-page lesson plan, even offering a theme: "Geometry is everywhere in soccer — on the field, in the ball, and even in the design of stadiums!" It explained the place of shapes and angles on a soccer field. It suggested classroom conversation starters: Why are those shapes important to the game? It proposed a project for students to design their own soccer field or stadium using rulers and protractors.

"Using AI has been a game changer for me," said Sepúlveda, who teaches at a dual language school in Dallas and has ChatGPT translate everything into Spanish. "It's helping me with lesson planning, communicating with parents and increasing student engagement."

Across the country, artificial intelligence tools are changing the teaching profession as educators use them to help write quiz-



A student is taught how to ask Canva for help during a summer class at Roosevelt Middle School, Wednesday, June 25, 2025, in River Forest, Ill.

Associated Press

zes and worksheets, design lessons, assist with grading and reduce paperwork. By freeing up their time, many say the technology has made them better at their jobs.

A poll released Wednesday by Gallup and the Walton Family Foundation found 6 in 10 U.S. teachers working in K-12 public schools used AI tools for their work over the past school year, with heavier use among high school educators and early-career teachers. It surveyed more than 2,000 teachers nationwide in April.

Respondents who use AI tools weekly estimate they save them about six hours a week, suggesting the technology could help alleviate teacher burnout, said Gallup research consultant Andrea Malek Ash, who authored the report.

States are issuing guidelines for using AI tools in classrooms

As schools navigate concerns over student abuse of the technology, some are also introducing guidelines and training for educators so teachers are aware of avoiding shortcuts that shortchange stu-

dents.

About two dozen states have state-level AI guidance for schools, but the extent to which it is applied by schools and teachers is uneven, says Maya Israel, an associate professor of educational technology and computer science education at the University of Florida.

"We want to make sure that AI isn't replacing the judgment of a teacher," Israel said.

If teachers are using chatbots for grading they should be aware the tools are good for "low-level"

grading like multiple choice tests but less effective when nuance is required. There should be a way for students to alert teachers if the grading is too harsh or inconsistent, and the final grading decision needs to remain with the educator, she said.

About 8 in 10 teachers who use AI tools say it saves them time on work tasks like making worksheets, assessments, quizzes or on administrative work. And about 6 in 10 teachers who use AI tools said they are improving the quality of their work when it comes to modifying student materials, or giving student feedback.

"AI has transformed how I teach. It's also transformed my weekends and given me a better work-life balance," said Mary McCarthy, a high school social studies teacher in the Houston area who has used AI tools for help with lesson plans and other tasks.

McCarthy said training she received from her school district on AI tools has helped her model proper use for her students.

"If I'm on the soapbox of, 'AI is bad and kids are going to get dumb,' well yeah if we don't teach them how to use the tool," said McCarthy. "It feels like my responsibility as the adult in the room to help them figure out how to navigate this future." □

Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac ordered to consider crypto as an asset when buying mortgages



This April 21, 2018, file photo shows the Fannie Mae headquarters building in Washington.

Associated Press

By ALEX VEIGA
AP Business Writer

The head of the federal government agency that oversees Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac wants the mortgage giants to consider accepting a homebuyer's cryptocurrency holdings in their criteria for buying mortgages from banks.

William Pulte, director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, which oversees Fannie and Freddie, ordered the agencies Wednesday to prepare a proposal for consideration of crypto as an asset for reserves when they assess risks in single-family home loans. Pulte also instructed the agencies that their mortgage risk assessments should not require crypto-

currency assets to be converted to U.S. dollars. And only crypto assets that "can be evidenced and stored on a U.S.-regulated centralized exchange subject to all applicable laws" are to be considered by the agencies in their proposal, Pulte wrote in a written order, effective immediately. Pulte was sworn in as the head of FHFA in March. Public records show that as of January 2025, Pulte's spouse owned between \$500,000 and \$1 million of bitcoin and a similar amount of Solana's SOL token. Banks seeking to make mortgages that qualify for purchase by Fannie and Freddie have not typically considered a borrower's crypto holdings until they were sold, or converted, to dollars. □

NBA players seem to tear their Achilles more frequently nowadays. Why is that?

By MICHAEL MAROT

AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Kevin Durant and Tyrese Haliburton entered their respective NBA Finals elimination games with strained right calves.

Each wound up leaving early with torn right Achilles tendons.

Durant, a perennial All-Star and the league's 2014 MVP, missed the whole next season as he recovered from the injury and now Haliburton, the Indiana Pacers' two-time All-Star, could face a similar fate. Predictable? Perhaps. Both knew the risks when they opted to chase a championship, and both wound up paying the price when their tendons gave out on pro basketball's biggest stage.

"There's no question you're at a higher risk of worsening an injury or another injury occurring because maybe your gait is off a little bit or the muscle firing isn't as good," said Dr. Kevin Farmer, an orthopedic surgeon and chief of sports medicine at the University of Florida.

"To Tyrese's credit, maybe he wasn't as healthy as he wanted to be, but he was willing to go out there



Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton (0) falls to the court with an injury during the first half of Game 7 of the NBA Finals basketball series against the Oklahoma City Thunder Sunday, June 22, 2025, in Oklahoma City.

and try to perform to win that championship for the team.

"He made a decision to take that risk, and I think there should be some credit there for trying."

Haliburton's injury reflects a new trend, though, one that has seen younger players become more susceptible to Achilles injuries that were traditionally more prevalent in athletes

in their mid to late 30s and early 40s.

Haliburton, 25, Boston Celtics All-Star Jayson Tatum, 27, and Milwaukee Bucks All-Star Damian Lillard, 34, all suffered Achilles injuries in the playoffs and each is expected to miss most if not all of next season.

Farmer and Dr. James Borchers, president and CEO of the U.S. Council for Athletes Health and a

longtime team physician for Ohio State football, have studied the changes. They attribute the increase in Achilles injuries to many factors from low-cut shoes to longer seasons to Fluoroquinolone, a class of antibiotics both acknowledge has been tied to ruptured tendons.

Neither has examined Haliburton, Tatum or Lillard. But they believe the big-

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gest factor may be younger athletes shedding the multi-sport label to specialize in a single sport year-round, creating more wear and tear on specific body parts, such as elbows and Achilles tendons, that are prone to break down based on workload.

"Athletes that are doing a lot of impact sports, certainly jumping and putting a lot of stress across tendons and those tendons over time can develop into micro damage and lead to weakening in the tendon," Borchers said.

"I think there's a lot more activity that increases the risk of these types of injuries and it's the wear and tear. It's very rare we're going to look at an otherwise healthy tendon rupture just because of an acute event."

It's not conjecture, either. Multiple studies from Farmer's medical team at Florida have researched whether today's overuse injuries in baseball occur because players are throwing harder for longer periods.

Farmer said he considers the Achilles tendon in basketball to be comparable to the elbow in baseball. □

Judge orders NASCAR teams to turn over financial data to stock car series, limits details

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday ordered a dozen NASCAR teams to provide 11 years of financial data to the stock car series as part of an ongoing legal fight but sharply limited what they need to share.

A day after hearing arguments from both sides, U.S. District Judge Kenneth Bell of the Western District of North Carolina said the information will "allow NASCAR to have much of the arguably relevant substance of the requested information, while protecting the legitimate interests" of the 12 teams. They had raised concerns that the private financial details could end up being made

public and would hurt competitive balance.

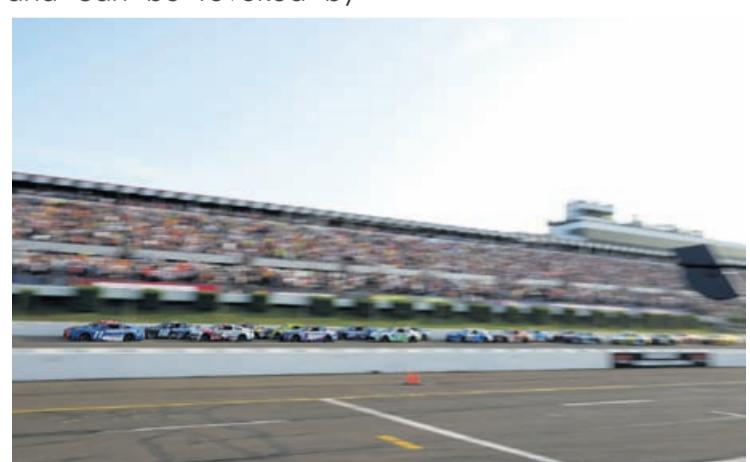
Under the decision, the teams must provide top-line data: total revenue, total costs, and net profits and losses dating to 2014. The teams and NASCAR were ordered to settle on an independent accounting firm to handle the details by Friday, with that work paid for by NASCAR. Earlier this week, attorneys for 12 of the 15 overall race teams argued against disclosing their financial records to become part of NASCAR's antitrust lawsuit. They are not parties in the ongoing suit filed by 23XI Racing, which is owned by the NBA Hall of Famer and three-time Daytona

500 winner Denny Hamlin, and Front Row Motorsports, owned by entrepreneur Bob Jenkins.

23XI and Front Row are the only two organizations of the 15 that refused last September to sign take-it-or-leave offers on a new charter agreement. Charters are NASCAR's version of a franchise model, with each charter guaranteeing entry to the lucrative Cup Series races and a stable revenue stream. Of the 13 teams that signed, only Kaulig Racing has submitted the financial documents NASCAR subpoenaed as part of discovery. Teams have long argued that NASCAR is not financially viable and they

need a greater revenue stream and a more permanent length on the charter agreements, which presently have expiration dates and can be revoked by

NASCAR. Two years of negotiations ended last fall with 13 teams signing on and 23XI and FRM instead heading to court. □



Chase Briscoe (19) and Denny Hamlin (11) lead the field on a restart during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Pocono Raceway, Sunday, June 22, 2025, in Long Pond, Pa.

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Arizona Diamondbacks fighting their way through a rash of injuries

By JOHN MARSHALL

AP Sports Writer

The Arizona Diamondbacks have been snakebit all season.

Injuries plagued the club in spring training and have continued to wreak havoc as the season reaches the midpoint, leaving manager Torey Lovullo searching for answers as he tries to cobble together a daily lineup.

"I have not seen anything like this," Lovullo said from Chicago this week. "Usually, you have a bad week or a bad month, or two guys in a 30-day period of time that will go down, but it's just been one after another. It's frustrating. I feel for the players. I feel for this team."

It's been painful.



Arizona Diamondbacks' Ildemaro Vargas reacts after hit by pitch from Chicago White Sox relief pitcher Mike Vasil during the second inning of a baseball game in Chicago, Tuesday, June 24, 2025.

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Left-hander Corbin Burns, signed to a \$210 million, six-year deal in January, lasted 11 starts before going down with a season-ending elbow injury. He followed fellow starter Jordan Montgomery and proceeded key reliever Justin Martinez in needing Tommy John surgery.

Reliever A.J. Puk also needs elbow surgery, to repair his left ulnar collateral ligament, a procedure that could turn into Tommy John. Pitchers Tommy Henry, Blake Walston and Christian Montes de Oca also are out for the season. Catcher Gabriel Moreno has been out with a broken finger after being hit by a foul ball on June 15. Backup catcher Adrian Del Castillo has dealt with shoulder and back issues, spoiling his chance to move up from Triple-A Reno to replace Moreno. The hits kept coming this week.

Arizona placed All Star outfielder Corbin Carroll on the injured list with a chip fracture in his left wrist before Tuesday's game against the White Sox, then watched infielder Ildemaro Vargas go down with a broken foot after being hit by a pitch in the second inning. Carroll has been out since being hit by a pitch on June 18.

Third baseman Eugenio Suárez has been out of the lineup since being hit on the hand by a pitch on Monday. First baseman Josh Naylor also was injured on Monday, straining his right shoulder on an awkward swing, but returned to the lineup on Wednesday.

"It's part of the game, but we've taken on a lot, there's no denying that," Lovullo said. "A lot of teams have. I don't want anybody to feel sorry for us. But it's our turn to go out there and figure out how to get the job done, and that's where my main focus is right now."

The Diamondbacks have managed to keep their focus during the rash of injuries. □