

ROLE  
MODEL

Texans rookie open to nickel or cornerback.

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JUDGE: KEEP  
COHEN QUIET

Prosecutors told to rein in Trump's former fixer ahead of testimony in trial.

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LASTING  
TRIBUTE

Perennial blooms ideal for Mother's Day.

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HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

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HISD board OKs job cuts before 2024-25 school year



Student Nova Uribe, 13, speaks during the Houston ISD Board of Managers monthly meeting on Thursday.

Photos by Raquel Natalicchio/Staff photographer



Mayor John Whitmire and Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham are former state senators.

Mayor, GLO aim to mend the past

By Abby Church  
STAFF WRITER

On Mayor John Whitmire's first day in office, he got a call from Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham.

Her message? "We want to work with the city of Houston," Whitmire recounted at an April 17 council meeting.

Whitmire shared the contents of the call at the start of Buckingham's visit to City Hall — a trip largely framed as a relationship reset and one the land commissioner was quick to note herself.

"It is wonderful to actually be invited here, as last time I tried outreach I was disinvited," Buckingham told council members.

After years of verbal and legal battles between the former mayor and the former land commissioner, Whitmire and Buckingham seem poised to usher in a new era of cooperation between their new offices. As experts predict an active hurricane season in the Gulf of Mexico, the potential for better relations between the city and state agency could be well-timed.

Whenever disaster strikes in *Land office continues on A6*

TxDOT seeks input on planning for growth

By Dug Begley  
STAFF WRITER

It is an overused and oft-abused phrase that millions of Texans are sick of hearing, but when it comes to Texas transportation, everything is bigger — and growing.

Just how much it might grow over the next quarter-century is something today's Texans are about to have a say in.

The Texas Department of Transportation's proposed long-range transportation plan, called Connecting Texas 2050 and updated every four years, opened for public comment Friday and closes June 9. A public hearing is scheduled for May 28.

Texas has more miles of road than any other state — 701,000 miles. That's 1.5 times the next road-laden state, California. Simply maintaining the 201,000 miles managed by TxDOT is nearing an annual cost of \$2 billion.

Collectively, Texans drive an estimated 540 million miles per day, something TxDOT notes is "enough to circle the earth nearly 100 times every minute."

Now, add more people who want to go to more places and try to plan out 25 years. The numbers get big, very big. As TxDOT *TxDOT continues on A7*

All campus-level roles subject to 'reduction in force' consideration

By Megan Menchaca  
STAFF WRITER

The Houston ISD Board of Managers unanimously approved two measures Thursday allowing the district to cut dozens of staff and teaching positions as part of a "reduction in force" before the beginning of the 2024-25 school year.

The board's approval means HISD can proceed with cuts to any current campus-level jobs, including nurses; librarians; counselors; assistant principals; principals; reading, math and science teachers; fine arts and other elective instructors; speech therapists; magnet coordinators; and special education coordinators.

The full extent of the district's future personnel cuts is unclear as the agenda items did not state the total number of planned reductions. The agenda items also do not require HISD to cut from all of the listed positions. The



Members Cassandra Bandy, left, and Janette Linder take part in the Board of Managers meeting Thursday.

Raquel Natalicchio/Staff photographer

district has already begun sending notices to employees in certain roles, such as wraparound specialists, custodians and maintenance workers.

State-appointed Superintendent Mike Miles said in a news conference before the board meeting that "almost every single" HISD department would be shrinking due to budget cuts, but he did not say how many total employees would lose their positions after the end of the school year.

Miles also said that an unde-

**INSIDE**

Houston Federation of Teachers vote no confidence' in Superintendent Mike Miles. **Page A7**

terminated number of teachers and principals received notices this week that they will be out of jobs based on performance metrics, including instruction and achievement data, but he said those cuts were unrelated to the district's planned "reduction in force." He said the district would share the full number of people being let go in a few weeks.

Board members approved the reduction-in-force measures as part of the consent agenda, which meant they did not discuss the agenda items before voting.

However, HISD students, parents and teachers spent about three hours speaking out *HISD continues on A7*

Storms call flood risk claims into question

By Jhair Romero  
STAFF WRITER

When 48-year-old Ana García moved into the sprawling Colony Ridge development about 30 miles northeast of Houston a year and a half ago, she said she was reassured by the development company multiple times that the predominantly Latino community in Liberty County did not flood.

She was skeptical, owing to her experience living in flood-prone areas of Houston. Referring to nearby waterways, including the east fork of the San Jacinto River in the neighboring town of Plum Grove and the winding Tarkington Bayou, García remembers asking company representatives, "But the rivers

are so close. How could it not flood?"

García and other residents' suspicions were confirmed when major storms slammed into Southeast Texas last week and flooded swaths of the Houston region's northern edge, leaving parts of Colony Ridge underwater. Residents said entire streets were flooded for days, and videos and photos from neighbors show vehicles, even school buses, stalled out and residents wading through high water.

Some Colony Ridge residents weren't expecting to be trapped in their homes for days, including neighbors who told the Houston Chronicle they were also promised the community wasn't at risk for floods when *Colony Ridge continues on A6*



Colony Ridge resident Gloria Martínez is reflected in a puddle on her driveway Monday as she talks about flooding on the road and in her yard from last week's storms.


Elizabeth Conley/Staff Photographer




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# Mold can emerge when floods subside

By Ryan Nickerson  
STAFF WRITER

Homes in the Greater Houston area that experienced recent flooding are at risk of developing mold because of the excess moisture and standing water.

Mold can pose a risk to everyone entering a home, but it's hazardous to people with asthma, allergies and those with compromised immune systems. Mold is a type of fungus that sprouts from microscopic spores floating in the air.

According to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a home has 24 to 48 hours to dry out before it's assumed it has mold growth. Mold can grow in walls, furniture, cardboard boxes, books, carpet, foods, insulation, showers, sinks, bathtubs, toilets, refrigerators, air conditioning vents and many other places inside a home.

Dr. Luis Ostrosky-Zeichner, chief of infectious diseases and epidemiology with UTHealth Houston, helped conduct a study following Hurricane Harvey which found a spike in hospitalizations in Houston with



Yanira Diaz stands in her muddy living room on Monday as she begins the cleanup of her flood-damaged home in the River Plantation neighborhood of Conroe.

Brett Coomer/Staff photographer

patients with invasive mold infections, primarily in people who had weakened immune systems.

"When you inhale the spores of these molds, they get into

your lungs and normally your immune system is pretty good about controlling and getting rid of them, but when you have massive exposure, you overwhelm your immune system,"

Ostrosky-Zeichner said. "When your immune system is not working well, you have no chance in controlling it."

Invasive mold infections usually begin in the lungs, where

the spores begin eating away at the lungs by creating little cavities. The spores will eventually enter the body's bloodstream that can cause people to get sick and potentially die, Ostrosky-Zeichner said.

Mold can appear as little pink or black substances growing in moist or humid areas around the home. The CDC recommends removing mold growth from hard surfaces using commercial products, soap and water or bleach. If one does decide to use bleach to get rid of mold, the CDC says:

Never mix bleach with ammonia or other household cleaners.

Open windows and doors to provide fresh air while using it.

Wear non-porous gloves and use protective eye wear.

If you are entering a home or building with known mold damage, the CDC recommends wearing N-95 respirators, goggles or eye protection, protective gloves, long pants and waterproof boots.

The CDC also recommended using a qualified professional to investigate if a home or building has mold.

# McCoy, Patterson to square off in Fulshear mayoral runoff

By Claire Goodman  
STAFF WRITER

The Fulshear mayoral race is heading to a runoff after none of the three candidates managed to secure 50.1% of votes.

Don McCoy and Joel Patterson will square off for the seat in the June 15 election. Dominic Giametta was knocked out of the running.

Patterson secured 480 votes at 42.7%, and McCoy received 479 votes, or 42.62%, city documents show. Giametta trailed with 14.68%, or 165 votes.

Patterson is a current Ful-

shear City Council member.

McCoy currently serves as the president of the Fulshear-Katy Chamber of Commerce.

Patterson said he wasn't surprised by the close race with McCoy, given McCoy's presence in the Fulshear community.

"I expected him to have a large turnout, so I knew it would be tight," Patterson said. "He moved here last year so he could run for mayor, and I think he's leveraged his role as chamber president for his campaign."

McCoy said he was proud to have the race come to a runoff.

*"He moved here last year so he could run for mayor, and I think he's leveraged his role as chamber president for his campaign."*

Joel Patterson, Fulshear mayoral candidate

"I think, especially since this is my first time putting my name in for a political office and then running against a six-year incumbent council member, to bring it to a runoff and actually be virtually tied is pretty amazing," McCoy said. "This wouldn't have been possible unless I touched some people

out there in Fulshear."

Patterson stated that his top priorities as mayor are to fill the vacant city manager position, improve infrastructure projects and fund the \$127 million capital improvement plan for 2025.

"It's critically important to get someone who has municip-

pal government experience, and there are some very critical infrastructure projects we're going to address this year," Patterson said.

McCoy plans to focus on listening to the needs of his constituents if elected.

"I'm here to listen, and I think that's what a representative is," McCoy said. "My vision is to take what residents want and see how we can make those things make sense. We have a lot of rapid growth going out here, and we want to make sure that the town can be economically viable for the future."

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# Child killed, two injured after police chase group of teens in allegedly stolen vehicle

By Shakari Briggs  
STAFF WRITER

A child died and two others were injured after a group of boys between 12 and 13 led police on a vehicle pursuit Thursday night across Houston, leaving a trail of damage, authorities said.

Houston Police Department Assistant Chief Jessica Anderson said West Side Division officers responded to an officer call around 10 p.m. when they saw a speeding vehicle crash into another vehicle

in the 12000 block of Richmond Avenue in west Houston.

She said police pursued the vehicle after the hit-and-run and attempted to conduct a traffic stop. However, the driver of the vehicle didn't stop. Anderson said the group stole the vehicle.

Police continued the pursuit. The stolen vehicle crashed into another vehicle in the 2800 block of Kirkwood Drive in the Westchase area, Anderson said during a Thursday night news confer-

ence posted on X.

"Officers continued to follow trying to pull the car over," she said. "They got onto Westheimer and traveling in the 10600 block of Westheimer the suspects attempted to avoid a Metro bus, lost control and then crashed into three other vehicles."

Anderson said four teens exited the vehicle and ran. Police detained two of them.

"Upon returning back to the vehicle, they found another suspect in the back seat of the vehicle

who was unresponsive," she said.

The Houston Fire Department took the unresponsive minor to the hospital where officials declared him dead. The two boys captured by authorities also went to the hospital for treatment of minor injuries.

Anderson said no other drivers or bystanders suffered any injuries. At least five drivers reported damage to their vehicles. Police continued their search Friday morning for the other two boys.

# Suspect in woman's killing arrested after standoff

By John Wayne Ferguson  
STAFF WRITER

Harris County deputies on Wednesday arrested a man accused of killing a woman outside a Museum District gas station and then getting into a shootout with a deputy constable.

Tilford Anthony Joseph, 46, was arrested after a standoff at an apartment complex in the 2000 block of Westborough, in west Harris County, Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said in a

post on X.

Deputies were initially called to the house because of "weapons disturbance," Gonzalez said. When they arrived, Joseph barricaded himself in the apartment. Deputies then learned he was potentially wanted, Gonzalez said.

Joseph was wanted in the Tuesday morning killing of Teresa Houston, 44. She was shot multiple times outside a gas station by a man she had been seen fighting with, police said. The witnesses to the

shooting included a group of Houston firefighters who were refueling an ambulance at the gas station, police said.

After the shooting, the gunman drove away and was stopped by a Harris County Precinct 7 deputy constable. The constable and the man exchanged gunfire, police said. Neither was hit, but during the gunfight the man was able to get into the constable's police vehicle and drive it away. The man later returned, began shooting again and got into his

own car before escaping, police said.

Police said Tuesday there was a history of domestic violence between the victim and the shooter.

Houston worked for Alvin ISD.

Joseph was taken into custody peacefully after about three hours, Gonzalez said. He was charged with murder and aggravated assault of a peace officer.

Charging documents related to Joseph's arrest weren't immediately available.



# 3 indicted jailers no longer at county lockup

By Nicole Hensley  
STAFF WRITER

Three jailers indicted in the injury of 48-year-old Adael Gonzalez Garcia in November 2022 have been relieved of duty and are no longer working at the jail, officials with the Harris County Sheriff's Office said Friday.

The officers, charged with misdemeanor assault causing bodily injury, were relieved of duty, as required by sheriff's office protocol, about a week after a grand jury handed down the April 29 indictments, officials said in a news release.

"HCSO officers are entrusted to provide care and a safe environment for those in our custody," the release stated. "We take these matters seriously and conduct an internal review of all use of force incidents. All employees are held accountable for their actions and must adhere to all protocols and policies."

The detention officers, John Ziesemer, Ezihuo Osiminibeke and Jimmy Poole, were relieved May 4 and 6 after an internal investigation into Garcia's injuries, officials said. The indictments were part of a use of force investigation, records show.

The grand jury took no action on a fourth detention officer, whom civil rights lawyer Randall Kallinen said surrendered a license that allowed him to be a jailer. The jury declined to indict a fifth individual in connection with Garcia's injuries, Kallinen said. The sheriff's office did not elaborate on the status of their employment in a statement and



Raquel Natalicchio/Staff photographer

**Adael Gonzalez Garcia, taking part in a news conference Friday with civil rights lawyer Randall Kallinen, was put in a coma by injuries he suffered at the Harris County Jail in late 2022.**

could not be reached for additional comment.

Kallinen surmises that felony indictments could have been sought because of the severity of Garcia's injuries but that the misdemeanor charges against the three detention officers would have been "more likely to be upheld."

"The mere fact that they're charged with assault is a good step in the right direction," Kallinen said Friday during a news conference outside the jail.

Garcia also addressed the in-

dictments, saying the injuries have had a lasting impact on his ability to find work.

"I thank God I'm alive," Garcia said in Spanish. "My head still hurts, I get dizzy at times."

He also disputed that he fell off the bed as described in the sheriff's office account of what happened after his arrest on a Walker County warrant.

Garcia, who had been wanted on a misdemeanor DWI charge, was booked into the Harris County Jail. He purportedly fell from a top bunk bed and suf-

fered an injury to his face. He was taken to the jail clinic for treatment. The next day, he was released from the clinic and was being escorted to another cell block when, jail staffers reported, he became combative and attempted to punch a detention officer. A struggle ensued, with Garcia falling and striking his head on the ground, authorities said.

Garcia was taken to Ben Taub Hospital, where he remained in a coma for several days.

The indictments contend that

*"The mere fact that they're charged with assault is a good step in the right direction."*

*Randall Kallinen, civil rights lawyer*

Osiminibeke and Poole struck Garcia's head with their hands, while Ziesemer threw Garcia to the ground. The injuries put Garcia in a coma.

Kallinen, who represented Garcia in civil litigation against the county, said he requested to review surveillance video of the incident but he has yet to see it. He called on the sheriff's office Friday to require detention officers to wear body cameras, a protocol that the law enforcement agency is expected to adopt this year. More than 200 detention officers were outfitted with the cameras earlier this year.

Justin Keiter, who represents Ziesemer, described Garcia as "the aggressor," alleging that he sucker-punched his client from behind while he was trying to leave the jail floor. Keiter said that he has watched surveillance footage showing that Ziesemer was acting in self-defense.

Ziesmer and Osiminibeke are expected in court next week, while Poole is scheduled to return to court in July. All three are free on bail.

*Hana Ikramuddin and Raquel Natalicchio contributed to this report.*

# Katy ISD's transgender policy under civil rights investigation

By Claire Goodman  
STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Office has opened an investigation into a Title IX complaint against Katy ISD for potentially violating student civil rights with its transgender policy.

As first reported by the Houston Landing, Students Engaged in Advancing Texas, a student-led activist group, announced in a news release Monday that federal officials are investigating whether the district's transgender policy is discriminatory.

"The district is committed to offering equal educational opportunities to our entire community," said Katy ISD media relations representative Nick Petit. "While we have received the OCR filing and deny any wrongdoing, we are committed to remaining fully cooperative and responsive throughout the process."

The activist group filed the lawsuit in November, targeting the district's policy, which insti-

tuted multiple new mandates toward transgender students, including a measure that requires teachers to "out" a student if they reveal to a staff member that they are transgender.

The measure narrowly passed 4-3 in August, with board members Rebecca Fox, Lance Redmon and Dawn Champagne opposing the policy, and Morgan Calhoun, Mary Ellen Cuzela and Amy Thieme, alongside board president Victor Perez, supporting it.

At least 23 students have been reported to their parents as transgender since the policy was activated, a public information request from the district shows.

"The Department of Education opening an investigation marks a significant step forward in holding Katy ISD accountable for its actions and ensuring that transgender students are equally protected under federal civil rights laws," said Cameron Samuels, an organizer of the activist group. "SEAT applauds the depart-

ment's response to our complaint and looks forward to co-operating fully with the investigation process."

In the months following the policy's enactment, several student-led protests sprung up across the district.

"Tides are finally turning," said Tompkins High School student Jarred Burton, who helped organize a protest in August. "While this policy has undoubtedly put students in danger, we've risen up to become more informed, outspoken and powerful. We will not sit idle while our school district tries to write us out of existence through policy. We deserve a seat at the table, and we're one step closer to getting there."

In the federal complaint, the group seeks a resolution that repeals Katy ISD's policy, provides direct resources to students impacted by the district's policy, establishes professional LGBTQ+ inclusion training for district personnel and codifies nondiscrimination protections for gender identity, the news release said.

## AROUND THE AREA

### NATIONAL PARKS Flooding forces forest's closure

The U.S. Forest Service has closed Sam Houston National Forest due to severe flooding following recent storms.

The national forest and the wildlife management area, about 50 miles north of Houston, will be closed, including roads, trails, developed recreation sites and other facilities until May 21, according to a news release.

Southeast Texas experienced flooding during the back-to-back storms in early May.

Some counties, including Montgomery and Harris, faced road closures, flooding and evacuations.

### WEST HOUSTON Police seek suspect in lawyer's death

Houston police are offering a reward for information on a man charged in connection with the death of a local attorney who was fatally shot at a west Houston McDonald's.

The Houston Police Department will pay \$5,000 for information that helps investigators find Anthony Martin Landry, 54, who has been charged with murder. Landry is accused of shooting Jeffrey Limmer last Saturday at the restaurant at Katy Freeway and Chimney Rock.

Limmer may have been trying to intervene in an argument between a customer and a McDonald's employee, authorities said. The two reportedly moved outside the restaurant, where Limmer pushed the man to the ground.

The man went to his car to retrieve a gun and allegedly shot Limmer, according to Houston Chronicle reporting partner ABC 13. The shooter is believed to have driven away in a 2000s blue Ford pickup, police say.

Limmer was an associate at Lewis Brisbois and lived near the McDonald's, ABC13 reported.

Police are asking anyone with information about Landry's whereabouts to call 713-308-3600.

*From staff reports*

# Car led cops to men charged in death of Dominican politician's son

By Nicole Hensley  
and John Wayne Ferguson  
STAFF WRITER

A ditched car and dropped cellphone were the key pieces of evidence that led Houston Police to nightclub owner Hernan Torres and his two sons in connection with a brazen gas station shooting that killed the son of a Dominican politician, court documents revealed.

The phone, which belonged to the father, was left at the scene, abandoned as the accused shooters fled the April 1 shooting in a hurry, according to court records. Investigators used the phone to link Torres Sr. and his sons, Hernan Jr. and Hernando, to the attack that left Luis Pacheco Rojas, 34, dead and another man wounded outside a southeast Houston gas station in the 2400 block of Wayside.

Surveillance cameras at the gas station caught the moment when two vehicles boxed in a Cadillac SUV with Pacheco Rojas and three other men outside the gas station, prosecutors said. Torres and his 19- and 25-year-old sons emerged from the two cars, a Dodge Charger and Mercedes Benz sedan, and exchanged words with the four men, author-

ities said.

The first round of gunfire appeared to come from the Cadillac, before any of the Torres men, one of whom was shown brandishing a firearm, had a chance to open fire, investigators wrote in charging papers.

The father and son managed to return fire, regardless, and struck Pacheco Rojas and another man as they tried fleeing the barrage of gunfire, according to police.

Pacheco Rojas, an aspiring rapper and DJ, was the son of Alfredo Pacheco, the president of the Chamber of Deputies in the Dominican Republic.

Police described the shooting as "targeted," but neither they nor prosecutors have drawn any connections between Alfredo Rojas' death and his father's political position. A prosecutor, Bryan Honeycutt, said how the Torres family knew Pacheco Rojas, if at all, remained under investigation.

Police tracked the family's Dodge Charger to an auto body shop in South Houston, where security cameras showed two men leaving the car there and walking away. The Charger, which still had its license plate intact, was registered to the Torres family's home, blocks away from where



Melissa Phillip/Staff Photographer

**Hernan Torres Jr. appears in court on Wednesday. Hernan Torres Sr. and his two sons are charged with murder.**

the gas station shooting unfolded.

Investigators also found gun-fire damage to the Charger, without elaborating in court documents how that damage happened.

Torres Sr. was arrested in Philadelphia and is expected to return to Harris County to face the murder charge in connection with Pacheco Rojas' death, as well as two counts of aggravated assault of a deadly weapon linked to an unrelated shooting outside the family's night club in February.

Despite his recent arrest, authorities had eyed Torres Sr. as a possible murder suspect within days of Pacheco Rojas' death, according to court records.

Prosecutors on April 4 identified the father as "a suspect in an unrelated murder case" in bail paperwork for the assault case. In that incident, Torres Sr. ordered security at his El Trebo VIP club at 6500 Dixie Drive to remove two patrons. Once outside, Torres Sr., who identified himself as a club owner to the patrons, shot one of

the men in the leg, according to court records.

Torres Sr., unlike his sons, has a criminal history. He pleaded guilty in 2013 to intoxicated manslaughter.

Norwood Richardson, a court-appointed defense attorney for the eldest son, argued in court Wednesday that self-defense may have played a role in the shooting and that video evidence would corroborate that.

The sons are being held in the Harris County Jail on \$2 million for their role in the shooting.

Richardson was adamant that his client, Torres Jr., 25, should have a lower bail amount, noting that he, like his brother, was born and raised in Houston. Both sons lack a criminal history.

Judge Ramona Franklin in the 338th District Court declined to lower his bail, deeming that the amount set earlier this week by a magistrate was sufficient. Court records indicate that Torres Jr. also described himself as a nightclub owner.

The younger son, Hernando, is not expected to appear in court until next week.

A judge signed an order barring the father and son from being housed near each other at the jail.



NATION & WORLD

Judge directs Cohen to keep quiet on Trump

By Jake Offenhartz, Jennifer Peltz, Michael R. Sisak and Alanna Durkin Richer  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — With Donald Trump's fixer-turned-foe Michael Cohen expected to take the witness stand Monday, the judge in the former president's hush money case issued prosecutors a stern warning: Get Cohen to stop his taunting posts and jabs at Trump.

Judge Juan M. Merchan's comments came as a dramatic and consequential week in the first criminal trial of a former American president drew to a close Friday. The prosecution could rest its case by the end of next week, prosecutor Joshua Steinglass said.

Prosecutors have been building up their case ahead of important testimony from Cohen, who arranged the \$130,000 payout to porn actor Stormy Dan-



Timothy A. Clary/Associated Press  
**The third week of a trial involving ex-President Donald Trump wrapped up Friday.**

iels to keep her from going public ahead of the 2016 election about an alleged sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump denies ever having sex with Daniels.

The judge's warning underscores how Cohen is not only prosecutors' most crucial witness, but their most complicated. Once a Trump loyalist, he has become one of his fiercest critics since pleading guilty to

federal charges, routinely bashing and mocking the former president on social media.

Defense attorneys will argue that the now-disbarred lawyer who served prison time is out to get Trump and cannot be believed.

Two people familiar with the matter told the Associated Press that Cohen is expected to take the stand Monday. The people could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Trump's lawyers complained after Cohen in a social media video this week wore a shirt featuring a figure resembling the former president behind bars. The defense has argued it's unfair that Trump is under a gag order that prevents him from speaking publicly about witnesses while Cohen is free to speak badly about Trump.

"It's becoming a problem every single day that President Trump is not allowed to respond

to this witness, but this witness is allowed to continue to talk," defense attorney Todd Blanche said.

Merchan told prosecutors they should inform Cohen "that the judge is asking him to refrain from making any more statements" about the case or about Trump. Prosecutors told the judge they already requested that Cohen and other witnesses not talk about the case, but they have no direct means of controlling witnesses' behavior.

Cohen did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday.

As the third week of testimony wrapped up, the case that ultimately hinges on record-keeping returned to deeply technical testimony — a sharp contrast from Daniels' dramatic, if not downright seamy, account of the alleged sexual encounter with Trump that riveted jurors earlier this week.

Witnesses in the case have

seesawed between bookkeepers and bankers with testimony about records and finances to Daniels and others with unflattering stories about Trump and the tabloid world machinations meant to keep them secret. Despite all the drama, in the end, the trial is about money changing hands — business transactions — and whether those payments were made to illegally influence the 2016 election.

Leaving the courthouse, Trump addressed the allegation at the heart of the case: that he falsified his company's records to conceal the nature of hush money reimbursements to Cohen. Trump's lawyers have portrayed the ledger entries at issue in the case as pro forma actions performed by a Trump Organization employee.

"A very good bookkeeper marked a legal expense as a legal expense," Trump said. "He was a lawyer, not a fixer," he added, referring to Cohen.

Police arrest dozens more while breaking up campus protests

By Bruce Shipkowski and Michael Casey  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Police made dozens of arrests as pro-Palestinian protest encampments were dismantled Friday at the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, hours after police tear-gassed demonstrators and took down a similar camp at the University of Arizona.

Philadelphia and campus police at Penn took action around daybreak to remove protesters from an encampment in place for more than two weeks. School officials said protesters were given warnings and the chance to leave without being detained. About 33 people, including faculty members and seven students, were among those arrested and charged with trespass, the school said.

Protest camps have sprung up in recent weeks as students demand universities stop doing business with Israel or companies that support its war efforts.

In Cambridge, Mass., police in riot gear arrived at MIT around 4 a.m., encircled the camp and gave protesters about 15 minutes to leave. Ten students who remained were arrested, the university's president said.

Protesters insist they will keep demanding MIT cut all ties to the Israeli military. The encampment especially angered Jewish students, who held

counterprotests nearby.

"This is only going to make us stronger. They can't arrest the movement," said Quinn Perian, an undergraduate student and organizer for MIT Jews for Ceasefire.

MIT President Sally Kornbluth, in a letter confirming Friday's arrests, wrote that her responsibility is "to make sure that the campus is physically safe and functioning for everyone ... and that everyone feels free to express their views." The encampment, she wrote, "increasingly made it impossible to meet all these obligations."

At the University of Arizona in Tucson, campus police in riot gear fired tear gas at protesters late Thursday before tearing down an encampment. The school said police vehicles were spiked, and rocks and water bottles were thrown at officers and university staff. Two people were arrested, a university spokesperson said.

And at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, police arrested 13 people Thursday night after they refused to leave a damaged and vandalized building. The building was cleared and open Friday.

Protesters at the University of Wisconsin-Madison agreed Friday to dismantle their encampment and not disrupt graduation ceremonies, in return for the opportunity to connect with "decision-makers" who control university investments by July 1.



Jessica Griffin/Associated Press  
**Police remove a protester Friday on the University of Pennsylvania campus in Philadelphia.**



Abdel Kareem Hana/Associated Press  
**Palestinians displaced by an Israeli offensive arrive Friday at a makeshift tent camp west of Rafah, Gaza Strip. More than 1.4 million Palestinians have been sheltering in Rafah.**

Combat, dwindling supplies push more than 100,000 out of Rafah

By Wafaa Shurafa and Joseph Krauss  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Heavy fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Rafah has left crucial nearby aid crossings inaccessible and forced more than 110,000 people to flee north, U.N. officials said Friday.

With nothing entering through the crossings, food and other supplies were running critically low, aid agencies said.

The World Food Program will run out of food for distribution in southern Gaza by Saturday, said Georgios Petropoulos, an official with the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Rafah. Aid groups have said fuel will also be depleted soon, forcing hospitals to shut down critical operations and bringing to a halt trucks delivering aid across south and central Gaza.

The United Nations and other agencies have warned for weeks that an Israel assault on Rafah, on the border with Egypt near the main aid entry points, would cripple humanitarian operations and cause a disastrous surge in

**DEVELOPMENTS**

The U.N. General Assembly voted 143-9, with 25 abstentions, Friday to grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and called on the Security Council to reconsider Palestine's request to become the 194th member of the United Nations. The United States voted against it.

The Biden administration said Friday in a report to Congress that Israel's use of U.S. weapons in Gaza likely violated international humanitarian law but conditions prevented U.S. officials from determining that for certain. The caveat could give the White House leeway in future decisions on whether to restrict U.S. weapons to Israel.

*Associated Press*

civilian casualties. More than 1.4 million Palestinians — half of Gaza's population — have been sheltering in Rafah, most after fleeing Israel's offensives elsewhere.

Heavy fighting was also underway Friday in northern Gaza, where Hamas appeared to have once again regrouped in an area where Israel has already launched punishing assaults.

Israel's move into Rafah has been short of the full-scale invasion that it has planned. The United States is deeply opposed to a major offensive and is stepping up pressure by threatening to withhold arms to Israel.

But the heavy fighting has shook the city and spread fear that a bigger assault is coming. Artillery shelling and gunfire rattled throughout the night into Friday, an Associated Press reporter in the city said.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, said more than 110,000 people have fled Rafah. Families who have already moved multiple times during the war packed up to go again. One woman held a cat in her arms as she sat in the back of a truck piled with her family's belongings about to head out.

The full invasion hasn't started "and things have already gotten below zero," said Raed al-Fayomi, a displaced person in Rafah. "There's no food or water."

Those fleeing erected new tents camps in the city of Khan Younis — which was half destroyed in an earlier Israeli offensive — and the town of Deir al-Balah, straining infrastructure.

AROUND THE NATION AND WORLD

**FLORIDA**  
**One killed as storms, winds pummel South**

Powerful storms packing hurricane-force winds killed at least one woman Friday in Florida as a week of deadly severe weather continued in the South, where uprooted trees crashed onto homes and knocked out electricity to thousands in several states.

City officials in Tallahassee said wind gusts of 80 to 100 mph, speeds that exceed hurricane intensity, were reported.

The woman killed in Florida was at least the fourth death

caused by severe weather in the Southeast this week.

An estimated 201,000 homes and businesses from Mississippi to North Carolina were blacked out Friday afternoon, according to the tracking website poweroutage.us. Most of those outages were in Florida, where lights and air conditioning were out for nearly 142,000 customers.

**COLORADO**  
**Solar storm could produce disruptions**

An unusually strong solar storm hitting Earth could produce northern lights in the U.S.

this weekend and potentially disrupt power and communications.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, headquartered in Boulder, Colo., issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated. The effects could last into next week.

NOAA alerted operators of power plants and spacecraft in orbit to take precautions, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The storm could produce northern lights as far south in

the U.S. as Alabama and Northern California, according to NOAA.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**\$400M in military aid headed to Ukraine**

The U.S. announced a new \$400 million package of military aid for Ukraine on Friday, as Kyiv struggles to hold off advances by Russian troops in the northeast Kharkiv region.

This is the third tranche of aid for Ukraine since Congress passed supplemental funding in late April after months of gridlock. Ukrainian President Vol-

odymyr Zelenskyy had warned Thursday that his country was facing "a really difficult situation" in the east, but said a new supply of U.S. weapons was coming and "we will be able to stop them."

The package includes High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and rockets for them, as well as munitions for Patriot and National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, artillery, anti-aircraft and anti-tank munitions, and an array of armored vehicles, such as Bradley and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles.

*From wire reports*



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# Humble ISD sued over at-large elections

By Elizabeth Sander  
STAFF WRITER

A former Humble ISD Spanish teacher sued the district Thursday, alleging trustees and administrators violated the Voting Rights Act by holding all at-large elections for the school board.

The lawsuit, filed by Brewer Storefront, the advocacy arm of Dallas-based Brewer, Attorneys and Counselors, states that Humble ISD has a 70% minority student population, yet a majority white board. It also claims that the district has a geographically significant Hispanic population that would allow for at least one Hispanic-majority single member district to be drawn for increased representation. While the board does have two black trustees, the board does not have a Hispanic trustee.

The firm called the 48,000-student district's elections system a "relic of the district's past."

"Even though Humble ISD's population has significantly grown and diversified since 1919, the district's political leadership has failed to adjust to these demographic or socio-economic changes," the lawsuit reads. The district, spanning northern Harris and Montgomery counties, is the sixth fastest growing district in Texas and began as a one-room schoolhouse.

The lawsuit comes after Brewer Storefront sent letters to 11 Texas school districts in March as part of a statewide initiative to secure voting rights among Texas' minority populations. The firm sent letters of warning to Humble ISD, Lufkin ISD and Angleton ISDs, asking that the districts consider at least one single-member district to allow for minority representation.

After the district decided to "refuse the opportunity to avoid litigation," according to the law firm's release, the plaintiff decided to propel the cause with legal action.

## 'Time is of the essence'

The founder of the firm, William Brewer, said the plaintiff was taking the action in May because "time is of the essence when people are being denied the right to fairly participate in the political process," he said, adding that the board "indicated no meaningful willingness to bring the electoral system into compliance with the Voting Rights Act."

Humble ISD officials said the district would respond to the lawsuit through legal process. Board president Robert Scarfo did not respond to requests for comment.

The Humble ISD board voted in January against holding a hearing to discuss a hybrid or single-member district system in a

4-3 split. Those in favor of the discussion said that there wasn't enough minority or geographic representation on the board. Scarfo opposed continuing discussions at the time, saying that all trustees should care for all students of the district, making a hybrid or single-member district system unnecessary.

But this did not assuage concerns that the district was in compliance with the Voting Rights Act, which mandates that a system of elections may not "(deny) voters of color an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice ... (including) Hispanics, African Americans, Asians or other minority groups."

Plaintiff Judith Bautista claimed that the system has worked against her as a woman who lives in the zone for Summer Creek High School, where her daughter attends. The lawsuit alleges that not one trustee lives within the boundaries of her high school on the district's south side.

Trustee Marques Holmes lives in the Atascocita High School district, but his neighborhood is a "flex zone," he said, meaning that his child could also choose to attend Summer Creek High School even though he does not live in the Summer Creek boundaries.

Bautista has plans to run for a seat on the board in 2025, according to the filing. She resigned

from her post in the district last June after students in the Spanish National Honors Society had their graduation stoles removed before walking onstage, while other students in cultural affinity groups were reportedly allowed to wear theirs.

The administration apologized for the incident last year, calling it a misunderstanding, but Bautista said she felt it symbolized something deeper.

"Humble ISD's confiscation of preapproved sashes for Hispanic students is emblematic of a much larger problem of discrimination and a lack of support of Hispanic students and faculty," the lawsuit reads.

## Racial performance gap

According to census data, voters of color make up 47% of the district's citizen voting-age population. Humble High School has a population of 96% students of color, yet no trustee resides within the attendance boundaries for the school, which serves just under 3,000 students.

One potential consequence of this lack of representation is a performance gap for students in the district that Brewer called "disturbing."

"The majority of Hispanic and Black children are not meeting grade level on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Read-

ness (STAAR) exams," the firm reported. In 2023, 43% of Hispanic students and 34% of Black students met grade level, compared with 66% of white students.

This filing comes in the wake of other lawsuits to increase representation for minority communities brought by Brewer Storefront, such as those in Lewisville and Richardson ISDs, which enacted changes in their election systems. Brewer Storefront also has a pending lawsuit against Pearland ISD, a district where all seven board members are white, despite having enough minority eligible voter populations clustered in certain areas to create coalition minority districts.

The Pearland ISD suit is currently held up in federal court, as is a lawsuit brought by a different party against Spring Branch ISD, a district that also has an at-large system of elections and elected trustees who do not represent the racial diversity of the district.

This lawsuit could prove costly for a district that is already battling more than \$800,000 in legal fees for recent Title IX cases stemming from a report that the district's former athletic director, Troy Kite, fostered a "locker room culture" in the workplace. Kite is married to Humble ISD superintendent Elizabeth Fagen, who is one of five finalists for a superintendent job in Reno, Nev.

## COLONY RIDGE

From page A1

first moving there. The Chronicle spoke to several residents across the development Monday, when much of the floodwaters had receded, and although none of them reported flooded homes, all were faced with inundated roadways and yards.

"All of this looked like it was a river," García said in Spanish, signaling toward the end of her street as she stood in front of the home she shares with her husband and their three children. "You couldn't see anything."

Flooding has been a concern in Colony Ridge, a 33,000-acre development that has become a popular destination for low-income Latino families, typically immigrants, looking to own land and escape rising housing costs in Houston. It's estimated to house tens of thousands of people.

The development is built on razed forests and filled-in wetlands in Liberty County, and residents from Colony Ridge and surrounding communities have complained for years about inadequate drainage there.

Colony Ridge CEO John Harris, who has developed the area alongside his brother William "Trey" Harris III for more than a decade, acknowledged the need for improved drainage but said he was proud of how the community's systems performed during the torrential floods.

When asked about residents who said they felt tricked by the company's flood risk claims, he



Raquel Natalicchio/Staff photographer

Colony Ridge saw severe flooding during storms last week.

said, "To them, in this situation, I would say, 'Apologies, but that's exactly how it was designed. The roads flood to keep it from going into people's homes. ... The thing we try to do is protect lives and homes first.'"

The developer added that surrounding communities like Plum Grove and Cleveland saw worse flooding than Colony Ridge during the recent storms. (Plum Grove sued the Colony Ridge developers in 2020, claiming the community's sewers filled ditches and creeks with sewage and that the subdivision's inadequate drainage had worsened local flooding. A judge ruled early last year that the developers weren't to blame for the nearby flooding.)

The Colony Ridge developers have also been scrutinized by federal and state officials for their business practices, which include offering buyers high-interest

loans that have led to above-average foreclosure rates in the development.

Last December, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau sued the developers. They accused them of targeting tens of thousands of Latinos with falsehoods and predatory loans. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton also filed suit, alleging deceptive trade practices and fraud.

Flooding in Colony Ridge is central to the arguments in the lawsuits, with both alleging that the development company lied to buyers about the flood risk.

"During the Property Visit, consumers report that Colony Ridge sales assessors did not inform them about any flooding risk," the DOJ and CFPB's filing said. "To the contrary, consumers report that Colony Ridge employees represented to them that their

lots did not or would not flood."

Paxton's office made similar claims in its suit: "Colony Ridge and John Harris continue to falsely represent to consumers at the time of sale that the residential lots in the Development are not subject to repeated flooding."

John Harris had previously called the DOJ's legal action "outrageous and inflammatory" and said, "There is nothing new" in Paxton's lawsuit.

Yolanda Debernardi-Lewis realized that her new neighborhood floods before moving there.

The 50-year-old and her family bought land in Colony Ridge in early 2023, hoping for a quieter and cheaper life in rural Liberty County. Because they couldn't yet afford to put a home on the plot, they waited to move until August and took occasional trips to tend to their land.

Debernardi-Lewis was surprised when she visited her soon-to-be home on one of those trips only to find the land flooded, she said, despite being told by the development company there was no flood risk.

"It's hard when you put all of your money into something that you were told was going to be the perfect life, right?" she said from her home last Friday, as waters continued to rise. "They sold us a dream, you know, the dream of having perfect land and living in a perfect world."

"For you to be a good businessperson, you have to come out and lay everything on the table," she continued. "Don't deceive people."

When the rains began last

week, Debernardi-Lewis said the land around her home flooded in under two hours. It was the fourth severe flood she'd experienced while living in Colony Ridge, and the inundations had already damaged the foundation underneath her brand new home.

Resident Gloria Martínez came to Colony Ridge four years ago under similar circumstances as García and Debernardi-Lewis, looking for a quiet place to raise her family. But after the recent flooding, she said she feels trapped in the community and hopes to move out soon.

"When (the development company) shows you the land here, they don't tell you that it floods," she said in Spanish. "Wanting to own land, one goes, 'Wow, what a good opportunity.' But sometimes we make mistakes."

The flooding that hit the neighborhood had been especially unexpected for the 55-year-old.

Martínez lost television signal when the storms rolled in, disconnecting her from Spanish-language news organizations disseminating crucial information from local officials. She did not know how intense the storms would be until she looked outside and saw the water rising on her street and front yard. It eventually reached her front doorstep but stayed out of the house.

During the rains, Martínez and her husband couldn't leave her home to buy food and other essentials that they hadn't stocked up on.

"I have a baby girl, and we couldn't leave," she said. "We were left with no help."

## LAND OFFICE

From page A1

Texas — whether it be wildfire, winter storm or hurricane — it's the state's General Land Office that has primarily retained responsibility for divvying up the federal funds to cities and counties across the state that apply for relief. The agency is also in charge of making sure the cities and counties it grants funds to are spending it correctly.

But despite the rhetorical reset, Houston remains on the outs when it comes to the Hurricane Harvey funds. The city still is not set to see a single dollar from \$4.3 billion in federal funds approved for flood mitigation after the 2017 storm.

Houston's history with the GLO has been rocky since Harvey. After the storm, the GLO, then led by George P. Bush, was charged with distributing federal funds for home repair and flood mitigation.

Bush's office, at the time, argued that Mayor Sylvester Turner's administration was mishandling the housing funds it had been given and determined not to provide the city with any funds for flood mitigation. The city argued that the GLO made the process of applying for and receiving funds difficult and called the state agency an overbearing partner.

Since then, Buckingham has

taken over the GLO office and Whitmire has taken over the mayor's office. The two have a longstanding relationship as former colleagues who worked together in the Texas Senate, and the new mayor said that will only continue in the days to come.

"There will be strong collaboration with the GLO and our state partners," Whitmire told the Houston Chronicle.

## GLO's history in Houston

Federal relief funds for hurricanes are usually reserved for two issues: efforts to cover the cost of rebuilding and flood mitigation projects, meant to make communities more resilient against future storms.

Houston received \$1.3 billion to build back and remodel housing destroyed by Harvey in 2017, with \$427 million set aside for rebuilding homes damaged in the hurricane and \$350 million to build affordable apartments.

But those housing recovery funds quickly became mired in controversy. The city sued the GLO in 2020 as the agency moved to take control of the city's entire \$1.3 billion portfolio, and both parties ultimately agreed to cut most of the city's program responsible for rebuilding and remodeling homes.

The GLO then came back and took away more money from the city, claiming it had missed spending benchmarks, and the

city argued that the agency had failed to see the progress it made. Houston was left with \$664 million — about half of its initial allotment.

And the dispute wasn't just limited to housing funds. Though the GLO received over \$4 billion for federal mitigation relief to prepare cities and counties for future storms, the agency decided to not give Harris County or Houston — which expected \$1 billion each — any of the cash.

Regional leaders such as County Commissioner Adrian Garcia speculated that the move was politically driven.

The GLO, however, maintained that the application process had been fair.

Harris County later received \$750 million from the GLO after bipartisan outcry and a federal finding that the decision violated the Civil Rights Act. Houston, though, still is not set to receive funds.

As Buckingham entered office in 2023, she made clear that she had no plans to deviate from the post-Harvey plan that denied Houston mitigation funds and that she would continue with the effort that took away half of the city's housing recovery funds.

But once Whitmire was sworn in, Buckingham penned a letter to the new administration offering to help the city spend the rest of its recovery aid for building more housing. The city has about \$151

million left in federal grants.

## A change of tune

In a sign of good faith, Buckingham's office conceded on a small portion of recovery funds for a property where 120 single-family homes are planned on the site of a former business park near NRG Stadium.

During the April 17 council meeting, Buckingham said the GLO was prepared to extend the timeline the city had to build on the lot, just as the city was getting ready to abandon the program ahead of the deadline.

With the GLO grant of an extension by the Housing and Urban Development Department to use the funds, the city may be able to build single-family homes on the Stella Link Road property. The city started with a \$60 million budget for its single-family home program and has put \$44 million toward other housing projects. Housing Director Mike Nichols said the project's price tag has yet to be fully determined but that he expects that federal dollars will be able to cover the cost.

But HUD's extension does not guarantee the program's viability. The city will have to prove it will build and sell the homes on the property before the GLO sets a new deadline to spend the cash. The rest of the city's recovery portfolio, including efforts to build apartment complexes and buy out flood-prone properties,

will need to be spent by the original August 2024 and February 2025 deadlines.

Asked how the GLO and city were working to rebuild their relationship, spokespeople for Whitmire and Buckingham redirected back to a news conference the pair held in April.

"The recent news conference I held with GLO Commissioner Buckingham to help some Houstonians post-Harvey exemplifies the strong partnership I am building between the city and state," Whitmire said in a statement. "We are former colleagues in the state senate, and she understands we represent the same people."

That relationship reboot will likely fall on the shoulders of Whitmire's chief of intergovernmental relations, Joshua Sanders, who told the Chronicle that the mayor's office communicates regularly with the GLO.

"Our improved relationship will bring about increased efficiencies when delivering much needed support to the residents of Houston," Sanders said.

Brittany Eck, Buckingham's spokesperson, referred to Buckingham's preexisting relationship with Whitmire as "valuable."

"They not only are wanting to work together, they have that existing relationship where they can pick up the phone and call each other and have that conversation," Eck said.



# Teachers union votes ‘no confidence’ in Miles

By **Nusaiba Mizan**  
STAFF WRITER

In one of the largest acts of protest this school year, nearly 3,000 Houston Independent School District teachers returned a vote of “no confidence” against state-appointed Superintendent Mike Miles, Houston Federation of Teachers leaders announced Thursday.

The resolution, a rebuke to Miles’ leadership since his June 1 appointment, calls for his removal as superintendent and lays out the union’s grievances, including the dissolution of its exclusive consulting agreement with the district, rescinding teacher retention bonuses and widespread teacher turnover.

Roughly 3,000 ballots were returned, said Zeph Capo, president of the Texas American Fed-



Raquel Natalicchio/Staff photographer

**A protest involving the Houston Federation of Teachers is held last year at HISD headquarters. The union has approved a resolution of no confidence in Superintendent Mike Miles.**

eration of Teachers. About 70 people who returned a ballot did

6,000 members. About 11,465 teachers work in HISD.

“I would find it very difficult, so I understand where you are, to work for somebody that I have no confidence in at all,” the Houston union’s president, Jackie Anderson, said at a Thursday meeting. “That is very profound.”

The union’s resolution of no confidence in Miles comes as HISD approaches its one-year anniversary under state control and as an undisclosed number of teachers’ jobs are in danger of being cut.

“One of the main reasons our members voted to approve a resolution of no confidence in Mike Miles is because he has steadfastly refused to listen to educators, parents and students about what they need, and has likewise refused to accept criticism with

anything other than absolute disdain from people he says that he should be serving,” Capo said.

HISD did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The announcement came at a Thursday meeting that HFT scheduled at the same time as a “State of Education” event hosted by the regional business organization Greater Houston Partnership, where Miles was a featured speaker.

The union has vocally opposed changes brought on by HISD’s new leadership and has sued to temporarily delay the implementation of Miles’ new teacher evaluation system. Under Texas law, the union has no right to hold a labor stoppage. A vote of no confidence is one of the strongest acts the public sector union has to protest its employer.

## HISD

From page A1

against the proposed staff cuts and other agenda items in one-minute increments. Multiple speakers ended their comments with “No transparency. No trust. No bond,” referencing their lack of support for a multibillion-dollar school bond election being planned for this November.

HISD wraparound specialist Rocío Puente said she was one of the 170 campus-level wrap-around specialists who were notified last week that they would be laid off at the end of the year. She said eliminating these roles — which provide resources such as school supplies, food and clothing — deprives students of

essential support and the ability to succeed.

“Our role is crucial to the overall well-being of our students as we ensure their basic needs are met so they can thrive academically and personally,” Puente said during the meeting. “How could you take this away from our students and what gives you the right to destroy the lives of our children by setting them up for failure?”

HISD, like several other school districts in Texas, has had to prepare for significant budget cuts in the upcoming school year as it loses federal COVID-19 relief money, known as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, sees student enrollment decline and because state lawmakers refused to increase

school funding during the previous legislative session.

Miles estimates that the district will face an estimated \$450 million budget gap next year, with schools outside the New Education System expected to see cuts of up to 12%. The district is, however, still planning to spend at least \$120 million more toward increasing teacher salaries and expanding the controversial NES program to 45 more campuses next year.

“Effective budget management is paramount for closing the 2035 competencies skills gaps of creativity, critical thinking teamwork, problem solving and resiliency, while ensuring financial sustainability,” said Shannon Swoope, a parent of two HISD students. “I encourage HISD to

build a budget, not take up Miles’ ax to the previous budget.”

Multiple attendees also spoke out about what they described as a lack of transparency in the budget process. The district currently has one budget workshop planned this year on Thursday, when it plans to disclose the majority of its financial plans. The district held five budget workshops during the previous academic year, beginning with one on Feb. 16, 2023.

Meghna Goswami, a parent of two HISD students, said she understood difficult decisions needed to be made about district staffing and programs in the budget for next year, but she was surprised by the lack of communication from the district on its plans for cuts to services that students

and schools would be facing next year.

“As a public entity that’s taxpayer funded, it is imperative that HISD has a transparent budgeting process, not just a compliance step after budget decisions are already made, but one that is thoughtful and deliberate and includes community input,” Goswami said.

The Board of Managers is expected to vote on whether to approve the budget during its regular meeting next month. The school board will also review the names of everyone affected by the staff cuts during a future meeting if a campus or department determines that reductions are necessary.

*Elizabeth Sander contributed to this report.*

## TXDOT

From page A1

works on its long-range plan, taking into account construction, maintenance and development of transportation projects, the total cost estimated from 2025 to 2046 could reach \$740 billion.

That figure is more than the gross domestic product of Belgium, simply so Texans can drive, fly, bike, walk, float or ride around.

To put that some other ways, over the next quarter-century, Texas could spend enough on transportation to:

Fund the space shuttle program three times over. Not the space shuttle, but the entire 30-year shuttle program — research, construction, launches, commemorative pins, etc. Then it would still have money left over for three B-2 stealth bomber programs.

Buy almost half the state — 14 million people — a Toyota Tundra 4X4 crew cab with a 6.5-foot bed.

Sail for 23.2 million years aboard the Mariner of the Seas in an ocean-view cabin, based on current November prices for a five-day stay from Galveston to the Caribbean.

Where, and on what, that money gets spent is likely to be a long-simmering discussion for politicians, planners and advocates, but it will start with a public component this month.

With comment on the plan open and officials set to approve a final version in July, here are four numbers and one quote to keep in mind as Texas talks about the future of transportation.

42

That is the percentage increase that officials expect in vehicle miles traveled in Texas, prompted by what could be 60% more Texans. Demographers believe the state could hit 40 million residents by 2050.

Keep in mind these are projections and not promises. The state’s population could grow even faster, but many suspect the growth actually could slow and give booming areas some time. The numbers change enough that when TxDOT started



Melissa Phillip/Staff photographer

**TxDOT’s long-range plan could reach a cost of \$740 billion for 2025 through 2046.**

the long-range plan process last year, the agency expected 41 million people — meaning we lost 1 million people in the process.

Whoever turns out to be right, the state’s urban areas will continue to demand increasing levels of maintenance — from repaving roads to modernizing bridges and ports. Rural connectivity, meanwhile, is expected to cost between \$85 billion and \$95 billion, even as more of Texas turns urban and suburban with housing and business growth.

**\$520 billion**

Setting aside routine maintenance and development of projects, that’s what officials believe the state might need to spend to reach their targets for movement in the state. On the low side, they think at least \$470 billion is necessary.

Not factoring for inflation, Humberto Gonzalez, TxDOT’s director of transportation planning and programming, said that amounts to \$22 billion annually for the next 22 years, so that by 2046 they have the money in hand for projects out to 2050.

Right now, at a record pace of funding, the state spends about \$13 billion annually.

“We still have a lot of wood to chop,” said J. Bruce Bugg, chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission, which oversees TxDOT.

**2 billion**

This is the predicted increase in truck freight tonnage in Texas, basically doubling the amount out there now.

More people means more jobs and more people buying more things, so get accustomed to seeing

more trucks. Though all forms of freight movement grow, according to TxDOT scenarios, it is trucking that still picks up the bulk.

That load is leading officials statewide and in Houston to consider more projects to funnel that freight through the region as fast as possible, from development at seaports to bypass routes for trucks such as the long-discussed Texas 36 route from Freeport to west of Katy.

Among the only big numbers Texas officials do not brag about is the number of roadway deaths, which they have stated as a goal to eliminate by 2050. Zero deaths might never happen, but officials say it is the only goal worth setting. They are aiming to reduce total road deaths to half of Texas’ 2019 total by 2035.

For now, trends do not point in that direction. A record high of 4,028 fatal crashes statewide in 2021 has only slightly declined over the past two years, with the state on pace for about 3,800 fatal wrecks even if the rate of decline continues.

The lack of progress, despite some successes, has safety advocates leaning on state transportation officials for bolder action that makes streets safer from the very beginning. This involves designing them to encourage options other than driving and adding elements to potentially force motorists to drive responsibly.

Interestingly, that has led to a slight rhetoric change that some safety and urban planning advocates have sought for years.

“It is my opinion that bicycling and walking pathways are going to be very important by 2050 be-

cause in the metropolitan areas particularly, as you have density, you have different ways of getting around.”

That comment last month from transportation Commissioner Alvin New, speaks to what has been a growing sense in TxDOT that while the agency builds wider roads and deeper ports, more at-

tention is going to come to the major cities where “one more lane” — a common joke among critics of the agency — will not solve the problem.

In its current \$100.5 billion, 10-year plan, TxDOT, by the most generous standards, spends about 2% on so-called transportation alternatives. Safety advocates and those look-

ing to scale back highway construction argue that doubling or tripling that amount — because of lower costs and in targeted needs — would be a fractional reduction in road work for a generational jump ahead in nonautomobile mobility options and better access to transit for the state’s many city dwellers.

## Struggle with CPAP? Come hear about another solution.



Visit [InspireSleepEvents.com](https://InspireSleepEvents.com) to register for a free event.

Hear from doctors and patients in your area about Inspire, an implanted device that works inside your body to treat the root cause of obstructive sleep apnea. No mask. No hose. Just sleep.”

Inspire is not for everyone. Talk to your doctor to see if it’s right for you, and review important safety information at [InspireSleep.com](https://InspireSleep.com).



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OPINION

HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

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DEPUTY OPINION EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Thumbs: Texas cooperation works in D.C.

While you were studying Manhattan courtroom sketches of Stormy Daniels describing an alleged sexual encounter that Donald Trump says never happened, an even stranger spectacle was afoot at the U.S. Capitol. Democrats and Republicans who seldom agree on anything united to save the speakership of Louisiana Republican Mike Johnson. Only one Republican representative from the Texas delegation, Chip Roy, voted with the insurgents led by Rep. Marjorie Taylor Green, the heckling Georgian endlessly sowing disarray in her own party. It appears Washington finally took Rice political scientist Mark Jones' advice and adopted the Texas House Republicans' model of building an "informal coalition with moderate Democrats" to ensure the people's business gets done. The irony is likely not lost on Dade Phelan, the Texas House Speaker fighting for his political life in this month's primary runoff against a challenger backed by Attorney General Ken Paxton who calls him a RINO "beholden to the Democrats who elected him speaker." Nope, just beholden to that old-fashioned notion of occasional compromise.

Texans are also taking our petty yet brutal small-town squabbles to Washington as well, by way of the Supreme Court. This story begins in Castle Hills, a tiny town swallowed up by San Antonio's growth, where the city manager apparently angered some residents by not personally answering some of their phone calls, according to the Texas Observer. Two women who decided to take on the establishment won city council positions but soon after found themselves in jail after being accused of trying to abscond with official documents in their efforts to oust the city manager. Now their suit against the city for violating their free speech rights has reached the nation's highest court. It could also have implications for the case of Laredo citizen journalist Priscilla Villarreal, better known as La Gordiloca, who was arrested after publishing a leaked government document. At least the Houston Chronicle and ProPublica managed to defeat a defamation suit last month stemming from a 2018 investigation of Houston heart surgeon Dr. O.H. "Bud" Frazier that a Texas appeals court found to be a "fair, true, and impartial account" of accusations against him. We're not sure whether to be proud of all the Texas rebels testing the bounds of free speech or embarrassed of the Lone Star State for trying to quash them.

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz managed to shepherd a reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration through the upper chamber Thursday. He had to overcome the very sorts of obstruction he has spent more than a decade perfecting into a gridlock-inducing art. Ha, ha, "the foot's on the other hand," Republican senators joked as Cruz begged them to get on board with the bill, according to reporting by The Hill. We're not surprised though that he located his big-boy pants to help out the FAA. All the better to get to Cancun in times of trouble.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton is a man without limits. There he was by Donald Trump's side two weeks back in that Manhattan courtroom even though the AG is no criminal defense attorney. Maybe Paxton was there, as we wrote last week, to help Trump get right with God as part of his own recent campaign of righteousness. Some of his battles do indeed seem justified, like making sure websites such as Chaturbate and Pornhub follow age verification requirements. But this week, Paxton's holy roll veered off any recognizable Christian course: he went after Annunciation House, a Catholic migrant shelter in El Paso. In February, the AG's lawyers tried to force the nonprofit to share their guest logs.

The group refused, arguing it violated their constitutional rights, including freedom of religion. Nonsense, says our AG, who not only castigated the charity as a "stash house" but, in a new filing, calls into question their faith: Annunciation House "goes months without offering Catholic Mass, does not offer confessions, does not offer baptisms, does not offer communion, and makes 'no' efforts to evangelize or convert its guests to Catholicism."

What's more, the director has admitted "probably only about half" the volunteers subscribe to any religion and, according to the filing, they follow "a more Bohemian set of 'seven commandments' to 'visit' people when 'incarcerated' and 'care' (for them) when they're sick." For shame! Caring for the

sick?! Paxton, apparently caught up in his fear of God's wrath, didn't ask any of his Catholic friends, like Gov. Greg Abbott, about the seven principles of Catholic social teaching. Then again, shouldn't he, as a Southern Baptist, know the Gospel found in the New Testament, especially in those pesky bleeding-heart, red-lettered sections?

Cristina Rivera Garza's genre-bending book — equal parts memoir, investigative journalism, biography and feminist call to arms — won a Pulitzer Prize this week. The writer earned her doctorate from the University of Houston and now teaches there as the director of the PhD program in creative writing in Spanish. Her book, "El Invencible Verano de Liliana," available in translation as "Liliana's Invincible Summer," responds to the murder of the author's sister in 1990 and rampant femicide in Mexico. In an interview with the Chronicle's Andrew Dansby, Rivera Garza said, "We live in a world in which the system in general is betting on forgetfulness. Forcing silence and forced erasure is part of the violence. As a writer, we have the opportunity to counter these narratives. To not settle for forgetfulness." Her book gives us all a chance to contribute to "changing how we participate in this collective memory."

We're happy to see Mayor John Whitmire hasn't forgotten one of the city's best resources: public pools. The Houston Landing reports that after abrupt service cuts following the pandemic and the struggle to hire enough lifeguards, the parks department says it's hoping to open all but one of its 37 aquatic centers, each for three days a week. It's a constrained goal and we're still bummed that a city our size can't manage to keep its pools open all week. And there's a catch: The city still has to hire enough lifeguards to reach its goal. It hasn't actually increased the base pay for lifeguards from last summer, which isn't an encouraging sign. But it is offering a \$500 incentive to employees who sign on from June 30 through Sept 1.

Dallas is on a streak. The Rangers beat the Astros last year in the MLB playoffs. The Mavericks are still in the NBA playoffs while the Rockets still rebuild. Heck, Big D's rail system even beats ours on length and speed. And, here's a new one: their permitting office beats ours for utter dysfunction. Residents of both cities are driven nuts by how long it takes to get building permits whether for small home renovations or multimillion-dollar buildings. The Dallas permitting department, however, didn't even obtain proper permits from itself for its own new building before employees moved in. The Dallas Morning News Editorial Board calls the fiasco "embarrassingly ironic." Indeed, the very folks whose job it is to make sure people don't live or work in unsafe conditions were themselves in a building with fire and other safety code violations. On top of that, their city managers can't get their story straight on who allowed the debacle to happen. That's more Thumbs fodder than the law permits.

THE NETANYAHU RULE...



Border talking points by GOP are out of date

By Catherine Rampell

Psst. Have you heard? Illegal border crossings are down. Way down. From the last four months of 2023 to the first four months of 2024, illegal crossings at the U.S. southwestern border fell a whopping 40%, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Such crossings usually rise in the early months of a calendar year, as the weather warms, so this number might even understate the turnaround.

Two takeaways from this development: First, the standard GOP (and media) talking points about the "border crisis" are woefully out of date. Second: Anyone who cares about border security should support a presidential candidate with (ahem) *good* diplomatic relationships.

The latest trends at the border have earned precious little coverage, despite immigration featuring prominently this election cycle. Presumably, Republicans aren't eager to tout the progress, which threatens Donald Trump's narrative that only he can halt the migrant "invasion." Biden administration officials have talked a little about these numbers, but they seem loath to prematurely declare victory. (And to be fair, April's border apprehensions, at around 130,000, remain high by historical standards.)

So what explains the recent declines?

Texas claims its legally dubious border measures deserve credit, but the timing of the state's actions doesn't quite fit the trends. Instead, other factors have likely eased pressures.

Some relate to President Joe Biden's domestic policies, such as creating more pathways for lawful entry, which reduce migrants' incentive to brave dangerous terrain and show up at our border unannounced. The biggest factors, though, appear to be measures not from the United States directly but from our allies. Most significantly: Mexico.

Most migrants crossing illegally from Mexico into the United States are not Mexican nationals. They're citizens of *other* countries, such as Guatemala and Ecuador, who transit through our southern neighbor. In early December, Mexico's immigration agency ran out of funds to continue its migrant deportations and transfers. Not coincidentally, that is when unlawful crossings from Mexico into the United States peaked.

But by the end of the month, after negotiations with Biden and his top aides, the Mexican president committed to providing more funding and military resources to address irregular migration. This included military patrols, highway checkpoints and busing migrants en masse from northern Mexico (i.e., closer to the United States) to southern Mexico. Mexican authorities have been intercepting about 8,000 U.S.-bound migrants daily.

"It's mostly about Mexico's interdiction efforts, especially the ongoing efforts to stop migrants from getting to the U.S.-Mexico border," said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy director at the American Immigration Council. "That came after negotiations with the Biden administration."

Whether Mexico's efforts will continue at full force in the months ahead is unclear. The country's previous

crackdowns eventually petered out, when pressures built up on Mexico's own southern border. Lower-level officials who enforce Mexico's transit restrictions have also proved susceptible to bribes.

Fortunately, though, Mexico isn't our only friend that has stepped up.

Other allies have worked harder to ensure that they're not facilitating smuggling networks. Spain, for example, has implemented more transit visas, particularly for populations known to use Spain as a transit point to Latin America (and from there, into the United States).

Some of our allies — such as Canada, Greece and Spain (again) — have also opened up more legal pathways for migrants to work in their countries. This is happening partly because these countries *need* more laborers as their native-born populations age. But here, too, U.S. leadership and Biden's relationship with key allies have encouraged other countries to share more of the global burden of mass migration.

"I cannot overstate the importance of these new labor pathways abroad," a Homeland Security official told me. "Economic opportunity is an incredibly significant driver of migration patterns, including to the United States."

Mass migration is a global problem, which requires global solutions. Likewise, U.S. border challenges are not exclusively, or even primarily, about securing our southern border; they require dealing with migration routes that begin thousands of miles away. That's one reason the GOP's myopic focus on "building the wall" failed to curb migration during the Trump era.

Trump supporters have conveniently forgotten that border crossings spiked in 2019 to their highest levels in over a decade and were reversed only when the coronavirus pandemic temporarily disrupted international migration patterns.

Deportation and migration are at heart diplomatic issues. Solving them requires having strong relationships with our allies — especially Mexico, which will likely elect its first female president next month.

But it's not only Mexico; we need friends in countries much farther away and at all points in between. "There are people, today, making a decision in India to pay \$60,000 to smugglers to get them to the United States," said Reichlin-Melnick. "This is not a problem that a wall would solve."

All of which is to say that voters who value secure borders should consider which presidential candidate proves better at forging and maintaining cooperative relationships with our allies. If you think that's Trump, then boy, do I have a border bridge to sell you.

Reach Catherine Rampell at [crampell@washpost.com](mailto:crampell@washpost.com). This piece originally appeared in the Washington Post.

BIBLE VERSE

Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Solomon 8:7

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Viewpoints c/o Houston Chronicle, 4747 Southwest Freeway, Houston, Texas, 77027 or [viewpoints@chron.com](mailto:viewpoints@chron.com). We welcome and encourage letters and emails from readers. Letters must include name, address and telephone numbers for verification purposes only. All letters are subject to editing.



WORD SLEUTH

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions – forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. ©2024 King Features Syndicate Inc.

Friday's unlisted clue:  
**POCKET.**  
Saturday's unlisted clue  
hint: **AFFECTIONATE**  
**EMBRACES.**

WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH  
MOTHER'S DAY  
U Q N K I F D A S U P P O R T  
X V T Q O M J H M F C A A O Y  
E W U R S P N L E J H F E T F  
D D B G E Z X V M T R F C C Q  
O M U R E D I V O R P E I E K  
I H A T H F D B R Z Y C F T W  
V C T D **I N S P I R A T I O N**  
R Q N O I T O V E D L I R R O  
N O Y L I M A F S L O O C P K  
B G N I R U T R U N V N A I H  
F D C A Z X W V G S E S S I K

Affection  
Bond  
Care  
Devotion  
Family  
Gratitude  
Inspiration  
Kisses  
Love  
Memories  
Nurturing  
Protector  
Provider  
Sacrifice  
Support

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

PHEDT

DESYE

TARIEP

NANLID

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The forecast was right! I'm glad we decided to stay home instead of going to the mall.

I can shop just as easily right here.

SHOPPING ONLINE WAS HOW THEY PLANNED TO ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: MONEY PRANK SKETCH ENGAGE  
Answer: The piano salesperson who played while talking to customers was a — KEYNOTE SPEAKER

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

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

Difficulty: ★★★★★ 5/11

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CRYPTOQUIP

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

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VYVKVLH NRYGKLVA SCLS CLN  
LY TMSATIT HRWRYX ZGA  
KSRIVHLSRYX ELZZTRYLSTN  
NARYWK: STL ATM.

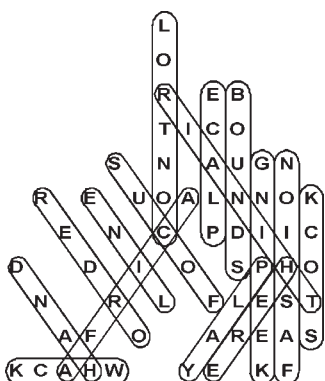
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals U

stimulating caffeinated drinks: Tea reX.  
ANSWER: Unusual dinosaur that had an extreme liking for

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

OUT OF --



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

# What to watch SATURDAY

May 11, 2024

All times Central. Start times can vary based on cable/satellite provider. Confirm times on your on-screen guide.

## NTT IndyCar Series: Sonsio Grand Prix

NBC, 2:30 p.m. Live

It's back to the Brickyard for the NTT IndyCar Series as drivers compete on Indianapolis Motor Speedway's 2.439-mile, 14-turn road course.

## ABBA: Against the Odds

The CW, 7 p.m.

This documentary explores the rise and influence of one of the most popular music groups of all time.

## A Whitewater Romance

Hallmark Channel, 7 p.m. ■ Original Film

Maya Alvaro (Cindy Busby) is a hardworking businesswoman with a heart of gold. What she is not is a rugged outdoorsy type. So when the CEO of her company invites her to an exclusive whitewater-rafting retreat in the Rocky Mountains, Maya's not so sure she's the woman for the job. If she can do this and survive a weekend camping in the woods, the promotion of her dreams will be hers. At the retreat, Maya meets Matt (Benjamin Hollingsworth), an outdoorsy type who is also trying to snag the same coveted contract she's after. As fate would have it, the two are paired to complete a series of team-building exercises together. As Maya lets her guard down to brave the wilderness, what begins as a ferocious competition slowly starts to evolve into something much more.

## Mommy Meanest

Lifetime, 7 p.m. ■ Original Film

Inspired by true events, this new film star-



ring Lisa Rinna and her daughter, 25-year-old Delilah Hamlin, tells the disturbing story of a teenage girl (Briana Skye) who starts getting cyberbullied and eventually discovers that the person who is harassing her is closer than she had ever imagined: her own mother.

## The Svengoolie Classic Horror & Sci-Fi Movie

MeTV, 7 p.m.

Sven introduces 1944's *House of Frankenstein*, one of Universal's "monster rally"

pictures of that era. The cast features Boris Karloff as a mad scientist, Lon Chaney Jr. as Larry Talbot and the Wolf Man, John Carradine as Dracula, and Glenn Strange as Frankenstein's monster.

## Saturday Night Live

NBC, 10:30 p.m. Live; also livestreams on Peacock

A new episode airs tonight ahead of next week's season finale. Tonight's host and musical guest had not been announced at press time.

## CATCH A CLASSIC

### Two for One: Patty Jenkins

TCM, beginning at 7 p.m.

Tonight, TCM primetime host Ben Mankiewicz is joined by filmmaker Patty Jenkins, who introduces two films of her choosing. Jenkins will offer commentary on each title's cultural significance and its influence on other films, behind-the-scenes stories and her own personal reflections on them. The director has chosen Terry Gilliam's 1991 fantasy comedy/drama **The**



**Fisher King (pictured)**, starring Best Actor Oscar nominee Robin Williams, Jeff Bridges and Best Supporting Actress winner Mercedes Ruehl, and writer/director Charlie Kaufman's drama **Synecdoche, New York** (2008), led by Philip Seymour Hoffman and Samantha Morton.

## ACES ON BRIDGE

By Bobby Wolff

Put yourself in Marty Fleisher's South seat for our final deal on the subject of unusual second-hand plays. You rebid two no-trump to get your hand off your chest, and your partner raises to game. You receive the lead of the spade eight and can easily place ace-jack-nine-sixth in spades with East. He would have bid three spades with seven of them. Plan the play. You have nine tricks once the diamond ace is knocked out, but the spade suit poses a problem. If you were to take the first spade with the king to preserve a tenace in dummy against East, you would go down if West had the diamond ace. You could instead duck the first spade to cut the defensive communications, but that fails when the diamond ace is on your right. Do you simply have to guess? Mathematically speaking, you should play West for the diamond ace. He has 11 vacant spaces outside spades, as opposed to East's seven, but there is no need to bank on the cold odds. Play the man instead. Put up the spade queen from dummy! Technically, this gives you no chance, regardless of who

**NORTH**  
♠ Q 10 3  
♥ K 8 2  
♦ Q 10 7 2  
♣ Q 9 4

**EAST**  
♠ A J 9 7 5 2  
♥ 7 6  
♦ A 6 5  
♣ 8 7

**SOUTH**  
♠ K 4  
♥ A Q J 5  
♦ K J 4  
♠ A 10 5 2

Vulnerable: North-South  
Dealer: South

The bidding:  
South West North East  
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♦ 2 ♣  
2 NT Pass 3 NT All pass

Opening Lead: Spade eight holds the diamond ace, but put yourself in East's shoes; he will surely think you hold king-third, as per the heart position in Wednesday's deal. If so, he will take the spade ace and switch, unwilling to give you a second spade trick. Then you will have the tempo to knock out the diamond ace in peace. In other words, deceive East by making the play that you would make with king-third in hand.

**ANSWER:** I could make a takeout double, which will probably be the winner if my partner has hearts, but I might instead overcall two no-trump to get my hand off my chest rather than double and miss game when partner has moderate values. I am slightly in favor of the double (since I cannot afford to duck my spade stopper), but it is extremely close.

## LEAD WITH THE ACES

South holds:

♠ K 4  
♥ A Q J 5  
♦ K J 4  
♣ A 10 5 2

South West North East  
2 ♠  
?

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## LOOKING BACK

**1935:** the Rural Electrification Administration was created as one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs.  
**1946:** the first CARE packages, sent by a consortium of American charities to provide relief to the hungry of postwar Europe, arrived at Le Havre, France.  
**1960:** Israeli agents captured Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

## BIRTHDAYS

Rock singer **Eric Burdon** (The Animals; War) is 83. Actor **Pam Ferris** is 76. Former White House chief of staff **John F. Kelly** is 74. Actor **Shohreh Aghdashloo** is 72. Actor **Frances Fisher** is 72. Sports columnist **Mike Lupica** is 72. Actor and former MTV VJ **Martha Quinn** is 65. Actor Tim **Blake Nelson** is 60. Actor **Jeffrey Donovan** is 56. Actor **Nicky Katt** is 54. Actor **Coby Bell** is 49. Cellist **Perttu Kivilaakso** is 46. Actor **Austin O'Brien** is 43.





Angelonia and pentas bloom in a Bellaire garden.

Dylan Aguilar/Contributor

# Perennials for Mother’s Day

Seven plants provide colorful blooms perfect for Houston gardens

By Melissa Aguilar  
STAFF WRITER

If you’re looking for a gift for Mother’s Day, Houston-area nurseries are filled with ideas. It’s fun to pick out a plant or two, pot them up, or offer to plant them in Mom’s garden. For those whose mothers have passed, why not remember them with a favorite flower?

Here are seven perennials perfect for Houston. They will last not only this summer but for seasons to come.

**Salvia**  
Salvia adds a bit of drama to the garden. ‘Mystic Spires’ salvia has vibrant deep blue flowers. It’s a compact hybrid that’s easy to grow, heat tolerant and relatively pest- and disease-free. ‘Evolution’ salvia, aka mealecup sage, produces rich, violet-blue flowers. This compact plant has a long summer blooming season.

**Rudbeckia**  
Also called black-eyed Susan, this native perennial has golden yellow flowers with black centers. It produces large blooms up to 5 inches across that make great cut flowers. It’s drought tolerant and prefers full to part sun. It pairs well with purple salvia.



Melissa Aguilar/Staff

‘Jolt Pink Magic’ dianthus is a good selection for Houston because it is heat tolerant.



Erle Nickel

Rudbeckia is a summer staple in the Houston garden.



Melissa Aguilar/Staff

Salvia pairs well with rudbeckia in the garden.



Melanie Marshall

Plumbago is a medium-size perennial, evergreen shrub.



John Everett

Summer phlox is a heat-tolerant favorite perennial.



Jens Kalaen/Getty Images

Purple coneflower is a prolific summer bloomer.

Perennials continues on A13

# Birders in The Woodlands spot array of species during the Big Sit

By Gary Clark  
CORRESPONDENT

A group of 42 birders gathered under cloudy conditions along a wooden platform at the edge of Bear Creek Reservoir at Lakeside Park in The Woodlands to count the number of bird species they could see or hear for four hours on April 20.

The Woodlands birders were conducting an annual spring bird count called the Big Sit,

during which they gathered within a 50-foot-diameter circle to count birds. It was part of the Great Texas Birding Classic, which began April 15 and ends May 15.

Birders at the Big Sit had to remain within the prescribed circle, but they could count birds seen or heard both within and outside the circle. That allowed the birders to count numerous waterbirds, like great egrets, blue-winged teal

and even a limpkin, in the 60-acre shallow reservoir nestled within a wooded landscape.

Cathy Niemann, who has been birding for about 25 years, was among the birders. “I’ve probably seen about 20 species so far this morning, including a bald eagle that flew over the water,” she said.

Beginning birder Mark Caruthers missed seeing the bald eagle.

Nature continues on A13



Kathy Adams Clark/Contributor

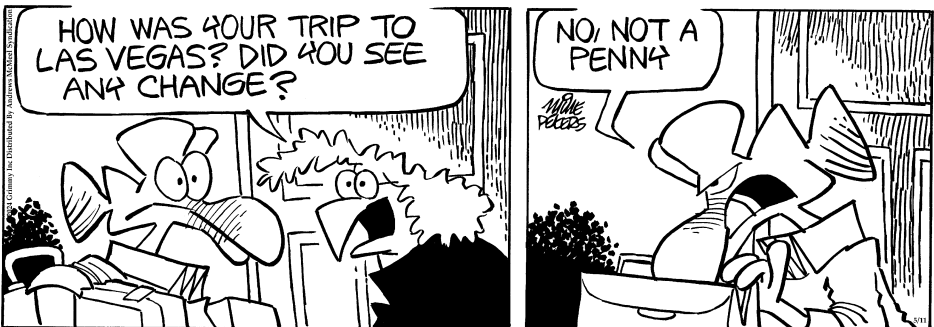
Birders taking part in the Big Sit spotted a roseate spoonbill.



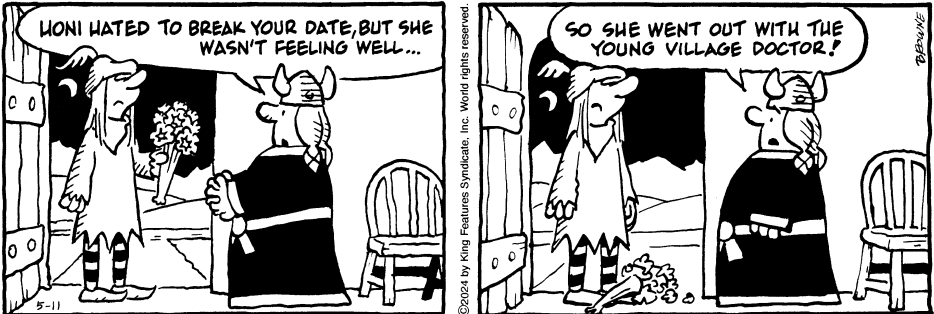
BIZARRO



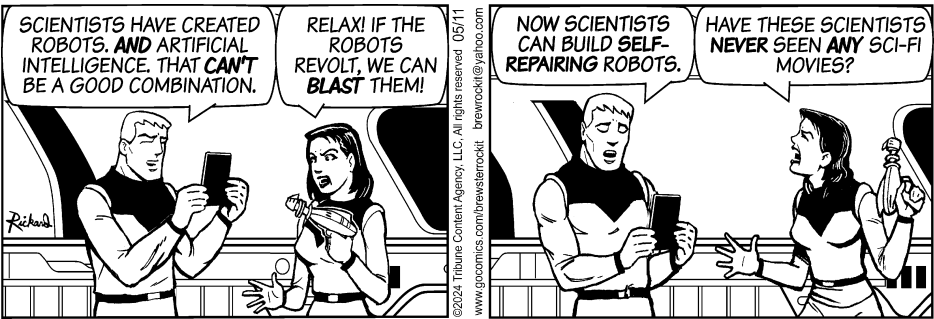
MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM



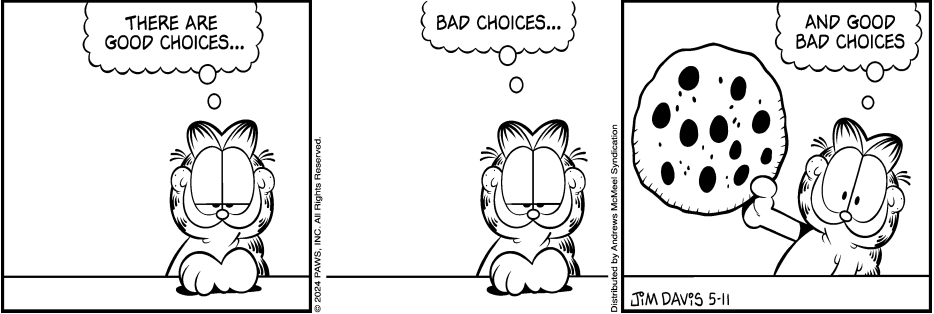
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



BREWSTER ROCKIT: SPACE GUY!



GARFIELD



SHERMAN'S LAGOON



**Dear Abby:** My husband had an affair. I found out after seeing a motel charge on our bank account. I asked, and he confessed that it was with an old school sweetheart. I asked how long it was going on. He said two years. He then called her and told her I knew. He told me he had told her if I ever found out, it was over for them.



Dear Abby

When I got on the phone with her, she said he was lying, and their affair had been going on for 20 years! He invited her to his mom's visitation when she passed. He invited her to other things as well. Now she no longer wants him because he is a liar, and he expects me to go back to the way it was.

I'm having so much trouble with this and all the things they did together. My husband didn't do anything with me I was going everywhere alone. People always asked where he was, and I always had to say "working."

The way things are now is not comfortable. He doesn't care. He just wants his way and to not let anyone else in the family know. It's been two years and it's still fresh in my mind. I don't know what to do. Counseling hasn't helped. He wants me to forget everything. I'm going crazy. How do you trust after that?

**Lost Faith In Missouri**

**Dear Lost Faith:** You are not crazy. You are married to a lying, narcissistic womanizer. For you to "forget everything"

might require a lobotomy. Are you willing to do that? I think it would benefit you to discuss this with a licensed mental health professional. TALK with your friends and your family as well. You need all the support they can give you. Your husband has plenty to be ashamed about.

A marriage without trust is no marriage at all. If you were to separate, your life would not be much different than it already is. It might even be better.

**Dear Abby:** My partner and I have miscarried five times over the past four years. We are heartbroken, defeated, overwhelmed and exhausted. We are struggling emotionally, physically and financially because of this journey. We do not feel any real emotional support from our families. They have been sympathetic, but after the initial "I'm sorry. I'm here if you need me. We're thinking about you," that's it. They expect us to attend all family gatherings, and we aren't always feeling up to it. I am angry with them for not understanding what we're going through. I have started distancing myself and skipping family functions. Is this wrong?

**Bowing Out In North Dakota**

**Dear Bowing Out:** No. Under the circumstances, skipping a family gathering in which you would be forced to socialize isn't a bad idea. If this causes hurt feelings, remind the host that grief has no set timetable, and you will celebrate with them again when you are up to it. Period.

*www.DearAbby.com  
Andrews McMeel Syndication*

**Dear Readers:** Try these hints to help with parking and avoid nicking or denting your car or garage:

To help you aim the car down the center, paint luminous stripes or put reflectors or brightly colored tape on the rear garage wall.

If you don't have good lighting in the garage, stick reflector tape on anything that seems to be in your way at night.



Heloise  
HINTS FROM HELOISE

Heloise

**Dear Heloise:** I have found that a good

way to eliminate garbage odor is to keep cat litter at the bottom of the trash can. It works for me. Have a good day!

**Ron, via email**

**Dear Heloise:** I saw your advice to put vinegar-soaked bread in the bottom of the trash can. Here's what I do:

After the trash has been emptied, I leave the lid off and let the sun shine on and in the can.

This will dry it and remove the odor. Do this every time you empty the trash, and it will not smell.

**Karen McVay, via email**

*Heloise@heloise.com  
King Features Syndicate*

ROYAL STARS

**Today's Birthday** (May 11). You are highly creative. You're also independent and like to march to your own drum. This year service is a theme for you, especially service to family. Therefore, it's important to take care of yourself.

**Moon Alert:** There are no restrictions to shopping or important decisions today. The Moon is in Cancer.

**Aries** (March 21-April 19) ★★ Tread carefully when dealing with family members today, because people are touchy and their feelings might be easily hurt. Meanwhile, Mars is in your sign, which makes you quite assertive! Tonight: Cocoon.

**Taurus** (April 20-May 20) ★★★ Do what you can to avoid arguments with daily contacts. Friction can easily arise today because the Moon is at odds with fiery Mars. Say no more! Tonight: Listen.

**Gemini** (May 21-June 20) ★★ Money squabbles might arise today. This friction could relate to cash flow. Maybe you don't want to lend something to someone. Tonight: Maintain your possessions.

**Cancer** (June 21-July 22) ★★ Be mindful today. The Moon is at odds with Mars, which is at the top of your chart. This is the classic configuration that will encourage arguments with authority figures. Tonight: You're fine.

**Leo** (July 23-Aug. 22) ★★★ You might feel vaguely disgruntled about something. In fact, you might feel downright grumpy. And yet, you're not sure why. Tonight: Solitude.

**Virgo** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) ★★ Be patient with friends today. Likewise, be patient

when dealing with members of clubs, organizations and conventions or conferences, because these are the areas where you might lose your cool. Tonight: Patience.

**Libra** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) ★★ It's important to know that you are high-viz today. You like harmony and peaceful surroundings. You don't want to have a whispered argument in an elevator. Tonight: Show respect.

**Scorpio** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) ★★★ Be patient with co-workers today. Likewise, if you run into snags or problems related to a pet, be patient with the people you encounter. Tonight: Learn.

**Sagittarius** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) ★★ Lovers' spats as well as sports disagreements might take place today. In addition, parents might be challenged by their kids with hissy fits and meltdowns. Tonight: Check your finances.

**Capricorn** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) ★★ Increased activity on the home front due to visiting relatives and guests, or renovations, or perhaps residential moves, will test your patience when dealing with people. Tonight: Cooperate.

**Aquarius** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) ★★★ You're an intelligent sign, which means you might challenge others today or feel challenged in daily conversations. Deal as skillfully as possible with these verbal encounters. Tonight: Work.

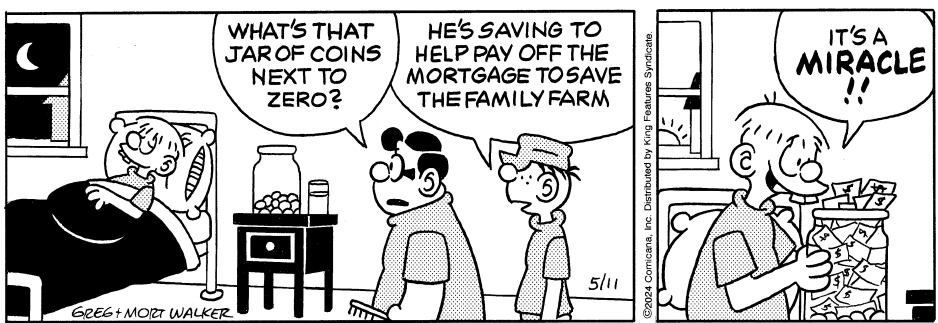
**Pisces** (Feb. 19-March 20) ★★★ Today is a testing day. You might have arguments with others about social occasions, sports events or dealing with your kids. Tonight: Socialize.

*King Features Syndicate*

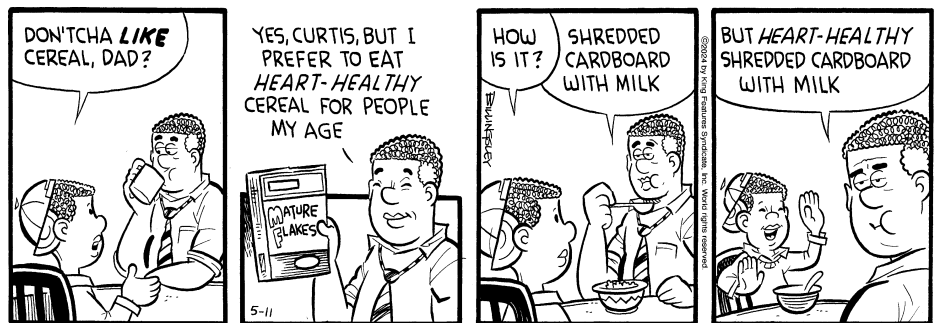
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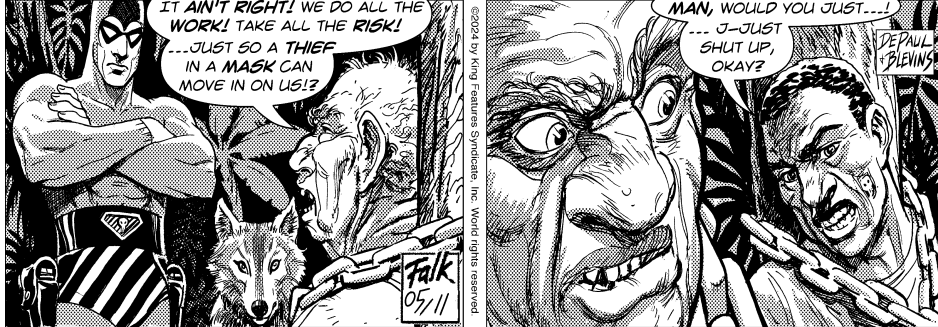
B.C.



REX MORGAN, M.D.



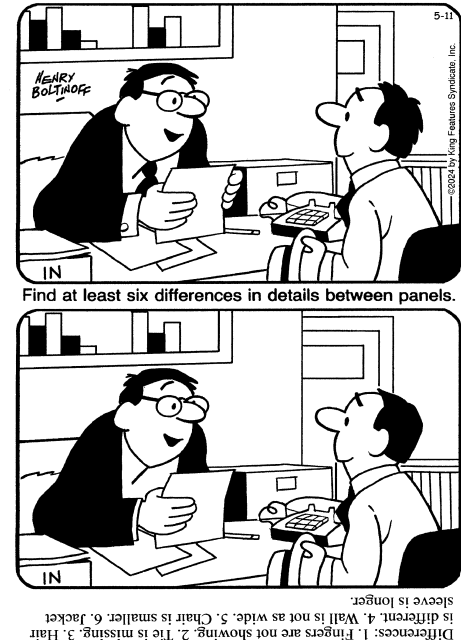
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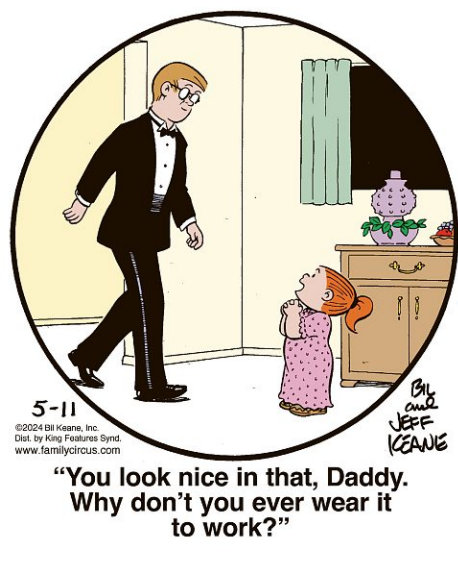


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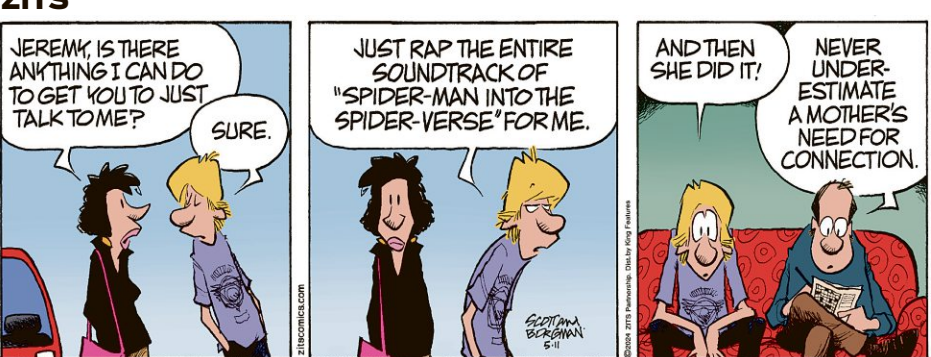
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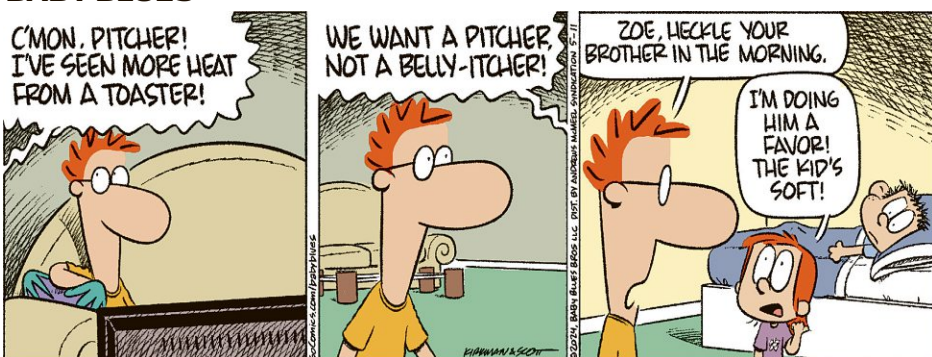
MUTTS



WALLACE THE BRAVE



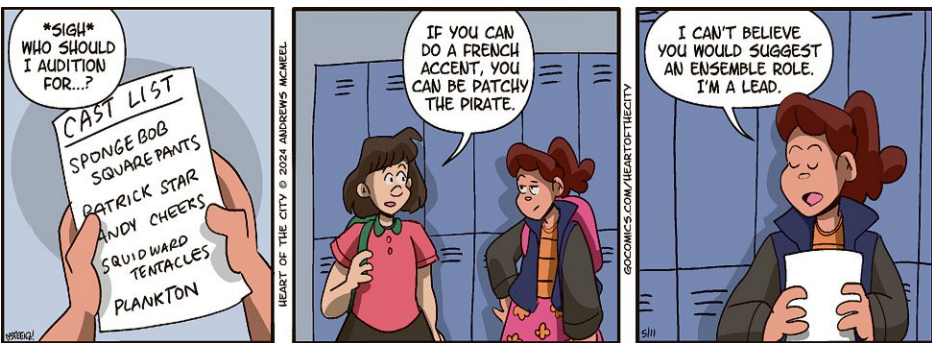
BABY BLUES



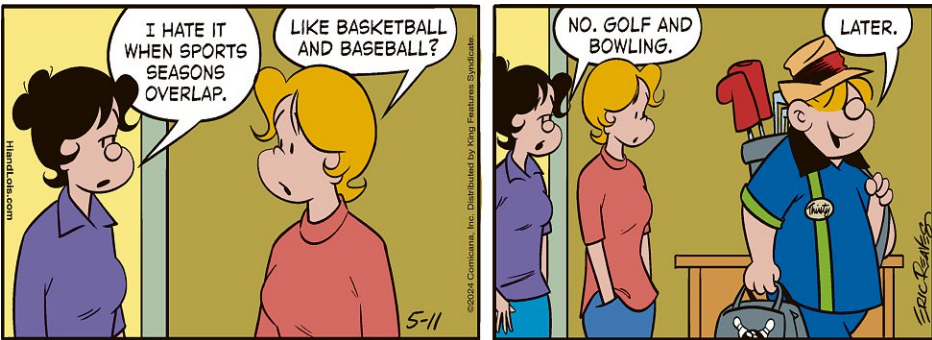
LUANN



HEART OF THE CITY



HI & LOIS



BALDO



RED & ROVER



SALLY FORTH



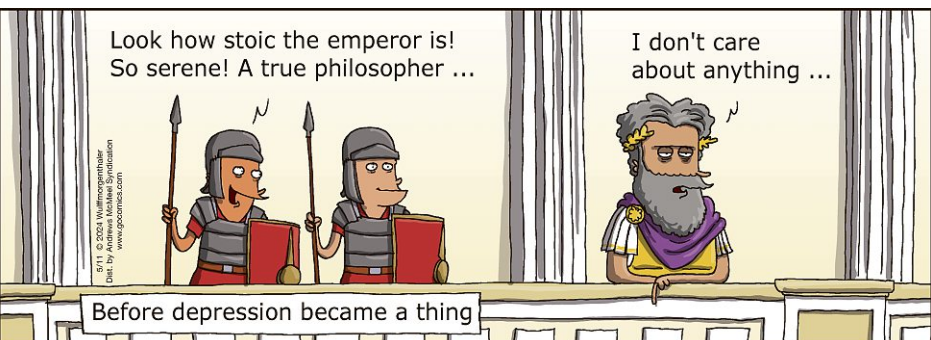
BREAKING CAT NEWS



RHYMES WITH ORANGE



WUMO



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F MINUS





# Keep cut flowers blooming past Mother’s Day

By Jessica Damiano  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

There’s nothing quite like receiving a fresh bouquet of cut flowers. They can cheer up a room, bring a bit of nature indoors and, if you’re lucky, release a heavenly fragrance.

But nothing kills that vibe quicker than stinky, slimy, wilted flowers poking out of a vase full of brown water.

Bacteria is one of the main causes of premature bouquet deaths. Its presence in vase water clogs stems and speeds up decay. Dehydration, either from a lack of water or a stem’s inability to absorb it, results in wilting. And exposure to ethylene gas exuded by neighboring decaying flowers or ripening fruit hastens aging.

But with proper preparation and care, you can greatly increase the lifespan of your bouquets.

First, I’d like to put an end to some bad advice that’s been floating around: Despite what you might have read, smashing the cut ends of flower stems does not increase water uptake. In fact, it would destroy a portion of the stems’ vascular system, responsible for transporting water through the stem. It would also expose fresh plant tissue to water, which accelerates rotting. Don’t do it.

If you are cutting flowers from your garden, do so in the morning when stems are the most hydrated, then immediately place them into a container of water.

Regardless of whether your bouquets are picked or purchased, these tips will greatly improve their longevity.

## How to extend the life of cut flowers

1. Always start with a clean vase.
2. Remove any leaves that land below the container’s water line, or they will introduce bacteria as they rot.
3. Using a clean, sharp knife or garden pruners, trim 1-2 inches off the bottom of each stem at a 45-degree angle. This will maximize the surface area, al-



Melinda Myers

**To help extend the life of your blooms, keep arrangements out of direct sunlight and away from drafts, such as open windows, ceiling fans, forced-air heaters and air conditioning units.**

lowing flowers to take up more water and preventing blockages that can result when stems lay flat against container bottoms. For woody stems, scrape a bit of bark away from the sides of angled cuts.

4. Add flower food. The little packet that comes with your bouquet contains sugar, citric acid and bleach, which lower the water’s pH and inhibits bacterial growth. Follow the dosing instructions on the packet; using too much can burn foliage and shorten the life of your flowers.

5. If you don’t have flower food, add ¼ cup of sugar-sweetened citrus soda or a tablespoon of vodka (or other clear spirit) as a booster. Soda helps keep water acidic and feeds flowers; vodka inhibits spoilage.

6. Keep flowers away from drafts, such as open windows, ceiling fans, forced-air heaters or air conditioning units, out of direct sunlight and away from fruit, which releases ethylene gas as it ripens.

7. Wash the vase, remove fad-



Sallee Ann Harrison/Associated Press

**Before placing cut flowers in a vase, cut the stems at a 45-degree angle and remove the lower leaves so they are not submerged in the water.**

ing flowers and leaves, trim another one-quarter to one-half inch off stem bottoms and replace flower food and booster

every other day.

8. There’s a reason florists store flowers in a refrigerated case. Just as it does food, refriger-

eration keeps flowers fresher longer. Tuck your bouquet into the fridge every night to slow the aging process.

## NATURE

From page A10

eagle while getting a kolache. “I’m waiting for it to come back,” he said, “But I think my favorite bird today was a roseate spoonbill that just flew by, and I thought it was a flamingo.”

Experienced birder Joanne “JoJo” Bradbury had counted 42 bird species by about 9 o’clock and had just seen an eastern kingbird when I talked with her. When asked about the most exciting bird of the morning, she said, “Yikes! I love them all, so it’s kind of hard to say, but maybe the limpkin, which was very unusual here a couple of years ago.”

The sounds of such songbirds as tufted titmice, Carolina chickadees and pine warblers resonated throughout the forested park near the zone of the Big Sit. Birders spotted those songbirds and heard and saw red-bellied woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers and pileated woodpeckers.

Birders also spotted Neotropical migratory birds such as eastern kingbirds, gray catbirds, chimney swifts and barn swallows. Earlier that morning, they counted barred owls and a great horned owl calling from the dense woods.

A young man asked me if the bird he’d just heard was a sum-



Photos by Kathy Adams Clark/Contributor

**Joy Klumpp, Laura Rumelhart, John Fu and other participants gather around Bear Creek Reservoir at Lakeside Park in The Woodlands for a bird count called the Big Sit.**



**The summer tanager is a secretive nester found in parks and neighborhoods.**

## BIRDING IN THE WOODLANDS

A Big Sit is among the tournaments in the annual Great Texas Birding Classic, coordinated by Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Forty-two birders counted 55 bird species during an early morning Big Sit beside Bear Branch Reservoir at Lakeside Park in The Woodlands.

The Woodlands Township Environmental Services Department organized and hosted the Big Sit, and the \$500 team entrance fee was paid by Visit The Woodlands at [visitthewoodlands.com](http://visitthewoodlands.com).

The San Jacinto River Authority operates and maintains the Bear Branch Reservoir System, including the dam.

Lakeside Park, 5001 W. Alden Bridge in The Woodlands, includes such activities as ball fields, basketball courts, a children’s playground, picnic tables, kayaking and fishing.

mer tanager. “Definitely,” I said, “and congratulations for knowing its song.”

*Email Gary Clark at [Texasbird-er@comcast.net](mailto:Texasbird-er@comcast.net). He is the author of "Book of Texas Birds," with photography by Kathy Adams Clark (Texas A&M University Press).*

## PERENNIALS

From page A10

### Angelonia

Angelonia, or summer snapdragon, is a South American native with small blooms of lavender, purple, pink, raspberry and white. The plant grows 18 to 22 inches tall and 1 foot wide and likes full sun. Angelonia is a tender perennial, meaning it is not frost-hardy. (I covered mine during the freeze, and it made

it through.)

### Coneflower

Coneflowers have raylike petals surrounding a conelike center. These prolific bloomers grow 2 to 4 feet tall. The eastern purple coneflower is a popular, drought-tolerant native that attracts butterflies and lasts through Houston’s summers. It prefers full sun to partial shade and well-draining fertile soil. New cultivars come in shades of reddish orange, yellow and white.

### Dianthus

Dianthus ‘Firewitch’ is a long-flowering evergreen ground cover that has bright pink single flowers with frilly petals. ‘Melody’ dianthus is a perennial with white or pink blooms for many months. ‘First Love,’ with white, light pink and dark pink blooms, is another great variety. ‘Jolt Pink Magic’ is cold and heat tolerant. Dianthus, which have an appealing clove scent, require good drainage and sun or part sun.

### Summer phlox

Summer phlox grows 3 to 4 feet tall with domed white, magenta or pink blooms that look great in mass plantings. It flowers from late spring to fall and likes full to part sun and good drainage. Butterflies love it.

### Plumbago

Plumbago is a 4-foot, mounding perennial shrub with sky blue or white blooms. Blue plumbago is a root-hardy perennial for the

Houston garden. For the most part, it’s pest-, disease- and deer-free. It likes full sun and is easy to grow in the garden or containers. Plumbago may die down in cold weather, but it should come back from the roots.

### Perennial garden tips

Prune spent flowers and tip prune your perennials to encourage a dense growth habit. Keep watered in well-draining soil. Use a bloom booster when flowers start to wane.



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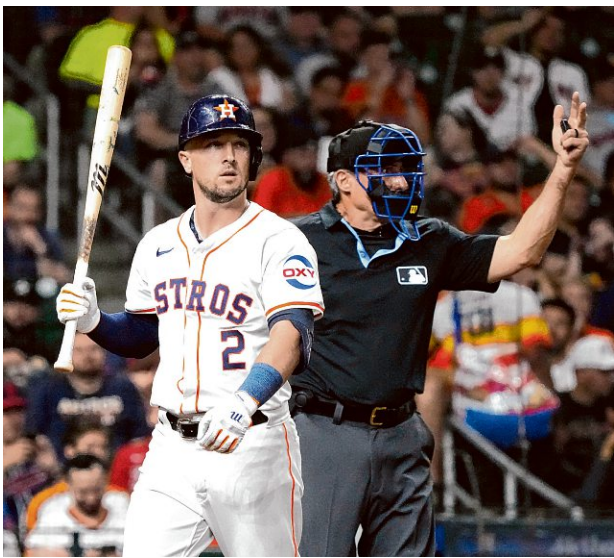
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Karen Warren/Staff photographer  
**Alex Bregman entered Friday with a .534 OPS, the lowest of his career through 34 games.**

ASTROS

# Bregman eyes turnaround

Two-time All-Star believes he can pull out of slow start

By Matt Kawahara  
STAFF WRITER

DETROIT — Alex Bregman is in a place both familiar and not. The Astros third baseman is known for slow starts to seasons yet is mired in a pronounced one, magnified by the struggles of the team around him. Nearly one-fourth of the way into the season, a true turnaround has yet to manifest for either. Bregman re-

mains metronomic in his pursuit of it, masking any frustrations its elusiveness might produce. “You want to perform well and play well and swing the bat well, and obviously you get a little frustrated when you know everything that you put in on a daily basis to this game,” Bregman said Thursday night. “But that’s the beauty of the game, too, at the same time, is it’s a game of failure.

I’ve dealt with slow starts before and come out on top every time. So, planning on doing that again.” By most metrics, this is the worst start of Bregman’s career. He entered Friday’s series opener at Detroit with a .534 OPS, his lowest through his first 34 games of any season. Just seven qualified hitters owned a lower OPS, while six had a lower slugging *Astros continues on B4*

UP NEXT

ASTROS AT TIGERS

**When/where:** 5:10 p.m. Saturday in Detroit.

**TV/radio:** SCHN; 790 AM, 93.3 FM (Spanish), 1010 AM (Spanish).

ASTROS UPDATES



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TEXANS

# Value of versatility

Lassiter says he’ll play anywhere he’s needed as he gets his first taste of rookie minicamp

By Jonathan M Alexander  
STAFF WRITER

It didn’t take Kamari Lassiter long to receive his first lesson in what it’s like to be a new Houstonian.

Before arriving to rookie minicamp Friday, the Georgia native, who went to high school in Tuscaloosa, Ala., checked the weather app on his phone, which showed it was 80 degrees outside.

But he failed to account for the humidity.

And not just any humidity. The Houston humidity.

“I walked out on the field, and I was practicing and I’m like, ‘This is not 80,’” Lassiter said Friday with a smile. “‘This 90 — something else.’ So, it’s a little bit different.”

It’s a lesson many rookies before him have learned playing on the outdoor fields at Houston Methodist Training Center, across from NRG Stadium. Coach DeMeco Ryans learned that lesson, too, in 2006 when he was a rookie linebacker. He said that’s the biggest hurdle new players have to overcome.

“Houston is still a little different with the heat, so once you get over that,” Ryans said. “I was telling one of the guys out there who may have been struggling a little bit. I said, ‘How long have you been playing football?’

“Since you were six, seven, eight years old. The game of football hasn’t changed. You’re still playing with the same guys you played with, just on a different level.”

In many ways, rookie minicamp is like the first day at a new school. Nine draft picks joined several undrafted free agents and a few tryout players Friday. They’ll have another practice Saturday, which will be closed to the media. Many of these players just arrived in Houston and are meeting each other for the first time.

“I’m in a hotel and I’m here all day,” second-round pick Blake Fisher said. “Like I don’t even know my way around here yet. Still trying to get used to everything, man.”

Fisher and third-round pick Calen Bullock were the only *Texans continues on B3*



Brett Coomer/Staff photographer  
**Texans rookie Kamari Lassiter weathered the Houston humidity during rookie minicamp at Houston Methodist Training Center.**

WNBA

# Toronto lands expansion team for 2026

Reports say league will look north as Rockets owner pitches Houston

By Matt Young  
STAFF WRITER

The WNBA wants to capitalize on its surge in popularity by expanding to 16 teams by 2028. The league will move to 13 next summer when San Francisco adds a team, and, ac-

cording to multiple reports Friday, Toronto will be No. 14 when it gets an expansion team in 2026.

Houston has been without WNBA representation since the Comets, who won the league’s first four championships from 1997-2000, disbanded in December

2008.

Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta has spoken publicly about his desire to bring both a WNBA and an NHL team to Toyota Center.

“I feel like WNBA expansion is going to always work better and has a better chance of success in a city like Houston, where the Rockets are one of the strong teams from a financial standpoint,” Fertitta

told the Houston Chronicle Editorial Board in April. “I think that I would probably be the natural owner.”

When discussing expansion, WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert has yet to mention Houston as a possibility, instead bringing up cities such as Philadelphia, Portland, Denver, Charlotte and Nashville.

It was long thought Port- *WNBA continues on B2*



Adam Hunger/Associated Press  
**Commissioner Cathy Engelbert has not mentioned Houston as a possible site for WNBA expansion.**



PRO BASKETBALL

MAVERICKS 119, THUNDER 110 THURSDAY’S GAME

Snub fuels Doncic’s rebound

By Mike Curtis  
DALLAS MORNING NEWS

OKLAHOMA CITY — Luka Doncic described it as one of the most difficult games of his career.

The Mavericks desperately needed him to channel an MVP-like performance one night after the results of the prestigious award were revealed. Despite a historic season, he finished a distant third in the race, while his friend in the Mile High City accepted the honor for the third time in four seasons.

Doncic, playing through pain in both of his legs and constant heckling from a hostile fanbase, delivered on his team’s needs to help Dallas even its second round series while simultaneously handing the Oklahoma City Thunder their first loss of the playoffs.

Faint chants of “Luka sucks” broke out through Paycom Center midway through the fourth quarter as fans hurled insults toward Doncic. He silenced the crowd on the Mavericks’ next possession. Doncic carefully used a screen to get to his spot at the free-throw line before executing a turnaround fadeaway off one leg that looked eerily familiar to the signature shot of Dirk Nowitzki.

“Luka what?” Doncic screamed toward the crowd as he ran back on defense.

It was the defining moment of Thursday’s Game 2 that punctuated a defiant performance. A display that Doncic refused to concede to injury. A game in which he responded to the bevy of negative remarks thrown his way. And a performance that challenged the majority of MVP voters who didn’t consider his electric regular season enough.

Still, Doncic displayed the shot-making of an MVP on Tuesday, finishing with 29 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists



Kyle Phillips/Associated Press

**Luka Doncic played through some bruising contact to score 29 points to go with 10 rebounds and seven assists in the Mavericks’ win Thursday over the Thunder.**

PLAYOFF RESULTS/SCHEDULE

Western Conference
Second round
<b>No. 1 Oklahoma City 1, No. 5 Dallas 1</b>
Game 1: Oklahoma City 117, Dallas 95
Game 2: Dallas 119, Oklahoma City 110
Game 3: at Dallas, 2:30 p.m. Saturday (ABC)
Game 4: at Dallas, 8:30 p.m. Monday (TNT)
Game 5: at Oklahoma City, 8:30 p.m. Wednesday (TNT)
Game 6*: at Dallas, 7:30 p.m. May 18 (ESPN)
Game 7*: at Oklahoma City, 7:30 p.m. May 20 (TNT)
<b>No. 3 Minnesota 2, No. 2 Denver 0</b>
Game 1: Minnesota 106, Denver 99
Game 2: Minnesota 106, Denver 80
Game 3: at Minnesota, late
Game 4: at Minnesota, 7 p.m. Sunday (TNT)
Game 5*: at Denver, TBA Tuesday (TNT)
Game 6*: at Minnesota, 7:30 p.m. Thursday (ESPN)
Game 7*: at Denver, TBA May 19

Eastern Conference
Second round
<b>No. 1 Boston 1, No. 4 Cleveland 1</b>
Game 1: Boston 120, Cleveland 95
Game 2: Cavaliers 118, Boston 94
Game 3: at Cleveland, 7:30 p.m. Saturday (ABC)
Game 4: at Cleveland, 6 p.m. Monday (TNT)
Game 5: at Boston, 6 p.m. Wednesday (TNT)
Game 6*: at Cleveland, TBA Friday (ESPN)
Game 7*: at Boston, Noon May 19
<b>No. 2 New York 2, No. 6 Indiana 0</b>
Game 1: New York 121, Indiana 117
Game 2: New York 120, Indiana 121
Game 3: at Indiana, late
Game 4: at Indiana, 2:30 p.m. Sunday (ABC)
Game 5*: at New York, 7 p.m. Tuesday (TNT)
Game 6*: at Indiana, TBA Friday (ESPN)
Game 7*: at New York, TBA May 19

to help propel Dallas to a 119-110 victory in enemy territory.

After the game, Doncic spoke briefly to the Dallas Morning News about the results of the Most Valuable Player award — which was awarded to Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic.

“Obviously, I was hoping to win it,” Doncic told the News. “I kind of knew in the end I probably wasn’t going to win it, but

hopefully one day I can win it.”

Doncic became the first player in NBA history to average at least 33 points, nine rebounds and nine assists in a season. After an uncharacteristic Game 1 with 19 points, the Mavericks needed their superstar to have a bounce-back game.

Doncic winced throughout the game due to a nagging right knee sprain and an apparent soreness in his

lower left leg, which oozed blood through his white protective sleeve. He wore ice and pads on both legs while on the bench.

Still, Doncic had his most productive shooting night of the postseason. He drilled four of his five 3-pointers in the first 12 minutes of the game. Doncic pointed to a lack of effort as the cause of Tuesday’s loss, and he made up for it with his activity on the boards. He grabbed six of his 10 rebounds in the first quarter.

He collided with Cason Wallace in the fourth quarter and hobbled back to the bench. After recovering during a timeout, Doncic drilled his fifth 3-pointer of the night, another display of resilience through the pain.

“He was Luka,” Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said. “He was aggressive. He was taking the shots that presented themselves. He was attacking early. He wasn’t settling.”

CAVALIERS 118, CELTICS 94 THURSDAY’S GAME

Familiar issues arise for Boston in loss

By Kyle Hightower  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON — The Celtics are once again following a troubling script in the second round of the playoffs.

Boston opened its first-round series against Miami with a dominating Game 1 win and followed it up with a lackluster effort in Game 2.

That pattern repeated itself during the Celtics’ 118-94 Game 2 loss to the Cavaliers on Thursday night.

Almost everything Boston did well in a 25-point victory in Game 1 — knock down 3-pointers, defend and rebound — was flipped by the Cavaliers in Game 2.

The Cavs held advantages in 3-point shooting (plus-15 points), points in the paint (60-34), rebounds (44-31) and even fast-break points (14-8).

Most troubling, though, was the Celtics’ performance from beyond the arc.

Boston went 8-of-35 shooting from the 3-point line (22.9%), including 2-of-18 in the second half. Cleveland finished 13-of-28 (46.4%). Teams are now 103-6 this season when holding a plus-20 percentage points advantage from 3.

“I think it was just a bad game,” Celtics forward Jaylen Brown said. “Obviously, we didn’t shoot the ball well tonight. But defensively that was unacceptable. ... So we didn’t help ourselves



Steven Senne/Associated Press

**The Cavaliers’ Donovan Mitchell, left, scored 29 points in Cleveland’s 118-94 victory over Boston.**

tonight.”

Brown and fellow All-Star Jayson Tatum both shot 7-of-17 from the field, scoring 19 and 25 points, respectively.

The poor 3-point shooting was eerily reminiscent of the last time Cleveland won a game in Boston in regulation — the Cavs’ Game 7 win in the 2018 conference finals. Boston went just 7-of-39 from the 3-point line in that game.

“I definitely think there were times when we went through tough stretches defensively and if affected our offense,” Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said.

As bad as the night as the Celtics had, they were very much in the game entering

the second half.

The score was knotted at 54-all at halftime. Then Cleveland went to work in the third quarter, getting 16 points from Donovan Mitchell and going 7-of-10 from the 3-point line. It helped the Cavaliers outscore the Celtics 36-24 for the period.

Cleveland started the fourth quarter on a 12-5 run to push its lead to 102-83 with less than nine minutes to play.

“We expected them to play better and they did,” Celtics center Al Horford said. “They were the better team tonight. You have to give them credit. They responded and we didn’t.”

Brown said he expected

the film review of the game to be revealing on a night in which he said the Cavs were more assertive across the board. That will almost certainly include a long look at how they can better contain center Evan Mobley.

Mobley continued to fill in for Cleveland center Jarrett Allen, who sat out Game 2 and his missed five consecutive games as he continues to deal with bruised ribs he sustained in Round 1 against Orlando.

Mobley came out more aggressive on the inside early with Boston’s Kristaps Porzingis remaining sidelined with a strained right calf.

Mobley had 11 points in the first quarter. It included eight of Cleveland’s 22 points in the paint and helped the Cavs take a 30-24 lead into the second. He finished with 19 points and 10 rebounds — his third straight double-double.

Then there’s Mitchell, who finished with 29 points and eight assists after scoring 33 points in Game 1.

Brown said any hopes of bouncing back in Game 3 on Saturday must also start with doing a better job containing him.

“He made some tough shots tonight. Some tough contested 3s, we have to be up. He’s a basketball player. We’ve got to have a little more alertness to him,” Brown said. “We just have to keep making it tough.”

WNBA

Bets pouring in for Clark, Fever

By Mark Anderson  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — The betting public is throwing money on Caitlin Clark and the Indiana Fever as the WNBA prepares to open one of the more-anticipated seasons in league history.

A Fever championship would have bookmakers sweating. They are the biggest liability at BetMGM Sportsbook, with nearly half the betting tickets on the Fever, who open the season Tuesday at the Connecticut Sun.

Indiana is second in money wagered at 29%, behind the two-time defending champion Las Vegas Aces at 41.5%, also a popular public team that additionally draws action from many professional bettors.

The heavy money on the Fever caused them to go from +2500 to win the championship to +1800. Las Vegas edged from a +115 favorite to even money.

“Caitlin Clark drove record handle on the women’s NCAA Tournament, and the interest from bettors has carried over to the WNBA,” BetMGM Sportsbook trading manager Seamus Magee said. “We expect Fever games to be the most bet throughout the season and for Clark’s player props to be popular with bettors.”

The story is much the same at Caesars Sportsbook.

Indiana, which went 13-27 last season and put the Fever in position to land Clark with the No. 1 overall pick, is tied with the Sun at Caesars with the fourth-best odds at 15-1.

The Aces at +100, last year’s runner-up New York Liberty at +240 and

the Seattle Storm at +800 are favored to win the title.

“I think we’ve definitely seen an increase in the handle at this time last year,” Caesars basketball oddsmaker David Lieberman said. “It makes sense with the hype around (Clark).”

That buzz also has pushed Clark into the group of favorites to win the MVP award. She has received 68% of the wagers at BetMGM Sportsbook to receive the league’s top individual honor, which at +1000 it’s a strong value bet.

Las Vegas’ A’ja Wilson of Las Vegas at +120 and New York’s Breanna Stewart at +550 are the two favorites. Both are two-time winners, with Stewart beating out Wilson and the Sun’s Alyssa Thomas last season in a close vote. Wilson used that perceived snub as fuel in last year’s WNBA playoffs.

Clark also is third in the MVP odds at Caesars at +850, behind Wilson of Las Vegas at +100 and Stewart at +550.

There is almost no betting value on Clark to win Rookie of the Year. She is -750 at BetMGM Sportsbook, which explains why 22% of the wagers have gone to her and the Chicago Sky’s Angel Reese has garnered 43% of the action with a much higher payoff at +3000.

“I would argue there’s no value betting the Fever or Caitlin Clark MVP right now,” Lieberman said. “The odds are probably a little lower than they should be. It’s probably mostly public action there. I don’t think there are any sharps (pros) lining up to bet something that’s obviously a little lower than it should be at this point.”



Darron Cummings/Associated Press

**Caitlin Clark’s arrival in Indiana has fueled a run on bets for the Fever to win the WNBA championship.**

WNBA

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land was a lock for expansion, however Engelbert said in November those plans had been “deferred” as concerns arose around plans to renovate Portland’s Moda Center, which also hosts the Trail Blazers. Engelbert called Portland “an ideal destination for a WNBA franchise” but said the league would hold off “until the timing and scope of arena improvements are settled.”

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which broke the latest expansion news, reports that an official announcement on Toronto will come on May 23 when billionaire Larry Tanenbaum — who is chairman of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, which owns the Raptors and Maple Leafs — is introduced as the team’s primary owner.

Toronto showed it was ready for the WNBA when it sold out Scotiabank Arena with a crowd of 19,800 fans for a preseason game between the Chicago Sky and Minnesota Lynx last year.

There has been no word on the expansion fee Tanenbaum will pay to enter the WNBA, but it cost the Golden State Warriors \$50 million to secure San Francisco’s team for 2025. That’s a long way from where the league was when the Comets folded. Former Rockets owner Leslie Alexander sold the Comets to furniture entrepreneur Hilton Koch for \$10 million in 2007.

At the franchise’s pinnacle, the Comets — led by Basketball Hall of Famers Cynthia Cooper, Sheryl Swoopes and Tina Thompson — averaged a WNBA-high 11,442 fans per game from 1997-2002. That had tailed off to less than 8,000 fans per game in each of Alexander’s final two years of ownership. Under Koch, the Comets moved out of Toyota Center after one season and into Reliant Arena, where they averaged just 6,585 fans in their final year.

Koch put the team up for sale in 2008, reportedly looking to recoup his \$10 million buying price, but when he couldn’t find a buyer, the league took over management of the team and folded the franchise in December of 2008.



NFL

BEARS



Michael Reaves/Getty Images

Bears coach Matt Eberflus didn't waste any time naming No. 1 overall pick Caleb Williams, the 2022 Heisman Trophy winner out of Southern California, the starting quarterback going into the 2024 season.

No. 1 pick Williams to start

By Andrew Seligman  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Caleb Williams is the Chicago Bears' starting quarterback. Just in case there was a shred of doubt the No. 1 overall draft pick is the team's No. 1 QB, coach Matt Eberflus erased it on Friday.

"No conversation. He's the starter," he said.

Eberflus' comment was hardly a surprise considering the Bears have been all in on Williams since the early stages of the draft process. They made their intentions clear when they traded Justin Fields to Pittsburgh in March.

Chicago brought in veteran quarterbacks Mike Glennon and Andy Dalton when they drafted Mitchell Trubisky and Justin Fields with high picks in recent years, thinking the rookies would watch from the sideline in a sort of red-shirt season. The plan blew up in both cases, with Glennon getting benched for poor play and Dalton getting hurt. But the Bears were under a different regime at the time, with former general manager Ryan Pace and coach Matt Nagy.

The other quarterbacks currently on the Bears' roster are Tyson

Bagent and undrafted rookie Austin Reed.

Williams, the 2022 Heisman Trophy winner, is widely viewed as a generational talent. The Bears are banking on him to become the sort of franchise quarterback Chicago has craved for decades.

Williams seems to be embracing his new surroundings, whether he's sitting courtside at a Chicago Sky preseason game, getting a rousing ovation at Wrigley Field or doing regular-guy stuff like shopping at Target.

"You want to find balance within all of this," Williams said Friday. "That's really important. And then the other part of it, just getting around. Going to Target, that was for all of the installs and all the small things that I needed. And I just thought it was a funny picture, the way I was walking. It's all of it. All of it goes together to enjoy and find a good balance, but also, in a sense, get acclimated to the area of the land and things like that."

Williams put up huge numbers in college, with 93 touchdown passes and 14 interceptions during three seasons at Oklahoma and Southern California.

He followed coach Lincoln Riley from Norman to Los Angeles and threw

for 72 TDs and just 10 interceptions in two years with the Trojans.

The Bears have made just three playoff appearances since the 2006 team advanced to the Super Bowl. They are 10-24 in two seasons under general manager Ryan Poles and Eberflus. But they see themselves as a play-off contender after going from three wins in 2022 to finishing 7-10 last season.

That largely hinges on Williams.

"You can really tell he's comfortable in his own skin and he is who he is," Eberflus said.

"His personality starts. His light comes out from the inside. You can certainly feel that energy. He's a one-plus-one-equals-three guy. He's an enhancer. He's a guy that brings out the best in people. You can certainly feel that in him within five minutes of meeting him."

Williams got a bit of a leg up in learning the basics of offensive coordinator Shane Waldron's system through his work with personal QB coach Will Hewlett.

Williams checked all the boxes for Chicago during the pre-draft process. He has continued to make a good impression on the Bears since they drafted him, whether he's working out with teammates or taking in Cubs

or Sky games with them.

"The community has been rallying behind us, which we appreciate and we look to be able to pay that respect back with our on-the-field contributions," said receiver Rome Odunze, the No. 9 overall pick.

"It's been awesome. Chicago has welcomed us with welcoming arms. We're doing well."

Odunze, an All-American at Washington, said it's "hard to imagine a better situation" getting to grow with a rookie quarterback. It doesn't hurt him or Williams, either, that the Bears have two veteran playmaking receivers in DJ Moore and six-time Pro Bowler Keenan Allen.

"Right now I'm following all the vets, I'm following all the coaches. I'm listening, having both ears open and my mouth shut," Williams said.

"Just kind of sitting back listening and when I get to the point of when I learn everything, when I learn the ways of how we do it with the culture, the playbook, and what the offensive line, the receivers are all doing, running backs and tight ends and things like that — then you can start taking the lead. Then you can start taking the helms of all of it and take the next steps."

NOTEBOOK

Ex-LSU stars call off wager

WIRE REPORTS

ASHBURN, Va. — Jayden Daniels feels his biggest challenge after being drafted second by the Washington Commanders to become their franchise quarterback is learning how to be a pro.

He learned an important lesson before throwing his first NFL pass.

Daniels, the 2023 Heisman Trophy winner, and former LSU teammate Malik Nabers, now a receiver with the division-rival New York Giants taken four picks later, said Friday they called off their \$10,000 bet over who would be offensive rookie of the year.

"We were uneducated on the gambling policy in the NFL," Daniels said after the first practice of the Commanders' rookie minicamp.

Word of the wager emerged from recent podcast appearances the players made. Nabers first mentioned it, then Daniels — after saying Nabers wasn't supposed to talk about it — confirmed the financial ramifications.

With so much scrutiny over gambling, including several players being suspended in recent years for violating league policy, betting on performance, even privately without a sportsbook involved, could have been considered a violation.

"I'm educated now that I got here about sports betting and gambling," Nabers said after Giants rookie minicamp in East Rutherford, N.J. "We're calling the bet off. There is no bet now. It was just another brother pushing another brother to try to get to success. That's all it was."

Chicago's Caleb Williams, the No. 1 pick, is favored to win offensive rookie of the year honors, according to BetMGM Sportsbook, with Daniels as the 6-1 second choice and Nabers fifth at 11-1.

"We're just focused on being the best players for our respective teams," Daniels said.

It's possible Daniels' wallet is already a little lighter after reaching an agreement with punter

Tress Way, Washington's longest-tenured player, to wear the same No. 5 he had at LSU and previously at Arizona State. Daniels would not reveal the terms of the deal but thanked Way for working with him to get it done.

"Obviously it was very hard for him, sentimental value to him and me," Daniels said. The QB took the field in a yellow practice version of that jersey Friday along with seven of the other eight Commanders draft picks, several rookie free agents and players on tryouts. The first of their three second-round selections, defensive tackle Jer'Zhan "Johnny" Newton, did not take part and observed with a boot on his surgically repaired left foot.

Nabers, the sixth pick in the draft last month, signed a four-year, \$29.1 million deal that includes an \$18 million signing bonus Friday.

Callahan thrilled to join son's staff

Bill Callahan never thought he'd work for his son in the NFL. Not at his age and after all his years in the league.

As Brian Callahan interviewed for head coaching jobs in 2023, father and son talked at length about the idea, leaving Bill convinced he wouldn't join his son if and when a team hired him.

Then the Tennessee Titans hired Brian in January. With Cleveland's permission, Bill Callahan said he felt compelled to join his son.

"It really was a kind of a no-brainer in that regard," said Bill, who turns 68 in July. "So it's family, and I want to see him succeed. Just like any parent wants to see their children succeed. So, it's rare. It's unique. And so, oh yeah I'm fired up about it."

Brian became just the seventh son to follow his father as a non-interim head coach in the NFL, joining Wade and the late Bum Phillips, the Jim Moras, Dick and Mike Nolan, Don and Dave Shula, the late Buddy and Rex Ryan and Mike and Kyle Shanahan.

TEXANS

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drafted rookies who had not signed contracts as of Friday.

On May 20, organized team activities (OTAs) begin, when the rookies can join the veterans. But for now, it was back to the basics.

Most of Friday's practice consisted of stretching, individual drills and learning basic terminology.

It's an opportunity for many of these rookies to figure out where they fit in.

That's the mindset Lassiter is taking. When the Texans selected him No. 42 overall in April's draft out of Georgia, cornerback Derek Stingley Jr. sent him a text. He said, "Let's get to work," Lassiter relayed.

The Texans front office and coaching staff saw a 5-11½ cornerback who was versatile and could play outside and in the slot. Lassiter is a cornerback, who isn't afraid to tackle, and is willing to do whatever for the team.

"I play football," he



Brett Coomer/Staff photographer

Texans defensive backs Calen Bullock, front, and Kamari Lassiter run drills during rookie minicamp at Houston Methodist Training Center. The practice consisted of drills, stretching and learning terminology.

said. "I play defense wherever they put me at. It doesn't matter. I'm going to do it to the best of my ability."

At Georgia, Lassiter was a star. He played

some nickel as a freshman, then started as an outside corner in his final two years, where he allowed the fewest passing yards, and second-fewest completion percentage of

any FBS cornerback in the country.

He even excelled when going up against some of the top receivers in college football. He shut down Malik Nabers and Xavier

Legette.

The one knock against him was his 40-yard dash time. He was clocked at 4.61 at Georgia's pro day.

But Lassiter's versatility is what intrigued

Ryans. And as of now, it's unclear which position he will play.

Though the Texans signed multiple players in free agency like C.J. Henderson, Jeff Okudah, and Myles Bryant in the slot, the competition is still open at those spots.

"With Kamari — again, he's a very sharp young man," Ryans said. "He can play inside and he can play outside. He did that at Georgia, and whatever that day calls for, we'll put him out at corner, we'll put him out at nickel, and we'll see what happens."

Lassiter said he's looking forward to that. His only goal is to do whatever the team needs him to do.

He said he learned that at an early age.

When he woke up this morning, just before checking the weather on his phone, he said he had his 'wow' moment. It hit him. He was finally achieving his dream.

"I was getting some water, and I was like, 'Dang, I'm really playing for the Houston Texans,'" he said. "This was my dream. I'm getting to play football at the highest level — it's a great feeling."



ASTROS

Alvarez, Singleton go big in the Bronx

By Matt Kawahara  
STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK — Yordan Alvarez swung and produced the kind of contact few hitters can create. The baseball careened off his bat at 116.8 mph and into the second deck in Yankee Stadium's right field, the second-hardest hit home run of Alvarez's major-league career. The Astros slugger turned and stared back at his dugout before starting his trot to first base.

Minutes later, Alvarez stood in the dugout wearing a different expression — one that conveyed wonder.

Two batters after Alvarez, Jon Singleton launched a home run that struck the facing of the third deck in right field, territory reserved for the most mammoth of blasts. Singleton dropped his bat and tilted his head, admiring its flight. Cameras captured Alvarez's reaction, eyes wide and mouth open, destined for memes and an apt distillation of what had just occurred.

Two swings seemed to unleash the frustrations of a stalled team and started it toward a victory it all but needed to salvage. Six previous matchups with the Yankees brought defeat by myriad ways, blown leads and blowouts resulting in the same end. In the teams' final regular-season meeting Thursday, the Astros claimed a 4-3 win, kick-started by a slugger mired in a slump and another trying to seize an opportunity.

Alvarez arrived for his first at-bat against Marcus Stroman hitting .169 over his last 20 games. Two of his three home runs in that span came in one game in Mexico City. He had gone hitless in five at-bats Wednesday, flying out to end the game. Afterward, Alvarez said through an interpreter he is "not feeling great at the plate right now. Obviously, I'm in the middle of a slump and things aren't going well."

Stroman dispatched his first two batters on four pitches. He built an 0-2 count against Alvarez but



Sarah Stier/Getty Images

**Astros slugger Yordan Alvarez went 2-for-5 in Thursday's 4-3 win over the Yankees with a solo home run in the first inning that left his bat at 116.8 mph and was his hardest-hit ball this season.**

could not put him away. Alvarez worked a full count. Stroman threw a low cutter for the eighth pitch of the at-bat. Alvarez crushed it. The home run was his hardest-hit ball in play this season and the fourth-hardest of his career, perhaps the type of swing that can ignite him.

"It was a big boost," manager Joe Espada said, "but more for him. Because I know he's been working on some things. And when he hit, he looked in the dugout like saying, 'Hey, I'm coming.' And we know he's coming. And we can't wait for him to get here."

Jeremy Peña worked a walk from a 1-2 count. It brought up Singleton, who bludgeoned a 91 mph sinker that Stroman left in the middle of the zone.

"Stroman's a good pitcher, typically he stays out of the middle part of the plate, so that's something you know and have to be very cautious (about) when you go up there," Singleton said. "But he made a pitch down the middle and that's all I could hope for."

The ball left Singleton's

bat at 115.4 mph and flew an estimated 442 feet. Alvarez's and Singleton's blasts were the Astros' two hardest-hit balls in play this year. Houston became the first team with two 115 mph-plus home runs in one inning in the Statcast era, dating to 2015, according to MLB's Sarah Langs.

Peña, leaving first base, said he did not track the ball but did see Singleton drop his bat.

"Once he pimps it, you know it's far," Peña said.

"That's about as well as I can hit a ball, yeah," Singleton said.

Singleton has started Houston's last nine games at first base since José Abreu was optioned to the team's minor-league complex. He is 7-for-29 with four home runs and 10 RBIs in that stretch, serious production compared to what the Astros had received at first base previously. Espada elevated Singleton to the fifth spot in his lineup for the final two games in New York, with Alex Bregman shifted down to sixth.

"I haven't seen many

balls hit like that in this ballpark," said Espada, who spent three seasons coaching third base for the Yankees. "But again, Jon has been playing his butt off. He's taking the opportunity that we've given him and he's making the best out of it."

An early lead promised little. Kyle Tucker struck first-inning home runs in this series' first two games, only for New York to negate them with scoring outbursts. The Yankees struck six homers and totaled 19 runs across those two wins. Ronel Blanco, continuing his turn as the steadiest constant in Houston's rotation, quelled their potential response in the bottom of the first.

Blanco hasn't been immune to the pitching staff's first-inning problems. He had been scored upon in the first inning in three of his previous four starts. His first two hitters reached base Thursday, bringing Aaron Judge to the plate. Blanco won a seven-pitch at-bat, getting Judge to swing over a slider. His next pitch, a change-

up, induced a double-play ground ball from Alex Verdugo.

Blanco threw his slider just 20.8% of the time in his first six starts, using his changeup more to off-set his four-seam fastball. Thursday, he threw 43 sliders on 107 pitches. He threw 36 changeups, requiring the Yankees to beat something other than his fastball. They totaled four hits against him, the lone damage a two-run homer by Anthony Volpe on a 330-foot fly ball that cleared the right-field wall.

"Everyone is aware of his changeup," Espada said. "So, he's got to mix all his pitches, and he did today. His fastball up in the zone, the slider away to some tough righties that have a tough time handling that slider, and he executed some good changeups. His mix today was excellent."

Judge's 473-foot blast off Ryan Pressly in the eighth inning accelerated the entrance of Josh Hader, who was asked to record more than three outs for a second time this season. Hader notched four to record

his fourth save and rebound from his previous outing, in which he allowed a decisive home run to the Mariners' Cal Raleigh after inheriting a tied game in the ninth.

Hader cited shaky slider command as an early-season issue but said the pitch is sharper now, allowing him to sequence better. Raleigh hit a mistake 0-2 fastball in Houston. Hader mostly stayed around the edges of the zone Thursday, save for the sinker that Gleyber Torres hit for a leadoff single in the ninth.

Volpe gave a tough final at-bat, seeing eight pitches after falling behind 0-2. After spinning two sliders below the zone, Hader elevated his final five pitches to Volpe, who swung through a 98 mph fastball at the top of the zone to end it.

"That's where I play best with my fastball — if I can get it right at the top of the zone, that's going to be good for me," Hader said. "Obviously, when you get guys that are in attack mode and they're sitting heater, when you make that error like the Raleigh one, you're going to give them an opportunity to drop the head. ... But when you have the slider, you're able to mix and keep them off-balance."

"I was able to miss up when I needed to. For instance, the Volpe at-bat, attacking up, attacking in, kind of brushing back, to where I can then go back up-middle, instead of missing down and giving him a chance to drop the head on it."

Thursday, it was two loud swings by Houston hitters that resonated for the rest of the game. For Alvarez to heat up could propel a lineup that still appears top-heavy. Bregman, who singled twice Thursday, also said he felt his swings were better in this series. Alvarez added a 105.7 mph double in the fifth inning to set up the Astros' final run, a reminder of the impact he wields.

"It's always good when Yordan hits the ball hard," Peña said. "It was big for us."

ASTROS

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percentage than his .260 clip.

Bregman was hitting .198. Notably, he hit .195 in his first 34 games last season before going on to finish the year with a .262 average, .804 OPS and 25 home runs, illustrating the kind of buildup he referenced.

A difference is that Bregman's OPS in last year's 34-game start was more than 100 points higher than his current one. All but six of his 26 hits are singles. He hit his first home run of the season April 30. Entering Friday, that was his lone extra-base hit since April 10.

Bregman said he felt the just-completed series at Yankee Stadium held some positive signs. Wednesday, Bregman hit two line drives and two balls with a 99 mph exit velocity, all for outs. He struck two singles Thursday, a soft line drive to the right side and a sharp groundball pulled into left field.

Bregman said he is working on staying in his back leg longer and "delivering the bat out front," feeling he has been drifting forward in his swing, and "it's been a lot closer the last few days to the cage work in the game."

Astros hitting coach Troy Snitker agreed with Bregman's assessment. Snitker pointed to Bregman's first two at-bats Wednesday, a 368-foot flyout to center field and a lineout to right field on fastballs thrown by left-hander Carlos Rodón, as examples of



Karen Warren/Staff photographer

**Despite his struggles, Alex Bregman has maintained his plate discipline, striking out just 18 times.**

Bregman taking better swings.

"He's gotten to a lot more 'A' swings the last five days or so," Snitker said. "He's had some hard-hit balls that he didn't get much to show for it. But yeah, that's the key is staying over his back side, engaging his back leg longer and swinging from back there."

Bregman has never relied on stellar exit velocities for success, yet his current average exit velocity (86.9) and line drive rate (20.2%) would be career lows. Bregman's plate discipline remains excellent — he had 14 walks and 18 strikeouts entering Friday — and he will rarely swing and miss. His pop-up rate of 17.5% was nearly double his career rate, however. He pointed out that his groundball rate was also up and that producing more line drives is a priority.

"It's staying back and getting the bat out front," Bregman said. "Not getting forward too soon and being able to control my forward move. When I do that, it's really, really good and it's repeatable for months on end. So the sooner we can get to that, the better the end result of the season will be."

That the Astros, and Bregman, prefer it to be imminent is obvious. Houston carried a record of 13-24 into Detroit and has received uneven production from a lineup that has struggled to capitalize on its scoring chances. Bregman is not the reason, but he has played a part, driving in just four runs in 22 starts battling in the cleanup spot.

On Wednesday, manager Joe Espada moved Bregman down to the sixth spot, the lowest Bregman has hit in the lineup in a regular-

season game since 2021. Espada said the move was aimed at "trying to get him to hopefully relax a little bit and get him going." The next day, Espada said he thought Bregman's at-bats from that spot were encouraging.

"He hit some balls hard, I thought he was more calm, his pitch selection was better," Espada said. "I think it was a step in the right direction."

Factors in the Astros' poor start are widespread. General manager Dana Brown, for one, has still stressed the impact a surge from Bregman could have. In a radio appearance this week on the team's flagship station 790 AM, Brown declared: "When Bregman gets hot, you will see this team roll. ... We need him to get hot. And he will get hot, it's just a matter of time. But we need him to get hot sooner than later."

Brown also made a point to say that Bregman is "working his tail off" amid his start. A few hours before Thursday's game in New York, Bregman passed through the clubhouse briefly to grab a pair of batting gloves before walking to the indoor cage. Shortly after, he emerged to take batting practice on the field, exiting the cage after each round and watching video of his swings on a tablet.

"I feel good," Bregman said after Thursday's game. "Over the course of the season, you're going to go through ups and downs. And the cream always rises to the top at the end of the season."

NOTEBOOK

Julks designated for assignment

By Matt Kawahara  
STAFF WRITER

DETROIT — The Astros claimed relief pitcher **Alex Speas** off waivers from the Oakland A's on Friday, the team announced. Outfielder **Corey Julks** was designated for assignment in a corresponding 40-man roster move.

Julks, who played at Clear Brook High School and the University of Houston, was an eighth-round draft pick by the Astros in 2017 and made his major league debut last season. He played in 93 games for the Astros, batting .245 with a .650 OPS, and was sent back to Triple-A amid a late-season slump. He made a team-high 59 starts in left field.

Julks was one of the final cuts when Houston set its initial 26-man roster this spring. He was hitting .266 with an .802 OPS in 31 games at Triple-A Sugar Land. The Astros' promotions of **Joey Loperfido** and **Trey Cabbage** in recent weeks, though, suggested Julks' descent on their outfield depth chart.

Speas, a 26-year-old right-hander, has gaudy strikeouts and walk numbers in parts of seven minor-league seasons. In 2023, Speas had a 2.86

ERA in 56 ⅓ innings with 85 strikeouts and 38 walks at Double- and Triple-A in the Rangers' system. Texas used a second-round draft pick on him in 2016.

Speas debuted for the Rangers last season. He was claimed this offseason by the White Sox and traded to the A's last month. In 11 outings at Triple-A this season, he has a 12.08 ERA.

Kessinger returns from stint on IL

The Astros activated infielder **Grae Kessinger** from the injured list before their series opener against the Tigers on Friday and optioned infielder **Jacob Amaya** to Triple-A in a corresponding move.

Kessinger was placed on the 10-day IL on April 30 with "right shoulder discomfort." He has appeared in eight games for the Astros this season as a reserve infielder. Kessinger played in four games on a rehab assignment at Triple-A Sugar Land, going 4 for 15 before his reinstatement.

With the Astros in a stretch of playing 16 straight days, manager **Joe Espada** said he plans to mix in off days for his lineup regulars in Detroit, an indication Kessinger could see playing time in this series.



# HIGH SCHOOLS

SOFTBALL: BRAZOSWOOD 11, PEARLAND 1 THURSDAY'S GAME

## Lady Bucs sweep defending champs

By Ted Dunnam  
STAFF WRITER

IOWA COLONY — When you've just swept the defending Class 6A champion in convincing fashion, you'd think a better reward would await in the wings than facing the No. 1 team in the nation.

The Brazoswood softball team, though, doesn't seem to be daunted by much of anything these days.

The Lady Buccaneers, fueled by sophomore Ali Rios' fourth-inning grand slam, rolled to an 11-1 win over Pearland in six innings Thursday night to

advance to the Region III-6A semifinals.

Winner of 19 straight, Brazoswood (31-7) will next take on powerhouse Katy in an effort to extend its season.

"We'll enjoy this one tonight and then address that assignment later," veteran Brazoswood head coach Laura Oltman said.

Brazoswood, which won the opener 13-2 on Wednesday night, found itself locked in a 1-1 game after the top of the fourth inning.

In the bottom of the frame, though, the Lady Bucs took control.

A one-out walk to Ja-

zlynn Soliz was followed by a fielder's choice on a ball hit by Lilliana Salazar. It appeared Pearland second baseman Layla Bennett may have tagged a Brazoswood runner, but everyone was ruled safe.

Mia Estrello eventually drew a two-out walk, loading the bases for Rios, who belted her grand slam to right-center for a 5-1 cushion.

The Lady Bucs were in control thereafter.

"I was just thinking to put the ball somewhere in play," Rios said. "I was really hoping for the gap. When it left the bat, I said 'Oh, shoot, this is going

somewhere,' but I didn't think it was going out of the park.

"That really relaxed us. You're definitely more comfortable in the field knowing you're up by four runs."

Pearland (34-6) managed to get runners to third base in each of the first five innings but could score only one run. At one point, the Lady Oilers were 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position.

Oltman said she knew her team would be thrust into a more difficult situation Thursday.

"Today, I think we pulled through with pa-

tience and persistence at the plate," she said. "We just needed a breakout moment, and Ali delivered with that.

"Winning last night was a good feeling but we knew they didn't throw their No. 1 (Carly Carpenter) yesterday so we anticipated it being tough. For several innings it was."

Brazoswood senior pitcher Peyton Tanner experienced a shaky start, but every time she needed to record a big out or two, she was up to the task.

Tanner, who has committed to Tennessee, only struck out two batters in six innings, but her de-

fense was rock-solid.

"Peyton delivered good pitches when she needed to," Oltman said. "Pearland did a great job of putting the ball in play and we were fortunate those first few innings."

Brazoswood lost to Katy in a tournament game, 8-1, on Feb. 29. Coincidentally, it also beat Pearland, 2-1, that same day.

Outscoring the Lady Oilers, 24-3, in two games would seem to signal that Brazoswood is hitting its stride.

"This is a great feeling," Rios said. "We're glad to be going to the fourth round."

SOFTBALL: KATY 8, CINCO RANCH 0 THURSDAY'S GAME



Karen Warren/Staff photographer

Katy's Ella-Kate Smith hits an RBI single in the fourth inning of the Tigers' Region III-6A quarterfinal win over Cinco Ranch on Thursday at Tompkins High School.

## No. 1 Tigers advance to regional semifinals

By Dennis Silva II  
STAFF WRITER

Katy and Cinco Ranch faced each other for the third time this softball season Thursday. But the stakes were considerably higher for the District 19-6A rivals.

Katy downed Cinco Ranch 8-0 in a one-game Region III-6A quarterfinal playoff at Tompkins High. The Tigers also beat Cinco Ranch during district play on March 9, 16-0, and April 12, 6-0.

Scoreless through two innings, Katy scored six runs in the third and fourth to pull away and secure an 18th consecutive win.

"I think they quit trying to swing so dang hard early and finally put the ball in play," Katy coach Kalum Haack said. "Once we started to get a few runs, I think we could take a sigh of relief and we started playing a little bit better."

Cinco Ranch, the fourth-place team out of

19-6A, wrapped up an admirable campaign at 17-16 overall and in the third round of the playoffs for the second time in three years.

The Tigers, ranked No. 1 nationally by MaxPreps and USA Today, improved to 37-1-1 and play Brazoswood (30-7) in next week's regional semifinals. Brazoswood finished off a sweep of defending state champion Pearland on Thursday.

Katy got on the board in the third inning on a pair of two-out RBI singles from junior first baseman Montgomery Henderson and sophomore catcher Maddie Smith.

Then the Tigers broke the game open in the fourth.

A pair of Cinco Ranch infield errors to lead off the inning induced a pair of baserunners with no outs. Katy pounced, following with RBI singles from senior center fielder Ashtyn Reichardt and junior third baseman Haley Gore, a

### SOFTBALL PLAYOFF RESULTS/PAIRINGS

<b>Regional quarterfinals</b>	Lake Creek vs. A&M Consolidated, late
<b>Class 6A</b>	One-game playoff
<b>Region II</b>	Barbers Hill 10, Nederland 0 (5 inn.)
<b>Bridgeland vs. Klein Oak</b>	One-game playoff
Game 1: Bridgeland 6, Klein Oak 0	
Game 2: late	
Game 3*: 5 p.m. Saturday, Tomball HS	
Oak Ridge 15, Klein Collins 1	
One-game playoff	
<b>Region III</b>	
Katy 8, Cinco Ranch 0	
One-game playoff	
<b>Brazoswood vs. Pearland</b>	
All games at Iowa Colony HS	
Game 1: Brazoswood 13, Pearland 2	
Game 2: Brazoswood 11, Pearland 1 (6 inn.)	
<b>Heights vs. Memorial</b>	
Game 1: Heights 8, Memorial 2	
Game 2: late	
Game 3*: late	
<b>Alvin vs. Kingwood</b>	
Game 1: Kingwood 5, Alvin 2	
Game 2: late	
Game 3*: 6:30 p.m. Saturday, La Porte HS	
<b>Class 5A</b>	
<b>Region II</b>	
<b>Melissa vs. Kingwood Park</b>	
All games at Rusk HS	
Game 1: Melissa 7, Kingwood Park 6	
Game 2: late	
Game 3*: 1 p.m. Saturday	
<b>Region III</b>	
<b>Foster vs. Friendswood</b>	
Game 1: Foster 3, Friendswood 1	
Game 2: late	
Game 3*: 11 a.m. Saturday, Grand Oaks HS	

sacrifice RBI from senior pitcher Cameryn Harrison and a two-out RBI single from sophomore right fielder E.K. Smith.

"Just keeping it simple with our swings," said E.K. Smith, who had a team-

best three RBIs. "Not trying to do too much. Not trying to be the big person. Any of us can have big moments, but we win when we keep it simple and just let the ball take its course."

E.K. Smith's one-out,

two-run home run in the sixth, her 11th of the season, was the final punch.

The Tigers' middle of the lineup — Henderson, E.K. Smith and Maddie Smith — was prolific. The trio combined to go 6-for-10 with five RBIs, one walk and no strikeouts.

"They've always been pretty solid," Haack said. "Especially Montgomery, she relaxed and found the holes in the infield. E.K. ... she just does a good job taking a good swing, and she's real consistent hitting the ball. I don't think she swings for the fence. She just has a real good cut, and when she hits it hard, it goes over."

Harrison and junior Lauryn Soeken combined for the 30th shutout of the season for Katy pitching.

Harrison threw five innings, allowing two hits while striking out 11 and walking three.

Fifty-six of her 83 pitches were strikes.

"I've thrown to them a bunch of times, so they

know what I have," Harrison said. "They attacked well and knew what I was coming with. They came out trying to catch my fast stuff, so I mixed in my changeup more and rolled with the punches."

Soeken threw two innings of relief, allowing one hit, striking out two and walking two. Twenty-two of her 37 pitches were strikes.

Thursday's game was Katy's first of the playoffs that was not decided by run-rule. The Tigers have outscored their postseason opponents 57-0 and have allowed one run, total, since March 22.

Players credit team chemistry.

"It starts with our off-season," E.K. Smith said. "We go through mat room, we run. We're there for each other every single day, even at our lowest. That's a big thing that keeps us in games. It teaches us to be there for each other and keeps everyone up during games."

### BASEBALL PLAYOFF RESULTS/PAIRINGS

<b>Area round</b>	Game 2: 2 p.m. Saturday, Cypress Springs HS	<b>Deer Park vs. Clear Falls</b>	<b>Milby vs. Friendswood</b>	with 2 outs	Game 2: late	Game 2: late
<b>Class 6A</b>	<b>Cinco Ranch vs. Stratford</b>	All games at Channelview HS	Game 1: Friendswood 7, Milby 2	Game 2: late	Game 3*: 2 p.m. Saturday, Caldwell HS	Game 2: late
<b>Region II</b>	All games at Cypress Lakes HS	Game 1: Clear Falls 3, Deer Park 1	Game 2: late	Game 3*: 1 p.m. Saturday, Alvin HS		
<b>Klein Collins vs. Willis</b>	Game 1: Willis 1, Klein Collins 0, ppd. to Friday in B3	Game 2: late	Game 3*: 1 p.m. Saturday	<b>Georgetown East View vs. Magnolia</b>		
Game 2: late	Game 2: Stratford 2, Cinco Ranch 1	Game 1: Clear Falls 3, Deer Park 1	Game 2: late	Game 1: East View 6, Magnolia 4		
Game 3*: 11 a.m. Sat., Wildkat Field (Lynn Lucas MS)	Game 2: late	Game 2: late	Game 3*: After Game 2	<b>Georgetown vs. Lake Creek</b>		
<b>Tomball vs. Grand Oaks</b>	Game 1: Tomball 11, Grand Oaks 0 (5 inn.)	Game 3*: Noon Saturday	<b>Region IV</b>	All games at Mumford HS		
Game 2: late	Game 2: late		Game 1: Lake Creek 4, Georgetown 1	Game 1: Lake Creek 4, Georgetown 1		
Game 3*: 1 p.m. Saturday, West Fork HS	Game 3*: 1 p.m. Saturday		Game 2: late	Game 2: 2 p.m. Saturday, Columbus HS		
<b>The Woodlands vs. Bridgeland</b>	<b>Pearland vs. Dobie</b>	<b>Class 5A</b>	Game 3*: After Game 2	Game 3*: After Game 2		
Game 1: Bridgeland 1, The Woodlands 0	Game 1: Pearland 6, Dobie 1	<b>Region II</b>	<b>Kountze vs. Van Vleck</b>	All games at Deer Park HS		
Game 2: late	Game 2: late	<b>Lucas Lovejoy vs. Porter</b>	Game 1: Kountze 7, Van Vleck 3 (9 inn.)	Game 1: Kountze 7, Van Vleck 3 (9 inn.)		
Game 3*: 2 p.m. Saturday, Grand Oaks HS	Game 3*: 1 p.m. Saturday	All games at Lake Belton HS	Game 2: late	Game 3*: After Game 2		
<b>Oak Ridge vs. Klein Oak</b>	<b>Jersey Village vs. Katy</b>	Game 1: Porter 2, Lovejoy 0, ppd. to Friday in T3	<b>Region IV</b>	<b>Columbus vs. Jourdan</b>		
Game 1: Oak Ridge 2, Klein Oak 1	All games at Cypress Falls HS	Game 2: late	Game 1: Santa Fe 13, Galena Park 1	Game 1: Santa Fe 13, Galena Park 1		
Game 2: late	Game 1: Katy 5, Jersey Village 3	Game 3*: After Game 2	Game 2: Santa Fe 5, Galena Park 0	Game 2: Santa Fe 5, Galena Park 0		
Game 3*: 2 p.m. Saturday, Oak Ridge HS	Game 2: late	<b>Region III</b>	<b>Barbers Hill vs. Foster</b>	All games at Strake Jesuit HS		
<b>Region III</b>	<b>Cy-Fair vs. Tompkins</b>	<b>Fulshear vs. Port Neches-Groves</b>	Game 1: Foster 7, Barbers Hill 0	Game 1: Foster 7, Barbers Hill 0		
<b>Ridge Point vs. Memorial</b>	Game 1: Tompkins 2, Cy-Fair 0	All games at Crosby HS	Game 2: late	Game 2: late		
Game 1: Memorial 11, Ridge Point 0 (5 inn.)	Game 2: late	Game 1: Fulshear 7, PNG 4 (9 inn.)	Game 3*: After Game 2	Game 3*: After Game 2		
Game 2: late	Game 3*: 1 p.m. Saturday, Langham Creek HS	Game 2: late	<b>Magnolia West vs. Elgin</b>	All games at Weimar HS		
		Game 3*: 2 p.m. Saturday	Game 1: Magnolia West 8, Elgin 3, ppd. to Friday in B7	Game 1: Sweeney 2, Davenport 1		



NHL PLAYOFFS



Tony Gutierrez/Associated Press

Stars goaltender Jake Oettinger gloves a shot by Avalanche left wing Miles Wood for one of his 28 saves during the first period of Dallas' 5-3 win over Colorado on Thursday night in Dallas.

# Stars hold off charging Avs

WIRE REPORTS

DALLAS — The Dallas Stars built another multi-goal lead against high-scoring Colorado. This time, they held on to win and avoid another 0-2 hole in the NHL playoffs.

“Found a way to win the game, and that’s the most important thing,” Stars defenseman Miro Heiskanen said.

Heiskanen scored two power-play goals, Roope Hintz had a goal and three assists and the Stars beat the Colorado Avalanche 5-3 in Game 2 on Thursday night to even the second-round Western Conference series.

Tyler Seguin got his first goal this postseason on a short-hander at the end of a 3-on-1 break-away for the Stars that put them up 4-0 late in the second period. Esa Lindell added an empty-netter with 20 seconds left, with Hintz getting his final assist.

Jake Oettinger had 28 saves against a Colorado team that led the NHL in scoring during the regular season and had averaged an NHL-high 5.33 goals in its first six games this postseason. Joel Kiviranta, Bran-

## PLAYOFF RESULTS/SCHEDULE

Western Conference
Second round
<b>Colorado 1, Dallas 1</b>
Game 1: Colorado 4, Dallas 3 (OT)
Game 2: Dallas 5, Colorado 3
Game 3: at Colorado, 9 p.m. Saturday (TNT)
Game 4: at Colorado, TBA Monday (ESPN)
Game 5: at Dallas, 7 p.m. Wednesday (ESPN)
Game 6*: at Colorado, TBA Friday
Game 7*: at Dallas, TBA May 19
<b>Vancouver 1, Edmonton 0</b>
Game 1: Vancouver 5, Edmonton 4
Game 2: at Vancouver, late
Game 3: at Edmonton, 8:30 p.m. Sunday (TBS)
Game 4: at Edmonton, 8:30 p.m. Tuesday (ESPN)
Game 5*: at Vancouver, TBA Thursday
Game 6*: at Edmonton, TBA May 18
Game 7*: at Vancouver, TBA May 20

Eastern Conference
Second round
<b>N.Y. Rangers 3, Carolina 0</b>
Game 1: N.Y. Rangers 4, Carolina 3
Game 2: N.Y. Rangers 4, Carolina 3 (2OT)
Game 3: N.Y. Rangers 3, Carolina 2 (OT)
Game 4: at Carolina, 6 p.m. Saturday (TNT)
Game 5*: at N.Y. Rangers, 6 p.m. Monday (ESPN)
Game 6*: at Carolina, TBA Thursday
Game 7*: at N.Y. Rangers, TBA May 18
<b>Boston 1, Florida 1</b>
Game 1: Boston 5, Florida 1
Game 2: Florida 6, Boston 1
Game 3: at Boston, late
Game 4: at Boston, 5:30 p.m. Sunday (TBS)
Game 5: at Florida, 6 p.m. Tuesday
Game 6*: at Boston, TBA Friday
Game 7*: at Florida, TBA May 19
*If necessary

don Duhaime and Valeri Nichushkin scored in the third period for the Avalanche, but they failed to score on a power play in the final three minutes that was partly a 6-on-4 after goalie Alexander Georgiev skated to the bench.

“Obviously, I think we can handle those situations better. But I think that the silver lining is that we built 3-0 and 4-0 leads, so we’ve played some very good hockey for long stretches against them,” Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. “I thought tonight was better than Game 1. We did most of the things that we wanted to do tonight. Building that lead, the right guys scored, got on the board for us.”

Game 3 is Saturday night in Denver.

Colorado had also trailed 3-0 in the first period of Game 1 two nights earlier before coming back to win 4-3 in overtime, and extend its postseason winning streak to five games. That was the third time this season the Avs had come back from a multi-goal deficit to win in Dallas.

They came up short this time in a game when hurt by some self-induced penalties and going 0 for 3 on power plays. Of their six penalties, two for delay of game after knocking pucks into the stands, and two more for having too many men on the ice. “The second period for me is when it fell

part. Just not sharp,” Avs coach Jared Bednar said. “Then we turn around in the third and go to work, and that’s what happens.”

**RANGERS 3 HURRICANES 2 (OT)** Artemi Panarin redirected a pass between his legs at the crease to beat Pyotr Kotchekov just 1:43 into overtime and New York beat host Carolina to take a 3-0 lead in the second-round playoff series.

Panarin scored after Carolina defenseman Dmitry Orlov lost control of a puck in the corner in the defensive zone. Vincent Trocheck collected it on the right side and sent it toward the crease to Panarin, who tipped the puck behind him as defenseman Jalen Chatfield tried to push him away from the crease.

The puck slipped under the right elbow and past the ribs of Kotchekov, sending Panarin into celebration and the Rangers soon joining him near the door toward the tunnel off the ice.

The Rangers can complete the sweep in Game 4 on Saturday night.

## AROUND SPORTS

# Djokovic wins, gets hit on the head with bottle

WIRE REPORTS

ROME — **Novak Djokovic** needed medical attention after getting knocked on the head by a water bottle after a win at the Italian Open in Rome on Friday.

Local organizers say a child was leaning over the railing to hand Djokovic a notebook for a signature and an aluminum-type water bottle fell out of the child’s backpack and hit the top-ranked player on the top of his head.

“Thank you for the messages of concern. This was an accident and I am fine resting at the hotel with an ice pack,” Djokovic posted on X. “See you all on Sunday.”

Meanwhile, defending women’s champion **Elena Rybakina** withdrew before her opening match against **Irina-Camelia Begu** because of illness.

Also advancing in second-round matches were 2017 Rome champion **Alexander Zverev**, **Grigor Dimitrov** and **Ben Shelton**. **Sofia Kenin** eliminated eighth-seeded **Oksana Kalashnikova** 7-5, 2-6, 6-4.

## COLLEGES C-USA to add Missouri State

Missouri State will move up to the highest tier of Division I college football and join Conference USA in 2025, the league announced Friday.

Missouri State will become the 12th full member of C-USA and the third school to move up from the Championship Subdivision to the Bowl Subdivision and join the league over the next two seasons.

Conference USA is adding Kennesaw State this season and Delaware is set to join in 2025.

**Grand Canyon, Seattle joining West Coast Conference:** Grand Canyon University and Seattle University will join the West Coast Conference beginning with the 2025-26 season, giving the league best known nationally for its basketball programs 11 full members for the first time in its history.

The conference announced the additions Friday, with the two schools set to leave their affiliations with the Western Athletic Conference after the next school year.

**Judge halts ACC’s suit against Florida State:** The Atlantic Coast Conference’s lawsuit against member school Florida State has come to a temporary halt.

North Carolina Chief

Business Court Judge **Louis Bledsoe III** handed down a ruling Friday that puts a stay on all discovery and further court-related work on the case while FSU appeals to the North Carolina Supreme Court. The school is appealing Bledsoe’s earlier ruling that denied the school’s motion to dismiss the case.

Florida State has yet to actually file the case with the North Carolina Supreme Court, but lawyers have indicated that is in their intent.

“Under North Carolina law, the longstanding general rule is that an appeal divests the trial court of jurisdiction over a case until the appellate court returns its mandate,” Bledsoe wrote in his ruling on Friday. “The lower court only retains jurisdiction to take action which aids the appeal and to hear motions and grant orders that do not concern the subject matter of the suit and are not affected by the judgment that has been appealed.”

Florida State is challenging the conference’s exit fees and the validity of a grant-of-rights agreement that binds league members together through their media rights.

**Illinois’ Shannon ordered to stand trial on a rape charge:** A Kansas judge on Friday ordered University of Illinois basketball standout **Terrence Shannon Jr.** to stand trial on a rape charge following testimony from a woman who said she was “terrified” as she was being assaulted.

Shannon, 23, of Champaign, Ill., is accused of committing sexual assault on Sept. 9, in Lawrence, Kan. He has been charged with rape or an alternative count of sexual battery.

## SOCCER FIFA urging peace talks

FIFA offered peace talks to the global networks of player unions and domestic leagues on Friday after they threatened legal action about soccer’s congested international calendar.

FIFPRO and the World Leagues Association aired long-held frustrations at FIFA adding new and bigger events — including a revamped 32-team Club World Cup next year and a 48-team men’s World Cup in 2026 — without fully consulting their members.

The 2024-25 schedule in European soccer also will be squeezed by UEFA expanding its three main club competitions.

## GOLF

# Zhang, Sagstom leading Founders Cup

WIRE REPORTS

CLIFTON, N.J. — Nelly Korda has no intention of letting anyone run away with the Cognizant Founders Cup and end her bid to become the first player to win six straight LPGA Tour tournaments.

Hear that, Rose Zhang and Madelene Sagstrom?

Faced with a 10-stroke deficit starting her second round Friday in the event that honors the tour’s founding members, Korda shot a bogey-free 6-under 66 in cold, damp conditions to move into third place, four shots behind leaders Zhang and Sagstrom with 36 holes to play.

The round matched the best of the day, which Sagstrom established less than an hour earlier in the afternoon.

Zhang, who tied Sagstrom’s tournament record with a 63 on Thursday, had a 68 playing in the morning.

The 20-year-old Zhang and the 31-year-old Swede, who are tied at 13-under 131 on the Upper Montclair Country Club, each have won once on the LPGA Tour.



Elsa/Getty Images

Nelly Korda shot 6-under 66 to move into third place on Friday at the Cognizant Founders Cup.

## Schauffele up by 4 at Wells Fargo

Xander Schauffele shot a 4-under 67 on Friday after opening with a 64, leaving him at 11-under 131 and four shots ahead of Rory McIlroy and Jason Day heading into the weekend at the Wells Fargo Championship.

Taylor Moore and Sungjae Im were five strokes back at 6 under.

The 30-year-old Schauffele has seven top 10 finishes this season, but no wins. He’s looking to snap a winless streak that dates to July 2022 at

the Genesis Scottish Open.

“I’ve had a few knocks on the door and I just tell myself to keep knocking,” Schauffele said.

## Stricker moves ahead at Regions

Two-time defending champion Steve Stricker birdied the final two holes for a 7-under 65 and a one-shot lead over Ernie Els on Friday after the second round of the Regions Tradition at Birmingham, Ala., the first of five PGA Tour Champions majors.

Stricker, who has won three of the last four times at Greystone, had four birdies and a pair of bogeys over the first six holes before overtaking Els at the end. A six-time winner last year, he’s seeking his first this season and got his wish of being in the final group.

A World Golf Hall of Famer, Els shot a 68 in the second round.

“I tried to be patient with how the year has been going on, but the golf hasn’t been as bad as maybe where I am on the Schwab Cup list indicates,” said Flesch, who came in ranked 65th.

## Gotterup surges at Myrtle Beach

Chris Gotterup birdied the final final four holes for a 7-under 64 and a one-stroke lead over Robert MacIntyre on Friday after the second round of the PGA Tour’s inaugural Myrtle Beach Classic.

After making two birdies and a bogey on the front nine at Dunes Golf & Beach Club, Gotterup played the back nine in 6-under.



Alessandra Tarantino/Associated Press

Novak Djokovic says he is fine after getting hit with a bottle and will be ready for his next match.



## FOR THE RECORD

## MLB AT A GLANCE

## AMERICAN LEAGUE

West Division	W	L	Pct	GB	WCGB	L10	Str	Home	Away
Texas	22	17	.564	—	—	7-3	W-1	10-9	12-8
Seattle	20	18	.526	1½	2½	5-5	L-2	11-8	9-10
Oakland	18	21	.462	4	5	6-4	L-1	10-13	8-8
Los Angeles	14	24	.368	7½	8½	4-6	L-1	4-12	10-12
Houston	13	24	.351	8	9	5-5	W-1	7-12	6-12
East Division	W	L	Pct	GB	WCGB	L10	Str	Home	Away
Baltimore	24	12	.667	—	—	7-3	W-1	12-7	12-5
New York	25	14	.641	½	+2	6-4	L-1	13-6	12-8
Boston	19	18	.514	5½	3	5-5	L-2	7-9	12-9
Tampa Bay	19	19	.500	6	3½	6-4	L-1	13-10	6-9
Toronto	17	20	.459	7½	5	4-6	W-1	8-7	9-13

Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB	WCGB	L10	Str	Home	Away
Cleveland	24	14	.632	—	—	6-4	L-1	12-6	12-8
Minnesota	22	15	.595	1½	—	8-2	W-2	11-8	11-7
Kansas City	23	16	.590	1½	—	6-4	W-2	15-8	8-8
Detroit	19	18	.514	4½	3	4-6	L-1	8-9	11-9
Chicago	10	28	.263	14	12½	4-6	W-2	6-12	4-16

## NATIONAL LEAGUE

West Division	W	L	Pct	GB	WCGB	L10	Str	Home	Away
Los Angeles	26	13	.667	—	—	8-2	W-7	15-8	11-5
San Diego	20	20	.500	6½	—	6-4	W-1	18-12	12-8
Arizona	18	20	.474	7½	1	6-4	W-4	9-10	9-10
San Francisco	17	22	.436	9	2½	3-7	L-1	9-7	8-15
Colorado	9	28	.243	16	9½	2-8	W-1	6-12	3-16
East Division	W	L	Pct	GB	WCGB	L10	Str	Home	Away
Philadelphia	26	12	.684	—	—	8-2	L-1	15-7	11-5
Atlanta	22	12	.647	2	+5	4-6	W-2	13-4	9-8
New York	18	18	.500	7	—	5-5	W-2	9-10	9-8
Washington	18	18	.500	7	—	6-4	L-1	7-10	11-8
Miami	10	29	.256	16½	9½	4-6	L-3	5-15	5-14

Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB	WCGB	L10	Str	Home	Away
Milwaukee	22	15	.595	—	—	5-5	W-1	18-7	14-8
Chicago	22	16	.579	½	+3	5-5	L-1	13-6	9-10
Pittsburgh	17	21	.447	5½	2	3-7	L-2	8-10	9-11
Cincinnati	16	21	.432	6	2½	1-9	L-8	9-13	7-8
St. Louis	15	22	.405	7	3½	2-8	L-5	6-11	9-11

## Thursday's results

American League	National League
Houston 4, Yankees 3	Arizona 5, Cincinnati 4
Minnesota 11, Seattle 1	Colorado 9, San Francisco 1
White Sox 3, Cleveland 2	Milwaukee 7, St. Louis 1
Kansas City 10, Angels 4	

## Friday's results

American League	National League
Houston at Detroit, late	Texas at Colorado, late
Texas at Colorado, late	Cubs at Pittsburgh, late
Yankees at Tampa Bay, late	Arizona at Baltimore, late
Arizona at Baltimore, late	Atlanta at Mets, late
Minnesota at Toronto, late	Philadelphia at Miami, late
Minnesota at Toronto, late	Philadelphia at Miami, late
Washington at Boston, late	Washington at Boston, late
Cleveland at White Sox, late	St. Louis at Milwaukee, late
Kansas City at Angels, late	Dodgers at San Diego, late
Oakland at Seattle, late	Cincinnati at San Francisco, late

## Saturday's games

American League	National League
Minnesota (Woods Richardson 1-0) at Toronto (Gausman 2-3), 2:07 p.m.	
Arizona (Nelson 2-2) at Baltimore (Means 1-0), 3:05 p.m.	
Yankees (Cortes 1-3) at Tampa Bay (Littell 1-2), 3:10 p.m.	
Washington (Irvin 2-3) at Mets (Criswell 2-1), 3:10 p.m.	
Houston (Javier 2-0) at Detroit (Skubal 4-0), 5:10 p.m.	
Cleveland (McKenzie 2-2) at White Sox (Clevinger 0-1), 6:10 p.m.	
Texas (Heaney 0-4) at Colorado (Feltner 1-3), 7:10 p.m.	
Kansas City (Ragans 2-2) at Angels (Anderson 2-4), 8:38 p.m.	
Oakland (Wood 1-2) at Seattle (Miller 3-2), 8:40 p.m.	
National League	
Arizona (Nelson 2-2) at Baltimore (Means 1-0), 3:05 p.m.	
Cubs (Steele 0-0) at Pittsburgh (Skenes 0-0), 3:05 p.m.	
Atlanta (Fried 2-1) at Mets (Scott 0-0), 3:10 p.m.	
Philadelphia (Walker 2-0) at Miami (TBD), 3:10 p.m.	
Washington (Irvin 2-3) at Boston (Criswell 2-1), 3:10 p.m.	
Cincinnati (Lodolo 3-1) at San Francisco (Black 0-1), 6:15 p.m.	
St. Louis (Gibson 2-2) at Milwaukee (Peralta 3-1), 6:15 p.m.	
Texas (Heaney 0-4) at Colorado (Feltner 1-3), 7:10 p.m.	
Dodgers (Paxton 4-0) at San Diego (Waldron 1-4), 7:40 p.m.	

## MLB NOTEBOOK

## TROUT CHOSE SURGERY OVER BEING STUCK AT DH

Mike Trout decided that having surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his left knee was a better alternative than postponing the procedure and being a designated hitter the rest of the season.

“It was an option they put out there. It would have been just maintaining the pain level of it,” the Los Angeles Angels slugger said before Thursday’s game against the Kansas City Royals. “The day I got the MRI and it showed that I was in a lot of pain. It would have been a tough road for the rest of the year to bear that.”

Trout has also struggled whenever he has been a designated hitter. In 1,518 career games, he has been the DH only 81 times and has a .214 batting average.

Trout — who is sidelined with a major injury for the fourth straight season — underwent surgery last Friday, when the Angels began a six-game road trip.

## ROBINSON STATUE THIEF ENTERS GUILTY PLEA

A 45-year-old man has pleaded guilty in the theft of a bronze Jackie Robinson statue that was cut off at the ankles and found days later smoldering in a trash can in a city park in Wichita, Kan.

Ricky Alderete entered the plea during his arraignment Thursday. A judge signed off on it Friday. He was charged in February with felony theft and aggravated criminal damage to property in the statue theft, along with two other

counts.

## BRASH DONE FOR SEASON

Mariners’ right-hander Matt Brash, one of the top relievers in the American League last season, underwent Tommy John surgery earlier this week and will miss the entire 2024 season, Seattle general manager Justin Hollander said Friday.

Brash had not pitched in the majors this season after experiencing discomfort in his elbow during spring training.

## ODDS AND ENDS

Former San Diego Padres first-round draft pick Sean Burroughs has died at age 43. Burroughs, the son of 1974 AL MVP Jeff Burroughs, played 528 games over seven seasons in the major leagues, mostly with San Diego, making his last appearance in 2012 with the Minnesota Twins. ... The San Francisco Giants acquired minor league outfielder Rodolfo Nolasco from the Pirates on Friday in a trade that sent right-hander Daulton Jefferies to Pittsburgh. San Francisco also dealt right-hander Mitch White to the Brewers for cash.

## THURSDAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

Rhys Hoskins, Jake Bauers and Joey Ortiz each homered as the host Milwaukee Brewers defeated the slumping St. Louis Cardinals 7-1. ... Erick Fedde worked six scoreless innings and Tommy Pham had two hits and an RBI as the Chicago White Sox held on to beat the visiting Cleveland Guardians 3-2.

*Wire reports*

## SCOREBOARD

## Odds

Home team capitalized

## NBA

Saturday	FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
DALLAS	3	219		Oklahoma City
Boston	8	211 ½		CLEVELAND

## MLB

## Saturday

American League	FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE
TORONTO	-152	Minnesota		+128
N.Y. Yankees	-126	at TAMPA BAY		+108
DETROIT	-126	Houston		+108
Cleveland	-168	at CHICAGO WHITE SOX		+142
Kansas City	-148	at LA ANGELS		+126
SEATTLE	OFF	Oakland		OFF

## National League

FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE
Chicago Cubs	-118	at PITTSBURGH	+100
MIAMI	OFF	Philadelphia	OFF
Atlanta	-168	at N.Y. METS	+142
SAN FRANCISCO	-148	Cincinnati	+126
St. Louis	-120	at MILWAUKEE	+102
LA Dodgers	-142	at SAN DIEGO	+120

## Interleague

FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE
BALTIMORE	-156	Arizona	+132
BOSTON	-154	Washington	+130
Texas	-154	at COLORADO	+130

## NHL

Saturday	FAVORITE	LINE	UNDERDOG	LINE
CAROLINA	-160	N.Y. Rangers		+132
COLORADO	-134	Dallas		+112

## Baseball

## Triple-A Pacific Coast League

East	W	L	Pct.	GB
Sugar Land (Houston)	23	13	.657	—
Oklahoma City (L.A. Dodgers)	22	14	.600	1
Round Rock (Texas)	19	16	.529	3½
El Paso (San Diego)	15	21	.429	8
Albuquerque (Colorado)	11	25	.286	12
West	W	L	Pct.	GB
Sacramento (San Francisco)	21	15	.583	2
Tacoma (Seattle)	19	17	.543	4
Reno (Arizona)	18	18	.486	5
Las Vegas (Oakland)	17	19	.486	6
Salt Lake (L.A. Angels)	14	21	.400	8½

## Thursday's results

Oklahoma City 22, Sugar Land 3	
Salt Lake 14, Sacramento 8	
Round Rock 12, Las Vegas 7	
Albuquerque 12, El Paso 8	
Reno 5, Tacoma 4	
Friday's results	
Oklahoma City at Sugar Land, late	
Las Vegas at Round Rock, late	
Sacramento at Salt Lake, late	
Albuquerque at El Paso, late	
Tacoma at Reno, late	
Saturday's games	
Tacoma at Reno, 6:05 p.m.	
Oklahoma City at Sugar Land, 6:05 p.m.	
Las Vegas at Round Rock, 7:15 p.m.	
Sacramento at Salt Lake, 7:35 p.m.	
Albuquerque at El Paso, 7:35 p.m.	
Thursday's game	
Baseball Club 22	
Space Cowboys 3	
Oklahoma City	250 013 092 — 22 19 0
Sugar Land	000 000 012 — 3 8 1
W: Casparius (1-0), L: Tamarez (3-2), Oklahoma City—Casparius, Dodson (7), Rooney (8), Fisher (9), Sugar Land—Tamarez, Coleman (5), McDonald (6), Mushinski (7), Hummel (8), Bernhill (9).	

## Football

## UFL

USFL CONFERENCE	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Birmingham	6	0	1,000	171	89	
Michigan	4	2	0	.667	137	120
Memphis	1	5	0	.167	107	171
Houston	1	5	0	.167	84	138
XFL CONFERENCE	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
St. Louis	5	1	0	.833	173	103
San Antonio	4	2	0	.667	127	104
DC	3	3	0	.500	112	150
Arlington	0	6	0	.000	117	153

Saturday's games	
Memphis at Arlington, Noon	
St. Louis at Birmingham, 3 p.m.	
Sunday's games	
Michigan at DC, 11 a.m.	
San Antonio at Houston, 2 p.m.	

## Golf

## PGA Tour — Myrtle Beach Classic

Friday's second round	
At Myrtle Beach, S.C.	
Yardage: 7,347; Par: 71	
Chris Gotterup	.66-64—130
Robert Macintyre	.64-67—131
Jorge Campillo	.66-66—132
Alistair Docherty	.65-68—133
Beau Hossler	.64-69—133
Alex Smalley	.66-65—133
Davis Thompson	.65-68—133
Joseph Brannett	.68-66—134
Trace Crowe	.71-63—134
Chan Kim	.66-68—134
Cheer Reavie	.68-66—134
Gordon Sieg	.67-67—134
Erik Van Rooyen	.67-67—134
Dylan Wu	.69-67—134
Ben Griffin	.67-68—135
Patton Kozire	.70-65—135
Henrik Ronsander	.68-67—135
Justin Suh	.67-68—135
Paul Barjon	.69-67—136
Joel Dahmen	.69-67—136
Ryan Fox	.70-66—136
Chesson Hadley	.69-67—136
Michael Kim	.68-68—136
Seonyoung Kim	.68-68—136
Ryan McCormick	.68-68—136
Chandler Phillips	.67-69—136
Sam Ryder	.67-69—136
Matt Wallace	.72-64—136
Kevin Yu	.67-69—136
Zecheng Dou	.69-72—137
Adrien Dumont De Chassart	.67-70—137
Thriston Lawrence	.69-68—137
Song-Yul Noh	.68-68—137
Victor Perez	.71-66—137
Scott Piercy	.68-69—137
Ben Silverman	.67-70—137
Roger Sloan	.67-70—137
Sam Stevens	.68-69—137
Kevin Streelman	.72-67—138
Matt Atkins	.69-69—138
Jacob Bridgeman	.70-68—138
Harry Higgins	.69-69—138
Mac Messner	.70-68—138
Andrew Novak	.72-66—138
J.J. Spaun	.71-67—138
Alejandro Tosti	.65-73—138
Carson Young	.69-69—138
Andres Alberton	.68-71—139
Daniel Berger	.70-69—139
Blades Brown	.72-67—139
Hayden Buckley	.70-69—139
Parker Coody	.68-71—139
Patrick Fishburn	.73-66—139
Max Greyserman	.71-68—139
Lanto Griffin	.71-68—139
Henry Hall	.68-72—140
Troy Merritt	.68-71—139
Robby Shelton	.72-67—139
Dave Skinnis	.71-68—139
Austin Smerthman	.68-71—139
Carl Yuan	.67-72—139
Alexander Boodry	.73-67—140
Piercen Cloddy	.71-69—140
Tyler Dickson	.68-72—140
William McGirt	.71-69—140
Matthew NeSmith	.72-68—140
Sean O'Hair	.68-72—140
Thorbjorn Olesen	.71-69—140
Davis Riley	.69-71—140
Martin Trainer	.71-69—140

## LPGA Tour

## Cognizant Founders Cup

Friday's second round	
At Clifton, N.J.	
Yardage: 6,536; Par: 72	
Madeline Sagstrom	.65-66—131
Rose Zhang	.63-68—131
Nelly Korda	.66-66—135
Yan Liu	.68-70—138
Mid Reil	.67-72—139
Marina Alex	.68-71—139
Hannah Green	.69-71—140
Gorgia Hall	.69-71—140
Nasa Hatokata	.69-71—140
Jan Hee Im	.68-72—140
Lydia Ko	.69-71—140
Mi Hyang Lee	.69-71—140
Minjee Lee	.70-70—140
Elizabeth Lill	.68-72—140
Mary Lu	.69-71—140
Nia Rin An	.66-75—141
Pajaree Anannurakam	.68-73—141
Peiyun Chien	.69-72—141
Carloia Ciganda	.68-73—141
Alexandra Forsterling	.70-71—141
Sarah Kemp	.69-72—141
Sel Young Kim	.72-69—141
Jun Young Ko	.72-69—141
Xyu Lin	.68-73—141
Perrilla Lindberg	.70-71—141
Gabriela Ruffels	.69-72—141
Mao Salgo	.71-70—141

## ON THE AIR

## Television

Auto racing	NASCAR Cup: Darlington qualifying	FS1	9:30 a.m.
Auto racing	NASCAR Xfinity	FS1	12:30 p.m.
Auto racing	IndyCar from Indianapolis	NBC	2:30 p.m.
Boxing	Top Rank: Main card	ESPN	9 p.m.
Col. baseball	Kentucky at Florida	SEC	11 a.m.
Col. baseball	Arizona at Utah	Pac-12	noon
Col. baseball	Tennessee at Vanderbilt	SEC	2 p.m.
Col. baseball	Clemson at Wake Forest	ACC	3 p.m.
Col. baseball	Southern Cal at Washington St.	Pac-12	4 p.m.
Col. baseball	Miami at Virginia Tech	ACC	6 p.m.
Col. baseball	Indiana at Nebraska	Big Ten	6 p.m.
Col. baseball	UCLA at Oregon St.	Pac-12	7 p.m.
Col. softball	Big Ten: Indiana vs. TBD	Big Ten	3 p.m.
Col. softball	SEC: Missouri vs. TBD	ESPN2	4 p.m.
Col. softball	Big East: TBD vs. TBD (Game 2*)	FS2	5:30 p.m.
Col. softball	Big 12: TBD vs. TBD	ESPN2	6:30 p.m.
Col. softball	Pac-12: TBD vs. TBD	ESPN2	9 p.m.
Col. track	SEC Outdoor Championships	SEC	5 p.m.
Fishing	Bassmaster Elite	FS1	6:30 a.m.
Golf	Wells Fargo Championship	Golf CBS	noon



# Bionova’s \$56M project gets tax deal

County approves 7-year abatement for The Woodlands site

By Catherine Dominguez  
STAFF WRITER

Montgomery County commissioners approved a tax abatement agreement with California-based Bionova Scientific for the company’s \$56 million expansion in The Woodlands.

According to the agreement, Aventus Development LLC is purchasing the property in The Woodlands to build a

100,000-square-foot manufacturing and research facility in the 2600 block of Research Forest Drive to be leased by Bionova.

The facility is expected to be completed in late 2026.

The seven-year agreement will abate property taxes 100% from 2026 to 2029. That percentage will drop to 80% in 2030, 60% in 2031, and 40% in 2032.

The project will add 57 full-time positions with a combined payroll of \$7.4 million. The agreement states that the company will be at full staff by 2030.

The agreement comes after

Howard Hughes announced the creation of The Woodlands Innovation District.

The district is a reimagining of what has been known as The Research Forest, which was first pitched as a future life sciences hub in the 1980s by George Mitchell.

“The Woodlands Township is supportive of economic development that positively impacts our area, including the most recent efforts to bring biotechnology to our community,” said Ann Snyder, chair of The Woodlands Township Board of Directors. “Providing a home for these research

**Abatement continues on B9**



Jason Fochtman/Staff photographer

**The Woodlands Innovation District was first pitched as a future life sciences hub in the 1980s by George Mitchell.**



Howard Hughes’ 49,000-square-foot office building, One Bridgeland Green, will be built using engineered wood.

# Model for going green

Construction starts on mass-timber office building that could cut emissions

By Marissa Luck  
STAFF WRITER

Construction on one of the first mass-timber office buildings in the Houston area launched Thursday in Cypress, offering a model for the real estate industry to rein in its greenhouse gas emissions.

One Bridgeland Green, developed by The Woodlands-based Howard Hughes, will be built using engineered wood for structural components. The 49,000-square-foot, three-story building will open next year near the Grand Parkway in the Bridgeland master-planned community.

Building any new structure generates greenhouse gases, but steel and concrete are particularly carbon intensive. Mass timber could reduce construction emissions by 14% to 31%, research suggests.

The technique was used to build a Rice University dorm and a classroom at San Jacinto College in Pasadena. A handful of private developers have proposed mass-timber offices in Houston, but the Bridgeland project is the first to break ground.

One Bridgeland Green will be built with

**Timber continues on B9**



**One Bridgeland Green is among the first mass-timber office project to break ground in the Houston area. The technique may trim construction emissions by 14% to 31%.**

# Chemical from ’76 disaster still often on roads

By Rebekah F. Ward  
STAFF WRITER

The hazardous chemical that choked and blinded scores of Houstonians when a tanker careened off Loop 610 nearly 50 years ago, searing into local memory and triggering a federal policy review, is still regularly moved through the region’s dense roadways.

On the morning of May 11, 1976, a Transport Company of Texas truck loaded with more than 7,500 gallons of anhydrous ammonia wove through heavy traffic and lost control, flying off the side of a highway ramp where Loop 610 meets the Southwest Freeway near the Galleria. It rammed into the support column of an overpass, severing the tank and sending a cloud of the toxic chemical into the air.

Dorothy Nash, who worked as a sales manager at the nearby Houston Tribune building at the time, told reporters she felt she would die on the spot. She had opened the door after she heard an explosion and saw “men stumble by” outside the building, but quickly ran back inside after she started choking and “saw a great cloud of white smoke coming like it was pursuing me.”

The impact of the crash itself killed one person, but the ammonia release sent 78 to the hospital and eventually killed six more.

Anhydrous ammonia is still regularly liquefied and transported in pressurized tank trucks and rail cars for use as a fertilizer on farms across the country. It is highly corrosive, and when first released it burns into the eyes and skin of anyone in its vicinity.

“It can also cause narrowing of the airway, narrowing of the throat and swelling, so people can’t breathe,” said Inyang Uwak, an epidemiologist who works with the environmental

**Ammonia continues on B9**

# Tiff’s Treats’ new cookie bundle includes gold bar with order

By Erica Grieder  
STAFF WRITER

Tiff’s Treats, the cookie delivery company headquartered in Austin, is getting into the gold game.

Through May 13, the Tiff’s website is offering a special “Bullion Bundle” — a dozen cookies plus a 1-ounce, 24-karat gold bar.

The cookies come with a certificate explaining that U.S. Gold Bureau, a retailer not affiliated with the federal government, will deliver your bar within several days by a carrier such as FedEx. The bar, according to U.S. Gold Bureau, is “about the

same size as a military dog-tag.”

The price of the bundle will be about \$2,500 but will vary by day based on the price of gold. As of Thursday the spot price for an ounce of gold was \$2,312.76.

The promotion comes as the price of gold has surged by about 20% since the start of the year because of inflation, economic uncertainty and geopolitical turmoil, among other factors. Gold is generally seen as a hedge against more volatile investments, such as stocks.

Consumers who buy gold bullion typically turn to dealers such as Houston’s U.S. Coins and Jewelry. But with the recent

run-up in prices, other retailers have been adding gold to their offerings. Costco last year began selling gold bullion, as much as \$200 million worth each month, according to a recent Wells Fargo analysis.

Still, Tiff’s Treats may be the first cookie company to get in on the action. In announcing the promotion, the company also addressed a number of frequently asked questions. The first question of them: Is this real?

“Yes! We’ve always believed that the gift of our cookies is ‘good as gold’ but we wanted to go one step further and bundle them with REAL gold,” the company says on its website.



Tiff’s Treats

**Tiff’s Treats is selling a promotional “Bullion Bundle” that includes an ounce of gold with a dozen cookies.**



# Consumer sentiment hits six-month low

By Christopher Rugaber  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — U.S. consumer sentiment fell sharply in May to the lowest level in six months as Americans cited stubbornly high inflation and interest rates, as well as fears that unemployment could rise.

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index, released Friday in a preliminary version, dropped to 67.4 this month from a final reading of 77.2 in April.

May's reading is still about 14% higher than a year ago. Consumers' outlook has generally been gloomy since the pandemic and particularly after inflation

first spiked in 2021.

Consumer spending is a crucial driver of growth. Sour sentiment about the economy is also weighing on President Joe Biden's reelection bid.

Still, consumer confidence surveys have not always been reliable guides to actual spending, economists note.

"Perceptions don't always match reality and we think the fundamental backdrop remains strong enough to keep consumers spending," said Oren Klachkin, an economist at Nationwide Financial, in a research note.

"Rising incomes offer a healthy offset and will prevent consumer outlays from retrenching on a sustained basis."

In the first three months of this year, consumer spending stayed strong even as growth slowed, likely fueled largely by upper-income earners with significant wealth gains in their homes and stock portfolios.

The unemployment rate is at a historically low 3.9%, which has forced many companies to offer higher pay to find and keep workers.

Yet big retailers have begun to sense more caution from customers, particularly those with lower incomes, who are pulling back on spending.

Starbucks lowered expectations for its full-year sales and profit in late April after a terrible quarter that saw a slowdown

in store visits worldwide.

Starbucks reported a sharper and faster decline in spending in the U.S. than it had anticipated.

McDonald's last month said that it will increase deals and value messaging to combat slowing sales.

The Chicago fast food giant said inflation-weary customers are eating out less often in many big markets.

Consumer price increases have been stuck at an elevated level this year, after a sharp drop last year from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 3% a year later.

In March, prices rose 3.5% compared with a year ago, up from 3.2% in the previous month. Federal Reserve officials

have underscored this month that they will likely keep their benchmark interest rate at a 23-year high for as long as needed to get inflation back to their 2% target.

The consumer sentiment survey found that Americans expect inflation will stay higher over the next year at 3.5%.

Before the pandemic, consumers typically expected inflation a year ahead would be below 3%.

The drop in overall consumer sentiment occurred across age, income, and education levels, the survey found.

It also crossed political lines, falling among Democrats, Republicans and independents.

# Target to reduce stores carrying Pride merchandise

By Anne D'Innocenzio  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Target confirmed Friday that it won't carry Pride Month merchandise at all stores this spring after the discount retailer experienced backlash and lower sales over its collection honoring LGBTQ+ communities.

Target, which operates roughly 2,000 stores, said decisions about where to stock Pride-themed products, including adult apparel, home goods, foods and beverages would be based on "guest insights and consumer research."

A Target spokesperson declined to disclose the number of stores where the merchandise will not be available, but the company said its online shop would offer a full assortment. The moves were first reported by Bloomberg.

"Target is committed to supporting the LGBTQIA+ community during Pride Month and year-round," Target said in an e-mailed statement to The Associated Press.

"Most importantly, we want to create a welcoming and supportive environment for our LGBTQIA+ team members, which reflects our culture of care for the over 400,000 people who work at Target."

The head of the Human Rights Campaign, a U.S. LGBTQ advocacy group, said Target's decision



Pride month merchandise is displayed at a Target store on May 24, 2023. Target confirmed that it won't be carrying its LGBTQ+ merchandise in some stores.

was disappointing and risks alienating LGBTQ+ individuals and allies at the risk of not only profits, but also their values.

In a statement emailed to The Associated Press, Human Rights Campaign, American LGBTQ advocacy group President Kelley Robinson said Target's decision was disappointing and risks alienating the LGBTQ+ individuals and allies at the risk of not only profits, but also their values.

"Pride merchandise means something," Human Rights

Campaign President Kelley Robinson said. "LGBTQ+ people are in every zip code in this country, and we aren't going anywhere."

Given that LGBTQ+ people account for 30% of Gen Z, Robinson said that companies need to understand that what is needed is "full-hearted support" for the community.

Last year, Target removed some items from its stores and made other changes to its LGBTQ+ merchandise nationwide ahead of Pride Month after

intense reaction from some customers who confronted workers and tipped over displays.

Target also moved displays to the back of its stores in certain Southern locations last year.

But Target faced a second backlash from customers upset by the discount retailer's reaction to aggressive, anti-LGBTQ+ activism, which has also been sweeping through Republican state legislatures.

Civil rights groups scolded the company for caving to customers

who expressed outrage over a selection of gender-fluid bathing suits it carried last year. The anti-LGBTQ+ customers also posted threatening videos on social media from inside the stores.

Target's latest moves are just another example of how companies are struggling to cater to different groups of customers at a time of extreme cultural divides, particularly around transgender rights.

Last year, beer brand Bud Light got a negative response from customers angered by its attempt to broaden its customer base by partnering with transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney.

Target, based in Minnesota, and other retailers such as Walmart and H&M, expanded their Pride Month offerings a decade ago or longer. But transgender rights, including to gender-affirming health care and sports participation, have become politicized social issues, prompting lawmakers in some states to try to reverse activists' previous gains.

Target's move to scale back its presence of Pride merchandise for this year isn't unexpected.

Last August, CEO Brian Cornell told reporters that Target learned from the backlash and said the company would be more thoughtful about merchandise decisions for heritage months that celebrate the achievements of marginalized groups.

## ABATEMENT

From page B8

and development companies was part of Mr. Mitchell's vision for The Woodlands."

Developer Howard Hughes is accelerating growth in the district through a partnership with Vitrian, which builds biomanufacturing facilities across the country.

Howard Hughes and Vitrian have tapped five potential sites totaling 83 acres for development.

Each plot has the capacity to host at least one multinational company with multiple production lines, office space, manufacturing areas and warehouse space all under one roof, Vitrian co-founder Scott Nudelman said in a previous article.

**Biomanufacturing boom**

Nudelman said approximately \$400 million in biomanufacturing facility investments have been made in The Woodlands and Conroe area.

Facilities could range from 40,000 to more than 200,000 square feet per site. The total square footage could be 1 mil-

lion square feet and host hundreds of jobs across income levels.

Facilities have expanded since Cellipont, a cell therapy manufacturer, transformed the former office space into a new 76,000-square-foot headquarters in the nearby Research Forest Lakeside development in March.

A new \$18 million life science hub anchored by cancer-fighting biopharmaceutical company Nurix is also in the works nearby.

The hub is backed by Alexandria Real Estate, which aims to create a cluster of life sciences firms it hopes could become a smaller alternative to Texas Medical Center.

Nudelman said the two areas will continue to be vital to Houston's fight against cancer.

"Houston is literally the hub for advanced therapies to treat cancer ... (and) the two biggest hubs are The Woodlands and the (Texas) Medical Center," Nudelman said. "There's more advanced manufacturing for cell therapy going on in Houston than anywhere else."

Claire Partain contributed to this report.



Clouds of deadly ammonia fumes spread over the Loop 610 west overpass at the Southwest Freeway after a tanker truck crashed through a guardrail and exploded on May 11, 1976.

## AMMONIA

From page B8

nonprofit Air Alliance Houston.

Uwak, who is familiar with the explosion, said her concern was not so much the substance's continued use as the fact that it is still transported on roadways through dense, highly-populated cities such as Houston.

The National Transportation Safety Board concluded in a 1977 report that the speed of the truck and the lateral surge of its liquid contents caused the crash, killing the driver on impact. The spill itself caused the rest of the incident's injuries: nearly 200 were either treated at the scene or hospitalized.

"The ammonia fumes penetrated automobiles and buildings, and when their occupants left to escape the fumes during the early minutes of the release, many were exposed to higher dosages," the report said.

The tank contents exploded as the suddenly depressurized substance turned from liquid to gas. The blast destroyed the roadway, a support column and 94 feet of bridge rail, and flung



The truck crash killed the driver on impact, and the ammonia release killed six more people and hospitalized scores.

debris at passing cars.

The safety board later used the Houston tragedy as the basis for a review of U.S. Department of Transportation policy, concluding that "none of the regulatory safeguards ... were effective in reducing the injurious effects of the hazardous materials release."

Ryan Paquet, vice president of Hazmat Safety Consulting and a former industry regulator, said a lot of things have changed since 1976.

"There's been tons of improvements in technology. Elec-

tronic braking systems, anti-rollover systems in cargo tanks, tons of regulations that have changed. Now, in the United States, drivers have to have a hazardous materials endorsement," Paquet said.

Still, anhydrous ammonia is transported in the U.S. under the category of "compressed gas," in spite of its toxicity; everywhere else in the world, Paquet said, "it is transported as a toxic-by-inhalation gas ... you would have a placard on the outside of the truck that showed a skull and crossbones."

## TIMBER

From page B8

a combination of spruce, pine, fir, and cross laminated timber materials. Along with using low-carbon concrete and renewable-energy systems, Howard Hughes has estimated its design would cut emissions by 20%. More recent estimates weren't immediately available.

"We see a significant reduction in embodied carbon throughout a project's lifecycle compared to a steel or concrete building," said Ryan Jones with Lake Flato, the design architect for the project. "One Bridgeland Green pushed this concept, us-

*"One Bridgeland Green ... is unique within the Texas market."*

Ryan Jones with Lake Flato, the design architect for the project

ing mass timber for all vertical construction, which is unique within the Texas market."

The design includes a 10,000-gallon cistern that will recycle rainwater and HVAC condensate, contributing to an 80% reduction in municipal water usage, compared with other offices, the developer estimated.

Howard Hughes will occupy 14,000 square feet at One Bridgeland Green.



# What to do with your bigger tax refund

By Cora Lewis  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The average taxpayer is getting a \$2,852 refund, \$75 more than last year, based on the most recent IRS data. So what should you do with that money?

Experts generally advise putting it toward debt and savings, but, for many people, that's unrealistic.

A tax refund is typically the "biggest extra windfall of the year," said Courtney Alev, consumer financial advocate at Credit Karma.

"One thing we do see is a propensity to consider a tax refund something to splurge with. One in four taxpayers see it as free money and plan to spend it on something they would not otherwise," she said. "While this behavior is completely understandable, given how hard up people are — with the rising cost of living, and high interest rates, the best thing you can do is use it as an opportunity to advance your financial goals."

Emily Garcia, 30, who works in marketing for a medical imaging software company in Toledo, Ohio, said she and her husband, with whom she filed jointly, were refunded about \$1,000 and spent the money on patio furniture.

"We wanted to dress up the backyard, to make it seem nice, and furniture's not cheap," she said. "It was a nice thing to have the refund check to be able to



Lynne Sladky/Associated Press

**Travelers walk through Miami International Airport in November. Experts say paying down debt and saving for a rainy day remain the safest things to do with your tax refund.**

buy what we were looking at."

Though Garcia and her husband bought a house two years ago, which they're still in the process of paying off, they decided not to put the refund toward their mortgage.

"The debt's not going anywhere," said Garcia. "A thousand dollars is not going to make a dent. But it's a good amount to buy something like furniture."

Megan McClelland, 38, who works as a head high school counselor in Petaluma, Califor-

nia, is spending her refund — just over \$1,000 — on travel, such as trips for a bachelorette and a wedding.

In October, McClelland had the last of her outstanding student loans cancelled through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, and so is debt free for the first time in years. She said that the \$500 she had budgeted for her monthly student loan payments is now going into her savings account, so she sees the refund as a chance to spend on

"things that I probably otherwise wouldn't be able to pay for — or that would bring me into debt."

In the past, McClelland said, she would typically have had to work extra shifts, moonlighting at a winery or as a caterer, to take a trip — or put the travel on the credit card. Now she can use the tax refund instead.

"The way the tax refund works in my mind is I can use it more for 'fun money,'" she said.

As of late last month, the IRS

had processed about 141 million returns and refunded roughly \$261 billion to taxpayers, 2.2% more than at that time in 2023.

Matt Schulz, chief credit analyst at LendingTree, echoed the idea that paying down debt and contributing to savings are the two most financially sound things to do with a tax refund, though he said people should do both simultaneously, rather than choosing between the two.

"If you pay down debt to zero and you don't have any savings, all that happens is the next time you have an emergency expense — like a flat tire or taking your dog to the vet — that expense just goes back on your credit card and you're right back in debt," he said.

"If you can build a little bit of savings while you're paying off loans you can break that cycle of debt so many people find themselves in."

Said Alev: "Life is short, we want to reward ourselves. And we see a diverse set of responses (with tax refunds). Our best tip is to use that refund to get your financial life on track. At the treetop, that's what we're seeing and advising."

*The Associated Press receives support from Charles Schwab Foundation for educational and explanatory reporting to improve financial literacy. The independent foundation is separate from Charles Schwab and Co. Inc. The AP is solely responsible for its journalism.*

# Sellers say Amazon's new fees cut into profit margins

By Spencer Soper  
BLOOMBERG

Amazon.com Inc. merchants have found themselves caught in an economic vice.

Earlier this year, the e-commerce giant rolled out changes to the fees its charges them — essentially shifting more of its operating costs onto the small businesses that account for most of the products sold on the site. Making matters worse for merchants, shoppers are trading down.

In the first four months of the year, American consumers have increasingly opted for the least expensive products in nearly all categories, according to a report released Thursday by Adobe Inc.

That makes it harder to pass price hikes along to shoppers, and online merchants are struggling to make money.

Duncan Freer, who sells weighted blankets and sleep masks on Amazon, expects his profit margin to slide to 8% from 20% as a result of the new fees.

One, imposed in March, charges a levy on shipments sent to the company's fulfillment centers.

That will drive the cost of shipping two pallets of Freer's products to Amazon to more than \$800, up four-fold from what it cost him in October, he said.

Amazon reduced the cost of fulfilling each customer order, but Freer said it only partially offsets the new fees.

"Amazon just keeps grabbing more and more," said the Chicago businessman, whose sales on the marketplace amount to

about \$500,000 a year.

"It's like a kick in the gut."

Amazon said the new fees are intended to reflect its own cost of distributing inventory around the U.S. so more items can be delivered in just one day, which helps boost overall sales for online merchants.

Some fees actually went down. In January, Amazon cut commissions for sellers of low-cost apparel, a move interpreted by merchants as an effort to blunt competition from Chinese fast-fashion startup Shein.

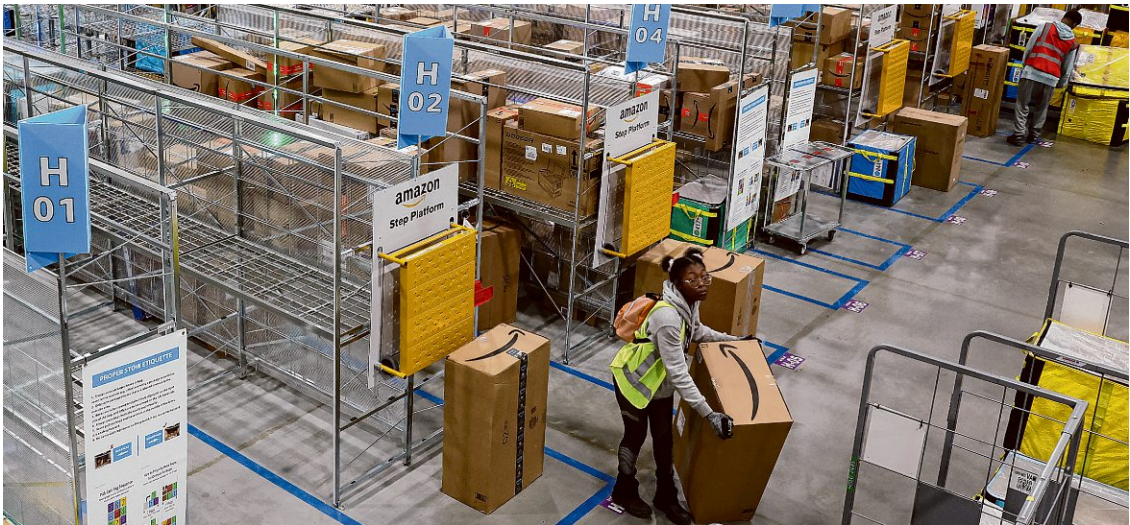
"When we announced these new fee changes in December, we estimated that sellers will on average see an increase of \$0.15 per unit sold, which is significantly less than the average fee increases announced by other fulfillment service providers," company spokeswoman Mira Dix said in an emailed statement.

"As sellers are adapting to these changes we have seen that the actual impact is even lower, and many more sellers are seeing a decrease in the average fees that they are paying to Amazon."

Still, many merchants say Amazon is mostly benefiting from the higher fees, an assertion reflected in the company's earnings.

Revenue from seller services, which includes the popular Fulfillment by Amazon logistics operation, increased at a faster rate than fulfillment expenses in each of the past seven quarters.

Amazon's seller services revenue of \$34.6 billion for the period ended March 30 was up 36.5% from two years earlier, more than triple the pace of growth of its fulfillment costs, which were



Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

**A worker moves a package at an Amazon delivery station in Alpharetta, Ga. Amazon is changing the fees it charges sellers, including on shipments sent to fulfillment centers.**

\$22.3 billion in the period.

In last month's earnings report, the cloud computing division's strong performance overshadowed the growing tension between Amazon and its sellers.

Amazon Web Services in the first quarter contributed more than 60% of the company's operating income, even though it accounts for less than 20% of revenue.

But sales in the core e-commerce business grew at a slower pace than the number of units sold, another indication that consumers are watching their budgets.

Amazon's marketplace model helps the company keep growing through a slowdown by charging fees for advertising and logistics.

Antonio Bindi, a Brazilian businessman who has sold home storage and kitchen products on Amazon for five years,

said the fee structure is getting increasingly complex.

Of particular concern: a levy introduced in April charged when sellers' inventory runs low.

That's on top of previous storage fees that increase when slow-selling inventory lingers in Amazon warehouses.

It's too much for his 20-person team to manage, so he's whittling his catalog of 500 products down to 400 to simplify the operation.

Five years ago, he said, "Amazon was a platform that would facilitate your business operations and let you focus on what you're good at, like creating great products."

"You could just send your products to Amazon, and they'd take care of everything. Now you need an entire department to deal with the complexity. The costs are prohibitive."

San Francisco seller Neil Ay-

ton sells golf yardage books, yoga gear and pickleball equipment.

One of his most popular products is a yoga stick practitioners use to stretch. It was 59 inches, the longest it could be to avoid a higher fee tier.

Earlier this year, he noticed Amazon cut the size limit, and suddenly his yoga sticks were 1 inch too long.

Shipping costs for each product jumped from \$10 to \$26, and Ayton began losing \$3 per sale.

He recalled hundreds of yoga sticks from Amazon warehouses and trimmed an inch off each one, but said doing so merely minimized his losses.

Now he plans to wind down his Amazon business.

"Amazon kind of teases you," Ayton said. "It's great when it's working nicely, but you never know what surprise is coming tomorrow."

# Wall Street finishes week on winning note

By Stan Choe  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — U.S. stocks coasted to the close of another winning week on Friday.

The S&P 500 rose 8.60 points, or 0.2%, to 5,222.68 to finish a third straight winning week following its mostly miserable April. It had been on pace for a bigger gain in the morning, but that mostly disappeared following a discouraging report on U.S. consumer sentiment.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 125.08 points, or 0.3%, to 39,512.84, and the Nasdaq composite edged down by 5.40, or less than 0.1%, to 16,340.87.

The S&P 500 has climbed back within 0.6% of its record on revived

hopes that the Federal Reserve may deliver cuts to interest rates this year. A flood of stronger-than-expected reports on profits from big U.S. companies has also helped support the market.

Gen Digital jumped 15.3% after reporting better profit for the first three months of 2024 than analysts expected. The cyber safety company, whose brands include Norton and LifeLock, also authorized a program to buy back up to \$3 billion of its stock. It joined a lengthening list of companies announcing such programs, which helps goose per-share earnings for investors.

Novavax nearly doubled and shot 98.7% higher after announcing a deal with Sanofi that could be

worth more than \$1.2 billion. The agreement includes a license to co-commercialize Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine worldwide, with some exceptions. Novavax also reported a slightly smaller loss for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

They helped offset a drop of 11% for Akamai Technologies, which topped expectations for profit but fell short for revenue. The cloud-computing, security and content delivery company also gave some financial forecasts for the upcoming year that fell short of analysts' expectations.

It said the strengthening of the U.S. dollar's value against other currencies is slicing into its business, along with slowing traffic growth across the

industry. That helped overshadow its own announcement of a program to buy back up to \$2 billion of its stock.

In the bond market, Treasury yields rose following the discouraging preliminary report from the University of Michigan.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.50% from 4.46% late Thursday. But the movement was still relatively modest compared with its drop from 4.70% late last month.

A cooler-than-expected jobs report at the end of last week suggested the U.S. economy could pull off the tricky balancing act of staying solid enough to avoid a bad recession but not so strong that it worsens inflation.

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Notice to Creditors

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# Officials pledge \$200M to contain bird flu

By Jonel Aleccia and Mike Stobbe  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. health and agriculture officials pledged nearly \$200 million in new spending and other efforts Friday to help track and contain an outbreak of bird flu in the nation's dairy cows that has spread to more than 40 herds in nine states.

The funds include \$101 million to continue work on prevention and to test, track and treat animals and humans potentially affected by the virus known as Type A H5N1, the Health and Human Services Department said. And they include about \$98 million to provide up to \$28,000 each to help individual farms test cattle and bolster bio-security efforts to halt the spread of the virus, according to the Agriculture Department.

In addition, dairy farmers will be compensated for the loss of milk production from infected cattle, whose supply drops dramatically when they become sick, officials said. And dairy farmers and farmworkers would be paid to participate in a workplace study conducted by the Agriculture Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

So far, farmers have been re-



Associated Press file photo

**Forty-two herds of dairy cows in nine U.S. states have confirmed infections of bird flu amid an outbreak.**

luctant to allow health officials onto their farms to test cattle because of uncertainty about how it would affect their businesses, researchers have said. Also, farmworkers, including many migrant workers, have been reluctant to be tested for fear of missing work or because they didn't want to be tracked by the government.

The National Milk Producers

Federation, a trade group representing dairy farmers, said they welcomed the new resources. "Care for farm workers and animals is critical for milk producers, as is protecting against potential human health risks and reassuring the public," the group said in a statement.

The incentives should help increase farmers' willingness to test their herds, said Keith Poul-

sen, director of the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, who has been monitoring the outbreak.

"It provides the latitude and capacity to start going in the right direction," he said.

The new spending comes more than six weeks after the first-ever detection of an avian bird flu virus in dairy cattle — and one confirmed infection in a Texas dairy worker exposed to infected cows who developed a mild eye infection and then recovered. About 33 people have been tested and an additional 260 are being monitored, according to the CDC.

As of Friday, 42 herds in nine states have confirmed infections in dairy cows. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said the outbreak has not spread more widely.

"It's still in the same nine states, and that's the most positive thing about where we are," he told reporters.

But samples of grocery store milk tested by the Food and Drug Administration showed remnants of the virus in about 1 in 5 samples of retail milk nationwide, suggesting that the outbreak could be more widespread, scientists have said.

Under a federal order issued last month, farmers are re-

quired to test lactating dairy cattle for H5N1 before the animals are moved between states. So far, 80 cows have been tested, Vilsack said. About 50,000 animals cross state lines every week, Poulsen estimates.

The FDA found that pasteurization, or heat-treating, killed the virus in the grocery samples of milk, cottage cheese and sour cream.

The agency reiterated warnings that people should not consume raw or unpasteurized milk because of possible risk from the virus.

Officials on Friday also said they expect results soon from tests of pooled raw milk samples sent to commercial processors to "determine potential levels of virus that pasteurization must eliminate." The Agriculture Department found no evidence of the virus in a small sample of retail ground beef.

"The risk to the public from this outbreak remains low," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said.

*The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.*

# Biden to Boeing: End impasse with firefighters union

By Julie Johnsson  
BLOOMBERG

President Joe Biden weighed in on a labor dispute underway at Boeing Co., urging the plane-maker to restart stalled contract talks with a union representing 160 of its firefighters.

"Collective bargaining is a right that helps employers and employees," Biden said in a post on X, the social media site formerly known as Twitter. He said he was "concerned" about reports that Boeing had locked out members of International Association of Fire Fighters Local I-66.

Biden's admonishment over a relatively small-scale labor spat signals the scrutiny and stakes ahead for Boeing as it holds separate, high-stake talks with the union representing roughly 32,000 Seattle-area factory workers. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, whose contract expires in September, is seeking a 40% pay hike and board

representation.

The labor talks come as the company contends with a management shakeup, financial strain and regulatory scrutiny stemming from a January accident in which a fuselage panel blew off a 737 Max shortly after takeoff.

"We remain committed to securing an agreement," Boeing said in an e-mailed statement. "Our offer provides significant pay increases and increased benefits."

Boeing locked out its firefighters and hired replacements on May 4 after workers rejected pay offers that their union described as 20% below the average at other Puget Sound-area fire departments. The union has said it represents about 160 firefighters at several factories and flight-test facilities around the Seattle area and Moses Lake, Wash.

In its statement, Boeing said its firefighters' compensation is competitive with other industrial fire departments, which provide the initial response to

an incident before municipal first responders take command.

Boeing's firefighters earned \$91,000 on average

last year, and their pay would increase to \$112,000 at the start of Boeing's proposed four-year contract, according to the

company.

"I encourage folks to return to the table to secure a deal that benefits Boeing and gets these firefighters

the pay and benefits they deserve," said Biden, who has dubbed himself the most pro-union president in history.

## LIFE TRIBUTES

Mogas, Vincent  
Pickford, Lavon

### VINCENT LOUIS MOGAS

09/07/1939 - 05/02/2024

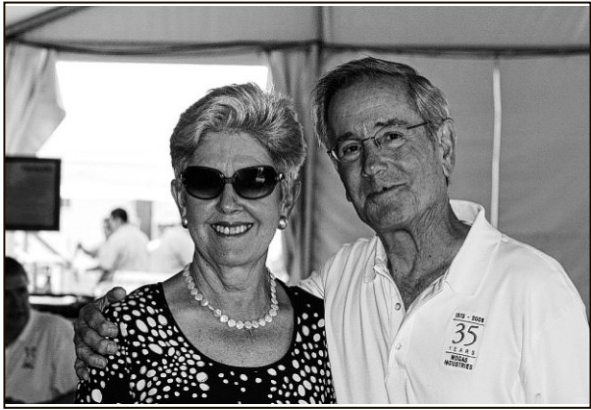
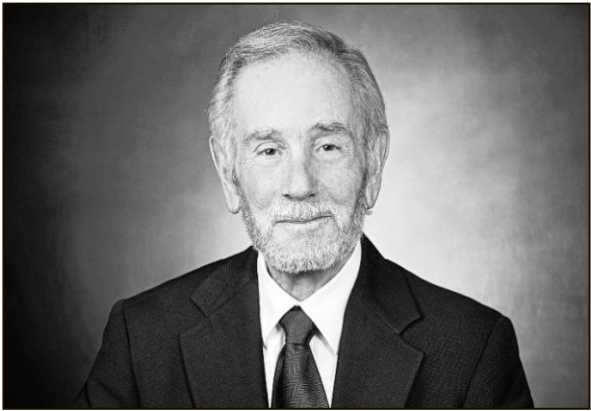
Vincent Louis Mogas, beloved chairman and founder of MOGAS Industries, died on May 2, 2024, in Houston, Texas at the age of 84. Louis spent his life building a family, a valve manufacturing business and a company culture that stood for goodness. Born in Laredo, Texas, on September 7, 1939, Louis was one of six children. Growing up on a cattle ranch taught him life-long lessons in hard work, honor and community. At an early age, Louis' father instilled principles in business such as they "weren't in the cattle business, but in the grass growing business". Louis graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in San Antonio and later received his Master of Business Administration degree from Texas A&I (Texas A&M Kingsville). He married Marilyn Palmer in 1962, whom he credited with encouraging him through difficult business obstacles.

Louis' first job was in Houston working for Cameron Iron Works' ball valve division, where the ball manufacturing was outsourced to a small local machine shop. When opportunity arose in May 1973 to buy that machine shop, Louis courageously took the chance. He soon acquired the patent rights and all intellectual property associated with Cameron's severe service floating ball valve for one dollar (\$1). Under Louis' leadership, MOGAS Industries studied valve failures and established an R&D department that customized valves for specific applications in

severe services. When double recessions hit Houston in the early 80s, Louis weathered the storm and expanded his company to international markets, and today has sales and service offices in Australia, China, Europe, Canada, South America, Middle East and India.

Early on, Louis introduced business behaviors that became the foundation of the Company's core values — Everyone is the CEO of Something, Make Work Fun, Do What's Right — to name a few. His belief that work can be fun and honorable, and that there is One Team at MOGAS drive the Company's business principles today.

While Louis received many Company awards, including The Inc. 500 Fastest Growing Private Companies, multiple Best Companies to Work For in Texas, Houston Business Journal philanthropy awards, supplier excellence, Texas Family Large Business of the Year Finalist, and Best Quality Product, he was most proud of his and his family's philanthropy, and of the MOGAS employees' fund raising and volunteering. These include Ronald McDonald House Charities Greater Houston, The Periwinkle Foundation, Camp for All, National Multiple Sclerosis Association, and several Houston district schools. In 2017 Louis Mogas was honored as a distinguished alumni at Texas A&M University, Kingsville. He established the Mogas Family Perseverance Scholarship Endowment. MOGAS Industries also awards scholarships and educational grants to employees and their children, and mentors summer interns.



tries also awards scholarships and educational grants to employees and their children, and mentors summer interns.

"Always live out your values in your work, so that when you drive home at the end of each day, you can feel proud of yourself." Louis Mogas

Louis Mogas was preceded in death by parents Joe Roque Mogas and Mary Benavides Mogas, sisters Mary Jo Patz and Marci Doughty, and brother Rock Mogas. Louis is survived by his wife Marilyn; daughter Dr. Valerie Mogas; son Matthew Mogas; granddaughters Meghan and Macy Mogas; sister Joyce Thornton; and brother Richard

Mogas.

Funeral services will be held at 2pm on May 16 at St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 717 Sage Rd, Houston, TX 77056. Livestream at <https://www.stmartinsepiscopal.org>. Reception to follow on church grounds. In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made to Ronald McDonald House Charities Greater Houston (<https://rmhchouston.org>), The Periwinkle Foundation (<https://periwinklefoundation.org>) and Houston Junior Woman's Club (<https://houstonjunior-womansclub.org>).

# German police prevent activists blocked from storming Tesla factory

ASSOCIATED PRESS

German police said Friday they had prevented hundreds of demonstrators from storming Tesla's factory near Berlin during protests against the pioneering electric carmaker over its environmental footprint.

Crowds of demonstrators gathered on Friday near the Grunheide factory, Tesla's only European production base, carrying banners complaining about water consumption at the plant and advocating for public transport over private cars.

Activists have been protesting in a forest near the plant since February over concerns about water and plans to cut trees to make way for an expansion of the plant, which opened in early 2022. In March, a suspected arson attack on an electricity pylon claimed by a far-left group knocked out power supplies to the factory for nearly a week, interrupting production.

Company CEO Elon Musk at the time called the culprits the "dumbest eco-terrorists on Earth" and said anti-Tesla protesters were misguided for aiming to halt production of electric vehicles rather than

those powered by fossil fuels.

During Friday's protest march at a nearby train station, "hundreds of participants ran into the forest and tried to get onto the Tesla site," police spokesman Mario Heinemann said on ntv television. "We prevented that with our forces."

Social media footage showed black-clad protesters, many wearing medical masks, running over rough ground toward the factory boundary and riot police using pepper spray in an attempt to turn them back.

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July 25, 1928 -May 4, 2024. Dr. Lavon (Jensen) Pickford, age 95. Survived by her three children Jim (Sandi), Susan and Will Pickford; grandsons Austin (Ashley) and Brandon Pickford; great granddaughter Nora Pickford, long-time friend Scott Gillette, and many other loving family members and friends.

Preceded in death by husband Hugh Pickford, brother Gerald Jensen and grandson Bryan Pickford. Retired professor of finance at the University of Houston and Texas A&M.



A celebration of Lavon's life will be held at 10:30 AM, May 11 at Bellaire United Methodist Church, followed by a lunch reception.

### In Loving Memory Of

#### LAVON PICKFORD

07/25/1928 - 05/04/2024

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## WEATHER

### HOUSTON'S SEVEN-DAY FORECAST

<b>84 67</b> <div></div> <b>TODAY</b> Clouds and sun; breezy, pleasant	<b>78 73</b> <div></div> <b>SUNDAY</b> Showers and a heavier thunderstorm	<b>84 67</b> <div></div> <b>MONDAY</b> Showers and a heavier thunderstorm	<b>90 67</b> <div></div> <b>TUESDAY</b> Mostly cloudy	<b>86 72</b> <div></div> <b>WEDNESDAY</b> A t-storm around in the afternoon	<b>83 67</b> <div></div> <b>THURSDAY</b> Showers and a heavier thunderstorm	<b>87 68</b> <div></div> <b>FRIDAY</b> Mostly sunny and less humid
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### METRO AREA OUTLOOK

**TODAY:** Breezy and pleasant with intervals of clouds and sunshine. High 81 to 86. Winds east 10-20 mph. **TONIGHT:** A brief shower or two. Low 64 to 69. Winds east-southeast 6-12 mph.

### AIR QUALITY

Today's forecast for the entire metro area by the TCEQ:



#### Ozone watch

<div>● Good</div>	<div>● Unhealthy</div>
<div>● Moderate</div>	<div>● Very unhealthy</div>
<div>● Unhealthy for sensitive groups</div>	<div>● Hazardous</div>

### POLLEN AND MOLD

Yesterday's readings by the Houston Health Department:

	Count per cubic meter of air
Tree pollen	<b>Low</b> 4
Weed pollen	<b>Medium</b> 46
Grass pollen	<b>Medium</b> 16
Mold spores	<b>Heavy</b> 13614

● Low

● Medium

● Heavy

● Extremely heavy

Note: No measurements on weekends; charts in Sunday and Monday papers reflect forecast ratings from the previous Friday.

### COMFORT INDEX

The comfort index takes into account how the weather will feel based on a combination of factors. A rating of 10 feels very comfortable while a rating of 0 feels very uncomfortable.

Today	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.
9	5	2	6	7	6

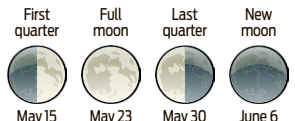
### UV TODAY

Values indicate the exposure to the sun's Ultraviolet rays.

8 a.m.	10 a.m.	Noon	2 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.
1	4	8	8	3	1

<div>● 0-2, Low</div>	<div>● 8-10, Very high</div>
<div>● 3-5, Moderate</div>	<div>● 11+, Extreme</div>
<div>● 6-7, High</div>	

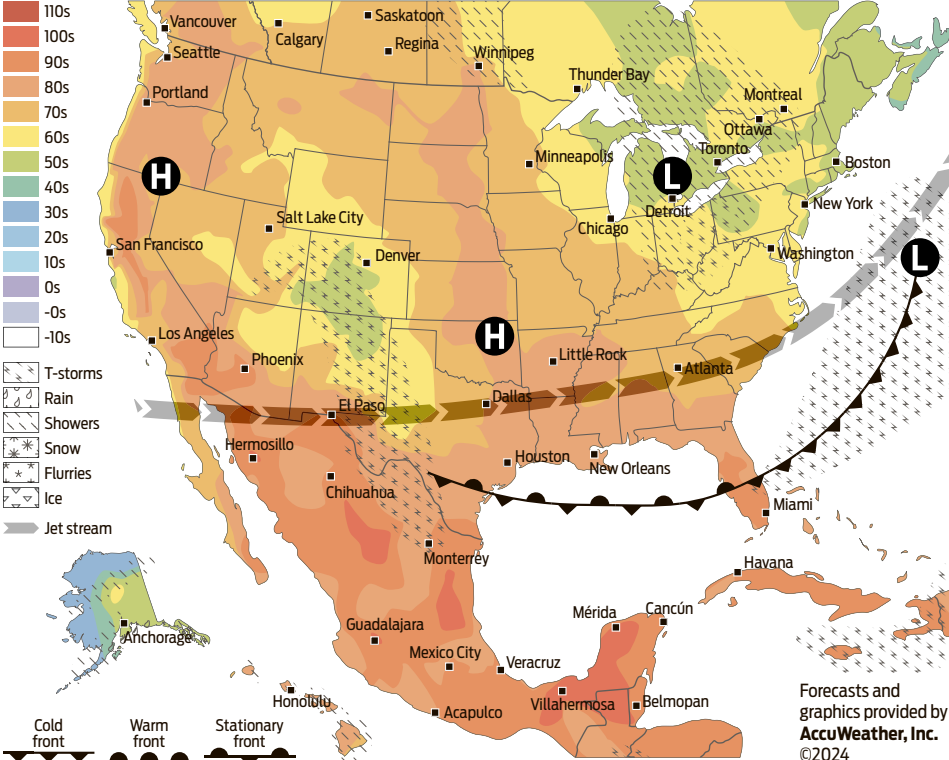
### SUN AND MOON



Sunset tonight	8:05 p.m.
Sunrise Sunday	6:30 a.m.
Moonrise today	9:19 a.m.
Moonset today	none

### NORTH AMERICA TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



### FOR THE RECORD

George Bush Intercontinental Airport through 3 p.m. Fri.

Temperature	Degrees F
High	86
Low	71
Normal high	85
Normal low	66
Record high	94 in 1927
Record low	51 in 1984
Precipitation	Inches
24-hour total	0.00
Month to date	3.63
Normal month to date	1.40
Year to date	20.74
Normal year to date	15.67

#### Other readings

Top wind speed	21 mph
High barometer	29.93 in.
Low barometer	29.77 in.
High dewpoint	69°
Low dewpoint	66°
Average dewpoint	67°
High humidity	90%
Low humidity	50%

### KEY TO CONDITIONS

s - sunny	r - rain
pc - partly cloudy	sf - snow flurries
c - cloudy	sn - snow
sh - showers	i - ice
t - thunderstorms	

### TEXAS

	Today	Sun.
Abilene	70/60/t	75/64/r
Amarillo	65/52/sh	71/50/r
Austin	81/63/pc	83/71/t
Beaumont	85/70/pc	81/74/t
Brownsville	92/79/c	93/79/t
Bryan/College St.	85/68/pc	78/72/r
Corpus Christi	84/76/pc	87/79/r
Dallas/Ft. Worth	79/63/sh	70/63/r
El Paso	91/62/pc	87/64/t
Galveston	81/75/pc	84/77/t
Kingsville	88/77/pc	91/80/t
Laredo	91/76/c	99/79/pc
Longview	81/62/s	70/64/r
Lubbock	68/57/t	76/55/r
McAllen	93/78/c	95/78/c
Midland/Odessa	65/60/r	86/56/c
San Angelo	72/65/t	83/65/t
San Antonio	81/68/c	85/71/t
Texarkana	84/66/s	75/65/sh
Victoria	86/74/pc	87/73/t
Waco	71/63/pc	74/67/r

### NATIONAL

	Today	Sun.
Albany, NY	66/49/c	60/45/c
Albuquerque	74/47/t	74/49/c
Anchorage	52/39/c	51/38/c
Atlanta	77/59/pc	80/60/pc
Baltimore	64/52/c	64/48/t
Billing	71/50/s	73/50/c
Birmingham	79/59/s	81/63/c
Boise	81/54/s	82/55/s
Boston	53/43/pc	56/47/c
Buffalo	62/46/sh	61/49/c
Charlotte, SC	78/58/pc	82/61/s
Charlotte	73/52/pc	77/55/pc
Chicago	66/49/pc	79/60/pc
Cincinnati	68/49/sh	71/54/pc

### NATIONAL cont.

	Today	Sun.
Cleveland	62/49/sh	66/56/pc
Columbus	66/46/t	68/52/pc
Denver	65/45/t	64/43/r
Des Moines	76/54/s	83/59/t
Detroit	62/46/r	69/56/pc
Duluth	68/50/pc	72/39/pc
Fairbanks	59/38/c	55/40/c
Great Falls	78/44/s	77/50/s
Hartford	64/47/pc	60/43/c
Honolulu	81/70/t	82/71/sh
Indianapolis	69/50/pc	74/56/pc
Jackson, MS	80/63/s	79/61/c
Juneau	57/45/pc	54/43/r
Kansas City	77/57/s	74/59/t
Las Vegas	85/65/s	92/69/s
Little Rock	86/63/s	80/62/c
Los Angeles	73/57/pc	76/59/pc
Memphis	82/60/pc	83/62/pc
Miami	95/75/pc	92/76/pc
Milwaukee	63/48/c	76/58/t
Minneapolis	74/57/pc	79/49/pc
Nashville	78/51/pc	78/57/pc
New Orleans	84/70/pc	82/73/c
New York City	62/49/pc	56/48/sh
Oklahoma City	78/59/pc	70/60/t
Orlando	94/67/pc	92/70/pc
Philadelphia	65/48/pc	59/47/t
Phoenix	94/67/s	97/71/s
Pittsburgh	58/46/t	63/49/sh
Portland, OR	87/53/s	77/54/pc
Sacramento	94/57/s	90/55/s
St. Louis	76/55/s	83/60/pc
Salt Lake City	71/54/s	80/59/s
San Diego	69/60/pc	70/60/pc
San Francisco	71/54/s	69/52/pc
Santa Fe	64/41/t	66/41/c
Seattle	82/51/s	71/51/pc
Tucson	88/59/s	92/61/s
Washington, DC	65/51/pc	67/50/t

### INTERNATIONAL

	Today	Sun.
<b>Africa</b>		
Cairo	87/66/s	83/64/s
Cape Town	66/51/pc	71/50/s
Casablanca	75/64/pc	73/63/pc
Dakar	84/73/pc	84/74/pc
Johannesburg	82/55/s	77/50/s
Lagos	92/77/t	90/78/t
<b>Asia/Pacific</b>		
Beijing	80/53/s	85/51/pc
Ho Chi Minh City	96/83/t	97/82/t
Hong Kong	85/78/pc	86/78/t
Islamabad	94/70/pc	88/67/t
Jakarta	94/78/sh	94/78/sh
Karachi	94/83/s	96/82/pc
Kuala Lumpur	91/77/sh	91/77/t
Manila	98/83/pc	98/82/pc
New Delhi	103/80/s	99/80/t
Singapore	72/49/r	71/49/s
Shanghai	75/65/r	81/56/pc
Singapore	89/80/r	89/80/r
Sydney	64/58/r	65/59/r
Taipei	88/73/c	90/66/t
Tokyo	76/66/s	75/67/c
<b>Canada</b>		
Calgary	70/45/pc	73/48/pc
Edmonton	68/42/pc	69/46/t
Montreal	64/50/pc	59/50/sh
Toronto	57/47/sh	63/52/c
Vancouver	67/51/s	65/53/c
Winnipeg	83/47/c	62/36/pc
<b>Europe</b>		
Amsterdam	72/55/pc	77/60/pc
Athens	74/57/c	76/56/s
Berlin	70/48/c	70/48/pc
Copenhagen	61/44/s	60/46/s
Dublin	69/51/pc	65/52/c
Frankfurt	77/53/pc	78/56/c
Geneva	78/51/c	76/55/pc
Istanbul	62/51/sh	69/55/s
London	75/55/pc	77/56/t
Madrid	84/56/pc	82/56/pc
Moscow	49/34/pc	46/32/pc
Paris	78/56/c	74/56/sh
Prague	69/48/c	68/44/pc
Rome	76/52/s	74/54/s
Stockholm	60/38/s	69/48/pc
Vienna	72/50/c	71/50/c
Warsaw	60/40/c	64/42/s
Zurich	75/48/s	76/54/pc
<b>Latin America</b>		
Bogota	69/50/sh	69/51/r
Buenos Aires	63/50/pc	57/44/r
Caracas	93/78/c	92/76/sh
Cancun	93/74/s	93/76/pc
Havana	90/81/pc	91/81/pc
Kinston	70/63/pc	70/63/pc
Lima	72/64/c	72/64/c
Rio de Janeiro	84/75/s	87/76/s
San Juan	90/77/sh	92/76/t
San Salvador	89/72/t	90/72/t
Santiago	59/38/pc	56/32/s
Sao Paulo	87/68/s	88/67/s
St. Thomas	91/81/pc	91/79/s
<b>Mexico</b>		
Acapulco	86/69/pc	88/70/pc
Cancun	92/77/pc	91/81/r
Guadalajara	99/62/s	96/60/s
Guanajuato	94/59/pc	94/54/s
Mazatlan	85/69/pc	85/68/pc
Merida	105/79/pc	106/79/pc
Mexico City	90/62/pc	89/60/pc
Puerto Vallarta	86/68/s	89/71/s
Tampico	90/79/pc	90/80/s
Veracruz	93/76/pc	97/79/pc
<b>Middle East</b>		
Baghdad	104/78/pc	99/74/pc
Beirut	76/65/s	73/64/pc
Dubai	95/80/s	101/84/s
Jerusalem	80/58/s	72/56/s
Kabul	72/48/t	73/51/s
Mecca	108/83/pc	110/83/pc
Riyadh	105/81/pc	108/84/pc
Tehran	81/66/s	85/70/pc
Tel Aviv	80/68/pc	76/67/s

### COASTAL FORECAST

**GALVESTON BAY:** Wind from the east at 10-20 knots today. Seas 2-4 feet. Visibility clear to the horizon. **Tonight:** Wind from the east-southeast at 7-14 knots. Seas 2-4 feet. Mostly cloudy, a shower or two.

**MATAGORDA SHIP CHANNEL TO HIGH ISLAND OUT 20 TO 50 MILES:** Wind from the east at 12-25 knots today. Seas 1-3 feet. Visibility clear to the horizon. **Tonight:** Wind from the east-southeast at 10-20 knots. Seas 1-3 feet. A couple of late-night showers.

### GALVESTON TIDES

Highs	Feet	Lows	Feet
9:44 a.m.	1.8	12:41 a.m.	-0.3
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### RIVERS, CREEKS AND BAYOUS

	Location	Flood stage	Latest stage	24-hr. chg.
Brays Bayou	South Main	54	16.92	-0.06
Brazos River	Bryan	43	19.14	-8.21
	Hempstead	50	46.44	+0.39
	Richmond	48	44.91	+1.16
Buffalo Bayou	Pinney Point	50	35.49	-0.12
	Shepherd Dr.	23	7.22	-0.12
Clear Creek	Friendswood	12	2.40	+0.11
Colorado R.	Austin	29	11.68	+0.04
	Bastrop	25	2.84	-0.13
	La Grange	32	4.63	-0.66
	Columbus	34	10.71	-0.92
	Wharton	39	10.97	-0.02
	Bay City	44	5.09	-1.72
Greens Bayou	Eastex Fwy.	61	39.29	-0.13
Guadalupe R.	Hunt	12	7.64	-0.03
	Comfort	26	3.25	-0.05
	Spring Branch	36	1.79	+0.16
	New Braunfels	13	9.41	+0.01
	Gonzales	31	11.70	-0.08
	Cuero	20	7.62	-0.02
	Victoria	21	5.77	+0.10
	Dupont	20	10.42	-0.08
Little River	Little River	30	11.49	+7.56
	Cameron	30	3.94	-0.87
Navasota R.	Easterly	19	20.38	-1.39
Neches River	Evadale	19	19.43	+0.06
Pine Island B.	Sour Lake	25	27.77	-0.68
Sabine River	Bon Wier	30	33.47	-0.52
	Deweyville	24	26.42	-0.16
	Orange	4	2.29	-0.07
	Burkeville	43	32.20	-2.99
San Bernard R.	E. Bernard	17	11.24	-2.01
E. San Jac. R.	Cleveland	19	8.54	-5.19
W. San Jac. R.	Conroe	116	101.46	-2.77
San Jacinto R.	Sheldon	10	4.33	-2.07
Sims Bayou	Telephone Rd.	30	2.40	-0.06
Trinity River	Goodrich	36	38.94	-2.44
	Liberty	26	31.33	-0.45
Village Creek	Kountze	20	15.74	-1.70
White Oak B.	Heights Blvd.	48	7.86	-0.34

### TEXAS LAKES

	Full pool	Latest level	Release cfs
through 7 a.m. Friday			
Canyon Dam	909	886.44	63
Conroe	201	201.17	350
Houston	4173	431.9	N.A.
Lake Travis	681	632.29	217
Livingston	131	131.42	

# White House highlights tax showdown

By Josh Boak

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The winner of November's presidential election will face an epic challenge next year with the coming expiration of nearly \$4 trillion in tax cuts — an issue that the Biden White House is highlighting in the runup to November.

Lael Brainard, director of the White House National Economic Council, in a speech Friday emphasized the administration's differences with Republicans over taxes. In her address at the Brookings Institution, Brainard made a case for higher rates on corporations and the ultra-wealthy in order to support the middle class.

“The expiration of Trump's 2017 tax package next year will put tax fairness front and center,” Brainard said. “The president is honoring his ironclad commitment to not raise taxes on anyone making less than \$400,000 and will cut taxes further for workers and families, paid for by asking corporations and those at the top to contribute more.”

Many of the 2017 income tax cuts signed into law by then-President Donald Trump are set to expire after 2025. If all the tax cuts expire, the vast majority of U.S. households would see their payments to the IRS increase. But if all the tax cuts are extended, as additional \$4.6 trillion including the cost of debt service would be added to the national debt over the next decade, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Trump, a Republican, says tax increases would destroy the U.S. economy. But Biden, a Democrat, wants to extend the middle-class tax cuts while raising taxes on highly profitable companies and the richest sliver of Americans.

In her speech, Brainard said the 2017 tax cuts failed to deliver the growth promised by Republicans, a claimed backed up by most economic analyses. She argued that the GOP's tax code rewrite let wealthy households

play by their own set of rules that helped them pay lower rates than many people with middle-class earnings.

Her speech used variations on the word “fair” 16 times in what is a clear attempt to raise awareness of the issue, as many voters are more focused on inflation, immigration and foreign policy as major policy challenges for the country.

Trump has argued that the expiration of all of his tax cuts would cause mass layoffs that could permanently cripple the economy. His remarks reflect a belief that growth stems from the choices made by companies and wealthy investors, whereas Biden is betting on growth flowing out of spending and saving by middle-class households that feel more financially secure.

Trump's 2017 overhaul cut the corporate tax rate to 21%, intending to make it more competitive internationally. The law also temporarily cut the income taxes paid by most U.S. households, in part by trimming marginal tax rates and increasing the standard deduction.

As a result of these changes, the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center initially estimated that a family in the 40th to 60th percentile of earners would on average save \$930 annually. But someone in the top 1% would get back \$51,140 and those in the top 0.1% would save \$193,380.

Even though Biden has said he only wants higher taxes on the wealthy and companies, Trump tells his supporters at rallies that his Democratic rival would raise everyone's taxes.

The Republican maintains that the high inflation under Biden as the country recovered from the coronavirus was the equivalent of a tax increase, one he claims would only worsen if Biden stays in the White House.

“Biden wants to raise taxes on top of that (inflation) and raise business taxes, which will lead to the destruction of your jobs and, you know