"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, sunny to partly cloudy, breezy, quite chilly, high 40. **Tonight,** mostly clear, cold, low 29. **Tomorrow,** partly sunny, brisk, remaining cold, high 38. Weather map, Page B10.

VOL. CLXXIV .... No. 60,354 © 2024 The New York Times Company SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2024 Prices in Canada may be higher $4.00

NEWS ANALYSIS

Musk's Pledge To Ax Trillions Faces Reality

Legal Fights and Lags Will Await His Efforts

This article is by ***David A. Fahrenthold, Alan Rappeport, Theodore Schleifer*** *and* ***Annie Karni****.*

WASHINGTON — These are frenzied times for the nascent Department of Government Efficiency.

In Silicon Valley, tech leaders are eagerly seeking positions or introductions to the department, even though for now it is not an actual part of government, but a loose grouping that Elon Musk named after an internet meme. On his social media platform, X, Mr. Musk posted a "Godfather"-style photo of himself as the "Dogefather," asking government employees, "What did you get done this week?"

And in Washington, a House subcommittee has been announced to help push through President-elect Donald J. Trump's vision, announced on Nov. 12, for a department that would slash the $6.7 trillion federal budget.

Members of Congress — even Democratic ones — have been offering up ideas for where to cut what Mr. Musk said could be $2 trillion out of the budget.

"It's going to be very easy," Elon Musk's mother, Maye Musk, told Fox News on Tuesday, after she sat in on some of her son's meetings. Mr. Musk will lead the department along with Vivek Ramaswamy, a former Republican presidential candidate.

The coming months will show if her prediction proves right.

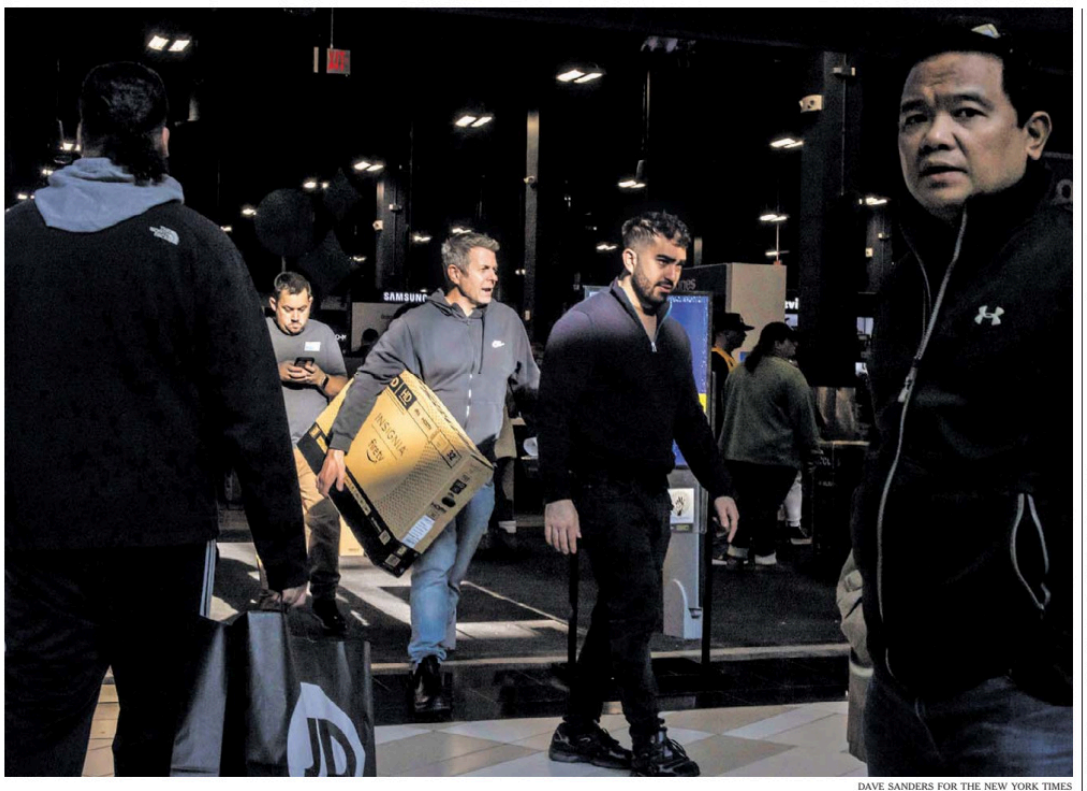
When Mr. Trump takes office, Mr. Musk's group will face a daunting reality. An entire apparatus has developed over the centuries that allows the government to keep marching on in the face of economic shocks, wartime hardships, or — as in this case — political vows to diminish its size and spending.

Any effort to slash the federal government and its 2.3 million civilian workers will likely face resistance in Congress, lawsuits from activist groups and delays mandated by federal rules. Unlike in his businesses, Mr. Musk will not be the sole decider, but will have to build consensus among legislators, executive-branch staffers, his co-leader and Mr. Trump himself. And federal rules ostensibly prevent Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy from making decisions in private, unlike how many matters are handled in the business world.

Meetings would have to be open and minutes made public, said Brian D. Feinstein, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania who studies administrative law.

"All of this would have to happen in the sunlight," Mr. Fein-

Continued on Page A14



DAVE SANDERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Looking for a Shopping Haul

Black Friday deal hunters in Albany, N.Y. Retailers are finding that buyers have grown more choosy about their purchases. Page B1.

Amid the Graves, Letting Nature Take Its Course

Cemeteries Resilient to Climate Change, and Helpful to Wildlife

By CARA BUCKLEY

Across the country, where the dead lie, life is increasingly thriving.

It's happening in Catholic and Jewish cemeteries; in burial grounds up and down the East and West coasts and in the Bible Belt; in sprawling private graveyards that double as public greenspaces, and in century-old potter's fields.

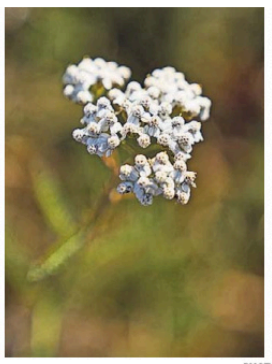
Groundskeepers, deacons, horticulturists, conservationists, arborists and newly minted gardeners are changing how they tend to burial sites. They are letting grasses grow longer and reducing how much they mow. They're ripping out invasive plants, encouraging native shrubs to thrive, forgoing pesticides, and replacing manicured turfgrass with wildflower meadows.

Cemeteries have often been the largest green spaces in cities, providing vital havens for wildlife. But during the pandemic, many of them grew especially popular as spots where people could safely gather and enjoy pastoral settings. In 2020, Laurel Hill, a 265-acre historic cemetery straddling the Schuylkill River in Pennsylvania, saw its attendance more than double. Green-Wood in Brooklyn, with 478 acres of rolling hills, lush plantings, thousands of trees and serene vistas, counted 200,000 new visitors.

The surge coincided with an effort underway by Green-Wood and other cemeteries to swap swaths of manicured lawns for meadows filled with wildflowers and drought resistant native shrubs. Earlier attempts to let grass grow longer at Green-Wood had been met with fierce resistance. But as people sought solace in nature during pandemic lockdowns, they brought with them a new openness.

"We've seen a huge sea change in terms of people's willingness to accept this," said Joseph Charap, Green-Wood's vice president of horticulture, as he wound his way through one of the cemetery's new

Continued on Page A16



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BING GUAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

More and more cemeteries, like Brooklyn's Green-Wood, are letting the grass grow longer.

In Airline Math, Late Departure Equals On Time

By BEN BLATT

The average flight today from Kennedy Airport to Los Angeles is slower than it was in 1995 in every conceivable way. Planes face longer delays leaving the gate; take more time taxiing before taking off; and spend more time in the air.

But paradoxically, even with an average rise in travel time of 18 minutes, the percentage of flights on this route arriving after the scheduled arrival time has decreased. In 1995, the arrivals were behind schedule 51 percent of the time; today it's just 37 percent.

Why do today's flights arrive early more often, even though they're slower? Airlines have extended their *scheduled* flight durations even more than the flights have lengthened in *actual* duration. The average scheduled duration from J.F.K. to Los Angeles has increased 23 minutes since 1995, according to an Upshot analysis of Bureau of Transportation Statistics data.

Thanks to those more forgiving schedules, a majority of domestic flights nationwide arrive early or on time. If your plane reaches the gate at exactly the estimated arrival time, you are actually on a plane that is running slower than usual.

For airlines, scheduling the extra time has little downside, while

Continued on Page A20

U.K. LAWMAKERS VOTE TO PERMIT ASSISTED DYING

A LANDMARK MOMENT

Applicants in Wales and England Must Meet Strict Criteria

By STEPHEN CASTLE

LONDON — After an emotive and at times impassioned debate, Britain's lawmakers on Friday voted to allow assisted dying for terminally ill patients in England and Wales under strict conditions, opening the way to one of the most profound social changes in the country in decades.

By 330 votes to 275, members of Parliament gave their support to a bill that would permit doctors to help some terminally ill patients to end their lives.

Friday's vote was not the final say on the matter for Parliament, as it will now be scrutinized in parliamentary committees and amendments to the bill may be put forward. But it is a landmark political moment, setting the stage for a significant shift that some have likened to Britain's legalization of abortion in 1967 and the abolition of the death penalty in 1969.

The new legislation would apply to a narrow group: Applicants would have to be over 18, diagnosed with a terminal illness and have been given no more than six months to live. Two doctors and a judge would be required to give their approval, and the fatal drugs would have to be self-administered.

Assisted dying is already legal in a handful of European countries, as well as in Canada, New Zealand, 10 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

The bill debated on Friday was proposed by a Labour Party member of parliament, Kim Leadbeater, but lawmakers were given the freedom to vote with their consciences, instead of being expected to vote along a party line, meaning the outcome was impossible to predict.

During almost five hours of debate on Friday in a crowded parliamentary chamber, raw divisions were revealed over an issue that transcended political affiliations.

Meg Hillier, a Labour lawmaker, said the legislation would "cross a Rubicon," by involving the state in the death of some of those it governs. "This is a fundamental change in the relationship between the state and the citizen, and the patient and their doctor," she said.

But Kit Malthouse, a Conservative lawmaker, argued in support of the bill, saying, "The deathbed for far too many is a place of misery, torture and degradation, a reign of blood and vomit and tears." He added, "I see no compassion and beauty in that — only

Continued on Page A10

Cyclist's Death Inflames Clash Over Paris Streets

A Road Rage Inquiry Exposes a Divide on an Anti-Car Push

By RICHARD FAUSSET and SÉGOLÈNE LE STRADIC

PARIS — It sent a shock through Paris, a city striving to transform itself into one of the great cycling metropolises in the world: a bicycle rider, crushed under the wheels of an SUV in a bike lane just a few yards from La Madeleine, the landmark neoclassical church, in what prosecutors suspect was a deliberate act of road rage.

A murder investigation has been opened, and last week, Mayor Anne Hidalgo led the Paris City Council in a minute of silence for the cyclist, Paul Varry, a 27-year-old who was also a cycling advocate. Ms. Hidalgo, a member of the Socialist Party, delivered an emotional speech in which she signaled she would continue to roll out her notably aggressive policies that aim to drastically reduce the role of the automobile in Parisian life.

"I am truly angry," she said. "The future does not belong to cars."

An outpouring of emotion over Mr. Varry's Oct. 15 death has put a spotlight on the dangers facing cyclists in a city that has seen an explosion in bikes and cycling lanes in recent years. But it has also underscored the frustrations that motorists increasingly feel in a place that has chosen to limit the movement, speed and parking options of cars.

As cycling organizations, spurred by the death of Mr. Varry, have demanded more protections from aggressive drivers in recent weeks, others have complained about Parisian bikers themselves, some of whom have earned a reputation as dangerous risk-takers.

Ratcheting up tensions this month is a new policy banning motorists from driving through the four arrondissements, or dis-

Continued on Page A9

U.S. Looks Away on China's Misuse of Panda Aid

By MARA HVISTENDAHL

WASHINGTON — For decades, American zoos have raised tens of millions of dollars from donors and sent the money to China for the right to host and display pandas. Under U.S. law, those funds were required to be spent protecting pandas in the wild.

But the Chinese government instead spent millions on apartment buildings, roads, computers, museums and other expenses, records show. For years, China refused even to account for millions more.

Regulators with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees the payments, have for two decades raised concerns about this with American zoo administrators and Chinese officials alike. The U.S. government, on three occasions, froze payments to China over incomplete record keeping, documents show.

ARIANA DREHSLER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A panda at the San Diego Zoo.

Zoos, too, have known that the money was not always going toward conservation. But they worried that if Fish and Wildlife cut off the money altogether, China could demand the return of its bears. Zoos count on pandas for visitors, merchandise sales and media attention.

Ultimately, the regulators allowed the money to keep flowing and agreed not to check the spending in China so thoroughly, according to records and former officials.

"There was always pushing back and forth about how the U.S. shouldn't ask anything," said Kenneth Stansell, a former Fish and Wildlife official who traveled to

Continued on Page A6

INTERNATIONAL A4-12

Syrian Rebels Escalate Attacks
An attack on the major city of Aleppo raised alarm that a long-running civil war was flaring up. PAGE A8

Notre-Dame in a New Light
France's president, Emmanuel Macron, toured the renovated cathedral before it opens to the public next week. PAGE A4

NATIONAL A13-17, 20

Justice Dept. Bracing for Test
President-elect Donald J. Trump's plans to install loyalists have left officials fearful that he will undermine the department's independence. PAGE A15

Last Resort for Rikers Island
A federal judge is likely to employ a rarely used remedy to try to fix problems in New York City's jails. PAGE A17

SPORTS B6-8

Aiming High in Season 2
The Professional Women's Hockey League is counting on an influx of talent to build on its early success. PAGE B6

ARTS C1-6

Reprising a Killer Role
The murderer played by Mark Duplass in the found-footage "Creep" films has returned in a TV series. PAGE C1

'And Don't Call Me Shirley'
Revisiting gags from "Airplane!" and other movies that Jim Abrahams, who died on Tuesday, helped create. PAGE C1

BUSINESS B1-5

Rethinking Airline Loyalty
Some frequent fliers, frustrated with changes to rewards programs, have stopped chasing status and are adopting different strategies when booking flights and using credit cards. PAGE B1

Hostile Days Ahead in Health
Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and others with marginal experience are in line for top health posts, raising alarms at drug makers and setting the stage for battles over regulatory changes. PAGE B1

OPINION A18-19

Vickie Wang PAGE A19

THIS WEEKEND

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Inside The Times

The New York Times

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The Newspaper and Beyond

TODAY'S PAPER

Corrections A20
Crossword C3
Obituaries B9
Opinion A18-19
Weather B10
Classified Ads B8

VIDEO President Emmanuel Macron of France toured Notre-Dame five years after the cathedral was damaged in a devastating fire. Watch a clip of the restored landmark, which is expected to reopen next month, at *nytimes.com/video.*

AUDIO On the latest episode of the "Hard Fork" podcast, the hosts Casey Newton and Kevin Roose delivered their list of the 100 most iconic technologies of all time, crafted with "vibes-only decision-making." *nytimes.com/hardfork*

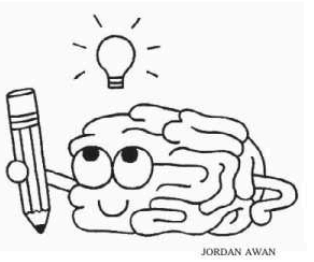
GUIDE The holiday season has arrived in New York City. Festivities of all kinds, from annual classics like "The Nutcracker" to ice skating and light displays, are opening. See a rundown of shows and events at *nytimes.com/arts.*

Quote of the Day

"You've achieved what was said to be impossible."

EMMANUEL MACRON, *the president of France, speaking to an assembly of over half of the 2,000 workers and craftsmen who contributed to the reconstruction of Notre-Dame Cathedral, which was ravaged by a fire in 2019. Page A4.*

The News Quiz



JORDAN AWAN

Did you follow the headlines this week?
Take our quiz to find out.

1. Why did Jack Smith, the special counsel, move to dismiss the federal criminal cases he brought against Donald J. Trump last year?

a. He found evidence that exonerates Mr. Trump.
b. He plans to try the case under more severe charges.
c. He wants to retire.
d. To follow a policy against prosecuting sitting presidents
e. He reached a settlement with Mr. Trump.

2. Mr. Trump picked Scott Bessent to be his Treasury Department secretary. What is Mr. Bessent's current job?

a. Chief executive of a biotech company
b. Deputy chairman of the Federal Reserve
c. Heir to a manufacturing conglomerate
d. Manager of a hedge fund
e. President of a bank

3. Mr. Trump said he would impose tariffs on all products coming into the United States from China and *two* other countries on his first day in office. What were they?

a. Canada
b. Japan
c. Mexico
d. Russia
e. Saudi Arabia

4. Israel agreed to a cease-fire this week with which group, halting the deadliest war between them in decades?

a. Hamas
b. Hezbollah
c. Houthis
d. Iran's Revolutionary Guard
e. Palestinian Islamic Jihad

5. The Biden administration said it would lend $6 billion to which electric vehicle company to build a factory in Georgia?

a. Fisker
b. Lucid
c. Rivian
d. Polestar
e. Tesla

KARSTEN MORAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

6. Percival Everett (above) won the National Book Award for fiction for "James," a retelling of which classic novel?

a. "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"
b. "The Great Gatsby"
c. "Lord Jim"
d. "Treasure Island"
e. "Ulysses"

7. Matt Gaetz, Mr. Trump's former pick for attorney general, recently joined a social platform in which celebrities are paid to send personalized videos to fans. What is it called?

a. AskJeeves
b. Cameo
c. Deliveroo
d. MostlyFans
e. Someecards

8. According to recent figures, what costs an average of $417 in New York City?

a. A Broadway show ticket
b. A hotel room for one night
c. A taxi from J.F.K. airport
d. Real estate broker fees
e. The toll to enter Manhattan

9. Thousands of protesters took to the streets of Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. What were they demonstrating for?

a. Abolishing the inheritance tax
b. Raising the minimum wage
c. The release of the former prime minister
d. The removal of a Supreme Court Justice
e. Repairs to the country's main highway

10. For the last time as president, President Biden pardoned two Thanksgiving turkeys at the White House. What are their names?

a. Champ and Major
b. Dinner and Dessert
c. Donald and Kamala
d. Peach and Blossom
e. Pumpkin and Pie

11. Which driver won his fourth straight Formula 1 title last weekend?

a. Lewis Hamilton
b. Joey Logano
c. Logan Sargeant
d. Michael Schumacher
e. Max Verstappen

The News Quiz is published on Fridays in the Morning newsletter. To sign up, visit nytimes.com/themorning.

Solutions: 1. D; 2. D; 3. A and C; 4. B; 5. C; 6. A; 7. B; 8. B; 9. C; 10. D; 11. E.

Today's Top Trending Headlines

Kennedy's Inheritance: How Addiction and Trauma Shaped a Turbulent Life A team of Times journalists examined the life of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President-elect Donald J. Trump's pick for health secretary. Interviews with friends, court filings and his own statements, they wrote, revealed a "pattern of cycling through extremes," including drug addiction and deep dives into conspiracy theories.

Hiker Survives 50 Days in Canadian Wilderness Sam Benastick, a hiker who was reported missing on Oct. 19, was found alive on Tuesday. He had been camping in Redfern-Keily Provincial Park in British Columbia, an area known for jagged mountains, fast-changing weather and bear warnings. With the official search called off, a spokesperson said the police had feared this "would not be the outcome."

After Emotional Debate, British Lawmakers Vote to Legalize Assisted Dying Britain's Parliament voted to allow doctors to help some terminally ill patients to end their lives, opening the way to one of the most profound social changes in the country in decades. Stephen Castle reported on the legislation's strict conditions, which stipulate that applicants would have to have been given no more than six months to live and that the fatal drugs would have to be self-administered.

Opinion | She Was the Queen of 90 Million Nightstands In Times Opinion, the author Sally Franson argued that the novelist Barbara Taylor Bradford, who died last week at 91, "should be recognized as one of the most influential American novelists of the last half-century." Though Ms. Bradford's 40 books — beginning with her 1979 debut, "A Woman of Substance" — sold more than 90 million copies in 40 languages, her work did not garner the critical accolades of her peers'.

A Headline From History

NATALIE WOOD IS FOUND DROWNED ON YACHT VISIT TO SANTA CATALINA

November 30, 1981. The body of the actress Natalie Wood was found in the water off Santa Catalina Island in California the previous day, The Times reported. Investigators said the cause of death was drowning, pending further investigation. Ms. Wood, 43, had been staying on a 55-foot cabin cruiser with her husband, the actor Robert Wagner; Christopher Walken, her co-star in the upcoming film "Brainstorm"; and the boat's captain. According to the article, the men noticed Ms. Wood was missing around midnight and began searching for her. At 3:30 a.m., the Coast Guard was called, and around 7:45 a.m., a county sheriff helicopter discovered her body, The Times wrote. After investigations and rumors about Ms. Wood's death, in 2012 the Los Angeles County coroner amended her death certificate to say that she had died from "drowning and other undetermined factors."

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Facts of Interest

The National Retail Federation projected U.S. holiday sales to grow as much as 3.5 percent this year, slower than in recent years but in line with averages before the pandemic.

Picky Buyers Cast Shadow Over Retail B1

Inspection reports indicate some nursing homes overuse psychotropic medications to pacify residents because they do not have enough workers to attend to them.

Nursing Home Industry Wants Trump to Rescind Mandate On Staffing Levels A15

Along with David and Jerry Zucker, his pals from his youth in Wisconsin, Jim Abrahams — who died this week at 80 — was a pioneer of some of the most beloved, gleefully over-the-top comedies in cinema history.

Movies So Silly They're Classics C1

Since awarding the 2022 soccer World Cup to Qatar, FIFA, soccer's governing body, has added a human rights component to its host selection process.

Secret Report Urges FIFA to Pay Workers Harmed at Qatar Sites A11

Florence, Italy — a city with about 367,000 residents — hosted nearly nine million overnight visitors in 2023, plus 1.5 million day trippers. The mayor's office says those numbers are increasing.

Arrivederci to Annoying Tourist Trappings C7

The ancient Greeks often competed in a coating of olive oil at the Olympics. The oil served as sunscreen of a sort, and the athletes also believed it would bring them good luck and strength.

Brigham Young Runners' Secret Ingredient to Win N.C.A.A. Titles: Olive Oil B8

The Mini Crossword

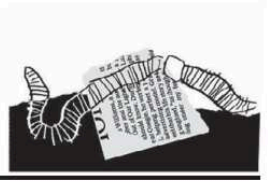
11/30/2024 BY WYNA LIU
EDITED BY SAM EZERSKY

ACROSS
1 Bro and sis, e.g.
5 Range that divides Europe into wet northern and dry southern climates
9 Beef and lamb, but not chicken or turkey
10 "Say ___!" (doctor's request)
11 By way of
12 It's a gift
14 Old-fashioned way to attach documents
15 "___ Kapital"

DOWN
1 What a tube top lacks
2 Radio streaming network since 2008, familiarly
3 Do first thing in the morning?
4 ___ the Eagle, Muppet who once thought "The Sound of Music" was written by Shakespeare
6 Video game segments
7 "Common Sense" writer Thomas
8 Fantasy sports fodder
13 Place for a body scrub

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

D	U	C	K	■
E	M	A	I	L
C	A	B	L	E
A	M	I	N	O
F	I	N	S	■



LUCY JONES

Might We Suggest . . .

Four Weekend Recommendations From Around the Newsroom

1 Solving the Streaming Conundrum

It's the visual equivalent of a record skip: With countless streaming options, the group gathered in your living room can't decide on what to watch. Fast-forward through the delay with Maya Salam's streaming suggestions for every mood. Need something family-friendly? Try the gripping documentary "Free Solo." Want a familiar classic to chat through? Turn on "Titanic." *nytimes.com/arts*

2 Dabbling in the (Holiday) Market

Transform your holiday shopping experience with an alternative to big-box bonanzas and cyber sprees. At winter markets, customers can connect with small business owners and find unique gifts while enjoying festivities like ice skating and Christmas tree-gazing. What vendors — and vibes — will you discover? *nytimes.com/business*

JEENAH MOON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

3 Taking an Artful Approach to Fitness

For some walkers, runners and cyclists, plotting their route is just as important as the workout itself. These inventive enthusiasts are using the map function of exercise-tracking platforms like Strava to create images of animals, phrases, even the Mona Lisa. One runner, Duncan McCabe, recently elevated the trend by producing animations of dancing stickmen and stomping dinosaurs superimposed over Toronto's city grid. Get inspired to create your personal best — artwork, that is — at *nytimes.com/style.*

4 Sharpening Your Focus

Playing out amid a cacophony of pings, rings and reminders, modern life is filled with distractions, and staying focused can be tough. For the Well section, Adam Bluestein talked with Oscar Piastri, a Formula 1 driver, about how he stays on track mentally in a sport that demands intense concentration. His tips include practicing motivational self-talk, preparing for the unexpected and making time for intentional breaks — an ideal activity for a holiday weekend. Learn how to kick your mental resilience into gear at *nytimes.com/well.*

Second Look

It's the Thought That Counts

HENRI CAMPEÃ

A banana duct-taped to a wall sold for $6.2 million dollars at a Sotheby's art auction last week. The fruit will rot before it reaches the buyer, but the conceptual work, "Comedian" by the artist Maurizio Cattelan, came with a certificate of authenticity and a 15-page set of instructions for recreating it. The whole thing is a send-up of the art world in the style of Marcel Duchamp. If an artwork is easy to replicate, its material perishable and ubiquitous, what are people bidding on?

Here to Help

How to Get Better Results From Your Microwave

For a recent revamp of Wirecutter's guide to microwaves, I spent six months nuking boxes of bean and cheese burritos, interviewing microwave engineers and reading dozens of microwave manuals. Along the way, I became a master microwaver. Here are some tips to improve anything you cook in any microwave. **RACHEL WHARTON**

Cut food into even pieces. Similarly sized pieces are more likely to cook through at the same rate, and smaller pieces will cook faster than larger ones. This works perfectly for tasks like softening butter or melting chocolate: Just cut it into tablespoon-size chunks.

Spread food out. Avoid a stack or deep bowl full of food. The center of a microwave-safe bowl of mashed potatoes or mac and cheese will be ice-cold long after the top and sides are sizzling. Instead, try spreading food out on a plate or in a smaller casserole dish.

Use a cover. Covering food traps steam and helps dishes cook more quickly and evenly. It also minimizes splatter, which can eventually lead to smoke, a fire or a baked-on mess. Microwaves pass through most glass, ceramic, plastic and paper, so a cover can be almost anything that isn't metal.

Separate different food items. Reheating multiple kinds of food at the same time produces uneven results. If you reheat food items one at a time, or even on different plates or in different containers, it provides meals with far better taste.

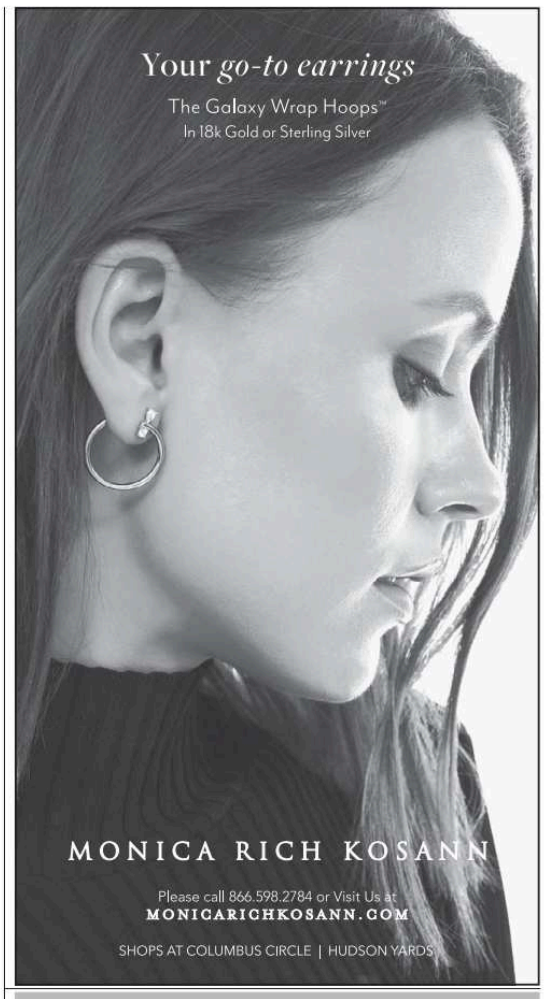
MARKI WILLIAMS/NYT WIRECUTTER

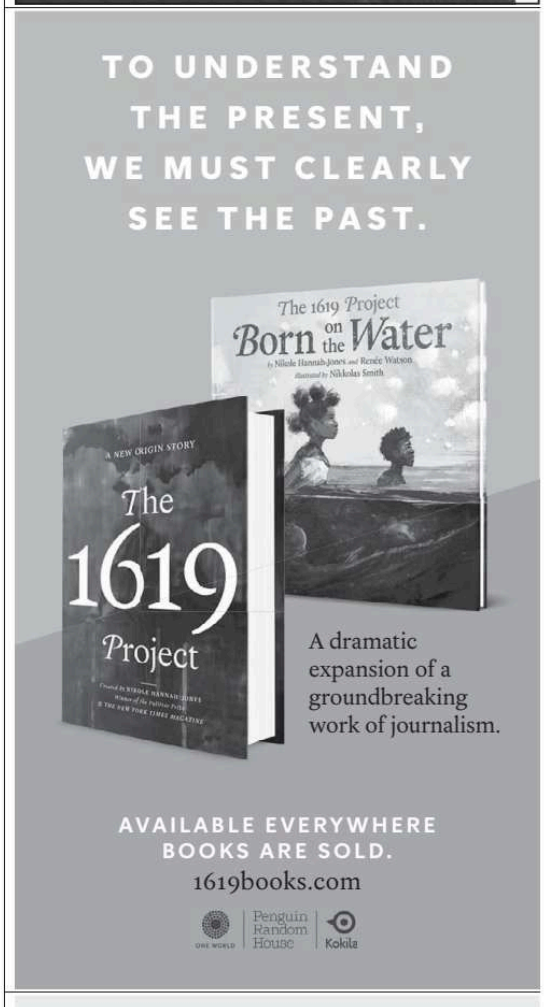
Start at a lower power level. Begin microwaving on a medium power level — or at least lower than the highest level — if you have a microwave with more than 700 watts of power, which typically includes all but compact models. In most cases, the highest power level heats food faster but not better.

Stir, flip or move your food. Stirring a few times during the cook cycle eliminates hot and cold spots. Flipping pieces of food over halfway through the cooking time or moving them to different parts of the carousel, promotes even heating, too. At a minimum, stir food before you serve and eat it.

Let it rest. Let foods stand in the microwave — with the door shut to keep in that warm steam — for about a minute after the cooking cycle finishes. This helps heat move to the center of the food.

Rachel Wharton is a senior staff writer at Wirecutter, a product recommendation site owned by The New York Times Company. For more advice, visit nytimes.com/wirecutter.





International

The New York Times

POOL PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHE PETIT TESSON

President Emmanuel Macron, center, touring Notre-Dame Cathedral on Friday. "Our nation's gratitude is immense," he said. It reopens to the public on Dec. 7.

Macron Takes an Early Look at a Gleaming Notre-Dame

By AURELIEN BREEDEN

PARIS — The world got its first glimpse on Friday of the newly renovated Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris.

President Emmanuel Macron of France took viewers on a live televised tour of the cathedral's dazzlingly clean interior and rebuilt roofing, five years after a devastating fire that was followed by a colossal reconstruction effort.

"I believe you are seeing the cathedral like it has never been seen before," Philippe Jost, the head of the reconstruction task force, told Mr. Macron.

The French president and his wife, Brigitte, gushed with admiration and craned their necks as they entered the 12th and 13th-century Gothic monument alongside the mayor and archbishop of Paris.

More than 450,000 square feet of cream-colored limestone inside the cathedral have been meticulously stripped of ash, lead dust and centuries of accumulated grime, leaving its soaring vaults, thick columns and tall walls almost startlingly bright.

Mr. Macron's visit before the monument is scheduled to reopen next week was an opportunity for him to shift focus away from the country's political turmoil and budgetary woes. It will put the spotlight on a bet that he made, and that appears to have paid off, to rebuild the cathedral on a tight five-year deadline.

"You've achieved what was said to be impossible," Mr. Macron told an assembly of over half of the 2,000 workers and craftsmen from around France — and beyond — who contributed to the cathedral's reconstruction.

Representatives for the fund-raising foundations and some of the major sponsors that helped raise nearly $900 million to restore the monument also gathered to hear Mr. Macron speak.

In the cathedral's central nave, Mr. Macron said the reopening next week would be "a jolt of hope." He praised the craftsmanship during a speech that was at times emotional, including when he paid tribute to Jean-Louis Georgelin, the French general who was in charge of the restoration project until he died last year.

In April 2019, the fire completely destroyed Notre-Dame's wooden roofing — a lattice of ancient medieval beams known as "the forest" — and its lead covering, which went up in toxic smoke.

The cathedral's spire, a 19th-century addition, crashed through the vaults and slammed charred debris into the ground below. The cathedral was drenched in water used by firefighters to stop the blaze. Gables were threatening to topple.

"The damage was indeed considerable," Philippe Villeneuve, the chief architect in charge of Notre-Dame's reconstruction, told Mr. Macron as he showed him before and after pictures of the cathedral's interior. But the rest of the monument, like the great organ and the iconic stained glass windows, were "miraculously protected," Mr. Villeneuve said.

"There was hope," he added. "That's when I thought that the five-year deadline — which was an obsession for all of us from the beginning — seemed feasible to me."

The cathedral will reopen during an official ceremony, broadcast to the world and attended by foreign officials, followed by a string of Masses, concerts and other events. About 15 million yearly visitors are expected at Notre-Dame, which was already among the world's most visited monuments before the fire.

The investigation into the cause of the 2019 blaze is continuing, but a definitive cause may never be determined. The leading theories among investigators are that it was sparked by an electrical short-circuit or a discarded cigarette.

Mr. Macron started his tour in the plaza in front of the cathedral, which is also in the process of being redesigned to open it up toward the Seine River and to help millions of visitors flow through more easily and comfortably by mitigating the effects of climate change.

Renovation of flying buttresses and other parts of the cathedral's exterior will continue for several more years, and the cathedral is still spotted with scaffolding.

Inside, though, the forest of metal tubes that had been erected after the blaze was gone.

During Mr. Macron's carefully choreographed, two-hour tour, he saw new liturgical furniture, like the altar; peered at delicately sculpted scenes from the life of Christ; marveled at gold-leaf stars set across a deep blue ceiling in one of the painted side chapels; and looked up at cherubs on the oculus, a ring of stone at the center of the four vaults that form the cathedral's transept crossing.

Mr. Macron was also taken up into the new attic and to the base of the new spire. Like the rest of the cathedral, both were rebuilt so that they are nearly identical to the pre-fire structure, using over 2,000 oak trees from around France.

"Each piece is unique, and each piece is made with one tree," Jean-Louis Bidet, the technical director of Ateliers Perrault, the company that built the choir roofing, told Mr. Macron as he showed him beams that were hewed by hand, like in the Middle Ages.

Mr. Bidet and other craftsmen showed Mr. Macron some tools — a stone chisel, an ax, a plumb line — to highlight the ancestral techniques that they used to renovate the cathedral, along with modern engineering know-how. In his speech, Mr. Macron said that each worker was a "link" in a chain of skills that stretches back to the Middle Ages.

"Our nation's gratitude is immense," Mr. Macron said, before thanking them again.

The workers, clustered on the cathedral's black-and-white checkered flooring, burst into applause.

Georgia Pivots From E.U. Bid; Demonstrators Take to Streets

By IVAN NECHEPURENKO

DAVID MDZINARISHVILI/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

Police officers used water cannons and tear gas to push back protesters in Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, on Friday. The government said it will revisit the country's bid to join the European Union in 2028.

TBILISI, Georgia — Thousands of people demonstrated in front of the Parliament building in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, for a second day on Friday after the government announced that the country had suspended its bid to join the European Union for four years.

The announcement has further deepened the conflict between the country's opposition, which wants closer ties with the West, and the governing Georgian Dream party, which has been pivoting Georgia away from Europe toward Russia and China.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze on Thursday said that the country was postponing the process of accession into the European Union until 2028.

Thousands of protesters poured onto the streets outside the Parliament building on Thursday night but were dispersed by riot police using water cannons and tear gas. On Friday night, protesters returned, blocking a long stretch of Tbilisi's main Rustaveli Avenue and the surrounding streets. Some protesters threw stones at police officers and tried to blind them with green laser pointers. Officers responded with stun grenades and water cannons.

"We are against Russian politics, which we feel every day we wake up in the morning," said David Kiknavelidze, 26, a musician. "We want to be free of it."

Mr. Kiknavelidze said the problem the protesters had was that Georgia's pro-Western opposition had been splintered and could not come up with a cohesive agenda.

Police officers, some of them masked, appeared to be pushing and beating some protesters, as well as journalists who were covering the rally.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs said in a statement that its law enforcement officers detained 43 protesters on Thursday. The police also said that 32 officers had been injured. The police detained more people on Friday night.

A mountainous country of 3.7 million, Georgia has been at the crossroads of great power interests for centuries. The current political crisis was prompted by the disputed victory of Georgian Dream in parliamentary elections in October.

The opposition, which received 61 out of 150 seats, says the election was rigged and has since followed through on its vow to boycott the new Parliament.

Mr. Kobakhidze said that Georgia was not abandoning its long-term goal of joining the European Union, but was pausing to reconsider the terms of accession. At the same time, according to Imedi, a pro-government TV network in Georgia, he accused the E.U. authorities of using accession talks as "a tool to blackmail our country and divide the public."

He specifically mentioned calls by the European Union to repeal a recently passed package of laws that ban what is described as L.G.B.T.Q. propaganda and a law that attempts to curb the influence of nongovernmental organizations funded by the West as "actions that amount to renouncing" Georgia's dignity.

A representative for the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, declined to comment, although Reuters quoted the European Union's ambassador to Georgia as saying the move to suspend its membership bid was "heartbreaking."

The Georgian government's announcement prompted outrage among the opposition, which regards the pursuit of European Union membership as an existential choice that would mark the country's departure from Moscow's orbit.

President Salome Zourabichvili of Georgia, whose official powers are nominal but who has emerged in recent weeks as a vocal supporter of the opposition, accused the government of committing a "constitutional coup."

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said on Thursday that his government would not interfere in Georgia's political situation, but he also offered praise.

Speaking at a news conference, he said he was "amazed at their courage and the character they showed in order to defend their point of view."

Georgia's Constitution stipulates that the country's government "shall take all measures" to "ensure the full integration of Georgia" into the E.U. and NATO.

That constitutional amendment, made in 2018, was endorsed then by Georgian Dream, but the party has been steadily moving in the opposite direction since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Jenny Gross contributed reporting.

Chinese Editor Is Sentenced To 7-Year Term For Espionage

By VIVIAN WANG

BEIJING — A Chinese court sentenced a high-ranking editor and columnist for a major Communist Party newspaper to seven years in prison on espionage charges on Friday. His family said it was punishment for past writings that were critical of the government, as well as a warning to Chinese citizens against engaging with foreigners.

The journalist, Dong Yuyu, 62, was arrested in Beijing in 2022 while having lunch with a Japanese diplomat, who was also briefly detained.

As part of his job, Mr. Dong had met regularly with foreign diplomats and journalists. He was also a prolific writer, expressing support for the rule of law and constitutional democracy, ideas that the ruling Communist Party says it supports but in reality has suppressed. Some of his writing criticized the party's selective version of Chinese history, which downplays its role in dark periods like the Cultural Revolution.

Such critiques were once common among Chinese intellectuals. But since China's current leader, Xi Jinping, took power in 2012, the party has eliminated virtually all space for dissenting views and urged suspicion of foreigners, in the name of national security.

Last year, China broadened its already expansive definition of espionage, and the state security agency called for a "whole-of-society mobilization" against spies.

Members of Mr. Dong's family released a statement on Friday calling his conviction and sentence a "grave injustice," not only to Mr. Dong but "to every freethinking Chinese journalist and every ordinary Chinese committed to friendly engagement with the world."

"Yuyu is being persecuted for the independence he has demonstrated during a lifetime spent as a journalist," the statement continued. "Yuyu will now be known as a traitor in his own country, instead of being recognized as someone who always fought for a better Chinese society."

After Mr. Dong was detained in 2022, he was held incommunicado for six months before being formally arrested, and he did not stand trial until July 2023, according to his family. The court then repeatedly delayed his verdict and sentencing.

Charges related to national security are shrouded in secrecy, and trials are held behind closed doors. The family's statement said that the judgment, which was read in court but not shared with Mr. Dong's lawyers, cited his contacts with a former Japanese ambassador to China, Hideo Tarumi, and another Japanese diplomat as proof that he had met with agents of an espionage organization.

The Japanese Embassy in Beijing declined to comment on Mr. Dong's case but said that "the diplomatic activities of Japanese diplomatic missions abroad are carried out in a legitimate manner."

Mr. Dong's family said the authorities had also scrutinized fellowships and exchanges in which Mr. Dong had participated in Japan and the United States.

The accusations "put tens of thousands of Chinese scholars and professionals who have been on exchanges abroad in danger," the family said.

Mr. Dong's career blossomed during a time when interactions with the outside world were not only accepted but encouraged by the Chinese authorities, as the country opened its economy. He joined Guangming Daily, the Communist Party's No. 2 paper, in 1987, after graduating from Peking University's prestigious law school.

He rose through the ranks and won journalism awards for stories he wrote or edited about corrupt officials, loans for poor students and other topics.

Outside his work for Guangming Daily, he contributed to liberal-leaning Chinese publications, which have since been shut down. He wrote articles for The New York Times's Chinese-language website about the government's prioritization of economic growth over issues like pollution and his desire to have his son educated overseas.

Starting in 2006, Mr. Dong spent a year at Harvard University on a Nieman journalism fellowship; in later years, he was a visiting scholar at two Japanese universities.

After Mr. Xi took power, the space for individual expression in China quickly shrank, and he demanded that news outlets serve the party. Chinese journalists are no longer allowed to write for foreign publications, and many academics must seek permission from superiors before meeting with foreigners, even privately.

In 2017, party officials at Guangming Daily labeled some of Mr. Dong's work "anti-socialist," his family said. (Mr. Dong, unlike most of the paper's employees, is not a party member.) He continued writing, but he often used a pen name.

On Feb. 21, 2022, Mr. Dong and the Japanese diplomat with whom he was dining were detained at a hotel restaurant. The diplomat was released following protests from the Japanese government.

The family said Mr. Dong was in good spirits and had been doing hundreds of push-ups and leg raises a day in jail. He planned to appeal the verdict.

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From left: The Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in western China; a plane arrived in October with pandas for the National Zoo in Washington; new buildings at the Chengdu center.

U.S. Turns Blind Eye to How China Spends Money Sent for Pandas

From Page A1

China throughout the 2000s to discuss pandas. He said his Chinese counterparts argued that "it shouldn't be of any concern to the U.S. government."

None of this has been revealed to the public.

Where Did the Money Go?

Zoos in the United States pay about $1 million a year to get pairs of pandas from China, an arrangement that regulators allow under a provision of the Endangered Species Act. Animal-rights groups have sued over similar payments for elephants, rhinos and tigers, saying that regulators were distorting the spirit of the law.

Pandas have so far escaped such scrutiny.

Panda rentals have been touted as a major conservation success. But a New York Times investigation found that what the program has done best is breed more pandas for zoos. And the conservation money at the heart of the program has been spent in ways that zoos do not reveal when fund-raising.

The Times used two decades of financial reports, internal correspondence, photos and archival records to track more than $86 million from American zoos to a pair of organizations run by the Chinese government. Zoos elsewhere in the world have contributed tens of millions of dollars more. In wildlife conservation, that is a huge sum, far larger than what zoos have spent in overseas donations for any other species.

Zoos approve which projects get financed and then list them in annual reports to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Those records show that funds were allocated to build apartment buildings far from nature reserves. China also bought computers and satellite television for local government offices and built at least three museums with the money, according to the records.

And American money helped transform a panda breeding center in western China into a bustling attraction that, according to an architect's plans, may soon welcome as many visitors as Disneyland.

Those payments represent only what was documented. Zoo administrators have at times struggled to persuade their Chinese partners to disclose the spending.

"You had to take their word," said David Towne, who until 2016 was the director of a foundation representing American zoos with pandas. "China felt it was not our business — that we got the pandas, and we shouldn't tell them how to spend the money."

Early agreements gave zoos the right to verify funding on the ground. But contracts signed recently by the National Zoo in Washington and by the San Diego Zoo make no mention of checking how money is spent.

American zoo administrators have acknowledged, in letters to regulators, that the numbers do not always add up.

Zoos in Europe, which also rent pandas, reached a similar conclusion. At Edinburgh Zoo, where two pandas lived until last year, an administrator said in 2021 that its money couldn't be tracked because "the funds from all zoos are pooled," according to meeting minutes. As a result, the Scottish zoo could not identify any "specific works, projects or outcomes" that it had funded.

This has been a problem for decades. When Fish and Wildlife officials asked Memphis Zoo in 2007 to identify which Chinese areas would benefit from $875,000 allocated for panda monitoring, the zoo had no answer. It wrote in an annual report that its Chinese partner had provided "NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION."

In a statement to The Times, the zoo acknowledged problems.

"Memphis Zoo was not able to control the funding that was sent to China as, once it was there, it was no longer in the hands of Memphis Zoo officials," the statement said. "And there was not always information provided regarding the funding once in China."

Melissa Songer, a conservation biologist at the National Zoo, which recently welcomed two new pandas, said that China had put donor money to good use. "They have done so much in terms of setting aside protection and doing all the right things — stopping logging, investing," she said. "And part of that money is coming from zoos around the world."

The National Zoo did not answer written questions about funding. The San Diego Zoo declined to comment. China's national forestry bureau and its zoo association, which together oversee panda exchanges, also did not respond to questions.

China has indeed expanded its network of nature reserves, and some American money was allocated for patrol trucks, small ranger stations, equipment and other items needed to protect land, records show. Mr. Stansell, the former regulator, said that, on visits to China, he did see some conservation projects. And Mr. Towne, the former panda foundation director, said that, even in the absence of hard evidence, he saw signs of progress, including more professional staff working in the reserves.

But pandas live on only a portion of that land, and their habitat is shrinking. China has built roads and developed tourism in and around nature reserves, piercing the natural habitat and leaving pandas isolated in ever-smaller populations, Chinese and American scientists have concluded.

Their report estimated that wild pandas have less territory to roam than they did in the 1980s, before the influx of funds from foreign zoos.

"It's in everybody's interest to portray these conservation efforts as great successes," said Kimberly Terrell, who traveled to China while working as director of conservation at Memphis Zoo.

"There was never any real evaluation of the programs," she added. "In some cases, it was really hard to see the connection between those programs and giant panda conservation."

(Dr. Terrell, now a scientist at Tulane University in Louisiana, settled an unrelated gender discrimination lawsuit against the zoo in 2018.)

The Fish and Wildlife Service said it takes federal law "very seriously" and requires "sufficiently detailed financial accounting data" from zoos with pandas.

Dan Ashe, the agency's former director, called the funding disagreement between China and the United States "a technical matter." Mr. Ashe said that he had approved new reporting standards to maintain a program that he felt significantly benefited conservation. "We had to come up with a solution," he said.

Mr. Ashe now heads the industry association for American zoos.

A Secret Compromise

In 2010, Mr. Ashe led a delegation of senior American wildlife officials to China for a high-stakes meeting.

The panda-rental program was on the verge of falling apart, records show. If he could not reach an agreement with his Chinese counterparts, pandas in Atlanta, Memphis, San Diego, and Washington might have to return to China.

The program's finances had been rocky from the start.

Early money had gone to what Zoo Atlanta called a "drastic expansion and construction" of a panda breeding center in Chengdu, western China. Millions more went toward infrastructure in and around nature reserves, including roads, buildings, and water hookups — money that regulators questioned. One National Zoo project, a mixed-use building with apartments and office space, was 30 miles from a nature reserve.

"While we understand the need for establishment of an infrastructure in China, we feel strongly that construction of facilities alone will not accomplish the goal of enhancing the survival of pandas in the wild," regulators at the Fish and Wildlife Service wrote to the National Zoo.

The zoo industry pushed back. "Conservation activities in the wild cannot occur if the infrastructure does not exist," the industry group currently headed by Mr. Ashe, now called the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, responded.

The Fish and Wildlife Service ultimately approved most of the funds.

Then, in 2003, regulators froze money to China because of a lack of documentation, records show. But they soon gave in to Chinese demands for less detailed reporting.

"The service thought that was a reasonable way to move forward to keep the program going," Mr. Stansell, the former agency official, said.

Back and forth it went for years, with the Chinese groups sometimes withholding information or spending money on projects with only loose connections to conservation, and American regulators periodically freezing funds.

Zoo Atlanta submitted a funding proposal for a 27,000-square-foot building, 48 sets of office furniture and 50 miles of road, along with computers and a copy machine, for "nature reserve infrastructure projects" in the northwestern Chinese province of Gansu, records show. Zoo Atlanta declined to comment, saying it did not have information on old projects.

So, when Fish and Wildlife officials landed in Beijing in 2010, years of money issues were coming to a head. The Chinese groups had stopped reporting their spending altogether, and the American regulators had frozen $12 million in payments over two years, according to internal National Zoo documents.

The zoo's employees acknowledged that they couldn't verify spending and fretted about losing their pandas. "The goal is to find a compromise," they wrote.

"This is a good opportunity to 'update' the process," another document read.

The zoos disclosed none of this publicly. "All of that money goes back into conservation research in China," Don Moore, a National Zoo administrator, told ABC News that year, even as the zoo's payments were frozen.

Ultimately, the zoos got the compromise they wanted. Fish and Wildlife regulators agreed to reduce oversight. Going forward, zoos could approve Chinese funding proposals directly, rather than sending them to the agency for review, Mr. Ashe said in an interview.

"What it did was put the accountability in the right place," he said. The zoos are "accountable to demonstrate that they are reporting significant and meritorious conservation projects, not the Chinese."

Panda Disneyland

Even with more lax reporting requirements, problems persisted.

Three of the zoos paid for office equipment for local government forestry bureaus.

Other money went to captive pandas, rather than to pandas in the wild. Memphis Zoo earmarked hundreds of thousands of dollars for animal enclosures, bamboo and veterinary facilities at Shanghai Zoo.

In 2017, a Chinese government group failed to show how the San Diego Zoo's money had been spent, records show. In a letter to regulators, the zoo blamed a change in leadership at China's national forestry bureau.

Animal-rights groups and scholars say that the heart of the problem is lax enforcement of the Endangered Species Act.

"It's really alarming that they're approving these things in the first place," said Delcianna Winders, an animal-law professor at Vermont Law and Graduate School. "And then there's no follow-up to track that the money is actually going to what it's supposed to be going to."

The Fish and Wildlife Service said that the donations were "an important tool to support conservation of endangered and threatened species."

American zoos continue to advertise that they are saving a species in the wild. But in western China, where the wild panda ecosystem is more fragmented than ever, panda tourism is booming.

The Chengdu breeding center, which American zoos helped renovate two decades ago, now has 11 million visitors a year and its own IMAX theater. It is a zoo in its own right, one that controls a third of the world's pandas. The campus is so large that tourists take shuttle buses from one end to the next.

On a visit in August, visitors thronged through the gate at 7 a.m. to catch a glimpse of the pandas before they retreated to air-conditioned enclosures.

The center is planning a satellite facility, its second. When complete, the complex expects to host 20 million annual visitors, more than Disneyland, according to an architecture firm's plan.

The development is part of a larger Chengdu tourism push that includes new resorts and an international panda festival. The Chinese state news agency Xinhua said the goal was to "fully tap the brand value, cultural value and economic value of the giant panda."

ARIANA DREHSLER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Yun Chuan, a panda at the San Diego Zoo, in August. The animals are such a major draw that zoos don't want to risk having to send them back to China.

ARIANA DREHSLER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A San Diego Zoo gift shop. Road-building and other development has fragmented pandas' natural habitat in China.

'I woke up at 5 in the morning and prayed to God before booking the tickets!'

Liu Chung-er, 49, a cook, told Wei Sheng-neng, 57, a teacher seated next to him.

The Alishan Forest Railway reopened last summer, 15 years after typhoons and landslides severed the line.

A Slow Train Journey Into Lush Mountains And Deep Memories

Article by AMY CHANG CHIEN | Photographs by LAM YIK FEI

On a recent morning, a red and cream-colored train departed a city in southern Taiwan, passing through neighborhoods and slowly pulling uphill into misty mountain forests. Passengers peered out their windows at the lush scenery, which fell into darkness as the train passed through a tunnel half a mile long.

"I was counting how many tunnels on the way, and there were 49," said Huang Yu-mei, a retired government office worker who was aboard. "The same as when I last took the train nearly 30 years ago!"

Since this summer, it has again been possible to take a famous scenic journey that begins in Chiayi and travels up more than 2,180 meters (7,150 feet) into Taiwan's verdant mountains. The 112-year-old Alishan Forest Railway reopened 15 years after typhoons and landslides severed the line and repair work met with repeated delays.

The platform in Chiayi, long empty and forlorn, is crowded every morning with people waiting to board the little 2.5 feet-gauge train. For many older passengers, the five-hour ride is nostalgic, stirring memories of the last time they made this trip.

With public excitement high about the reopening, tickets have been much in demand, and those who manage to buy one feel fortunate.

"I woke up at 5 in the morning and prayed to God before booking the tickets!" Liu Chung-er, 49, a cook, told Wei Sheng-neng, 57, a teacher seated next to him.

The revival of the train is recent enough that people along the way wave at the passengers as they slowly pass. The average speed of the train is a little over 12 miles per hour.

At the start, the train rattles through the outskirts of Chiayi, passing low-rise residential bungalows and hotels made of cement and glass.

And then — at the pace of a gentle jog — it winds into the foothills of the Alishan mountains, stopping briefly at little stations that date back to when Taiwan was a Japanese colony.

One of the stops is Fenqihu, a mountain village at the halfway point.

When Taiwan was a colony, between 1895 and 1945, the railway began transporting cypress trees, some hundreds or even thousands of years old, from the Alishan Forest to build officials' homes. The cypress wood — prized for its strength, pleasant smell and resistance to decay — was even shipped to Japan for construction of shrines and other buildings there. At that time, lumberjacks and railway workers often had lunch in Fenqihu, and the village is still known for its bento box meals.

All logging ended there in 1992; Alishan is now a national forest and one of the most scenic spots in Taiwan. For those who grew up in the area and recall the train, riding it up the mountains and into the trees is part of what makes the place special.

"This railway is one of the reasons that brings me home," said Peng Hsiao-chi, 68, a factory worker who spent her youth in the countryside near Chiayi. She and her husband awoke at 4 a.m. and drove two hours to be among the first to ride the restored railway. They were lucky, clinching last-minute tickets released on the departure day.

In the last stretch of the journey, the surroundings change from lush forests, dense with vines and bamboo, to tall, straight cedar trees. On this day, rain pelted down. But the conductor, Huang Zong-li, was undaunted. "I hope you enjoyed this journey!" he said as the train pulled into the final station. Even in the downpour, passengers lingered on the platform to take photos with the train.

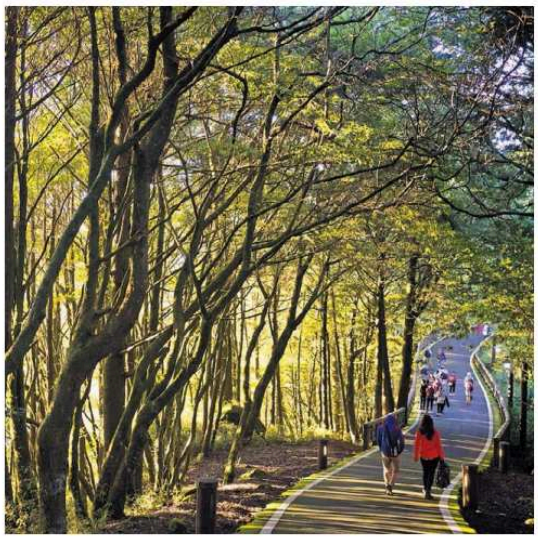
"It's really nice to slow down and take in the scenery," said Chen Wen-lin, 22, a Taiwanese student who posed for pictures shot by her boyfriend.

The narrow-gauge railway, above, begins in the southern Taiwanese city of Chiayi and rises at 12 miles an hour to more than 7,000 feet altitude. Left, the reopened train is still a novelty, and people along the tracks wave at passengers.

112

The number of years since the Alishan Forest Railway first opened. It carried lumber when Taiwan was a Japanese colony.

For many older passengers, the five-hour ride is nostalgic, stirring memories of the last time they made this trip.



The land the train runs through is now a national forest. Some of the cypress wood logged there went to Japan.

Fenqihu, where lumberjacks and railway workers once ate. The village is still known for its bento box meals.

War in the Middle East

Israel Tells Residents on Both Sides of the Lebanon Border to Stay Away

By LIAM STACK and EUAN WARD

TEL AVIV — The Israeli military issued new warnings to residents on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border on Friday, telling them not to return to their homes, as the fragile U.S.-brokered cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah appeared to largely hold despite another Israeli strike in southern Lebanon.

The military released a list of more than 60 towns in southern Lebanon that it said remained off-limits to civilians, including large centers like Bint Jbeil, Marjeyoun and Naqoura, the home of the U.N. peacekeeping force in the country. The country's hard-hit south has been the focal point of the war.

The Israeli military "does not intend to target you and therefore you are prohibited at this stage from returning to your homes," said Avichay Adraee, a military spokesman, in a statement posted online directed at residents of the towns. "Anyone who moves south of this line puts himself in danger."

It is not clear when hundreds of thousands of displaced Lebanese will be able to return to their homes in the south. Under the cease-fire agreement that took effect on Wednesday, Israeli forces will gradually withdraw from southern Lebanon over 60 days.

In his first address since the truce, Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's leader, argued that the war with Israel, lasting almost 14 months, had been a victory for the Iran-backed militia — a difficult proposition given the blows Hezbollah sustained, including the assassination of its previous chief, Hassan Nasrallah.

"We are looking at a great victory," Mr. Qassem said in a televised speech from an undisclosed location. "We are victorious because we prevented the enemy from destroying Hezbollah, and because we prevented him from quashing the resistance or critically weakening it."

But his statements were unlikely to persuade many Lebanese. In exchange for the truce, Hezbollah gave up on its original goal in the war, to force Israel to end its campaign against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. And in addition to Hezbollah's own losses, the Israeli campaign against it demolished entire communities.

Adding to jitters over the fate of the truce, the Israeli military said on Friday that it had carried out another airstrike in southern Lebanon, targeting what it said was a mobile rocket platform belonging to Hezbollah. A day earlier, the military said it had struck a rocket storage facility in the country's south.

Liam Stack reported from Tel Aviv, and Euan Ward from Beirut, Lebanon. Reporting was contributed by Aaron Boxerman, Hwaida Saad, Malachy Browne and Dayana Iwaza.

DANIEL BEREHULAK/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Cleaning up in Tryre, Lebanon, on Thursday. Israeli airstrikes had pelted the city for weeks. Israel's military said over 60 towns in south Lebanon are unsafe to enter.

Lebanon's state-run news agency reported on Friday that the Israeli military was enforcing restrictions on returning to towns in the border area with gunfire and shelling. It said Israeli tanks had shelled a building in the town of Burj al-Moulouk in southern Lebanon, and were also seen moving into the town of Khiam, where earlier in the week the news agency said two journalists were injured by Israeli fire.

The Israeli military declined to comment on those reports. Photos of tanks near Khiam, which were verified by The Times, circulated on social media on Friday.

In a video aired by Lebanese broadcasters on Friday, a man on a dirt road in Khiam says he and others with him have received "permission" from U.N. peacekeeping forces and the Lebanese military.

Seconds later there are several bursts of gunfire. "They shot at us," the man says as he runs for cover. It was not clear if there were any injuries. The Times verified the video and determined that it was taken next to Khiam's cemetery.

The Lebanese military has also warned civilians about returning to southern border towns, and a spokesman for the U.N. peacekeeping force in Lebanon said it did not have authority to grant permission to be in that area. It was the latest indication that the cease-fire agreement and military directives have led to confusion among Lebanese about where they can and cannot go.

The Israeli military also released a more general warning to residents of border towns in Israel, which had been the target of Hezbollah rocket and drone attacks for months, telling them the area, evacuated by tens of thousands of residents, remained under a "general closure." It warned that it could have to intercept aerial munitions, and so the risk of shrapnel falling into evacuated towns could not be ruled out.

One of the Lebanese towns that Israel labeled off-limits on Friday was Ain Ebel, a Christian village near the border. Rakan Ashkar Diab, a father of two, fled the town for Beirut in October but decided to return on Friday despite the warnings.

He passed destroyed houses along the way, he said, but arrived to find his own home still standing. He said he would not bring his family back yet because of the Israeli warnings, but he hoped to have them home in time for Christmas.

"We are waiting to see how the situation unfolds," Mr. Diab said. "It's still a bit fragile, the cease-fire."

Israel stepped up its airstrikes in Lebanon in September and then launched a ground invasion, after almost a year of near-daily Hezbollah rocket fire into northern Israel, which Hezbollah said was an act of solidarity with Hamas, its ally in Gaza.

The result has been devastating for both Lebanon and Hezbollah, a militant group that is the country's most powerful political player and military force. It has been the deadliest conflict in Lebanon since the country's 15-year civil war ended in 1990, and has forced roughly a quarter of the population from their homes. The fighting has killed about 3,800 Lebanese and 100 Israelis, according to their governments.

Under the cease-fire agreement that went into effect at 4 a.m. on Wednesday, both sides will observe a 60-day truce while Israel gradually withdraws and Hezbollah moves its fighters north of the Litani River, which runs somewhat parallel with the border with Israel.

That will create a sort of buffer zone to be policed by a U.N. peacekeeping force and Lebanon's military, neither of which have been combatants in the Israel-Hezbollah war.

But the agreement does not say when civilians will be permitted to return to their homes. On Wednesday, tens of thousands in Lebanon began to go back to ruined communities in the Dahiya area outside Beirut and in the country's south and east.

A similar cease-fire deal that ended a war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006 was never fully enforced.

Ori Gordin, the commanding officer of the Israeli military's northern command, told Israeli troops in southern Lebanon that it was now their job to "enable and enforce" the cease-fire.

"We will enforce it aggressively," said Mr. Gordin, in a video of the remarks released on Friday by the military. "We do not intend to let Hezbollah return to these areas."

At the same time, the war between Israel and Hamas continues. A gunman attacked an Israeli bus near a settlement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Friday. Hamas identified the attacker as a member of its military wing and said he had been killed.

The attack wounded several people, three of them seriously, according to Israel's emergency service. The Israeli military said four of its soldiers were lightly wounded, and that it had "neutralized" the shooter.

Syrian Rebels Reach Aleppo, Achieving Greatest Battlefield Advance in Years

By RAJA ABDULRAHIM

Syrian rebels breached the major city of Aleppo on Friday, according to the fighters and a war monitor, raising fears that the nation's long-running civil war is reigniting with an intensity not seen in years.

One rebel group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, took control of "more than half of Aleppo" on Friday without resistance from Syrian government forces, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitoring group based in Britain.

Government forces and their Russian allies earlier launched intense airstrikes on opposition-held territory on Friday, including 23 attacks on the city of Idlib, according to the Observatory. The Russian government confirmed that it was bombing Syrian rebels, but did not specify where.

Antigovernment fighters managed earlier on Friday to enter five neighborhoods in the western part of Aleppo after detonating two car bombs targeting government soldiers, according to the rebels and the Observatory. The official Syrian news agency, SANA, reported that four people were killed when rebels fired on Aleppo University, in the western part of the city.

The United Nations' humanitarian agency said that Aleppo's international airport and some of its hospitals were closed, other hospitals were near capacity and security within the city was "rapidly deteriorating."

The rebel offensive launched on Wednesday is the most serious challenge to President Bashar al-Assad's regime in years. And the timing of it has raised questions about whether the rebels are trying to take advantage of weakness across an alliance with Iran at the center, and groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Syrian regime closely aligned with it.

But rebels said they had been preparing the offensive for months.

Muhammad Haj Kadour contributed reporting.

Weapons and money have long flowed from Iran across Syria's borders to Hezbollah in Lebanon, part of a so-called axis of resistance that includes the Palestinian armed group Hamas in Gaza. Iran and Hezbollah also provided vital military support to Mr. al-Assad that helped him survive the civil war.

But now, Hezbollah, Hamas and Iran have all been weakened by more than a year of conflict with Israel. A cease-fire this week halted more than 13 months of war between Israel and Hezbollah while Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza continues.

Israel has been bombing Syria for months, targeting Iranian commanders and fighters in the country and weapons shipments transiting through Syria to Hezbollah.

At the same time, Mr. al-Assad's other key military ally, Russia, is bogged down in the war in Ukraine.

The rapid shifts over the past three days "serve as a powerful reminder that the Syrian conflict is far from "frozen," said Mohammed Alaa Ghanem, head of policy for the Syrian American Council, a Washington-based advocacy group.

"What remains clear is that these developments expose Assad's deep vulnerabilities and his regime's lack of popular legitimacy," he said.

The Syrian civil war began in 2011, displaced about half of the country's population and sent millions of refugees seeking safety in neighboring countries like Turkey and Lebanon, and beyond to Europe. It has been largely stagnant for years, but on Wednesday, fighters from an array of armed opposition factions launched the surprise offensive against the government in the northwestern province of Aleppo.

The scenes that have unfolded over the past three days — in videos and images shared by the rebels and Syrian media — are eerily reminiscent of the early stages of the civil war. This time around, as before, rebels claimed to have captured a series of towns, neighborhoods, military bases and weaponry, while issuing calls for government soldiers to defect and join their ranks.

The last major escalation in the civil war was in early 2020, when Russian-backed Syrian forces launched a widespread offensive against rebels in opposition-dominated Idlib province, capturing several towns and cities.

BAKR ALKASEM/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

A fighter targeting Syrian Army troops outside Aleppo on Friday. The last major escalation in the country's civil war was in 2020.

That fighting ended in a cease-fire brokered by Russia and Turkey, which has supported the opposition since the start of the war.

Three days of fierce clashes have killed more than 250 combatants on both sides, including more than 140 from rebel groups and 87 government soldiers and Iran-backed fighters, according to the Observatory.

The rebels posted a map on the Telegram messaging app along with evacuation warnings to civilians in the city of Aleppo, urging people to move to eastern neighborhoods "for your safety."

Syrian state media claimed that government forces had repelled the rebel advance and inflicted heavy losses on the other side. The rebels did not immediately respond to the claim, which could not be independently confirmed.

The White Helmets, a first-responder organization based in opposition-held areas of Syria, reported numerous civilians had been killed or injured in the government airstrikes on Friday.

In addition to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which was once linked with the terror group Al Qaeda but publicly broke ties with it years ago, the rebels come from an array of armed opposition factions. Turkish-backed rebel groups are also taking part.

Rebels said the goal of their assault is to try to stop airstrikes on opposition-held areas by government forces and their allies.

In a video statement announcing the offensive, Lt. Col. Hassan Abdulghany, military commander of the opposition's operations room, said the decision to launch the attack was forced on the opposition forces.

"It is an obligation to defend our people and their land," he said.

Iran has backed the Syrian government throughout the war, sending advisers and commanders of its powerful Revolutionary Guards force to bases and front lines, along with allied militias with thousands of fighters.

In Paris, a Cyclist's Death Escalates a Firestorm Over the City's Streets

From Page A1

tricts, in the heart of the city, rekindling the argument that Ms. Hidalgo's anti-car stance is impractical, bad for business and caters mostly to wealthy liberals who can afford to live in the city center.

"She is putting a garrote around Paris," Patrick Aboukrat, a boutique owner in the fashionable Marais neighborhood, said this week, placing his hands on his neck for effect.

The debate in the French capital reflects the challenges facing policymakers around the world as they ask constituents to alter ingrained life habits in the fight against climate change. Ms. Hidalgo's experiment — which has turned many Parisian streets into whooshing parades of pedaling commuters — is also unfolding in a city that has long harbored an innate tension between the big-city need for speed and the more languorous pleasures of "la belle vie."

If the rest of France thinks of the stereotypical Parisian as eternally in a hurry, and perhaps a little rude along the way, it is also the place that gave rise to the 19th century concept of the flâneur, the strolling, poetically minded observer of city life, who required time to adequately savor it. The German cultural critic Walter Benjamin even asserted, in what may be an urban myth, that some flâneurs slowed their roll by walking with a turtle on a leash.

Ms. Hidalgo, in her fiery speech last week, effectively embraced the turtle. Going "very quickly from point A to point B," she said, "is not living in a civilized way in a city. In a city, one stops, one takes one's time. We respect others."

But for some Parisians, especially pedestrians, it is cyclists streaking wantonly through intersections who have become the threat. A recent article in Le Monde described the rising trend of "bicycle bashing," noting social media complaints about bikers bearing the hashtag #cyclopathe.

Cycling organizations have since called for further protections.

Ms. Hidalgo, who took office in 2014, announced this week that she would not seek a third term. She has made reducing car traffic a signature effort.

Her government has already turned roads on the banks of the Seine into walking and bike paths, created hundreds of miles of new bike lanes elsewhere and reserved most of the Rue de Rivoli, a key east-west thoroughfare, for cyclists.

The city has reduced the speed limit on Paris's ring road and plans to remove 60,000 parking spaces by 2030. It is currently enacting a soft rollout of the new traffic restrictions in the First, Second, Third and Fourth Arrondissements, on the right bank of the Seine, an area that encompasses the Louvre museum, the Tuileries gardens and neighborhoods like the Marais. Buses and taxis are exempt from the prohibition, but regular drivers must have a specific destination inside of the zone in mind.

In an interview last week, Mr. Aboukrat, the head of a merchants' association called Comité Marais Paris, said his group is planning to take legal action to stop the ban, which he predicts will harm his business.

"People will look on Waze and see that it is a forbidden zone, and they won't come," he said, referring to the navigation app.

Yves Carra, a spokesman for the group Mobilité Club France, until recently known as L'Automobile Club Association, said he is frustrated that the Parisian government, which represents about 2 million people within the boundaries of the city, is making decisions that affect the 12 million-plus people who live in the metropolitan area.

The car, he said, was a valid technological response to Paris's suburban sprawl; Ms. Hidalgo's policies, he said, were detrimental to "the people who need these cars to be able to move around and live."

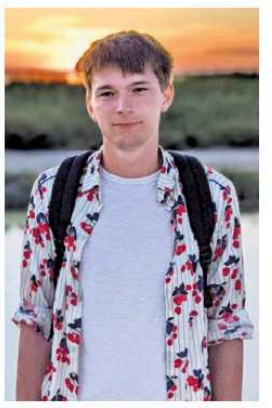
Mr. Aboukrat agreed. "It's stunning for a Socialist mayor to stop the banlieues from coming in, or to cut off their liberty to circulate," he said, referring to working-class suburbs.

DMITRY KOSTYUKOV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

ADNAN FARZAT/NURPHOTO, VIA GETTY IMAGES

JAMES HILL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Paris has seen an explosion in bikes and cycling lanes in recent years. The death of Paul Varry, a 27-year-old cycling advocate, below, on Oct. 15 put a spotlight on the dangers facing the city's cyclists. Supporters gathered to pay tribute to Mr. Varry in October at La Madeleine, left, near where he was struck by an SUV in what prosecutors suspect was a deliberate act of road rage.



Ms. Hidalgo, among other things, has argued that her policies have contributed to significant reductions in the amount of air pollution in the city.

Parisians' love for bicycles has a long history, including what has been described as a sort of "fever" for its precursor, the velocipede, in the 19th century. During World War II, the bicycle became the principal means of transport on Parisian streets, according to Clément Dusong, a scholar of urbanism, but it fell out of favor after the city began adapting to the automobile after the war.

Mr. Varry, the cyclist who was killed, hailed from a close-in suburb, Saint-Ouen-sur-Seine, where he had made the cause of cyclists "the commitment of his life," according to the City Council there.

According to the authorities, Mr. Varry was riding a bicycle in a cycling lane near La Madeleine on a Tuesday evening. The driver of the SUV, a 52-year-old man, began illegally driving in the lane as well and, at some point, ran over Mr. Varry's foot. Mr. Varry banged his fist on the hood. Shortly thereafter, prosecutors say, the driver, whose teenage daughter was in the SUV with him, ran Mr. Varry over.

The motorist, whose name was not disclosed by prosecutors, has been detained. A lawyer for the man described him as a father of four who worked as a sales representative. He said that his client was trying to turn right and did not run Mr. Varry over deliberately.

The incident sparked more than 200 protests across France, including one on Oct. 19 that drew roughly 1,000 people in Paris. It has also spurred cyclists to talk about road rage they have experienced from drivers; some have even likened it to the #MeToo movement.

"What Paul's death showed is that there are a lot of cyclists who experience dangerous things on a daily basis, but it has received very little media coverage," said Antoine Breton-Godo, a cyclist in his 20s. "So it was a trigger."

A recent poll in Le Parisien newspaper suggested that the effort to limit cars is supported by roughly half of residents, with 27 percent saying the Hidalgo government is doing a good job, and 23 percent saying that more should be done. Ms. Hidalgo is supporting a protégé and fellow Socialist, Rémi Féraud, in the 2026 mayoral election. Mr. Féraud said he plans to continue with Ms. Hidalgo's transportation policies.

In direct response to Mr. Varry's death, France's transportation minister, François Durovray, created a new "mission against violence to protect all users of the road." This month, a pro-cycling group that Mr. Varry belonged to, Paris en Selle, or Paris in the Saddle, announced it had drawn up a list of 200 intersections and 25 major roads that they say are in urgent need of changes to make them safer.

Ms. Hidalgo said that she hoped that someplace in Paris would be named in Mr. Varry's honor, adding him to the list of martyrs and heroes whose names already adorn the city streets.

France Loses Another Foothold in Africa as Chad Ends Military Partnership

By ADAM NOSSITER

France lost one of its staunchest military allies in the volatile Sahel region of Africa this week as Chad ended its longstanding defense partnership with the country, the latest blow to French efforts to maintain sway on the continent it once colonized.

France has some 1,000 troops in Chad who will likely now have to leave. Analysts suggested that could further open the door to influence from the Russian military, already present in Chad's neighbors.

The surprise decision was announced late Thursday by Chad's foreign minister, Abderaman Koulamallah. "It is time for Chad to assert its sovereignty," he said in a statement, calling the decision "a historic turning point."

The move appeared to have surprised the French government, which did not react by Friday evening, nor did it immediately respond to a request for comment.

Following the recent ejection of French troops and personnel from other former African colonies plagued by Islamist insurgencies — Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso — the decision by Chad ends what remained of France's military influence in the troubled stretch of countries below the Sahara known as the Sahel.

Russian paramilitary forces of the Wagner Group — now controlled by the Russian defense ministry — are present in varying degrees in these countries as well as in Chad's neighbor, the Central African Republic.

In a further shock for France, Senegal's president told the news agency Agence France-Presse on Thursday that he, too, wants French troops to leave.

But the end of France's partnership with Chad, long the region's most effective military power because of the quality of its troops, is the harshest blow. The French military has intervened there more often, and more decisively, than in any other African country, propping up regime after regime and even bombing rebels in 2019 to keep Chad's longtime ruler Idriss Déby in power.

AURELIE BAZZARA-KIBANGULA/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

French and Chadian soldiers in 2022 preparing to board a Chadian army plane in Chad, an ally in Africa's volatile Sahel region.

Chad's battle-hardened troops were indispensable in France's crushing of the Islamist insurgency in Mali in 2013. French troops helped install the dictator Hissène Habré in 1982, then helped overthrow him in favor of Mr. Déby in 1990. French Mirage jets take off regularly on training missions from a military base in the capital, N'Djamena.

President Emmanuel Macron of France was the only Western leader to attend the funeral of Mr. Déby, killed fighting rebels in April 2021. Mr. Macron's presence was seen as a kind of anointing for Mr. Déby's son Mahamat, the current ruler. "France will never allow the stability and integrity of Chad to be called into question," Mr. Macron said at the time.

But like other leaders in the region, the younger Mr. Déby is casting about for new partners, including Russia. Shunning the French plays well with the youthful electorate in France's former colonies. In January, Mr. Déby paid a visit to Moscow and was seen giving a vigorous handshake to Russian leader Vladimir V. Putin.

"Those who don't respect us, get out!" Mr. Déby yelled during a rally in May, a message clearly aimed at the French.

Wagner Group communications specialists were in N'Djamena recently during Mr. Déby's successful presidential campaign, said Charles Bouëssel, a Chad analyst with the International Crisis Group.

"This announcement has been an enormous surprise" for France, Mr. Bouëssel said.

"It's a move that's going to reinforce Déby's popularity" at home, he added. "It's a shock move that has a lot of significance for the population" in Chad, which was "the last domino in the Sahel that hadn't gotten out of France's domain."

In April the United States announced it was pulling some 75 Special Forces troops from the country after Chadian officials expressed discontent over their presence. It is not clear whether any have returned.

The announcement of France's departure was all the more surprising in that it came immediately following the departure Thursday from the country of France's foreign minister Jean-Noël Barrot, and on the heels of a report by Mr. Macron's "personal envoy" to Africa, Jean-Marie Bockel, recommending a drawdown, but not a withdrawal, of French forces there and elsewhere on the continent.

Britain's Transport Secretary Quits In Another Blow for Prime Minister

By STEPHEN CASTLE

LONDON — Prime Minister Keir Starmer of Britain suffered the first resignation from his cabinet on Friday when the transport secretary, Louise Haigh, quit hours after it emerged that she had been convicted of a fraud offense involving a phone a decade ago.

The departure is a blow to Mr. Starmer, who has been buffeted by a series of setbacks since Labour won the election in July, but the speed with which Ms. Haigh resigned suggests Downing Street is hoping to minimize the political fallout.

As transport secretary, Ms. Haigh had overseen one of Labour's flagship policies of bringing Britain's troubled private rail network back into public ownership, through legislation that recently completed its passage through Parliament.

Her resignation was triggered by reports from Sky News and The Times of London on Thursday night that revealed she had pleaded guilty to an offense in 2013. At the time she was 24 and working for Aviva, an insurance firm, when she was mugged in London.

In her letter of resignation Ms. Haigh said "the experience was terrifying," and said, "in the immediate aftermath, I reported the incident to the police. I gave the police a list of my possessions that I believed had been stolen, including my work phone."

She added: "Some time later, I discovered that the handset in question was still in my house. I should have immediately informed my employer and not doing so straight away was a mistake."

In a separate statement given to Sky News before her resignation, Ms. Haigh explained that, after her employer gave her a new phone, she discovered the missing handset was still in her home, switched it on and attracted police attention, leading to her being called in for questioning.

Ms. Haigh said that, on the advice of her lawyer, she pleaded guilty when the matter came before a magistrates' court in 2014 and received a discharge — the "lowest possible outcome."

Six months later she was elected to Parliament for the first time. Ms. Haigh told Mr. Starmer — a former chief prosecutor — about the case before she joined his top political team in opposition in 2020, according to British media reports. The case was not widely known by voters, however.

In her resignation letter to Mr. Starmer, Ms. Haigh, seen as being on the left of the Labour Party, said that news about the case would "inevitably be a distraction from delivering on the work of this government."

She added: "I remain totally committed to our political project, but I now believe it will be best served by my supporting you from outside Government."

HOLLIE ADAMS/REUTERS

As transport secretary, Louise Haigh had overseen one of the Labour Party's flagship policies while in Keir Starmer's cabinet.

Downing Street moved swiftly to replace Ms. Haigh with a centrist lawmaker, Heidi Alexander, who had been a minister in the justice ministry.

During his time as leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Starmer has gained a reputation for ruthlessness after purging his predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn, a hard-left lawmaker who was found to have failed to act over antisemitism in the party. While Mr. Starmer has steered Labour to the political center-ground, Ms. Haigh, who had supported Mr. Corbyn's leadership bid in 2015, was seen as one of the surviving standard-bearers of the left.

Allies suggested that the cause of her departure — a minor conviction more than a decade ago — set a low bar for other ministers to resign in the future. They also

A resignation followed news of a fraud case from a decade ago.

praised Ms. Haigh, who was the youngest member of the cabinet, as an energetic and effective transport secretary.

But some in Downing Street may not be disappointed to see her step aside. Ms. Haigh was the first cabinet minister to be publicly rebuked by Mr. Starmer after she described the P&O Ferries company as a "rogue operator."

That sparked a dispute with the firm's parent operation DP World, which threatened to boycott a government investment conference before Mr. Starmer contradicted his minister and said Ms. Haigh's comments were "not the view of the government."

On Friday, in response to Ms. Haigh's departure, Mr. Starmer wrote to her saying: "I know you still have a huge contribution to make in the future."

But the brevity of his three-sentence letter suggested that the prime minister was unwilling to invest much of his political support in trying to keep her.

British Lawmakers Vote to Permit Assisted Dying in England and Wales

From Page A1

profound human suffering."

Proponents of assisted dying say it is a merciful way to curtail unbearable suffering in the final months of life.

Under current British law, those who help relatives or friends to end their lives face police questioning and potentially prosecution. So even terminally ill patients who decide to end their life in a country with more permissive rules, like Switzerland, must do so alone to protect their families. That condemns some to a terrible death, some proponents of the bill argued.

Ms. Leadbeater told Parliament that her legislation addressed "one of the most significant issues of our time," and asked colleagues to help families who face "the brutal and cruel reality of the status quo."

Peter Prinsley, a Labour lawmaker and surgeon, rejected claims by opponents of the bill that its scope would later be extended to include a wider category of people. "This is not some slippery slope," he said. "We are shortening death, not life, for our patients. This is not life or death; this is death or death."

Critics view assisted dying as a threat to the old, disabled and those with complex medical conditions, any of whom might feel pressured into agreeing to a premature death.

Some lawmakers said they feared that some of those patients might end their lives prematurely to remove the physical or financial burden on their families.

"People often recognize coercion only after years have passed, yet within a month someone could be dead," said Rachel Maskell, a Labour lawmaker who worked as a senior physiotherapist in acute medical care. "Malign coercion cases may be few, but as a clinician working at the fringes of life, I heard my patients frequently say, 'I don't want to be a burden,' or 'I'd rather the money went to the grandchildren than on my care.'"

Under the British system, the scope of the proposed law extends only to England and Wales. A push for similar legislation is underway in the Scottish Parliament.

Polls suggest a clear majority of Britons support the principle of

BENJAMIN CREMEL/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

CARL COURT/GETTY IMAGES

Supporters of the assisted dying measure on Friday in London, above. Kim Leadbeater, the Labour Party member who proposed the bill, meeting campaigners after the vote, left. She asked colleagues in Parliament to help families who face "the brutal and cruel reality of the status quo."

assisted dying as long as conditions are attached, with 65 percent in favor and 13 percent opposed, according to one recent survey.

Many faith leaders, however, expressed their opposition to the move and, ahead of the vote, two senior cabinet ministers, the justice secretary, Shabana Mahmood, and the health secretary, Wes Streeting, also spoke out against the measure.

Mr. Streeting argued that training staff to deal with assisted dying would add costs to the country's National Health Service. He also pointed to the uneven availability of palliative care in Britain, warning that some patients might feel that they effectively had no alternative but to opt for assisted dying.

After Friday's vote, the foreign secretary, David Lammy, said that he had opposed the measure because of his mother's end-of-life experience. "Like millions of working class people, her final diagnosis filled her not with fear of death but a fear of being a burden to her family," he wrote in a letter to his constituents.

In 2015, when lawmakers in Britain last considered the issue of assisted dying, they voted against

When the issue was last considered in 2015, it lost by a significant margin.

it by 330 votes to 118. Ahead of Friday's debate, four former prime ministers, Gordon Brown, Boris Johnson, Theresa May and Liz Truss — none of whom are still elected lawmakers — indicated that they would have opposed the measure if they had a vote.

But David Cameron, who was against the measure when it was debated in 2015 and while he was prime minister, said he had changed his mind.

When it came, the result of the vote represented a clear break with the past, perhaps reflecting shifting social attitudes.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer had refused to say in advance which way he would vote, even though he supported assisted dying in 2015. On Thursday he hinted to reporters that his views had not changed, telling them that he had a strong interest in the issue because he had been responsible for reviewing police investigations into assisted deaths as a chief prosecutor before entering Parliament.

On Friday, alongside a majority of the cabinet, Mr. Starmer voted in favor of a bill that could prove one of the most consequential pieces of legislation to emerge during his time in Downing Street.

Ex-Soldier Who Escaped London Jail is Convicted of Spying for Iran

By STEPHEN CASTLE

After he escaped from a London jail last year, strapped by a sling made from trousers to the underside of a food-delivery truck, Daniel Khalife spent three days on the run, evading a nationwide manhunt launched by Britain's embarrassed authorities.

On Thursday the former British soldier was found guilty of spying for Iran after a trial that revealed the bizarre activities of a young man who claimed he was partly drawn to the world of espionage by watching the Emmy-winning drama "Homeland."

At Woolwich Crown Court, Mr. Khalife, 23, was convicted of collecting information useful to an enemy — in this case the government of Iran — but cleared of a charge of planting fake bombs in his military barracks.

Mr. Khalife had contested the spying charges, claiming he wanted to work for the British intelligence agencies as a double agent.

Perhaps a more convincing defense, however, was the amateurishness of his efforts to become a spy. Gul Nawaz Hussein, who defended Mr. Khalife in court, described his client's aspirations as naïve, stupid and bordering on slapstick, adding that it was more "Scooby Doo" than "007."

Certainly, Mr. Khalife made spying look less glamorous than in the movies. On one occasion his Iranian handlers sent him to a park in north London to collect around $2,000 left in a bag for dog excrement, prosecutors said.

Mr. Khalife pleaded guilty to the audacious prison escape in September 2023 — a breakout that exposed troubling flaws in prison security.

A huge manhunt ensued, with airports and other travel hubs on high alert. After three days, a police officer pulled him from a bicycle on a canal towpath about 12 miles from Wandsworth jail, in southwest London, where he had been held.

But in his own mind, the prison break had proved his abilities as an undercover agent. "I was finally demonstrating what a foolish idea it was to have someone of my skill-set in prison," he told the court. "What use was that to anyone?"

Whatever his motives, Mr. Khalife did pass documents to the Iranians, in one case visiting Turkey to meet a contact, and prosecutors dismissed his claims that he wanted to be a double agent as "a cynical game." Instead, they contended that he had gathered "a very large body of restricted and classified material."

Joining the British Army at 16, Mr. Khalife was a member of the Royal Corps of Signals, a communications unit, but was rejected for intelligence work because his mother is from Iran.

The following year he reached out to a man connected with Irani-

The 23-year-old said he was inspired by 'Homeland' on Netflix.

an intelligence and began passing information, according to prosecutors.

Mr. Khalife gained NATO security clearance when he took part in a joint exercise at Fort Cavazos, Texas, in 2021, and British security officials remained unaware of his contacts with the Iranians until he told them himself.

Claiming to have earned the trust of his Iranian handlers, he anonymously emailed MI6, Britain's secret intelligence service.

Ignored by that agency, Mr. Khalife turned to MI5, the domestic spy network, in November 2021. It informed the police and Mr. Khalife was arrested in January 2022 and released on bail. He was, he claimed, inspired to make a fake defection to Iran by watching "Homeland," starring Claire Danes and Damian Lewis, on Netflix.

In January 2023 he was reported missing by his army unit and, when his room was searched, the police found what they said appeared to be a potential explosive device, along with a note indicating that Mr. Khalife had left for fear of criminal charges. Later that month, he was arrested in Staffordshire, charged and sent to the prison from which he made his escape.

The court heard that, while in the army, Mr. Khalife had gathered the names of 15 serving soldiers — including some from the special forces — though he denied sending the list to the Iranians and claimed to have given them mostly fake information.

Most of the messages he exchanged with his contacts were on the encrypted app Telegram and were deleted.

But prosecutors said some of Mr. Khalife's army documents were genuine, and presented evidence from mobile phones, notes he wrote to himself, and surveillance footage.

"He surreptitiously sought out and obtained copies of secret and sensitive information which he knew were protected and passed these on to individuals he believed to be acting on behalf of the Iranian state," Bethan David, of the Crown Prosecution Service, said in a statement on Thursday.

The trial also heard that Mr. Khalife could have endangered Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian citizen who was held in Iran for six years, by sending a fabricated intelligence document to Iran that said the British government was unwilling to negotiate her release.

Sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 12. Dominic Murphy, head of the counterterrorism command at the Metropolitan Police, said in a statement on Thursday that the threat to Britain from "states such as Iran is very serious, so for a soldier in the army to be sharing sensitive military material and information with them is extremely reckless and dangerous."

Mr. Khalife, he added, "claimed that he wanted to help the U.K.'s security by becoming a so-called 'double-agent' but the reality we uncovered is that he simply put U.K. security at great risk by what he was doing."

METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE, VIA REUTERS

Daniel Khalife was a member of the Royal Corps of Signals.

For his part, Mr. Khalife still seemed to visualize himself in the glamorized world of undercover espionage depicted in "Homeland" and other fictions.

"I had seen one of the characters in the program had actually falsely defected to a particular country and utilized that position to further the national security interests of that character's country," he explained of one of his plans.

Mr. Khalife told the court he was a "patriot," adding: "I do love my country. All I wanted to do was help."

Secret Report Urges FIFA to Pay Workers Harmed at Qatar Sites

By TARIQ PANJA

The soccer World Cup held in Qatar in 2022 took the most popular sporting event to the Middle East for the first time. But it was trailed for years by reports of injuries, and even deaths, suffered by workers who created an entirely new country — including a subway network, hotels and a nearly a dozen modern stadiums — in preparation for the tournament.

Now, a report commissioned for FIFA, soccer's governing body, has recommended that FIFA itself take direct responsibility for some of the injuries by compensating some workers or, for those who died, their dependents, according to two people with direct knowledge of the report.

MARKO DJURICA/REUTERS

A symbolic World Cup in Qatar in 2022. Foreign workers built the tournament facilities.

The report offered no specific dollar amount of compensation. In the past, Amnesty International has called for at least $440 million for any compensation fund. FIFA, which has $4 billion in its reserves, has so far paid no money to anyone harmed.

"All reports and recommendations were considered during a comprehensive review by the FIFA administration and relevant bodies," FIFA said in a statement to The New York Times on Friday before publication of this article. "While all recommendations could not be met, practical and impactful elements were retained."

Referring to the report, the statement said, "It should be noted that the study did not specifically constitute a legal assessment of the obligation to remedy."

The report and its recommendations were prepared last year, and have been secretly guarded as FIFA grappled with the impact of publication. FIFA has committed to publishing it by the end of this year.

The report includes several proposals and was written by Human Level, a human rights advisory firm hired by FIFA. During the tournament, FIFA had come under pressure from some of its own member nations, rights groups, sponsors and fans to investigate its responsibilities for the thousands of laborers who worked on the World Cup projects.

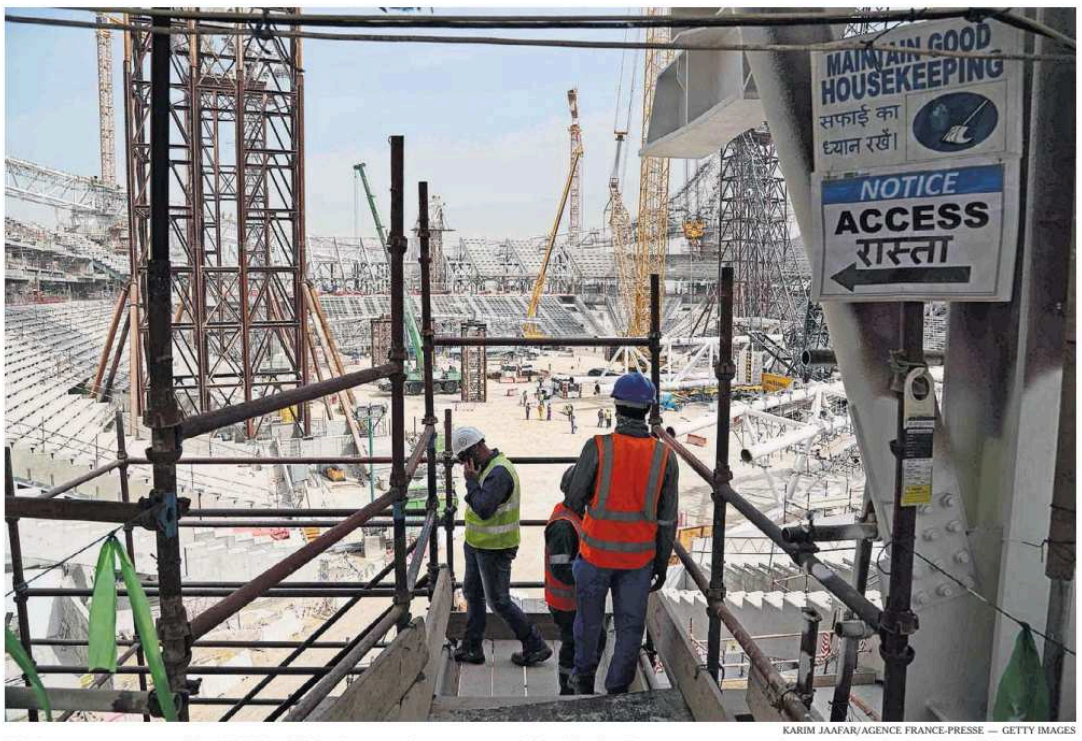
The report was meant to also address accusations that human rights abuses — like working and living in unsafe conditions and wage thefts — were commonplace experiences for laborers in Qatar.

Should FIFA not compensate workers, "the international community should see and condemn your failure to do what you are supposed to do," said Minky Worden, director of global initiatives at Human Rights Watch. She has been in direct talks with FIFA over compensating workers involved in the Qatar World Cup.

Hassan al-Thawadi, the official who led Qatar's World Cup, said in 2022 that "one death is too many," but also that the World Cup has in general been a catalyst for improvements to labor rights in the country.

Since awarding the World Cup to Qatar, FIFA has added a human rights component to its host selection process for future events. That has brought scrutiny on its impending decision to award the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia, which is embarking on construction projects that dwarf those that took place in neighboring Qatar. A vote takes place on Dec. 11.

Many of the workers on the 2022 tournament were brought to Qatar from some of the world's poorest countries. They suffered harms ranging from wage theft to injury and death from workplace accidents or the effects of working in the searing Gulf sun.



KARIM JAAFAR/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Workers constructing the Al-Wakrah Stadium in Qatar in 2018. The $575 million site was one of many built for the World Cup.

Human rights organizations have put the death toll from World Cup and related projects in the thousands. The official count by Qatari World Cup organizers — which they limit to deaths on projects directly linked to the tournament, like the building of stadiums — was 37, and only three if just workplace accidents are counted.

The Times in 2022, citing official data, reported that at least 2,100 Nepalis died in Qatar in the 12 years between the awarding to it of hosting rights by FIFA and the start of the tournament. Many more were injured, The Times reported, and had exchanged a lifetime of savings, or become heavily indebted, just for the right to work in Qatar.

Similar reports emerged before the Qatar World Cup from other nations, places where dire poverty and a lack of opportunities have for years driven workers to seek jobs in the Gulf.

An internal slide produced by FIFA two months before the start of the World Cup, and reviewed by The Times, detailed a payment mechanism that envisioned "humanitarian relief payments" for workers and their families "who suffered harm in the course of their employment and would otherwise not have access to adequate remediation."

The FIFA slide envisioned a special trust with independent governance but said that a final decision would be made in March 2023. It is unclear if any decision was ever made.

Qatar, a tiny thumb-shaped peninsula in the Persian Gulf, used the tournament for nothing short of a nationwide transformation, engaging in a 10-year, $200 billion overhaul with the World Cup as its center.

The decade-long building project regularly generated ugly headlines about the treatment of migrant workers, who were predominantly from South Asian countries that included Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan but some of whom were also from Kenya and Ghana.

The report, according to the people with knowledge of its contents, also pointed out that other organizations have a shared responsibility with FIFA to remedy abuses, and it recognized some steps that have been undertaken to improve labor conditions in Qatar.

FIFA this week announced a $50 million so-called FIFA World Cup Qatar legacy fund, in association with a slew of United Nations affiliated bodies. That announcement was met with immediate criticism from human rights organizations.

"By giving $50 million to the World Health Organization, U.N. refugee agency and other organizations but not a single penny for the families of migrant workers who died building the stadiums, this Legacy Fund just seems like another attempt to distract from FIFA's lack of care or compensation for the people harmed by its own actions," said Andrea Florence, the director of the Sport and Rights Alliance, a group created by rights organizations.

"FIFA should take responsibility for its impact and use some of its $7 billion revenue from the 2022 World Cup to compensate those who suffered to make it happen," she said.

FIFA described the fund as "a pragmatic and transparent initiative that will encompass social programs to help people most in need across the world," and pointed out that a separate worker support and insurance fund had been set up by Qatar in 2018, largely to deal with unpaid wages.

Within FIFA there have been debates about how to deal with the report, with officials aware that they would face criticism and further demands over compensation. But human rights leaders, and, in private, even some FIFA officials, also noted that FIFA, as a signatory to the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, has responsibility to remedy situations where it can be directly linked to harm.

Trump Critiques Biden's Foreign Policy, but Is Unlikely to Make Quick Changes

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald J. Trump comes to office with a view of America's place in the world that is dramatically different from his predecessor's.

Branding President Biden's foreign policy as "historically horrible," Mr. Trump is vowing to reinstate an America First approach that in his first term swept away years of policy consensus and shook U.S. alliances around the world.

He wants friendly relations with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, may slash U.S. support for Ukraine and has threatened to withdraw from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He admires foreign autocrats and shows little interest in Mr. Biden's goal of championing democracy abroad. He is hostile to international organizations and treaties including the United Nations and the Paris climate accord.

But amid the many areas of potential disruption, Mr. Trump will also find plenty of things to like in Mr. Biden's policies. Beyond the glaring exceptions of Europe and his plans for Russia and Ukraine, Mr. Trump's initial approach could bear a surprising resemblance to the Biden status quo.

One reason is that abrupt foreign policy swerves are rare and difficult to execute, analysts say. America's military, economic and political power tends to provide a fairly fixed amount of leverage over other countries. Pressure from allies, Congress and the federal bureaucracy push commanders-in-chief toward consensus views.

"There tends to be more continuity between administrations of different parties — even administrations of very different styles, like Trump and Biden — than the casual observer might expect," said Richard Fontaine, the chief executive of the Center for a New American Security, a nonpartisan Washington think tank. "We tend to focus on the big differences."

One reason is that Mr. Biden continued several key policies from the first Trump term.

In his dealings with such countries as Cuba, Iran, Venezuela, China and even Israel, Mr. Biden broke with Mr. Trump's approach in relatively modest or short-lived ways. National security strategy plans issued by both the Trump and Biden White Houses identified "strategic competition" with China and Russia as the north star of U.S. policy.

Saudi Arabia is a prime example. Mr. Biden initially branded the kingdom a "pariah" over the 2018 murder of the Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi and other human rights abuses. The president also suspended offensive weapons for Saudi Arabia's military campaign against Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen, which he said was causing a humanitarian disaster.

DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Biden took a hard line with Saudi Arabia at first, but has since softened his position.

ERIC LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mr. Biden's approach to China has largely been built on what Trump did when he was president.

But Mr. Biden has since bowed to the reality of Saudi Arabia's oil-powered influence. He restored the arms shipments and has sent aides to Riyadh in pursuit of a U.S.-Saudi security agreement that would bring the two countries closer militarily, on the condition that Saudi Arabia establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

"Biden went from trying to make the Saudis a pariah to trying to make them a treaty ally of the United States," Mr. Fontaine noted — an approach Mr. Trump is expected to continue.

Mr. Trump's plans for China are hazy, beyond threats to impose huge tariffs on its exported goods. But Mr. Biden will hand off an approach built on foundations laid in Mr. Trump's first term. They include a muscular U.S. military presence in East Asia to counter Chinese territorial aggression, tough action against Chinese technology that could threaten American security and existing tariffs — first imposed by Mr. Trump and left in place by Mr. Biden.

Mr. Biden has softened his competitive approach with dialogue and speaks regularly with China's president, Xi Jinping — but so did Mr. Trump.

One wild card is Taiwan. Mr. Biden vowed to defend the democratic island from a Chinese invasion; Mr. Trump has sounded ambivalent. But several of Mr. Trump's top national security picks, including Michael Waltz for national security adviser and Marco Rubio for secretary of state, are China hawks committed to Taiwan's defense.

As a candidate, Mr. Trump claimed that Mr. Biden had lifted the sanctions he had piled onto Iran's economy as part of his first-term "maximum pressure" policy. In fact, Mr. Biden left those sanctions intact. The difference was in the need for enforcement: Iran eventually found ways to increase its black market oil sales, reaping billions in revenue, but Mr. Biden took only modest steps in response. Trump advisers say he will crack down.

But Mr. Trump will face the same hard choices, including added tensions with China, the top customer for Iran's illicit oil, and the prospect of higher oil prices caused by any loss in Iranian supply. After campaigning on inflation and high gas prices, Mr. Trump may be especially wary.

This time around, Mr. Trump will have no Iran nuclear deal to rip up, as he did in his first term. Mr. Biden tried without success to restore the Obama-era agreement, which slowed Iran's progress toward a potential atomic bomb. Now, with Iran closer than ever to nuclear weapons capability, Mr. Trump sounds prepared to try again: "We have to make a deal," he told reporters in September, calling an Iranian bomb an "impossible" outcome.

Suzanne Maloney, an Iran expert at the Brookings Institution, said she expected "significant continuity in U.S. policy on Iran" under Mr. Trump, noting that both Democratic and Republican presidents have sought to coerce and negotiate with the country's Islamic government. "That includes the first Trump administration," she added. "The complexity of the challenges posed by Tehran provides few easy alternatives, as prior presidents have found."

Mr. Trump, Ms. Maloney said, will most likely be more willing to take risks with Iran, as when he ordered the assassination of the Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani in January 2020. But his pressure campaign will probably include efforts to talk, she said.

Mr. Trump casts himself as Israel's best friend in American politics, and he may give Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wide latitude on security issues and his treatment of Palestinians. But so did Mr. Biden. While the Biden administration often criticized Mr. Netanyahu's conduct of the war in Gaza, it took few concrete steps to restrain his behavior.

Some Biden officials fear that Mr. Trump could green-light an Israeli move to annex the occupied West Bank, something Mr. Biden would never accept. But in his first term Mr. Trump opposed a plan by Mr. Netanyahu to annex large parts of the West Bank, and such a move now could spoil his high hopes for a Saudi-Israel diplomatic agreement.

During his first term, Mr. Trump complained that the war in Afghanistan was "a waste." But he never completed a U.S. withdrawal — another reminder that big strategic changes are hard to pull off quickly. Mr. Biden wound up solving the problem for him, by executing on a withdrawal agreement that Mr. Trump had negotiated with the Taliban. Mr. Trump even initially called that "a wonderful and positive thing to do," before hammering Mr. Biden over the chaotic nature of the American exit. Neither has any inclination to deal with the Taliban leaders today.

A lot of what Trump advanced in his first term still stands.

And in Cuba, U.S. policy remains much as Mr. Trump left it four years ago — frosty and stagnant. As president Mr. Trump took measures to roll back the Obama administration's diplomatic opening, including by restoring Cuba to the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. Mr. Biden never undid that move. Similarly, Mr. Biden has largely maintained heavy Trump-era sanctions on Venezuela meant to pressure its authoritarian leader, Nicolás Maduro, from power.

Even some foreign officials worried about Mr. Trump's intentions are consoling themselves with the idea that his disruptive instincts may have limits.

One European diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Mr. Trump's election had created a climate of uncertainty and alarm on the continent. But asked about the prospect that Mr. Trump would withdraw the United States from NATO, the diplomat said he and many of his colleagues thought that fear is overblown.

Few in Europe, he said, believe that Mr. Trump will actually take such a radical step.

Sinn Féin supporters rallying in central Dublin. The party was neck-and-neck with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael as voting began.

Jonathan Dowling, a worker at a youth club in inner-city Dublin. "There is this real polarization at the moment," he said.

Malachy Steenson, center, a right-wing candidate with an anti-immigration platform, canvassed in the East Wall neighborhood.

Frustrated by Ireland's Status Quo, and Eager to Be Heard at the Polls

By MEGAN SPECIA

DUBLIN — On the lampposts in northeast Dublin, campaign posters were stacked one on top of the next, the faces of prominent politicians and newcomers competing for attention ahead of Ireland's general election on Friday.

But Janice O'Keeffe, 44, who was collecting a cup of coffee on Thursday morning from a cafe on Sean McDermott Street, said she was still undecided. One thing was certain: She was fed up with the establishment.

"They've had 100 years to prove themselves and they haven't done much," she said of Ireland's two main political parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

The two parties, both of which are broadly center-right, have run the Republic of Ireland for alternating periods since the founding of the modern Irish state in the early 20th century. At the last general election, in 2020, neither won a big enough majority to govern alone. So, along with the Green Party, they formed a coalition that kept out their main opposition: Sinn Féin, which had won the popular vote for the first time.

As Ireland headed to the polls, many voters voiced disillusionment with the government, citing issues like the steep cost of living, health care and immigration.

Despite that, the duopoly of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael was expected to hold, partly because neither is willing to enter a coalition with Sinn Féin, a left-wing nationalist party that for decades was ostracized because of its history as the political branch of the Irish Republican Army.

In the last election poll from The Irish Times, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Sinn Féin were neck-and-neck, with 21 percent, 20 percent and 19 percent.

Here in northeast inner-city Dublin, locals say the issues facing voters feel particularly acute. There is vast wealth inequality in the district, with pockets of affluence existing alongside deprivation. A boom in commercial development and an influx of well-paid tech workers from multinational firms lured by Ireland's corporate tax breaks has added to the feeling among some longstanding communities of being left behind.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAULO NUNES DOS SANTOS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Campaign posters in northeast Dublin. Voters pointed to the steep cost of living, health care and immigration as top-of-mind issues.

Surging demand for housing has overwhelmed limited rental stock, exacerbated by a failure by successive governments to invest in public housing. And as the number of new immigrants reached its highest level this year since 2007, a fault line has grown in Irish society and toxic narratives have gained a toehold, experts say.

"There is this real polarization at the moment, and our focus has to be: How do we help these kids growing up here?" said Jonathan Dowling, 38, a youth work leader at Belvedere Youth Club in the north inner-city. "I don't tell people, 'Don't sell drugs,' or 'Don't commit crime' or 'Don't be racist,'" he said. "We create a platform for them to see that there is right, there is wrong and here's your opportunity, and it's down to them to make a decision."

Dean Murray, 26, another youth worker, said there were often negative stereotypes about the area, where he also grew up, but that the community was tight-knit.

"Most people from here love it," he said. For most of his peers, the biggest issues were the cost of groceries and lack of housing, he said, adding, "I think people just want change from that constant perpetuating cycle of government saying they are going to do things, and then not."

The range of proposed solutions to Ireland's issues is reflected by the broad swath of candidates vying for Dublin Central constituency's four seats. There are the established candidates from the country's center-right parties, along with Mary Lou McDonald, the leader of Sinn Féin; progressive left candidates; a nationalist anti-immigration candidate; and even Gerry Hutch, a man prosecutors have described in court as the head of a crime family.

On Wednesday, Gary Gannon, a center-left Social Democrat, was knocking on doors in the fading evening light in a final push for votes. He has represented this Dublin constituency since 2020. Concerns about housing have been a major theme for constituents, he said, but he felt the emphasis on immigration concerns had lessened since last year.

"What breaks down fear is connection," he said. "The far-right agitators who have built their name on immigration, people realized once they stopped talking about immigration, they started talking about lessening reproductive rights, and attacks on L.G.B.T. people, and people realized that doesn't resonate with them."

He said the city needs "strong legislators," not just someone to give voice to grievances. "But it can be a bit of a harder sell to say, 'I'm not just going to speak to your anger, I am going to work to resolve it,' because that becomes a long process," he acknowledged.

A short walk away in the East Wall neighborhood, Malachy Steenson, a right-wing nationalist candidate running on an anti-immigration platform, offered a decidedly different vision as he knocked on doors. Mr. Steenson said traditional media had overlooked the importance of immigration to voters in neighborhoods like East Wall, adding, "Our obligation is to our own."

Adrienne McGuinness, 55, and Dawn Everard, 54, were canvassing for him and said they became politically active two years ago in frustration over the state housing asylum seekers.

"We pay taxes, we all work, and then everything feels like it's getting dumped on us," Ms. Everard said. Ms. Guinness added, "We definitely are forgotten."

Some right-wing nationalist and anti-immigration candidates may win seats, said Gail McElroy, a professor of politics at Trinity College Dublin. "It will be a big issue in certain local constituencies where there are plans to provide accommodation for large numbers of asylum seekers," she said, adding, "The mainstream parties are kind of avoiding it," focusing attention instead on the economy.

Sinn Féin is hoping that those disillusioned with the status quo may turn to them. After a surge in support in 2020, the party had been expected to perform well at this election, but its polling numbers have sagged during the second half of this year, thanks in part to internal party scandals.

On Thursday, Ms. McDonald, the party's leader, appealed to people who might have traditionally steered away from the party.

"If you want a change of government, vote for Sinn Féin," she said, standing in front of government buildings. "Lend us your vote for this election."

Despite the disillusionment with establishment parties, the country's unique form of proportional representation that uses ranked voting insulates it from the wild swings seen in other democracies, Professor McElroy said. As a result, she said, "The system rewards those with less extreme positions."

Vote in Mexico Clears Way to Eliminate Independent Watchdog Agencies

By JAMES WAGNER and EMILIANO RODRÍGUEZ MEGA

MEXICO CITY — Mexico's Senate on Thursday night passed a sweeping proposal to dissolve several government-financed yet independent watchdog organizations, a move the president and her supporters said would help reduce corruption and waste. Critics have called it a step backward for transparency and regulation.

The duties of most of the seven agencies, which provided oversight on a host of issues, such as public information requests and price fixing in the telecommunications, pharmaceutical and energy sectors, would be absorbed by other parts of the federal government, overseen by the president.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of the agencies — the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data, known as INAI — would have its responsibilities divided among a handful of existing federal agencies.

"The disappearance of these autonomous bodies represents a democratic setback," the Mexican Association for the Right to Information, a nongovernmental group, said in a statement. The move, the group added, "weakens the mechanisms of control, transparency and protection of rights that have been built with great effort in our country."

The constitutional amendment dissolving the agencies is part of a series of far-reaching proposals pushed by the former Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, that are supported by his successor and mentee, Claudia Sheinbaum, and by their political party, Morena.

In September, Mexico passed an amendment overhauling the country's judiciary, which supporters of the proposal said was riddled with graft, influence-peddling and nepotism. Critics warned that the move, which will see nearly all Mexican judges elected rather than appointed, undermines judicial independence and politicizes the courts.

Morena has also targeted the independent agencies because of what it has called excessive spending and corruption.

The latest amendment would also dissolve the independent watchdogs at the state level that oversee public information requests and the protection of personal data.

The bill already passed in the lower house of Congress. If it is approved by a majority of Mexico's 32 state legislatures — most of which are controlled by Morena — then it will become law after publication in the government's official gazette.

What will happen?

The amendment would eliminate seven agencies:

- INAI
- National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy, or CONEVAL
- Federal Economic Competition Commission, or COFECE
- Federal Telecommunications Institute, or IFT
- National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education, or MEJOREDU
- Energy Regulatory Commission, or CRE
- National Hydrocarbons Commission, or CNH

Most of the seven agencies were created in the 2000s or 2010s as a way to shift some power away from the federal government and strengthen Mexico's budding democracy.

Each body's duties would be absorbed by other federal agencies, though Morena lawmakers have said that their employees will not lose their jobs. Savings from the dissolution of the agencies are expected to be directed to a new government pension fund aimed at lifting payouts to the lowest recipients.

Ms. Sheinbaum has also said that Congress should consider using the money for cultural and education programs and for raising the salaries of soldiers.

She has also said that the work done by the information agency will continue because every federal body, under law, needs to be transparent.

"The disappearance of INAI does not mean that transparency in government is going to disappear," she told reporters recently. "On the contrary, we are going to be much stricter in transparency."

Who wanted this, and why?

The governing party has claimed that the cost of maintaining all seven watchdog agencies is too steep. In July, Mr. López Obrador estimated that up to roughly $5 billion would be saved by dissolving them, though it is unclear how that number was calculated.

He has criticized top INAI officials for having large salaries (he said the agency's commissioners make over $12,000 a month; the minimum wage in the country is roughly $360 a month) and for abusing government-issued credit cards (internal audits found that officials had logged unusually high spending, including charging trips to Europe).

Mr. López Obrador also attacked the economic competition commission, accusing it of being vulnerable to the whims of large companies.

Claudia Rivera, a Morena lawmaker in the lower house of Congress, said that the amendment to abolish the agencies was part of the government's "financial discipline" strategy. "It's about making the spending more efficient," she said, adding that the agencies' work "is not lost, not neglected," but transferred to existing ministries or institutes.

Critics have argued that dissolving some agencies might violate the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. That trade accord calls for an independent regulatory telecommunications agency in each country.

But Ms. Sheinbaum said the "original spirit of guaranteeing economic competition and antimonopoly" under the trade agreement would be maintained, but in a way "more appropriate for our national context."

She said she planned to restructure the economic competition and telecommunications agencies into a decentralized and independent organization within the existing economy ministry.

What does the opposition say?

Opponents have acknowledged that graft and misspending are chronic problems in Mexico. But Jorge Cano, an economist and public finances analyst at Mexico Evaluates, a public policy research group, said that Morena's estimates of $5 billion savings are "beyond the realm of reality."

Mr. Cano's group said that the seven agencies received $238 million this year from the government, representing only about 0.06 percent of Mexico's annual federal budget.

Natalia Campos, a public policy researcher at the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness, a research group, said that the disappearance of the agencies was likely to hurt Mexico's investment climate by getting rid of agencies that oversee markets and the government itself.

Diego Marroquín Bitar, a researcher at the Wilson Center, a nonpartisan study institute in Washington, said, "One of the reasons that a lot of foreign investors invest in Mexico and decide to bet on Mexico is because they know there are clear and stable rules."

The telecommunications commission has said that, since it was made an independent agency in 2013, Mexicans have paid significantly less for services, including phone and internet, despite rising inflation during that time. Changing its structure, it said, "would lead to a serious setback."

Zorayda Gallegos, an independent investigative journalist, said INAI was "very important" because it forced other government offices to be more open, including providing copies of contracts from federal agencies, such as the traditionally opaque Mexican military.

The plan to move part of INAI's duties to the civil service ministry, Ms. Gallegos said, would mean "the loss of a guarantee to the citizen" to be able to obtain information.

Recently, she said, she asked the civil service ministry for a copy of a yearslong investigation into a public official who ended up avoiding disciplinary action. She said she received an 18-page document that had been almost entirely redacted.

Of particular concern to some critics is the future of the National Platform of Transparency, a website where anyone can request information from any government agency. Once the request is answered, the records are accessible for anyone to view.

RAQUEL CUNHA/REUTERS

A protest in Mexico City last year in support of Mexico's freedom of information body, known as INAI, after the president at the time, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, backed a proposal to scrap it.

Miriam Castillo contributed reporting.

The New York Times

MARK LENNIHAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Linda McMahon ran a wrestling organization that was criticized for producing content that research suggested was harmful to children. Left, Ms. McMahon leaving federal court in 1994 with her husband, Vince McMahon.

McMahon's Fitness For Education Post Was Concern in '09

nytimes#l@l.l

This article is by ***Stephanie Saul, Zach Montague*** *and* ***Sharon Otterman****.*

ARIEL ZAMBELICH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Appointees to the State Board of Education usually sail through the confirmation process in Connecticut's House of Representatives, but a 2009 choice, Linda E. McMahon, drew intense pushback.

Andrew Fleischmann, who then chaired the House Education Committee, remembers being offended by her selection and leading the opposition.

"She had no involvement whatsoever in education," Mr. Fleischmann, a Democrat, said in a recent interview. "She's made tens or hundreds of millions of dollars pushing violence and sexualization of young women. She was a real force for doing ill to kids in our country."

Ms. McMahon's company, World Wrestling Entertainment, was criticized for promoting violence, steroid use and sexualized content. In the early 2000s, Ms. McMahon would go so far as to engage in the W.W.E.'s theatrics herself. She kicked her husband, Vince McMahon, the company's co-founder, in the groin in one routine. In another, she appeared to slap her daughter, Stephanie, and knock her to the floor.

After a contentious floor debate, the House voted to approve Ms. McMahon by a vote of 96-45, an unusual split for a minor appointment in Connecticut.

Ms. McMahon may soon face another confirmation, this time as President-elect Donald J. Trump's nominee for Secretary of Education.

Some things have changed in the last two decades. The year before Ms. McMahon was nominated to serve on the state's education board, W.W.E. announced that it was toning down its content so it could become PG-rated. That decision came after criticism and scientific studies that found watching wrestling was correlated with violent behavior among children.

Other things have not changed. The billionaire McMahon couple, now separated and no longer involved in running the business, have been controversial figures for decades. Allegations surrounding the company under their management included promoting steroids, a culture of rampant sexual harassment, intimidation and assault. There have been several out-of-court settlements involving the company or Mr. McMahon personally.

Most recently, a lawsuit filed in October accused the McMahons of willfully ignoring the sexual abuse of young boys by a W.W.E. ringside announcer, echoing claims made years ago.

Through their lawyers, the McMahons have denied all accusations of wrongdoing.

Ms. McMahon has yet to gain very much experience in education. She quit the Connecticut school board after about a year to run for elective office, personally spending nearly $100 million on two failed efforts to capture a U.S. Senate seat.

Her main schools experience has been serving for 16 years on the board of trustees at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn., where fellow board members described her as a smart businesswoman whose style was more practical than ideological. (With Mr. Trump pledging to dismantle the Department of Education, experts in the field have suggested that if she is confirmed, her primary task may be to fire people.)

"I don't think anyone saw this one coming," Michael J. Petrilli, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a center-right education policy group, said of her nomination. "I'm very much surprised and a little disappointed, as somebody who thinks education matters."

Mr. Petrilli, who was an official in the Department of Education during the George W. Bush administration, said business expertise would be useful in the department, which oversees billions of dollars in student lending and has been plagued by problems with its FAFSA student aid applications.

But he added, "She is not going to be a thought leader on education."

Ms. McMahon also has experience that is prized by her would-be boss: She is steeped in Trump World.

Their friendship dates back decades, to Mr. Trump's own participation in W.W.E. events, including a show in 2007 when Mr. Trump jumped on Mr. McMahon and began punching him. Since then, Ms. McMahon has given tens of millions to aid Mr. Trump's election efforts.

Mr. Trump has expressed admiration for her business acumen. "She helped grow W.W.E. from a modest 13-person operation to a publicly traded global enterprise with more than 800 employees in offices worldwide," he said in 2016.

He has called her a "superstar."

Ms. McMahon did not respond to a request for an interview.

Ms. McMahon, 76, grew up Linda Edwards in New Bern, N.C., a small city on the coast. She married Vince McMahon, also a North Carolinian, shortly after high school, and graduated from East Carolina University in 1969.

In documents filed in connection with her appointment to the Connecticut board, she claimed that her degree was in education. She later corrected that her major was actually in French.

She obtained a teaching certificate, but never worked in a classroom. Instead, after the couple moved to Washington, D.C., Ms. McMahon worked as a paralegal.

The couple found their niche in wrestling promotion. In 1982, they purchased the business that would become the W.W.E. from Mr. McMahon's father. After they took over, they branched out into broadcasting, publications, action figures and films. (Last year, W.W.E. merged with Ultimate Fighting Championship, the mixed martial arts company, and formed TKO Group Holdings.)

In a questionnaire filed when she was nominated for the Connecticut board, Ms. McMahon outlined a number of legal entanglements the couple had contended with over the years, including an Internal Revenue Service fraud investigation that resulted in no charges.

The most prominent of the legal problems was Mr. McMahon's 1993 indictment accusing him of providing steroids to wrestlers. Both Mr. McMahon and the company were acquitted. Among the witnesses for the prosecution was the wrestler Hulk Hogan. Ms. McMahon was not named as a defendant in that case.

Still, in a spectacle where bulkier and stronger is usually better, the taint of illicit steroid use would not go away. In 2007, after the wrestler Chris Benoit killed his wife and son, and then himself, W.W.E. became the subject of a congressional inquiry. At the time, W.W.E. said it had suspended 10 wrestlers over steroid use.

> 'She is not going to be a thought leader on education.'

Steroids and the W.W.E. came up during Ms. McMahon's Connecticut confirmation hearing. One lawmaker, Representative Shawn Johnston, described how he became embarrassed while attending a W.W.E. event with his wife and two sons.

"It had an incredible sexual overtone, with incredibly scantily clad women doing what I can say is basically selling pure sexuality," he said during the February 2009 hearing. After that outing, Mr. Johnston said, the couple forbade their sons from watching wrestling.

Lawmakers supporting Ms. McMahon pointed to the good works of her company. Among other public service programs, W.W.E. encouraged young people to register to vote as part of a Rock the Vote initiative in the 2000s. It also held a WrestleMania reading challenge.

Beth Yoke, then an official of the National Library Association's young adult division, said she contacted W.W.E. because of its popularity among teens. Under the challenge, students who read 10 books and reported on them won a chance to attend a W.W.E. event.

When Ms. McMahon resigned from the state school board to run for the U.S. Senate, she expressed concern that her candidacy might violate a state prohibition on political activities by board members. She lost the 2010 race to Richard Blumenthal, and lost again in 2012 to Christopher Murphy, despite outspending each of them by wide margins. During the campaigns, she cast herself as a social moderate, voicing support for abortion rights and charter schools.

By 2016, she had given up running for office herself and attached her political ambitions to Mr. Trump, donating a total of more than $7 million to two super PACs backing his presidential campaign. He rewarded her munificence, tapping her to lead the Small Business Administration during his first term in office. She sailed through the confirmation process, with endorsements from both her state's senators, Mr. Blumenthal and Mr. Murphy.

She went on to help lead the American First Policy Institute, a little-known right-wing organization formed in 2021. She also increased her support for Mr. Trump, providing more than $21 million to various Trump-related campaign entities in the 2023-2024 election cycle.

After he won on Nov. 5, Ms. McMahon was hired to steer Mr. Trump's transition, and the policy organization is believed to be wielding enormous influence in planning for the fledging Trump administration.

The group's education agenda would steer schools decidedly to the right, by promoting increased spending for charter and private schools, reducing the influence of teachers' unions, and expanding "parental rights" by giving parents more direct control over many aspects of public education, including curriculum and school library books.

In higher education, the group has opposed permitting transgender players in women's sports; demanded the elimination of diversity, equity and inclusion programs; and argued in favor of eliminating college degree requirements for some public-sector jobs.

Still, the education post was viewed as something of a consolation prize for Ms. McMahon. She was rumored to be Mr. Trump's choice for commerce secretary, but the other co-chair of the transition team, Howard Lutnick, was picked for that post instead. Mr. Trump cited Ms. McMahon's experience on the Connecticut board and her "deep understanding" of both education and business as reasons for his decision.

Ms. McMahon's tenure on the Connecticut board offers little insight into how she might run the Department of Education. Most of the votes during her year on the board involved routine matters. Records show that Ms. McMahon visited two Stamford charter schools on the board's behalf.

One idea she has favored is expansion of career and technical education. Patricia A. Ciccone, a former superintendent of Connecticut's technical high school system, said in an interview that Ms. McMahon's interest in technical schools dated back to her involvement on a board panel overseeing them.

Michael P. Meotti, the state's Commissioner of Higher Education at the time, said in an email that he had no recollection of Ms. McMahon's board service. But he added that Gov. M. Jodi Rell, the moderate Republican who appointed her, had a vastly different education agenda than Mr. Trump's.

Ms. McMahon remains involved at Sacred Heart University, where she is now the board treasurer. Patrick G. Maggitti, the provost at Villanova University and a former Sacred Heart board member, said he remembered how prepared she was for meetings and the savvy guidance she gave as the university undertook building projects and other expansions.

"As a business person, she is someone who you would want to have in the room if you were making tough decisions, or any decisions," he said. As for what she would do as education secretary, he hoped for the best.

"She seemed to be dedicated to higher education, at least at Sacred Heart," he said. "It seemed important to her."

NICHOLAS KAMM/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Donald J. Trump tapped Ms. McMahon to lead the Small Business Administration during his first term.

Shane Goldmacher contributed reporting. Susan C. Beachy and Alain Delaquérière contributed research.

Transition in Washington

NEWS ANALYSIS

Musk's Pledge to Ax Trillions Faces Reality

From Page A1

stein said.

A 1972 law says federal open-records laws apply to advisory committees. If a committee does not follow those rules, it could be sued — and a judge could order the committee to stop meeting, or order the government to disregard its advice.

A spokesman for Mr. Trump's presidential transition team, Brian Hughes, declined to answer detailed questions about the effort. He sent a written statement, saying that Mr. Ramaswamy and Mr. Musk "will work together slashing excess regulations, cutting wasteful expenditures, and restructuring federal agencies."

'Compensation Is Zero'

Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy laid out plans for their department in a guest editorial in The Wall Street Journal last week.

The two men said their effort would include "a lean team of small-government crusaders" working inside Mr. Trump's administration. Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy would remain outside government, offering advice as volunteers.

"Unlike government commissions or advisory committees, we won't just write reports or cut ribbons. We'll cut costs," the pair wrote in the editorial.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Musk's effort — which he calls DOGE for short — declined to say if Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy would make their meetings open. She also declined to say if the department would be set up as a separate legal entity, or how many people were already working for it.

The DOGE effort remains fairly informal for now. Mr. Musk has been openly tapping his network of Silicon Valley friends and business associates to begin assembling a team of advisers, and the group has been recruiting and interviewing candidates for full-time positions.

Mr. Musk has solicited employees on X, saying the job would involve more than 80 hours of work per week. "This will be tedious work, make lots of enemies & compensation is zero," he wrote.

The spokeswoman for the effort did not answer questions about how many staff members the group has now, and who — if anyone — is paying them.

In their op-ed, Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy also said that in slashing regulations, they would rely on a pair of recent Supreme Court decisions that limited federal agencies' power to issue rules.

They plan to compile a list of regulations that they believed stemmed from agencies having exceeded their legal authority.

"DOGE will present this list of regulations to President Trump, who can, by executive action, immediately pause the enforcement of those regulations and initiate the process for review and rescission," the men wrote.

Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy said that cutting rules would allow them to cut staff, allowing "mass head-count reductions" across the government.

Yet many of those employees have civil-service protections, meaning they generally cannot be fired without cause, or for their political beliefs. In his first term, Mr. Trump tried to shift thousands of employees into a different category, where they could be fired at will. President Biden rescinded that order, called Schedule F, when he took office.

Ripe for Legal Challenges

Jonathan H. Adler, a professor at the Case Western Reserve University School of Law, said that many of the ideas mentioned by Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy would be ripe for legal challenges and noted that many of Mr. Trump's previous efforts to expansively use executive powers had been struck down by courts.

Mr. Trump's advisers have suggested that the Supreme Court's ruling in a landmark case involving Chevron earlier this year will make it easier for the executive branch to nullify rules and regulations that appear to go beyond the legislative intent of laws.

However, Mr. Adler noted that the ruling actually means that agencies should not be able to make such determinations, suggesting that it would require litigation and court rulings to quash the regulations. Ignoring or eliminating rules without following the proper procedures is also likely to trigger lawsuits from those that benefit from the status quo.

"There's litigation risk that they're not adequately accounting for," Mr. Adler said, adding that the Trump administration would have to be extremely strategic if it tries to take legally creative steps to rescind regulations or shrink agencies.

Law firms have already been bracing clients for legal fights.

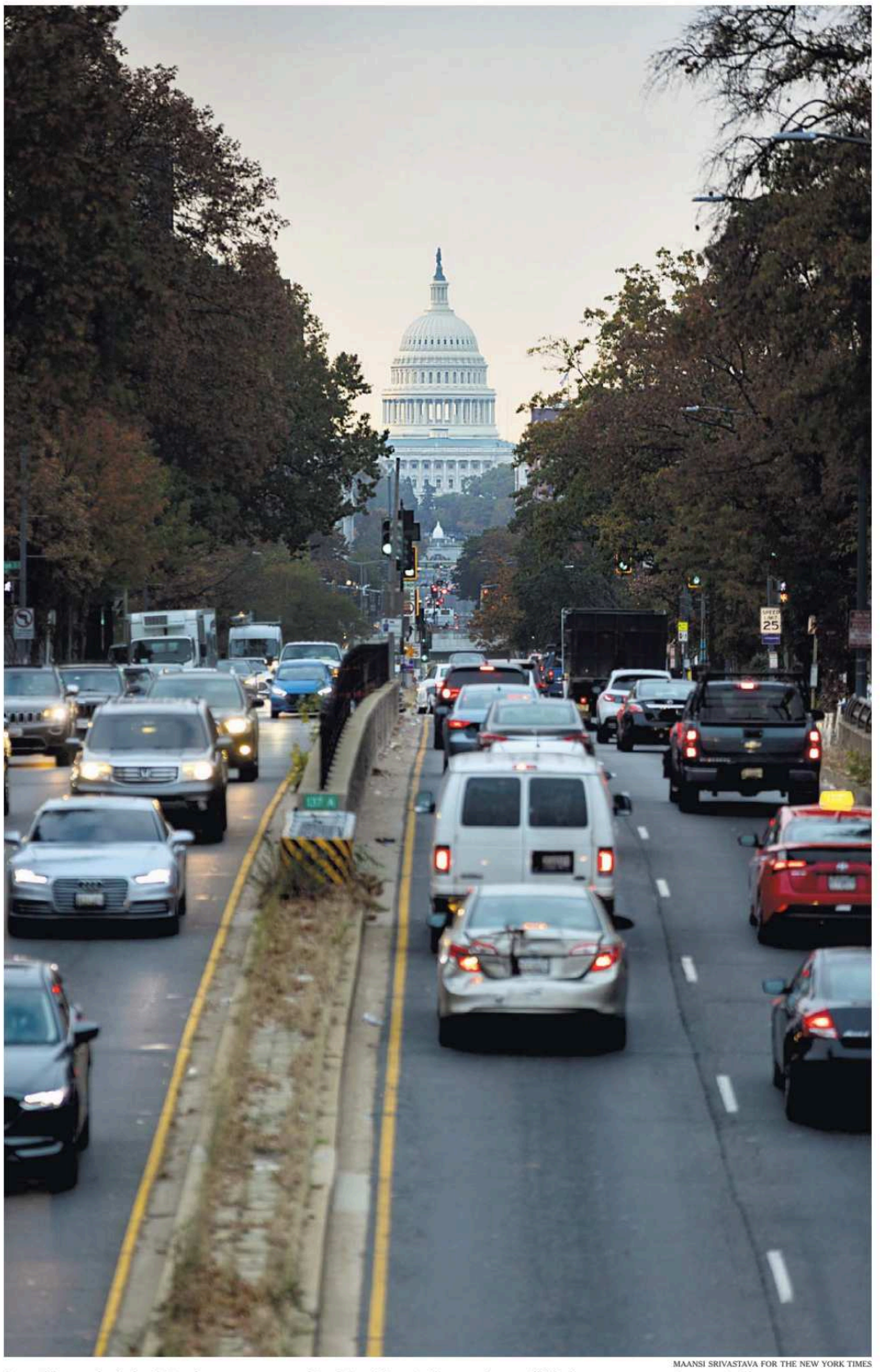
In a briefing this week, lawyers from Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman said that companies need to start warning members of Congress and the Trump administration about the potential fallout if government contracts are cut and if certain payments or benefits stop flowing as part of an efficiency effort.

"While the Republican-controlled Congress will very likely work in lockstep with the Trump White House, it is equally likely that Republican members of Congress will be uncomfortable with delayed payments and spending cuts to programs favored by constituents," they wrote. "In particular, government contractors are likely to push back against proposals from DOGE leaders to temporarily suspend payments to contractors while large-scale audits are conducted."

Robert J. Kovacev, a lawyer at Miller & Chevalier who specializes in tax disputes with the federal government, said that the Trump administration's ambitions were reminiscent of efforts by the Reagan administration to roll back regulations in the 1980s.

At that time, President Reagan issued an executive order to freeze regulations that were in process and established a task force to review regulatory burdens more broadly, but it fell short of its ambitious goals.

But Mr. Musk's team has advantages that Reagan's allies did not: a Republican-controlled Congress, and a 6-to-3 conservative majority on the Supreme Court.



MAANSI SRIVASTAVA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Any effort to slash the federal government and its 2.3 million civilian workers will likely encounter resistance in Congress.

Elon Musk, left, and Vivek Ramaswamy will co-lead the Department of Government Efficiency, a new grouping.

"I think what DOGE will bring to the table is a focus on identifying regulations that pushed the envelope and expanded regulatory power too far," said Mr. Kovacev.

Still, Mr. Kovacev said, the process of rescission — formally removing a rule from the books — can take years, because it requires the government to solicit and respond to public comment.

If it does hit legal obstacles, Mr. Musk's group could borrow from another approach Mr. Trump used during his first term: disruption. For example, after the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service unit published research that showed some tax cuts proposed by Mr. Trump would flow mainly to rich farmers, the Trump administration relocated that team from Washington to Kansas City.

Because many of the staff members did not want to move halfway across the country, the move caused the unit to shrink in size — and become less productive, according to a 2022 Government Accountability Office report.

Protected Status

The success of gutting the budget might also be determined by whether Congress, and even the president, have enough resolve especially when it comes to certain programs and departments. Some of the largest parts of the budget have gone to causes Mr. Trump has vowed to protect, such as Medicare, Social Security and the military.

Those sectors also likely have strong support in Congress.

Capitol Hill has always been the place where ambitious efforts to slash the budget — from one started by Theodore Roosevelt to the commission under Reagan run by industrialist J. Peter Grace — have run aground. Members of Congress have been reluctant to cut even small programs they think help their constituents, and the law says presidents must spend all the money that Congress allocates.

Still, in recent weeks, some members of Congress have shown enthusiasm for Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy's ideas.

Senator Joni Ernst, Republican of Iowa, took to social media this week to outline what she called "easy" steps to cut $2 trillion in spending. But even those steps showed the complexity of the task awaiting Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy.

Some of Ms. Ernst's recommendations would be relatively manageable but for negligible savings — at least in proportion to the immense size of the federal budget. She said, for example, that the government could save $16.6 million by no longer providing campaign help to long-shot presidential candidates.

And one of her ideas directly clashes with one of Mr. Musk's and Mr. Ramaswamy's. The billionaires' idea is to force federal workers to work five days a week in the office, with the idea that they will become more efficient or quit. But Ms. Ernst wants to take the opposite tack: allow federal employees to work from home and sell off the office space they no longer visit.

In the House, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, Republican of Georgia, will head up a House Oversight subcommittee to "support the DOGE mission." So far, she has been vague about her plans but has said in a statement that she intends to hold hearings that will help DOGE "gut useless government agencies" and "expose people who need to be FIRED."

(Mr. Musk has separately drawn criticism for some social media posts identifying obscure federal employees by name as he questioned the value of their jobs. An official from the American Federation of Government Employees said the posts could subject the workers to abuse.)

Ms. Greene also plans to push forward legislation like the REINS Act, which would require congressional approval for all regulations issued by federal agencies for them to go into effect.

For now, activist groups like Public Citizen, a left-leaning advocacy group, said that there was nothing about Mr. Trump's victory, or Mr. Musk's role at his side, that allowed them to ignore the slow legal process set up to make — or unmake — rules.

"We will use those structures to complain — and sue, if we need to," said Lisa Gilbert, Public Citizen's co-president. "We'll see where they start, and we'll use every tool in our tool set to push back."

Defense Chief Takes Control Of Plea Deals In War Court

By CAROL ROSENBERG

After months of wrangling over the legitimacy of a plea deal in the Sept. 11 case, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III has stripped a senior official running the war crimes court of her authority to reach settlements in any cases at Guantánamo Bay.

Mr. Austin's decision comes as government lawyers are trying to nullify a plea agreement in the Sept. 11, 2001, case.

On July 31, Mr. Austin's appointee in charge of the court, Susan K. Escallier, approved a settlement that was reached by prosecutors across years of negotiations. But Mr. Austin said he was surprised by it and moved to rescind the deal, saying he strongly believed that the men accused of plotting the attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people should face a trial.

Now, in a memo dated Monday and obtained by The New York Times, Mr. Austin stripped Ms. Escallier of the authority to approve deals in the U.S.S. Cole and Bali bombing cases, "effective immediately." In doing so, he has given himself the sole power to approve plea deals in the terrorism cases in the final months of the Biden administration.

Mr. Austin wanted to make sure "we aren't surprised by anything for the remainder of the term," said a senior Defense Department official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive legal issue.

An uncertain time for the prisoners still at Guantánamo.

The move comes at an uncertain time for the 30 remaining detainees at Guantánamo Bay, a third of whom have been convicted or charged by military commission. Sixteen men at the prison, who have never been charged with crimes, have been approved for transfer to the custody of other nations if security arrangements can be made.

The Sept. 11 case is mostly in legal limbo as a higher court decides whether Mr. Austin had the authority to retroactively cancel the July 31 agreement with the man accused of being the mastermind of the plot, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, and two co-defendants. Each man agreed to plead guilty to his role in the crime and waive appeals in exchange for life sentences rather than face a death penalty trial.

The case has been in pretrial proceedings since 2012 to resolve questions about the men's torture in C.I.A. custody and other legal questions related to national security.

It is unclear why Mr. Austin decided to claw back authority in the Cole or Bali bombing cases. Neither was believed to be nearing deals. The prisoners in both cases had recently obtained new lead defense lawyers and, if talks were underway, it was unlikely that they had reached very far.

Ms. Escallier, a retired career Army lawyer and brigadier general, has not spoken publicly about her decision this summer to approve the plea agreements in Sept. 11 case. Her predecessor, a Trump administration appointee, authorized prosecutors to start those negotiations in March 2022. The talks stalled for a time over the Biden administration's unwillingness to endorse certain conditions of confinement, forcing the two sides to return to talks late last year.

The U.S.S. Cole case has been in capital proceedings since 2011. It charges Abd al-Rahim al Nashiri, a Saudi citizen, with orchestrating the plot that killed 17 U.S. sailors. Col. Matthew S. Fitzgerald, the fourth military judge to preside in the case, has set a goal of starting the trial on Oct. 6, 2025, a week before the 25th anniversary of the attack.

Prosecutors in the Bali bombing case seek a life sentence for Encep Nurjaman, an Indonesian who is known as Hambali and the former leader of Southeast Asia's Jemaah Islamiyah movement. His case is still in preliminary proceedings.

Earlier this year, two of his co-defendants pleaded guilty to terrorism related charges in exchange for repatriation to Malaysian custody. Under their deal, they agreed to cooperate with prosecutors and have already been deposed in case.

As of Thursday, the Defense Department had not publicly disclosed Mr. Austin's memo. It has been circulated among prosecution and defense lawyers in the Office of Military Commissions.

WASHINGTON MEMO

At Justice Dept., Bracing for a Test Of Independence

By DEVLIN BARRETT

WASHINGTON — It was an early case of Donald J. Trump seeking retribution through the Justice Department.

In the first year of Mr. Trump's first presidency, Attorney General Jeff Sessions appointed a top federal prosecutor to review whether the F.B.I. had failed to fully pursue investigations involving Hillary Clinton, including an inquiry into the Clinton Foundation's ties to a Russian uranium mining operation.

The appointment of the prosecutor, John W. Huber, the U.S. attorney in Utah, was championed by many on the right eager to turn the spotlight away from Mr. Trump's ties to Moscow. But when Mr. Huber's work ended years later with no charges or public report, Mr. Trump publicly called him a "garbage disposal unit for important documents."

As Mr. Trump begins filling out his administration and putting his stamp on Washington again, few issues loom larger than the resilience of the Justice Department's tradition of independence and its commitment to the rule of law.

Mr. Trump's grievance-laden campaign rhetoric has left many current and former agency officials fearful that he will seek to turn it into a department of revenge aimed at foes inside and outside government.

They said they worried that Mr. Trump's past experiences with the Justice Department mean he is less likely this time to settle for an investigation like Mr. Huber's — one that leads to little punishment or pain for anyone.

In an interview, Mr. Huber characterized his work during Mr. Trump's first term as a sign of the Justice Department's ability to withstand any political pressure.

"The department tried very hard to honor its traditions," Mr. Huber said. "We had strong leadership, and the directions that we followed were reasonable and prudent, and we did our jobs."

Mr. Huber said that as Mr. Trump prepares to take office again, he remains hopeful that the Justice Department will continue to be stocked with principled leaders who can resist undue political pressure.

"I'm optimistic," he said, "but like many people in the country I'm also wondering who will be confirmed to lead the department, and that will play a big role in what the department does."

Mr. Trump's first term was overshadowed by politically fraught investigations and a kind of bureaucratic Cold War with national security and intelligence officials. Many current and former law enforcement officials say they worry that he will not just pick up where he left off, but intensify past efforts to make the F.B.I. and the Justice Department instruments of his will.

"Based on his past statements, he seems intent on using the Justice Department in a way that breaks with the norms of the past several decades and poses significant issues for the administration of justice and the rule of law," said Greg Brower, a former U.S. attorney and senior F.B.I. official.

Law enforcement officials are particularly concerned that Mr. Trump seems to be planning to repeat one of the most tumultuous steps of his first term — firing the F.B.I. director. In 2017, Mr. Trump nominated the director, Christopher A. Wray, to a 10-year term to succeed the just-fired James B. Comey. Now, as Mr. Trump gets ready to assume office again, he appears to be preparing to force Mr. Wray out.

Even though Mr. Wray has more than two and a half years left in his term, Vice President-elect JD Vance posted on social media this month that he was busy with interviews for a new F.B.I. director — a statement he later deleted.

Mr. Trump's already terrible relationship with the F.B.I. only worsened after agents with the bureau searched his Mar-a-Lago home in 2022, finding scores of classified documents that he and his staff had failed to return to the government despite receiving a grand jury subpoena.

The F.B.I. is not alone in facing Mr. Trump's ire. He has pledged to fire prosecutors, investigate former Representative Liz Cheney and hire a special counsel to investigate the Biden family. Mr. Trump has suggested using the military justice system to pursue Gen. Mark A. Milley, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He has also publicly threatened to prosecute executives at Google and Facebook.

TOM BRENNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Since Watergate, federal officials have sought to keep White House politics out of the criminal work the Justice Department does.

Since Watergate, federal officials have sought to keep White House politics out of the criminal work that the Justice Department does. Not everything the department does is free of politics — there are plenty of policy areas where its officials take explicit direction from West Wing officials. For decades, however, criminal investigations have generally been off limits to presidents.

Now, Mr. Trump is preparing to reoccupy the White House not just with his agenda, goals and grievances, but with the extra ammunition of a Supreme Court ruling that specifically says he has authority over criminal investigations.

"The president may discuss potential investigations and prosecutions with his attorney general and other Justice Department officials to carry out his constitutional duty," the court ruled this summer in conferring broad but not fully defined immunity for official acts taken by a president while in office.

Mr. Trump demonstrated his willingness to breach the traditional boundaries between politics and law enforcement in his first term, initiating or supporting a wide range of government investigations into rivals and critics.

As in the case of Mr. Huber's inquiry, Mr. Trump's first-term Justice Department would appoint a U.S. attorney to investigate an issue that had been seized on by conservatives. Often those investigations were announced to great fanfare on the right, and quietly fizzled out with little notice. (That approach did, however, prove essential to the department's effort to unravel the guilty plea made by Mr. Trump's first national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn.)

> Officials hope that rule-of-law norms hold under Trump.

When Mr. Trump announced that he had chosen Matt Gaetz, the scandal-plagued former Florida congressman, as his next attorney general, many law enforcement officials saw the selection of someone who had spent years railing against the F.B.I. and the Justice Department as the clearest sign yet of Mr. Trump's determination to punish both agencies.

Mr. Gaetz quickly backed out, and Mr. Trump has said he will instead nominate Pam Bondi, a longtime ally and former Florida attorney general.

But broad and deep concerns remain within the department that new Trump-chosen leaders may seek to transfer, punish or otherwise retaliate against agents and prosecutors involved in politically sensitive cases. Those include the sprawling investigation of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on Congress and the special counsel cases against Mr. Trump over his efforts to remain in power after his 2020 loss and his subsequent retention of classified documents.

Civil Service protections make it exceedingly time-consuming and difficult to outright fire an F.B.I. agent or prosecutor even when there is a credible allegation of wrongdoing. But that does not mean there could not be other repercussions for those on Mr. Trump's enemies list.

The work of the special counsel Jack Smith and his team may well be reviewed by the department's inspector general. During the first Trump investigation, the inspector general found misconduct by a low-level F.B.I. lawyer, which ultimately led to a guilty plea.

The inspector general's findings, however, did not go far enough for Mr. Trump and some of his supporters. In a more aggressive iteration of the Huber appointment, the attorney general at the time, William P. Barr, appointed John H. Durham, the U.S. attorney in Connecticut, as special counsel to investigate the agencies that had once investigated the Trump campaign's possible connections to Russian operatives.

"It was obvious to everyone that the appointment was simply intended to be able to create investigations that could be exploited for political purposes," Mr. Brower said. The long-running Durham investigation, he said, "shows that in the wrong hands, it's relatively easy for the Justice Department to start investigations, and leak information about the targets."

There are still significant checks on such efforts, Mr. Brower said, such as career prosecutors, grand juries, judges and defense lawyers. Mr. Brower added that he hoped "that the new leadership team at the Justice Department will rise to the occasion and effectively preserve the department's independence and integrity."

In addition to Ms. Bondi, Mr. Trump has chosen three members of his former criminal defense team for senior roles at the Justice Department. They are likely to be pressed at Senate hearings about where they will draw a line between representing the government and the people of the United States versus their client, the president.

Nursing Home Industry Wants Trump to Rescind Mandate on Staffing Levels

Rule Meant to Raise The Quality of Care

By JORDAN RAU

Covid's rampage through the country's nursing homes killed more than 172,000 residents and spurred the biggest industry reform in decades: a mandate that homes employ a minimum number of nurses.

But with President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House, the industry is ramping up pressure to kill that requirement before it takes effect, leaving thousands of residents in homes too short-staffed to provide proper care.

The nursing home industry has been marshaling opposition for months among congressional Republicans — and even some Democrats — to overrule the Biden administration's mandate. Two industry groups, the American Health Care Association and LeadingAge, have sued to overturn the regulation, and 20 Republican state attorneys general have filed their own challenge.

Consumer advocates, industry officials and independent researchers agree that the incoming administration is likely to rescind the rule, given the first Trump administration's "patients over paperwork" campaign to remove "unnecessary, obsolete, or excessively burdensome health regulations on hospitals and other healthcare providers." Among other things, Mr. Trump aided the industry by easing fines against homes that had been cited for poor care.

"The Trump administration has proven itself really eager to reverse overreaching regulations," said Linda Couch, the senior vice president for policy and advocacy at LeadingAge, which represents nonprofit elder care providers. "We think it's got a pretty good chance of being repealed, and hope so."

Issued in April, the staffing regulation requires nursing homes to have registered nurses on site around the clock — something that the industry has endorsed — and to maintain minimum numbers of nurses and aides. Four of five homes would have to increase staffing. The requirements would be phased in, starting in May 2026.

NATHAN HOWARD/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Even before the election, many experts and activists had doubts that the rule would be effectively enforced, given the poor results in states that have imposed their own minimums. In New York, California, Rhode Island and Massachusetts — states with the most robust requirements — many homes remain below the legal staffing levels. Governors have given many homes reprieves, and other homes have found that paying penalties costs less than the increase in payroll for additional staff.

The federal government estimates the average annual cost over a decade to meet the Biden mandate would be $4.3 billion a year, a 2 percent increase in expenses, though the changes do not include increases in federal Medicare or Medicaid payments.

"Staffing is everything in terms of nursing-home quality," said R. Tamara Konetzka, a professor of public health sciences at the University of Chicago.

While the rule's effectiveness was uncertain, she worried that repealing it would send the wrong message. "We would be losing that signal that nursing homes should try really hard to improve their staffing," she said.

Advocate groups for nursing home residents, who had criticized the Biden administration rule for not requiring even higher staffing levels, have since pivoted and are trying to protect it.

"We're hoping the president-elect will come in and take a look at the science and data behind it and see this really is a modest reform," said Sam Brooks, the director for public policy for The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, a Washington-based nonprofit. "We'd be devastated to see it fall."

The Trump transition team did not respond to a request for comment. The Department of Health and Human Services did not respond to requests for comment, but in a court filing it argued that nursing homes should be able to reach the required staffing levels.

"There is more than enough time to identify, train and hire additional staff," the Biden administration wrote.

The quality of care in the nation's 15,000 nursing homes and the lack of adequate staffing for their 1.2 million residents has been a concern for decades. Inspection reports continue to find homes leaving residents lying in their own feces, suffering severe bedsores and falls, contracting infections, choking on food while unattended or ending up back in a hospital for preventable reasons. Some nursing homes overuse psychotropic medications to pacify residents because they do not have enough workers to attend to them.

Leslie Frane, the executive vice president of the SEIU, the Service Employees International Union that represents healthcare workers, said in a statement that "far too many nursing home owners will not do the right thing and invest in workers without oversight and binding regulation."

The nursing home industry says many homes cannot afford to increase their workforces, and that, even if they could, there is a scarcity of trained nurses, and not enough people willing to work as aides for an average $19 an hour. A registered nurse earns $40 an hour on average in a nursing home, less than what they could make at a hospital, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

EMILY ELCONIN/REUTERS

Striking nursing home workers in 2020. The industry is moving to kill a staffing requirement, which could leave thousands of residents without adequate nursing to provide proper care.

The Biden administration noted in its court filing it was planning to spend $75 million to recruit and train more workers, and that there were more than 100,000 workers who left nursing homes during the pandemic and could be lured back if salaries and working conditions were better.

How many nursing homes could afford the increased cost remains a mystery because of weaknesses in the government's requirements for financial transparency. About half of homes lose money, according to their reports to Medicare, but some nursing home owners grow rich through clandestine maneuvers to siphon profits into their own pockets.

This month, owners of Centers Health Care, one of the New York State's largest nursing home chains, agreed to pay $45 million to settle allegations by Attorney General Letita James that they diverted $83 million intended for resident care to themselves during the pandemic.

Maryellen Mooney, a spokeswoman for the Centers Health Care chain, which denied the allegations, said in a statement that Centers was "committed to fully implementing the settlement terms, including a significant investment in resident care."

About three-quarters of nursing homes are for-profit. The industry, though, highlights the most sympathetic examples: rural nonprofit nursing homes like Kimball County Manor & Assisted Living in Kimball, Neb. Its staffing levels for registered nurses are 40 percent below what the new rule would require, federal data shows.

Sarah Stull, Kimball's administrator, said recruitment had always been challenging and that temporary nursing staffing agencies charged more than double what she paid her own staff.

"We had to pay $65 for a nurse aide during Covid and that's insane," she said.

The government estimated that about a fourth of the nation's nursing homes would be eligible to apply for hardship exemptions if there were a documented shortage of nurses and aides in their communities compared with the national average.

But Nate Schema, the chief executive of the Good Samaritan Society, which runs 133 nonprofit homes mainly in the rural Midwest, estimated that only seven would be likely to qualify for a hardship waiver.

"Philosophically, they sound great," he said, "but in practicality and how they're put together, they won't do much for us."

Jordan Rau is a senior correspondent with KFF Health News, part of KFF, a nonprofit health-policy research, polling and news organization.

Amid the Graves, Letting Nature Take Its Course

From Page A1

meadows one sunny day in late November, feathery goldenrod and milkweed pods catching the afternoon light. "The reaction was, 'Oh, it's beautiful.'"

Green-Wood is among the earliest cemeteries in the country to be modeled after rural landscapes, and to serve as an urban park. The first was Mount Auburn, founded in 1831 outside of Boston. Others include Laurel Hill in Pennsylvania and Evergreens Cemetery in Bushwick, Brooklyn. All are arboretums, filled with thousands of trees, and located in the Atlantic Flyway, a major migratory route for birds.

Each one has converted some of their land in recent years to wild, native meadows, working with a firm founded by Larry Weaner, the pioneering ecological landscape designer.

"I've been kind of blindsided by how many cemeteries reached out," said Mr. Weaner, whose firm has worked with five cemeteries in the last five years. "There definitely is a movement afoot."

Cemetery operators said there were myriad reasons to replace lawns or turf grass with native shrubs and other plants. Lawn mowers are loud, often polluting and heavy, compacting soil and hastening erosion. Thirsty turf grass fares poorly during the droughts that are growing longer and more intense. There is also mounting awareness of the harms from pesticides and irrigation, and a growing recognition that greener practices can help wildlife while making a cemetery more resilient to a changing climate.

Mount Auburn even has a full-time ecologist, Paul Kwiatkowski. In recent times, he said Mount Auburn has reforested pockets of land, replaced fertilizer with compost, removed invasive plants and non-native trees, and added perennial plantings to attract beneficial insects and create a food source and cover for other wildlife. One area, called Consecration Dell, was restored with trees and plantings that provide for birds, mammals, and amphibians, including spotted salamanders that live under leaf litter on its slopes. "When you're there, you feel like you're out in the woods," Mr. Kwiatkowski said.

The trend toward rewilding cemeteries is not limited to stately sites. In neighborhoods across Dallas, Julie Fineman, a photographer, is leading an effort, called the Constellation of Living Memorials, to transform neglected historic graveyards from weed-choked lots into wildlife habitats that help mitigate city heat.

"This is an answer to climate change, and correcting our previous disconnect with nature," she said.

If the pandemic helped more people reconnect with nature, it also reshaped how people envisioned their own ends. Interest in "green burials," where bodies are laid to rest without embalming fluids and in biodegradable caskets or shrouds, surged during Covid-19, said Lee Webster, past president of the Green Burial Council. According to the New Hampshire Funeral Resources, Education and Advocacy, a nonprofit organization, there now are 430 cemeteries nationwide that allow green burials, nearly a fourfold increase from 2015.

Gregg Tepper, senior horticulturist at Laurel Hill, said rising demand for green burials prompted the expansion of natural areas that benefited birds and other wildlife. "When you enter the areas, especially in the spring and summer, they are gorgeous," he said.

Joseph Placious, a deacon at Ascension Garden Catholic cemetery, outside Rochester, New York, said the butterfly-dotted green burial area was expanded three times in four years to keep up with demand.

"I think they find natural burial is one more way, the last way, that they can help save the earth," he said.

Billy Campbell, an environmentally-minded medical doctor, is credited with opening the first nature preserve that doubled as a burial site, Ramsey Creek Preserve, in rural South Carolina in 1998. The site has since doubled in size to 78 acres.

One of the first people to buy a plot was a conservative "crusty old Vietnam vet," Dr. Campbell said.

"He said, 'Look Billy, I love the woods, it's you environmentalists I don't like,'" Dr. Campbell recalled, adding that the man's widow still visits the site in a car covered in stickers supporting President-elect Donald J. Trump.

"Most of the burials these days are evangelical Christians," Dr. Campbell continued. "More than just saving the land, it's a way of getting people to bond to the land and see it as something special."

Still, the popular image of a cemetery as a place of neatly arranged rows of headstones poking out of pristine lawns is strong. The sight of unkempt grasses or plants at graveyards can be disturbing to those who interpret it as neglect and disrespect.

In 2019, Mr. Charap weathered intense blowback after he decided to stop mowing 200 acres at Green-Wood. He wanted to cut down on carbon emissions and fight invasive Bermuda grass, which thrives in disturbed soil, something graveyards have in spades. But as the grass grew long, complaints poured in about overgrown lots, weeds and obscured headstones.

"I don't think we really consider the cognitive grip that the American lawn has on our psyches," Mr. Charap said, as he walked along one of the cemetery's paths. "As someone who stewards and landscapes this, ultimately I don't want to cause any emotional distress."

The mowing resumed.

Mr. Charap and Sara Evans, director of the arboretum, tried another tack. They used mailers, social media posts and signs to make the case for the mowing the place less. They noted that Green-Wood's steep glacial slopes were treacherous for groundskeepers to access, and that headstones were often damaged by lawn equipment. By then, the pandemic had struck.

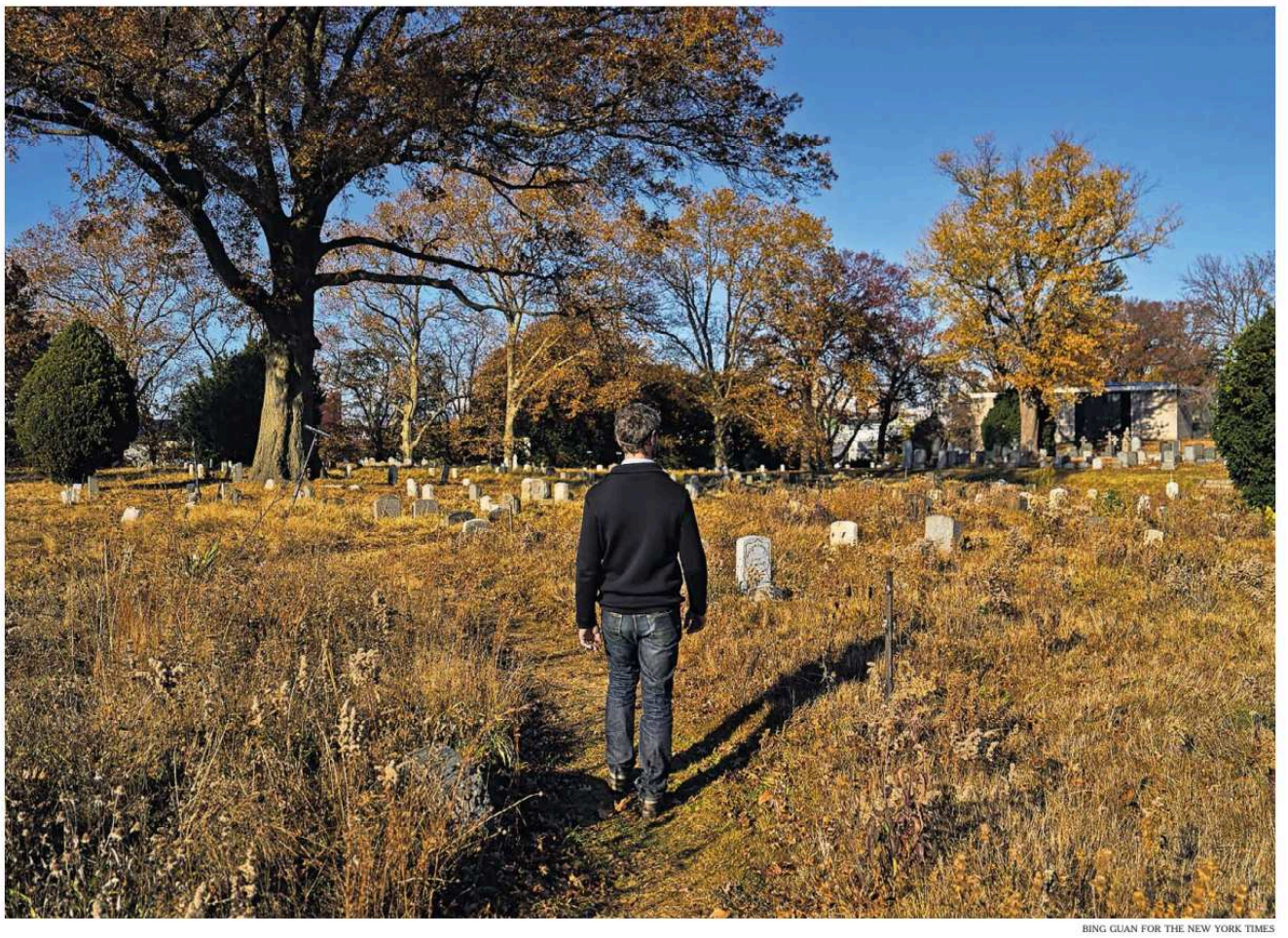
"It really did impact the long term receptiveness," Ms. Evans said, on a tour of the cemetery one recent fall day.

Meadows now fill around 40 acres of the cemetery, and less frequent mowings and longer grass allowed other plants to flower, providing nectar and pollen for foraging bees and butterflies. Passing old mausoleums, Mr. Charap and Ms. Evans pointed out native trees that had self propagated, their seeds carried by birds or the wind. The cemetery staff has also planted trees native to southern climates that are drought and fire resistant, an adjustment as the planet warms.

Ms. Evans climbed a hill, one of the oldest areas in the cemetery, where Mr. Weaner's firm designed an experimental meadow, a swaying sea of warm russets and silky browns. The meadows required no irrigation and, as they grew, several grassland bird species were spotted there.

Ms. Evans paused, and pointed out the contrast between the meadowland and a nearby stretch of headstones springing from grass turned brown by drought, a scene not unlike a suburban Halloween-themed yard.

"This is my own philosophy," she said, as she took in the horsemint, white beardtongue, mountain mint and butterfly weed filling the meadow, "but this situation is more comforting, and makes me feel that life goes on after death."



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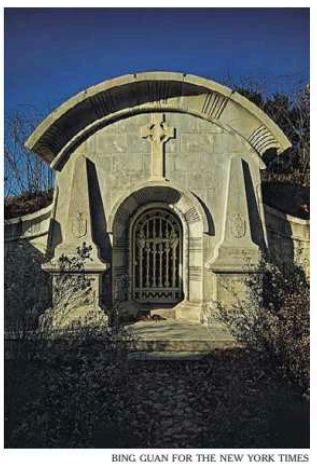
Joseph Charap, vice president of horticulture at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, above and below. Early resistance to letting the grass grow and other efforts to encourage nature to take hold dissipated during the pandemic, he said, when people came in search of solace during lockdowns.



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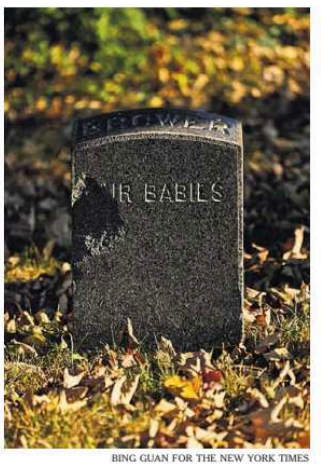

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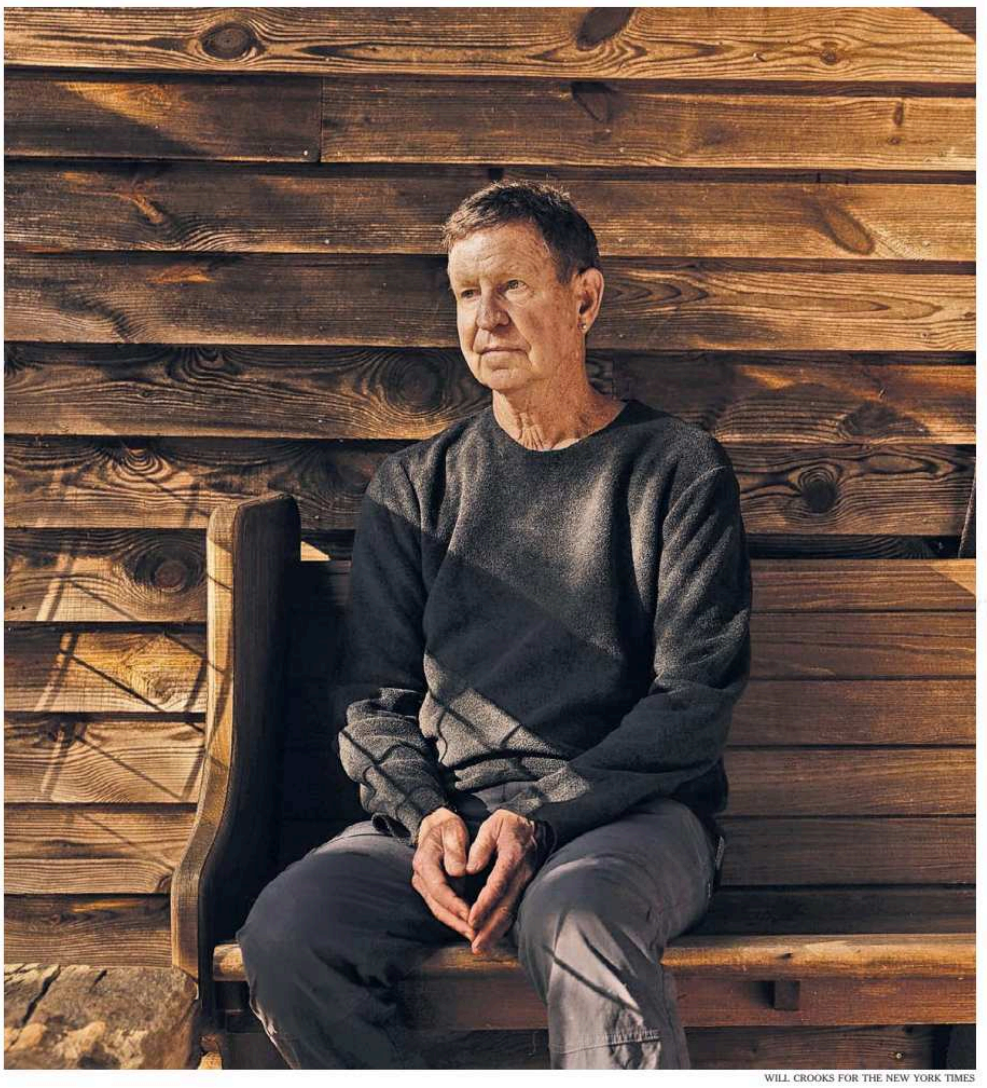

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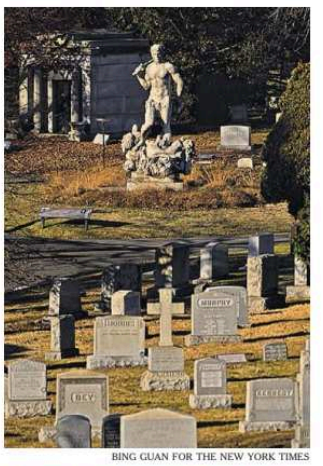

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WILL CROOKS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Billy Campbell, left, opened the Ramsey Creek Preserve, a cemetery and natural area, in South Carolina in 1998. "It's a way of getting people to bond to the land," he said.

HIROKO MASUIKE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Activists want the state to increase the development of renewable-energy projects, from a planned 3.5 gigawatts to 15 gigawatts.

Hochul's Challenge: Meet Climate Goals Without Provoking Republican President

By GRACE ASHFORD

In 2019, New York passed a sweeping law that promised to drastically reduce emissions and make New York an example for the nation.

But the measure also served another purpose: helping New York's pugnacious governor, Andrew M. Cuomo, stick a thumb in the eye of President Donald J. Trump, whose administration was striving to dismantle environmental regulations and expand fossil fuel production.

"Trump ignores climate change because it is not politically convenient to acknowledge it," Mr. Cuomo said at the signing of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Five years later, the landscape has shifted: The state's current governor, Kathy Hochul, is less eager to provoke Mr. Trump, who will return to the White House after growing his margin of victory nationwide — including in deep blue New York City.

And while New York once appeared on track to meet the first of its major climate goals — drawing 70 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 — that now seems a distant possibility, after supply chain disruptions and rising inflation derailed several key offshore wind projects.

All of which leaves Ms. Hochul in a difficult position of delivering progress on environmental issues for New Yorkers, 89 percent of whom consider them somewhat or very important, without putting the state in the cross hairs of the notoriously retaliatory president-elect.

Ms. Hochul has been a prominent surrogate for President Biden and the Harris campaign. Even so, she has signaled that she intends to take a less adversarial approach to Mr. Trump than Mr. Cuomo.

Ms. Hochul also has her own political future to consider: Despite some statewide successes, the Buffalo Democrat has received poor reviews from New Yorkers in polls, energizing rivals on both sides of the aisle. And with the election for governor on the horizon in 2026, she will have to weigh the benefits of showing strong leadership on climate concerns with the political cost of any policy that exacerbates the state's affordability issues.

Publicly, Ms. Hochul has embraced the mantle of climate leader, even serving as a chair on the U.S. Climate Alliance, a network of governors committed to reducing domestic emissions. But she has also been known to weaken or even veto environmental initiatives, including congestion pricing and a bill aimed at fighting deforestation, if they were thought to lead to an increase in consumer costs.

Already pressure is building on Ms. Hochul to make decisions.

"My job is to bring resources back to New York," she said at a summit with business leaders last week, identifying infrastructure, economic development and heat assistance subsidies as programs that rely on federal support. "You would not believe the number of programs that we get federal dollars for, that we supplement, but we really need them. So it's about having a relationship that's going to work."

The election of Mr. Trump, who has dismissed the risks of climate change, seems likely to throw a wrench into the works of many long-planned climate initiatives, including offshore wind projects and the installation of charging stations for electric vehicles.

Hilary Howard contributed reporting.

ERIKA P. RODRIGUEZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

HIROKO MASUIKE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Gov. Kathy Hochul is contending with pressures from environmental advocates and political conservatives. Catherine Du, a ninth grader at Hunter High School in Manhattan, accused officials of prioritizing costs over the climate at a public hearing last week.

Economic pressures put New York behind on renewables.

Already, officials are girding for conflict with the White House over Ms. Hochul's recent revival of congestion pricing, which Mr. Trump has promised to "TERMINATE." The tolling plan will fund crucial upgrades to the city's subways by charging drivers entering Manhattan.

State Senator Liz Krueger, who chairs the influential Finance Committee, argued that Mr. Trump's posture on climate made it all the more urgent that New York take action.

Before the end of the year Ms. Hochul will need to decide the fate of the Climate Change Superfund Act. The proposal would require polluters to pay roughly $3 billion each year for the harm they have done to New York's environment between 2000 and 2018. The money — a projected $75 billion over 25 years — would then be used to pay for damage that extreme weather events have wrought to roads, bridges and homes. That cost currently falls on New York taxpayers. Opponents worry that the tax will be passed on to consumers — a premise that some economists have said is unlikely.

Ms. Krueger said that her communications with the executive chamber made her "cautiously optimistic" that Ms. Hochul would sign the bill, similar versions of which were just passed in Vermont and are under consideration in California, Maryland and Massachusetts.

At the same time, Ms. Hochul is mulling the specifics of a key piece of the 2019 climate law that is yet to be instituted. Known as Cap and Invest, the program was created to raise revenue in support of the seismic changes to infrastructure that would be required to avoid the most catastrophic — and costly — effects of climate change.

Under the initiative, New York would set a limit each year on greenhouse gas emissions for the state and companies would pay for exceeding that benchmark. The details of the program could be released before the year is out.

But both critics and proponents acknowledge that some portion of the costs born by companies would be passed on to consumers, leading to higher prices at the gas pump and elsewhere.

Similar programs exist in California and Oregon — both of which have survived efforts to repeal them over price concerns.

Andrew Rein, the president of the nonpartisan Citizens Budget Commission, supports the plan, but says that it is crucial for New York to provide details about the economic and environmental effects of any proposal before it is adopted.

"We really need to go in eyes wide open," he said. "You know, this is going to be one of the biggest not only environmental, but economic programs that we implement."

He also has an eye on the state's looming 2030 climate goal, as well as a somewhat unorthodox suggestion about how to meet it.

"Right now we have goals that are so out of reach that they can be aspirational but not practical," Mr. Rein said. He suggested that New York abandon the methodology for calculating emissions that had made its law the most aggressive in the country, bringing its goals within reach. Such a shift would not only address the psychic and political tolls of failure, but he argued, would better equip New York to work with other states.

Environmental advocates are predictably unhappy with this kind of thinking. Marc Weiss of the group New York Renews argued that the state should not retreat. "There are all sorts of ways in which, if New York really stepped up to the plate in a vigorous way, it could have a big ripple effect, not just in the United States but around the world," he said.

Last week, roughly 200 people showed up at a hearing in New York City to urge the New York Power Authority to boost the construction of renewable projects from a planned 3.5 gigawatts to 15 gigawatts, which would put the state back on target to meet its 2030 goals.

One of those speakers was Catherine Du, a ninth grader at Hunter High School in Manhattan who berated the board, and the broader adult world, for prioritizing costs over climate.

"Lowering the cost may be good, but if you are trading off lives and our future, that is unacceptable" she said.

In an interview, Justin Driscoll, the president and chief executive of the power authority, called the 15 gigawatt target a "tall task."

But was it possible?

Mr. Driscoll paused for the tiniest fraction of a second. "I guess I would say that we are going to do as much as we can to fill as much of the gap as we can," he said.

Federal Prison Takeover Is Judicial Last Resort With Risks and Rewards

By ASHLEY SOUTHALL

Conditions in Alabama's prison system had been so miserable, for so long, in 1976 that a federal judge took the unusual step of appointing an outside authority to fix them.

By the time the administrator, who happened to be the state's governor, was discharged in 1989, the prison system experienced improvements that experts called remarkable and innovative. But the progress didn't last, and the federal government had to once again intervene.

What happened in Alabama and other jurisdictions is now being studied after a federal judge signaled that she is likely to appoint a third-party administrator, known as a receiver, to take control of New York City's troubled jail system, a last resort that courts have used only when other remedies have been exhausted.

The judge, Laura Taylor Swain, held the city in contempt on Wednesday for failing to carry out court orders to fix persistent problems at Rikers Island after nearly a decade of federal oversight. Since 2015, the jail complex has been operating under the supervision of a federal monitor who has been sounding alarms about worsening violence, unnecessary deaths in custody and ineffective management.

Hernandez D. Stroud, a senior fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, said he expected the judge to impose a receiver in the coming months. Judge Swain has expressed frustration with the city's lack of progress, and she has already asked for comment on the potential receivership from the city and from lawyers representing detainees who sued over conditions in the jails.

"For her to make these sorts of pronouncements, and then say, I don't know what else to do — the monitor's reports are still bad," he said, paraphrasing the judge. "There's only one tool left on the table."

Courts have traditionally used receiverships to protect property and assets. But they began appointing them to protect people's constitutional rights in the 1950s, when school districts refused to desegregate.

Since then, judges have appointed receivers to fix 12 jails, prisons and detention centers across the country. But their ability to create lasting change remains unknown.

Alabama's prisons were the first experiment in corrections. The Justice Department sued the state in 2019 after a three-year investigation found that officials failed to protect prisoners from violence and sexual abuse, did not provide safe and sanitary conditions, and allowed officers who used excessive force to go undisciplined. The case is ongoing.

Elsewhere, California's prisons have been under a receivership narrowly focused on medical care since 2006, with no end in sight. In Hinds County, Miss., a receiver's presence has been delayed for two years because of litigation over the scope of his authority. And the jail in Washington, D.C., where a receiver made changes to its medical and mental health program between 1995 and 2003 was sued last year by detainees who say the care is inadequate.

Experts and activists say receiverships come with risk and reward. Their success depends on a range of factors, including the administrator's skills and ability to maneuver political pushback, along with the extent of that person's powers.

But ultimately, how long changes last depends on the authorities who regain control of the jails when the receiver leaves. Mr. Stroud said he was worried by what happened elsewhere in the past.

"Yes, the primary objective is to fix the constitutional violations," he said. "But if it only lasts for a few moments after the court leaves the picture, then the whole thing was all for naught."

Like Alabama, experts say the problems in New York stem from mismanagement of the jails over decades. In New York, commissioners are appointed by mayors, and budgets are approved by the City Council, making progress vulnerable to politics.

Previous receivers have been former corrections officials, law professors or people with experience turning around large organizations.

Elizabeth Glazer, the founder of Vital City, a magazine focused on public safety, said there were two important qualifications for the Rikers role. The person needs to be "supremely able" to fix a complex organization and to negotiate with parties who are at odds.

"They're going to have to negotiate with the work force, the unions, and all the people who have interest," said Ms. Glazer, who led the mayor's office of criminal justice under Bill de Blasio. "They can't simply impose the remedy, because it won't stick."

Mr. Stroud added that the judge needs to consider whether, and to what extent, the corrections commissioner will be involved in the reform process.

He said that the commissioner could be instrumental in maintaining reforms after the receivership ends but that the official could also prove to be an obstacle.

Federal corrections law requires judges to give a receiver only the power that is necessary to address constitutional violations. But given the stubbornness of the issues at Rikers and their reach all the way up to leadership, Mr. Stroud predicted the receiver would be granted expansive control.

Lawyers in the case have already suggested giving the receiver sweeping powers, including the ability to revamp staffing, suspend union contracts and rewrite the Department of Correction's budget.

However, such an agreement may face resistance. Officials in Hinds County, just outside of Jackson, failed to persuade an appeals court to stop the Mississippi jail takeover, but they succeeded in getting the court to remove the receiver's power over the budget.

A receiver must also contend with New York City's powerful corrections unions. Leaders of the unions say the department was headed in the right direction under Mayor Eric Adams, and they expressed worries that a receiver would cut staffing and undo their collective bargaining agreements.

Patrick Ferraiuolo, who is president of the captains association and has worked in the Department of Correction for 43 years, said a receiver was not a good idea for Rikers because he did not believe it had worked anywhere else.

"I don't see how a receiver is going to fix anything without violating all of the things that we were prohibited to do," he said.

The Rikers case may find its way to the Supreme Court if the city or the Justice Department appeals. The court's conservative wing, now in the majority, has expressed skepticism over the role of judges in managing prisons and jails.

"I think one of the reasons this has proceeded at a glacial pace is Judge Swain's interest in developing a robust factual record in the event of an appeal," Mr. Stroud said.

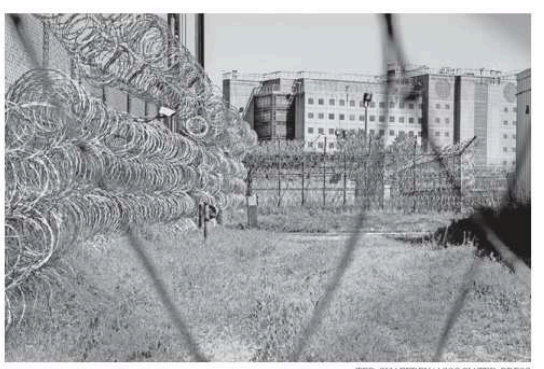
It is unclear what a receivership would mean for efforts to close Rikers Island and to move to a borough-based jail system, a shift that the city has already delayed.

VOCAL-NY, an organization involved in the push to close Rikers, circulated a primer acknowledging that a receivership could temporarily free the jail complex from politics but noting that it would not fix the problems at the root of the issue.

The group said it would like to see Judge Swain appoint a receiver who, among other things, is committed to closing Rikers by 2027.

Emptying jails and closing Rikers "is the only direct path to preventing deaths and humanitarian violations in New York City's jails," the document said, "and a receiver will not necessarily keep this goal as the north star."

More national news appears on Page A20.



TED SHAFFREY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York City's corrections complex at Rikers Island has been operating under the supervision of a federal monitor since 2015.

N

Opinion

The New York Times

ROUND TABLE

What Does It Mean to Be 'Wicked'?

Four Opinion writers visit Oz.

nytimes#l@l.l

ILLUSTRATION BY SAM WHITNEY/THE NEW YORK TIMES; SOURCE PHOTOGRAPHS BY GILES KEYTE/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Patrick Healy, the deputy Opinion editor, hosted a conversation with the Times Opinion columnists Maureen Dowd, Tressie McMillan Cottom and Lydia Polgreen about the new movie "Wicked."

Patrick Healy: I have a confession to make. While I love "The Wizard of Oz" and I love theater, I was never interested in the Broadway musical "Wicked." I had assumed it was for teenage girls and saw it only because of my job (when I was the Times theater reporter). I remember enjoying its two biggest songs, "Defying Gravity" and "Popular." But I didn't feel very invested in the two main characters: Elphaba, who later becomes the Wicked Witch of the West, and her frenemy, Glinda.

So I am genuinely surprised to report that the new movie "Wicked" melted me. I was swept up in Cynthia Erivo's performance as Elphaba and found myself crying almost every time her character cried. I felt righteous anger when Elphaba fought against a roundup of talking animals by the authorities and rescued a scared lion cub locked in a cage. A big-budget "Wicked" movie with a strong antifascist message? I did not expect that. What surprised you most about your experience with the movie?

Lydia Polgreen: I came to "Wicked" completely cold. "The Wizard of Oz" was not part of my childhood, nor was musical theater. My knowledge of the Oz story is entirely shaped by my wife's exuberant enthusiasm for "The Wiz." When Patrick asked me to join this conversation, I decided not to read or watch anything about the musical or movie and thereby play the straight man, as it were. So I had low expectations: Why would I be drawn in by a back story to a classic tale that never resonated for me?

I guess my surprise was mostly that . . . I loved this movie? It is a sly illustration of one of my favorite modes of creativity: using one form of art to remake and redefine an existing one. The perfect musical version of this for me prior to seeing "Wicked" was "Fun Home," the wondrous Alison Bechdel graphic-memoir-turned-musical. Musical theater does seem to be an ideal medium for such reinterpretations, and this is a particularly impressive one.

Maureen Dowd: I agree, Lydia, about flipping the script on classics. They've done this for a long time with monsters. John Gardner's "Grendel" from 1971 took the "Beowulf" story from the monster's point of view. "Wide Sargasso Sea" by Jean Rhys took "Jane Eyre" from the point of view of the Creole heiress who married Mr. Rochester and became "the madwoman in the attic."

And sometimes it's not a monster but a marginalized character. Percival Everett just won the National Book Award for "James," reimagining the "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from the point of view of the enslaved character Jim. Then there's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" by Tom Stoppard.

Healy: Tressie, you saw the stage musical of "Wicked" just last summer. How did the movie version land for you?

Tressie McMillan Cottom: The film is phenomenal. Its power comes from the comfort of a familiar moral trope: The outsider becomes the hero in an epic tale. Humanity has loved that story since we started storytelling around a fire. "Wicked" is an allegory for difference and a pretty straightforward embrace of one of the feminism waves — third, maybe? It's pro-female rage but with a lot of apologies for traditional femininity.

The story line about fascism and oppression was always there in the different "Wicked" versions. But a couple of things make that story line stand out in the film. First, casting the absolutely phenomenal Cynthia Erivo as Elphaba makes the story's heavy-handed but indirect message about racism obvious. She is Black, which is like being green. I am surprised by how many people apparently missed that note in the story's 20-year run. Erivo's casting takes away any pretext. That allows the authoritarianism critique to shine a bit more.

And second, we see the movie meaning that we need to see. Everyone in my world is still deeply distraught about the election. The election turned on propaganda about power and scapegoating of women and feminism. Frankly, we see the antifascism message clearly because we see fascism so clearly in our everyday lives.

Dowd: The movie was OK. It was preferable to watching the Sunday news shows. But Erivo was amazing. She's such a good actress, she could act with her fingernails, like Barbra Streisand. Erivo's manicurist said they wanted those nails as a nod to Black culture and because they were part of her magic.

Polgreen: I could not agree more about Erivo's performance. I first saw her on Broadway as Celie in "The Color Purple," and her performance of "I'm Here" is still a go-to when I feel like having a good cry. Just an extraordinary performer who can work in so many emotional registers, and my lord, the pipes on that one.

Cottom: Lydia, I could watch Erivo perform the phone book.

Healy: Early in the movie, Glinda refers to Elphaba's green skin as a "problem." As Tressie mentioned, race and identity are subtext in "Wicked," but the movie makes things more explicit by casting a Black actress, Erivo, as Elphaba. I went into the movie wondering if that casting would make the movie feel heavy-handed — like a woke "Wicked" — but Erivo's mixture of resilience and vulnerability knocked that thought out of my head. Elphaba takes pride in who she is. I'm curious how you saw the treatment of identity in "Wicked."

Cottom: The identity politics of the film are arguably more about gender and liberalism. The long history of persecuting witches has been tied to political campaigns to acquire land, own the labor of workers and control women's economic freedom.

When Elphaba goes to Oz, the Wizard is a stand-in for that history. He basically proposes a gentrification plan for Oz. And he needs Elphaba's labor, or magic, to achieve it. The gender politics don't get more obvious than that. I thought about Silvia Federici's classic book "Caliban and the Witch" throughout the movie.

Polgreen: Knowing nothing about this musical, I had assumed (wrongly, it turns out) that the character of Elphaba had always been Black. Now I understand that green is a metaphor for difference, and I think there is something interesting in casting a Black actress. Given how Elphaba's green skin is so explicitly rendered as a revolting form of difference, it has such power — especially in this Ozian world where Black-white prejudice does not appear to exist.

Elphaba is something more akin to the Phantom of the Opera than anything as prosaic as, well, an ordinary Black person, of which there are plenty in the film. If anything, Erivo being a Black actress seems to underscore this point.

Cottom: There is a very sly critique of liberalism in the film's characterization of Glinda. She is obsessed with being seen as good, but she frequently passes on chances to act in ways that would better people's lives. Bowen Yang's character in "Wicked" does these great "yasss girl" ad-libs that link Glinda's behavior to the way white liberal feminism shows up in the world, more obsessed with status than change. Being good is morally vacuous, like Glinda, if you don't do anything that matters.

Dowd: "Wicked" is about gender in parts, using old tropes in the plot: the women competing for a man — a prince, no less. And a makeover to be more attractive and popular. But in other ways, the moral of the story is genderless. You can't judge a book by its cover. All that glistens is not gold. The anthem, "Defying Gravity," emphasizes the centrality of this as a story about "the other." Marginalized groups have to leap over more hurdles to fly higher.

The ultimate lesson of the movie is for everyone: Almost nobody is as good or bad as they seem. And the question the movie asks is: "Are people born wicked? Or do they have wickedness thrust upon them?"

Healy: Maureen, say more about this — how our culture and politics often build stories and narratives about women being good or being wicked, as if those two caricatures and extremes are all there is?

Dowd: Women get typecast by men into the "Madonna-whore complex," perceiving them as either pure or wicked. The Virgin Mary or Mary Magdalene. My older brother used to refer to "Wednesday night girls" and "Saturday night girls." In old movies, like "Waterloo Bridge," prostitutes had to die by the last reel. At least, in "Pretty Woman," Julia Roberts could be carried off by Richard Gere, so there has been some progress.

But at the dawn of feminism, I naïvely thought we would move beyond catfight tropes. They're bigger than ever, with "The Real Housewives" and "The Bachelor" franchises. Hollywood loves its vixens, and it loves frenemy stories. "Wicked" preaches that women are not monochromatic.

Healy: We're seeing some divisions appear now on "Wicked," with some members of the MAGA movement dismissing the movie as if it were an attack on them. The film has a pretty strong antifascist message, with the diabolical leader plotting to scare people and rally them together against a common "enemy" and the roundup and arrests of opponents, the way that characters are cowed by authorities into silence and the desire by authorities to spy on Ozians.

Dowd: Remarkably, some people on TikTok are comparing Elphaba to Donald Trump, saying that the green-faced girl is like the orange-faced man because she, too, is a victim of the "deep state" (Jeff Goldblum in green boots). Most people, of course, will see shades of Trump in the Wizard, a con man with authoritarian tendencies who is set on uniting people against a common enemy. ("You're not being told the whole story.")

The "Glicked" weekend echoes the election in tone — male versus female — and a big gender gap. On opening night, according to The Ankler on Substack, the "Wicked" audience was 72 percent women and 28 percent men. The "Gladiator II" audience was about 61 percent male and 39 percent female.

Polgreen: Wow, Maureen, that is fascinating. And the green/orange thing is kind of perfect. At the end of the day, a big part of MAGA culture is seeing liberals/the left as the real fascists. I do think that the story lends itself to a kind of ideological flexibility. It is human nature to imagine the choices we make to be the good and right ones and to see ourselves as aligned with the hero. But to the movie's credit, it doesn't let either character stand in completely for good or bad, strong or weak.

Healy: Aside from Erivo, my M.V.P. award is split between Jonathan Bailey as Fiyero, for bringing the humor while looking dreamy, and Peter Dinklage as the voice of the talking goat, Dr. Dillamond, whose tone of fury and despair was just right. You?

Dowd: I kept thinking Jonathan Bailey must be Rupert Everett's son. He was appealing, but you didn't care if his prince carried away either of the girls. I am in love with Peter Dinklage; he really is the GOAT.

Cottom: Patrick, I want Jonathan Bailey to play every prince.

Polgreen: I loved Peter Dinklage as Dillamond. It was an interesting choice to make the Munchkins into people of slightly smaller stature rather than casting people with dwarfism, and it has, perhaps unsurprisingly, engendered some controversy.

Healy: The other lead, Ariana Grande, was an engaging Glinda for me, but her big number, "Popular," wasn't a home run in my book. There was a lot of directorial and set-design busyness that kept the song from building in power for me. How did you all feel about Grande?

Cottom: I am going to get pilloried for this, but it has to be done.

Healy: Pouring my tea now.

Cottom: Grande's Glinda was technically perfect and emotionally void. I don't subscribe to that "never talk about bodies" philosophy. When bodies reflect politics in our culture, ignoring them is unproductive. It is fine to talk about bodies humanely but critically.

The internet is abuzz with people commenting on how thin Grande is in this film. We are in the midst of a cultural reclamation of the ideal female body that is suitable for our conservative/authoritarian politics. Our politics are back to projecting thin, pale, weak bodies. Ideally, blond, but that is occasionally negotiable. Being thin is never negotiable.

This is a family movie, popular with girls and women. They're seeing a body politics of gauntness in this film. It shouldn't be ignored. Glinda's physical frailty undermines the message of her idealized wholesomeness.

Healy: No question, she is meant to convey an Ozian (if not American) beauty ideal. But I saw Grande as athletic more than frail, actually, carrying many of the dance numbers.

Cottom: Athletic! We will agree to disagree, Patrick.

Dowd: I agree with Tressie. She didn't bring a sassy or satirical edge to the dumb blonde trope. (She was no Judy Holliday in "Born Yesterday" or Lesley Ann Warren in "Victor/Victoria.")

Cottom: Maureen, I would have settled for Elle from "Legally Blonde." Anything to bring her Glinda to life.

Dowd: Elle Woods's energy would have been perfect.

Healy: Finally — this movie is just "Part 1" of "Wicked" onscreen. There's a Part 2 movie coming out next year. If you could write Part 2 of "Wicked," what would you have happen? I'd have a "Defying Gravity" reprise where Elphaba flies around with Glinda. I'd put Dr. Dillamond in charge of Oz. And I'd cast Liza Minnelli as Aunt Em in some sort of flashback.

Dowd: If I could write Part 2 of "Wicked," I would stuff it into Part 1. Ridic we have to wait a year for half a movie that could have been better told in two hours and change. (I've have had less Shiz University.) When "Gone With the Wind" opened in 1939, it had an intermission long enough to grab a drink or a sandwich before the epic rolled on. That would have been more gratifying with "Wicked." (Even though we know how the story ends.)

Polgreen: I am slightly annoyed with myself that after seeing the movie, I read the whole plot synopsis on Wikipedia. It would have been much more fun answering this with no idea of what comes next. I am a sucker for a 90-minute movie, so this one really tested my patience, much as I loved it. I am pretty happy to wait for Part 2 next year.

Cottom: No one told me this was a two-parter. When the film credits rolled, I thought it stopped for an intermission. I went to the bathroom and actually came back. I clearly missed a memo. I don't like cliffhangers. We can be different people by the time it is released. The cultural conversation will almost certainly be in a different place. Also, I'm getting too old for all of this.

Can Taiwan Count on the U.S. Now?

Vickie Wang
A writer, interpreter and stand-up comedian who lives in New York and Taipei, Taiwan.

I DON'T envy American voters. Your presidential choices have an impact halfway across the planet. Your soldiers fight and die in other countries' wars. I know you're tired of feeling you have to fix the world's problems. But like it or not, this unique privilege and responsibility comes with being a citizen of the greatest country in the world.

So spare a thought for one of these faraway places affected by your vote: my island home, Taiwan.

When I was growing up, we idolized America. I loved the idea of it — the land of opportunity and protector of democracy. I inherited this from my father, who was born in Taiwan in 1950, a year after the Chinese civil war forced his family to flee there from mainland China. He grew up in an era when, with the United States as a beacon, Taiwan transformed from dictatorship to democracy. After attending graduate school in Indiana in the 1980s, he returned a certified fanboy of Americana. We watched movies such as "Air Force One" and "Independence Day," in which U.S. presidents used their fists to defeat America's enemies and save the world. We ate at TGI Fridays in Taipei to satisfy his craving for a proper American hamburger. He dreamed that I'd someday make a life in America, where he felt that his opinionated only daughter would thrive.

Donald Trump's return to office is putting our faith in America to the test. He has made clear that, unlike previous presidents, he couldn't care less about Taiwan and our hard-won democracy. He says we need to pay for protection, even though we already spend billions of dollars a year on U.S. weapons systems. He says — falsely — that Taiwan "stole" America's chip business, has dismissed us as a geopolitical trifle and expressed doubt about the United States being able to defend Taiwan against China.

Maybe this was just campaign bluster, but statements like this carry an existential weight for Taiwan's 24 million residents. As China's economic might has grown, we have been left with fewer and fewer allies in the world, relying on our informal but strong relationship with America for survival.

Are we on our own now? Mr. Trump makes me yearn for those action-hero commanders in chief that Dad and I rooted for.

Sure, we're just a small island thousands of miles away across the Pacific. But from humble, war-torn beginnings we blossomed into a bright spot for democracy and human rights in a part of the world where these things are in short supply. Before the "Made in China" label was slapped on the world's products, there was "Made in Taiwan." It was once shorthand for cheap plastic goods, but in my lifetime we've turned it into a badge of honor. Taiwan now produces 90 percent of the world's most advanced semiconductors, the essential commodity of the digital age. We gave the world boba tea, cat cafes and Nymphia Wind, the first Asian winner of "RuPaul's Drag Race." You're welcome.

And if you voted for Mr. Trump out of a desire for border security, please understand that Taiwan is your most important line of defense in the Asia-Pacific. If China seized Taiwan, it would undermine the entire first island chain, a perimeter of U.S. allies stretching from Japan to Southeast Asia, not to mention extinguish a small but important democracy.

Border insecurity is a way of life in Taiwan: For the past 75 years, we've been hunkering down, looking across the Taiwan Strait as China got stronger and more threatening. During air-raid drills at school, we filed into an underground shelter where we crouched with our fingers covering our eyes and ears. I always wondered what good that would do if a bomb dropped on us. During one round of menacing Chinese missile launches in the mid-1990s when I was 10 years old, I asked my parents, "Will I be allowed to grow up?" I lived my whole life with this low-grade anxiety and these days avoid war movies because they feel like previews of Taiwan's fate.

RITCHIE B. TONGO/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

Many Americans voted for border security. Try living next to China.

Today China sends its warplanes flying across the median line, the midway point of the strait, on a near-daily basis. Civilians shouldn't have to know military terms like "median line," but they are part of casual conversation in Taiwan. Just last month, after our democratically elected new president, Lai Ching-te, made some very measured remarks about Taiwan's right to exist, China sent an armada of ships and aircraft to encircle and threaten us in a simulated military blockade.

In fact, Taiwan is already under attack, but for now, it's mainly a war of words. Besides its constant military threats, China runs an insidious disinformation campaign against Taiwan, designed to erode our confidence and trust in America. And it's working. More and more, there are those in Taiwan who say we are an abandoned chess piece, no longer valued by the United States. China amplifies these fears, hoping to convince us that we don't stand a chance in a fight without U.S. help, so we shouldn't fight at all. Our confidence and the power of deterrence are half the battle. Without those, anything can happen.

Still, we carry on, existing on the margins. We compete in the Olympics as Chinese Taipei. We tolerate drop-down menus on websites that refer to us as "Taiwan, province of China," stripping us of sovereignty with those three little words. We lose ally after ally to Beijing's bigger, better diplomatic aid packages. We don't know what lies ahead with the unpredictable Mr. Trump. He considers himself a deal maker, so maybe he will strike some sort of bargain with us. But whatever Taiwan can offer him, Beijing can easily top.

So we prepare for that moment when we may have to defend ourselves. Like thousands of others, I've gone through civil defense training to learn things that most Americans wouldn't imagine needing to know in their daily lives — how to tie a tourniquet, pack a go bag, evacuate to safer ground and remain alert to Chinese online disinformation. We do so gladly; it's part of being a citizen of a democracy and defending it in any way that you can.

I know U.S. voters have a lot on their plates. I guess that's why you voted for a president who promises to put America first. I get it; in some ways, Mr. Trump invokes the Hollywood presidents I grew up watching: bold, brash and rah-rah America. But I hope Americans are as committed to defending what their country really stands for — democracy — as we are in Taiwan.

My father died 10 years ago, before I was able to fulfill his American dream for me. But I finally did it this year and now spend much of my time in New York. I earned an O-1 visa, which is granted by the United States to "aliens of extraordinary ability" for the work I do as an interpreter. To get it, I had to prove I was of value to America. I wonder if my island home will have to do the same.

F.B.I. Vetting of Trump Nominees Is a Must

Noah Bookbinder and Gregg Nunziata
Mr. Bookbinder was a counsel for Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee and is now the president of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. Mr. Nunziata was a counsel for Republicans on the committee and is now the executive director of the Society of the Rule of Law.

FOR several years, we were the Republican and Democratic counsels who reviewed presidential nominees' background checks for the Senate Judiciary Committee. We know how the confirmation process is supposed to work and how important F.B.I. vetting is to that process. That's why we're appalled by reports that the new Republican-led Senate and the incoming Trump administration may dispense with it.

Without nominees being scrutinized by the F.B.I., the danger is that neither lawmakers nor the public would know whether they are trustworthy or have issues that could compromise their ability to do the job or their loyalty to the United States.

Efforts to bypass F.B.I. background checks and even Senate confirmation itself via mass recess appointments, made by the president when the Senate is not in session, would never have flown with past iterations of the Judiciary Committee, regardless of which party was in charge. The Senate shouldn't stand for it now.

In our time working on the Judiciary Committee, we reviewed hundreds of nominations. Many nominees, like many Americans, had minor issues — isolated drug use, fights, bad employment experiences — but most of those incidents, while not ideal, never rose to the level of further investigation. When there were more significant issues, we handled them together, Democrats and Republicans, confidentially, so there would never be a question of our using people's backgrounds for partisan gain.

Once we had answered any outstanding questions, it was up to the senators to decide whether the information would affect their votes.

This was key: A nomination was never scheduled for committee consideration without the committee receiving an F.B.I. background check, reviewing it and clearing the nomination to move forward.

This was not merely a matter of formal process. The nominees evaluated by the committee, if confirmed, would occupy positions of great importance; they make decisions every day that affect national security as well the lives of ordinary Americans. Those decisions include who is charged with crimes, who goes to prison, how the legal system and justice system work and how we treat civil rights and environmental laws.

Mr. Trump's transition team is in talks with the Justice Department to begin processing security clearances for transition officials so its members can get access to national security information. But even if such an agreement is reached, it would fall far short of a thorough commitment to the traditional background check process.

There are more than 1,200 leadership positions in the federal government that require Senate confirmation. Not all require security clearances, but all are consequential positions for which upstanding character and fitness for office are critical. Some Trump advisers recently suggested using private companies to undertake the background checks, but that would disrupt well-established procedures the Senate has come to trust over decades.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY THE NEW YORK TIMES; SOURCE PHOTOGRAPH BY DREW ANGERER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

The incoming president's team needs rigorous congressional consideration.

Even if we assume private contractors would be thorough, objective, consistent and transparent — which is very much an open question — this untested process would most likely leave gaps and cause delays. Senate investigators would need to adapt on the fly and would have no clear process to review private investigators' findings and follow up as needed.

Americans may disagree about the policy agenda set by a president and enacted by his executive branch appointees, but the Senate must perform its constitutional duty to ensure that president's nominees understand their obligations under the law and possess the character and fitness to perform their duties. That means, among other things, understanding their duty to the law and the Constitution.

The Senate confirmation process is intended to prevent, as Alexander Hamilton wrote, the president from filling powerful offices with "unfit characters" who have "no other merit" than "being in some way or other personally allied to him, or of possessing the necessary insignificance and pliancy to render them the obsequious instruments of his pleasure."

At a time when there are fewer and fewer meaningful checks on presidential power, the need for rigorous Senate consideration of nominees is all the more important. Without it, the president and his appointees could run roughshod over the government and over Americans' lives with no one challenging them.

To prevent this, the Senate, across party lines, must make clear that, as has been the case for years, it will not consider nominations without an F.B.I. background check.

And with Senate consideration of nominees one of the few restraints on presidential power likely to be meaningful in 2025, the Senate and House should be clear that they will not be a party to a presidential plan to do an end run around the confirmation process with mass recess appointments.

Mr. Trump urged just such an approach in a Nov. 10 post on Truth Social, before Senate Republicans chose their new leaders, writing, "Any Republican Senator seeking the coveted LEADERSHIP position in the United States Senate must agree to Recess Appointments."

The two of us worked together in politically contentious times during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, under Democratic and Republican chairmen. The Judiciary Committee's confirmation process had a reputation for being brutal. But disagreements about nominations never extended to the background investigation. No nominee would have moved forward to a committee hearing or vote without a meaningful review. Mr. Trump's nominees should be treated no differently.

LETTERS

What to Expect in a Second Trump Term

TO THE EDITOR:

When Donald Trump retakes the reins of the presidency in January, he will face a choice of which path to take.

The first is to use the office as a cudgel, punishing his perceived enemies and rewarding his most ardent supporters, enriching himself and his family in the process. For a man who has built an empire by turning situations to his advantage, the temptation to do the same with the presidency might be hard to resist.

The second path is more challenging, but it's one that could secure Mr. Trump a vaunted place in history. Imagine a presidency in which he seeks to uplift the most vulnerable and implement programs that benefit all Americans, not just those who voted for him.

Although his recent cabinet selections suggest otherwise, it's not too late. Admittedly, this approach would require humility and restraint, qualities Mr. Trump is not necessarily known for, but if he did embrace them, he could astonish even his harshest critics and leave a legacy that transcends personal ambition.

Mr. Trump likes to compare himself to great historical figures, like Lincoln. Here is his chance.

A lot of talk is about how Mr. Trump has no guardrails this time around. He's free to do what he wants. That cuts both ways.

The question is simple, but the answer is profound: What kind of legacy does Donald Trump want to leave?

DAVID GELIEBTER
PALM BEACH GARDENS, FLA.

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "Trump Had It Easy the First Time," by Thomas L. Friedman (column, Nov. 13):

We keep making the same mistakes in "analyzing" how Donald Trump will conduct his second term in the White House. If we have learned nothing else from over 10 awful years with this man sucking all the political oxygen out of the room, it's clear that he has no plan. It's shoot from the hip time in the Oval Office once more!

He has broken all the rules, defied all the critics, prevailed over and over and over again. He has more than nine lives when it comes to surviving political calamities that would sink anyone else.

I personally am going to refrain from reading any more about what he will or will not do. I have already stopped watching MSNBC and CNN. I am Trump-saturated, beyond weary, politically waterlogged, drowning in a sea of conjecture.

I am going to bed now. Someone wake me up in 2028.

LEN DISESA, DRESHER, PA.

TO THE EDITOR:

We have obtained a transcript of Donald Trump's second Inaugural Address. I thought you'd appreciate this Trumpian quote:

"And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you, *and* your country, can do for *me!*"

J. RODERICK EATON
HOLLY HILL, FLA.

Science and Policy

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "Survey Shows Trust in Science Is Rising in U.S." (news article, Nov. 16):

Many members of the public reported in a recent poll that they believe that scientists should not take an active role in policy debates about scientific issues, like childhood vaccines and climate change, instead maintaining they should focus on "establishing sound scientific facts."

The notion that scientists should remain value-neutral in doing and communicating their work to the public is deeply flawed.

Science is not a value-free endeavor. Scientific "facts" are hardly value-free. They reflect the values at the time the science is being done, and the value judgments of those doing observations and weighing the evidence to support factual claims.

Most important, scientists have a duty to speak up when politicians or other powerful voices invoke science in support of bogus views such as eugenics, the dangers of vaccines, ethnic and gender disparagement, climate change denial, the dangers of cell-cultured meat and the denial of the horrendous environmental impact of current agricultural practices.

The last time scientists argued for value neutrality was when some were put on trial at Nuremberg after World War II for supplying rationales to the Nazi regime for its barbaric eugenics and euthanasia policies and horrendous research in the concentration camps.

The scientists held that they had merely pursued the facts in a neutral manner, leaving moral, applied and political matters to others. The judges at their trial were not persuaded. In the current political climate, no scientist or member of the public should be.

ARTHUR CAPLAN
RIDGEFIELD, CONN.

The writer is the head of the division of medical ethics at the New York University Grossman School of Medicine.

The Times welcomes letters from readers. Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Those selected may be edited, and shortened to fit allotted space. Email: letters@nytimes.com

Inefficiency Dept.

TO THE EDITOR:

Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy are excited to head a new department in the next administration to be called the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE. They intend to review regulations to identify ones they deem invalid and cut costs.

They may not be aware that we already have such a department. The Government Accountability Office has been in operation for over 100 years. It is a bipartisan office set up to answer Congress members' requests to investigate federal agencies to make sure they are not wasting government funds and to run those agencies more efficiently.

It has a full team of experts. It produces comprehensive annual reports of issues investigated, making recommendations to Congress on how to save money by cutting costs and correcting administrative procedures and regulations.

The 2024 G.A.O. report shows that it saved $67 billion last year and made more than 1,400 recommendations to Congress.

To now create a new department to do the exact same thing is about as inefficient as it gets. But then, it sounds as if Donald Trump and his advisers are more interested in a slash-and-burn approach than an informed analysis of the fiscal problems.

KIMBERLY A. SCHECHTER
BUFFALO, N.Y.

The writer is a retired lawyer.

Emotional Tears

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "The Misty Science of Why We Need a Good Cry" (front page, Nov. 16):

Who sheds emotional tears? We do, but elephants seem to also. These pachyderms, the largest of land mammals, become seemingly distressed after one of their own dies. Filmed by wildlife filmmakers, they appear to show grief-related behaviors like trying to cover their dead and shedding tears.

For humans, however, tears are not all the same, as Dana G. Smith writes. They come in three basic kinds: 1) basal tears that keep eyes lubricated, protecting them from drying out; 2) reactive tears that wash out irritants in the eyes like onion vapors; and 3) emotional tears that flow in narrow rivulets or gush out in uncontrollable streams, and that come from intense feelings.

We cry when we grieve the loss of a loved one, when we're moved by a sunset or standing in the redwood forest, when we're astounded with joy, and even when we convulse with laughter.

To cry, to shed emotional tears is the body's way of externalizing intense emotion. Their biochemical composition is different from basal or reactive tears. Emotional tears contain leucine enkephalin, a neuropeptide in the brain that is related to endorphins. It's why we usually feel better after we cry.

DOROTHY P. HOLINGER
BROOKLINE, MASS.

The writer, a psychologist formerly on the faculty of Harvard Medical School, is the author of "The Anatomy of Grief."

Collector Offers to Buy 100,000 More Bananas

By SARAH MASLIN NIR

A week after a Chinese cryptocurrency entrepreneur bought an artwork composed of a fresh banana stuck to a wall with duct tape for $6.2 million at auction, the man, Justin Sun, announced a grand gesture on X. He said he planned on purchasing 100,000 bananas — or $25,000 worth of the produce — from the Manhattan stand where the original fruit was sold.

But at the stand at East 72nd Street and York Avenue, outside the Sotheby's auction house where the conceptual artwork was sold, the offer landed with a thud against the realities of a New York City street vendor's life.

It would cost thousands of dollars to procure that many bananas from a Bronx wholesale market, said Shah Alam, the 74-year-old employee from Bangladesh who sold the original banana used in "Comedian," an absurdist commentary on the art world by the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan. And, it wouldn't be easy to transport that many bananas, which come in boxes of about 100.

And then there is the math: The net profit from the purchase of 100,000 bananas by Mr. Sun — who once bought an NFT of a pet rock for more than $600,000 — would be about $6,000.

As an employee who makes $12 an hour during 12-hour shifts, Mr. Alam pointed out that any money would by rights go to the fruit stand's owner, not him.

"I am not personally familiar with the exact cost of the bananas," Mr. Sun wrote in a text message sent shortly after a stunt on Friday where he ate the original banana during a news conference at a Hong Kong luxury hotel. "Through this event, we aim not only to support the fruit stand and Mr. Shah Alam but also to connect the artistic significance of the banana to everyone."

Reached by phone, the stand's owner, Mohammad R. Islam, 53, who goes by Rana, said he would split any profit between himself, Mr. Alam and the six other people he employs at his two fruit stands. No one had contacted him about any such purchase, though, he said.

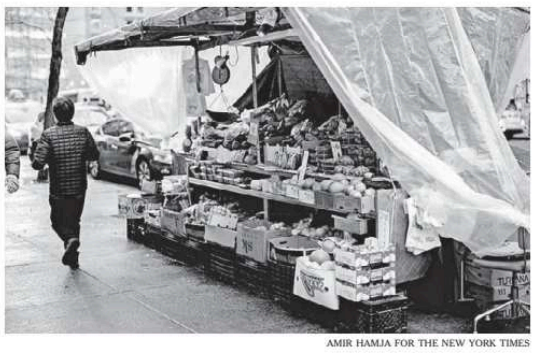
There are also other, quieter efforts to support the vendor. At least two online fund-raisers have collected more than $20,000 for Mr. Alam.

Working in the rain on Thanksgiving Day, Mr. Islam's brother, Mohammad Alam Badsha said he would welcome the bulk purchase. But it would have little tangible impact, Mr. Badsha said, either on the daily life of the fruit vendors, or on the gulf laid bare by the $6.2 million banana and the stand that sold it.

"It's definitely an inequality," Mr. Badsha said in Bengali.

He added a Bangladeshi idiom: It was, he said, the difference between heaven and hell.

Zachary Small, Debadrita Sur and Tiffany May contributed reporting.



AMIR HAMJA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A stand's profit on 100,000 bananas would be about $6,000.

Man Missing for 25 Years Found Alive in California

By HANK SANDERS

For years, Marcella Nasseri searched for the remains of her brother, who she believed had died after he mysteriously disappeared in Doyle, Calif., 25 years ago.

Now, Ms. Nasseri's brother, who vanished in August 1999, has been found and identified in the Los Angeles area and is being reunited with his family, the authorities announced on Tuesday.

It all started when Ms. Nasseri saw an article in USA Today from May that asked the public for help identifying a patient who had been found sitting on a curb in south Los Angeles nearly a month before. He had been staying at emergency facilities including St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood near Long Beach, Calif., for weeks.

The article, which explained that the patient could not communicate, included a photo of the man — with gray hair and blue eyes, believed to be in his mid-60s — lying in a hospital bed.

Ms. Nasseri believed the patient was her missing brother, Tommy. She added an undated photograph of her brother as a younger man in a GoFundMe post earlier this week. Tommy had more dark hair than the man in the hospital bed but his arched eyebrows, rounded nose and deep-set eyes showed a resemblance between the two.

In an attempt to have her inclination confirmed or denied, Ms. Nasseri contacted the local authorities. Derek Kennemore, the deputy sheriff of Lassen County in Northern California, then pushed for a detective with the Missing Persons Unit of the Los Angeles Police Department to obtain the fingerprints of the unidentified patient, according to a statement from the Lassen County Sheriff's Office.

"The Detective was able to positively identify the man as the one reported missing in 1999 from Doyle," the statement said.

St. Francis Medical Center, the county sheriff and Ms. Nasseri did not respond to requests for comment. Tommy's condition and how he disappeared were not immediately clear.

"He just VANISHED with no trace," Ms. Nasseri said in her post. "Not even his vehicle was ever located."

Now, the two are working to be reunited. Ms. Nasseri lives in Lassen County, about 600 miles north of Lynwood, Calif., where her brother is staying. For the cost of a possible medical transfer as well as items like men's clothing, pencils and paper so he can draw, Ms. Nasseri sought $500 in donations on the crowdsourcing site.

After two days, the page had raised nearly $7,000.

Some of the money, Ms. Nasseri said, would also go to buy her brother a device so he could listen to some of the songs that she remembers him loving — including one especially prescient tune by Cyndi Lauper.

"If you're lost you can look and you will find me," Ms. Lauper sings in one of the tunes that appeared on Tommy's list. "Time after time."

Corrections

INTERNATIONAL

An article on Friday about London's Smithfield Market incorrectly identified the music ensemble for which Simon Rattle is a conductor. It is the London Symphony Orchestra, not the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

NATIONAL

An article on Friday about which Democrats are in the mix to be chair of the Democratic National Committee misstated when Pete Buttigieg delivered his concession speech during his run for chairman of the organization eight years ago. His speech came before he earned three votes, not after the votes.

Errors are corrected during the press run whenever possible, so some errors noted here may not have appeared in all editions.

Contact the Newsroom
To contact the newsroom regarding correction requests, please email corrections@nytimes.com.

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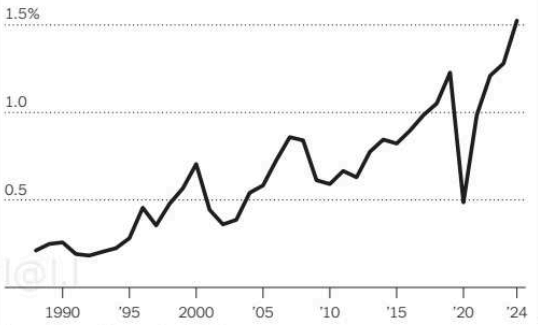
Flying in America Has Become Slower...

Averages, J.F.K. to LAX	1995	2023
Gate departure delay	8 min.	**13 min.**
Taxi-out time	24 min.	**25 min.**
Time in air	5 hours, 20 min.	**5 hours, 29 min.**
Taxi-in time	8 min.	**11 min.**
Total time	6 hours	**6 hours, 18 min.**
Flights arriving late	**51%**	37%

Note: Late-arrival percentage includes all flights arriving at least one minute after scheduled arrival time.

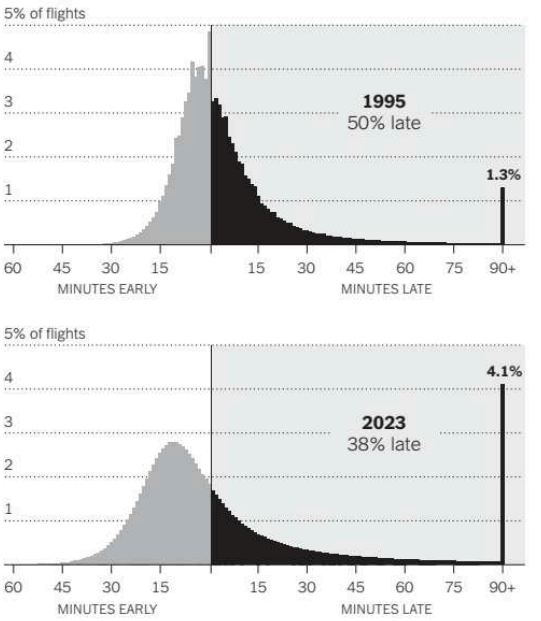
Percent of domestic flights arriving at least three hours late



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics

... Even As Statistics Show Improvement

Distribution of domestic flight arrival times



Note: Includes flights from Jan. 2023 to April 2024.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Airlines Are Padding Their Flight Times

From Page A1

it has the upside of looking good in on-time performance data and avoiding customer scorn.

"It's called padding," said Chad Kendall, a former commercial pilot and an associate professor of aviation at Metropolitan State University of Denver. He said airlines had plenty of incentives to be on time, especially on paper.

"The benchmark for performance set by the Department of Transportation is based on arriving within 15 minutes of your scheduled time of arrival," he said. And airlines are protective of their reputation; business travelers in particular care about arriving on time.

It is less common now for flights to be moderately delayed. About 30 percent of flights last year were delayed by up to one hour, compared with over 45 percent three decades ago.

At the same time, the percentage of very delayed flights has increased. Whether we use 90 minutes or three hours as a cutoff, the number of meaningfully late flights is likely to set a record this year.

Lavanya Marla, a professor of systems engineering at the University of Illinois, said that as airlines have optimized their day-to-day operations, especially with scheduling flight crews, it has also led to more instances of major disruptions that cascade throughout the system.

"If you build the schedule really well, you're able to do the same task with fewer crews," she said. "When it works, it's fantastic. But when you have an unexpected event happen, you don't necessarily have slack in the schedule."

A more efficient system allows for more flights without building more runways. But it has also created more traffic for individual flights. The average taxi-out time for LaGuardia Airport flights is now 24 minutes compared with 19 minutes three decades ago. In some ways the small increase is impressive given that LaGuardia departures are up 64 percent in that time while using its same two runways.

Long taxi times are a small factor compared with flights that don't depart the gate on time. If your plane does leave the gate on time, you are essentially ahead of schedule. Last year, 75 percent of flights that left the gate exactly on time arrived at their destinations early.

Patrick Smith, author of the blog Ask the Pilot and a commercial pilot for more than 30 years, said the data reflected his experiences: "If you leave Los Angeles on time, you're pretty much guaranteed to get to New York a bit early."

Right before a flight, he said, pilots are given a timetable based on weather conditions and air traffic. The arrival time on the pilot's timetable will be different — usually earlier — than the arrival time on your ticket.

A record number of passengers is expected this holiday season. Unfortunately, there are limited options if your goal is to spend as little time traveling as possible.

You could pay for a more expensive seat so that you can deplane faster. You could pay for TSA PreCheck to spend less time getting through security. And you could choose to fly an airline that has a proven record of fewer delays, although it will typically cost more.

If you don't want to spend additional money, there is one trend that's good to know. Flights that take off in the early evening are nearly three times as likely to be significantly delayed as those in the early morning.

The tight interdependency of scheduling means flights in the evening can be delayed if earlier flights had issues. Flights in the morning, which benefit from nightly schedule resets, are less likely to suffer the same problems.

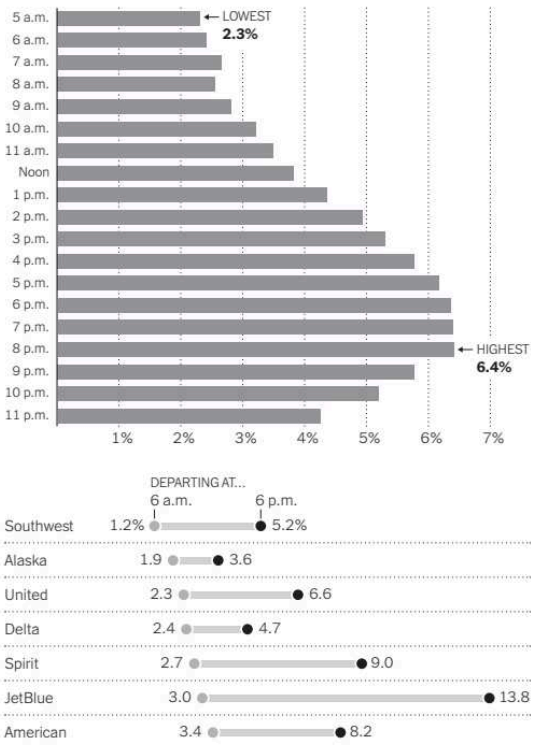
If you want to minimize lateness, it's more important to consider departure time than airline.

It's true that Spirit Airlines has had more long delays than Delta Air Lines over the last five years, but a flight on Spirit that departs at 6 a.m. is less likely to be significantly delayed than a flight on Delta that takes off in the evening.

That said, some airlines stand out for not sticking to their schedules. Among large airlines, JetBlue is one of the worst offenders. Its early flights have been delayed around 3 percent of the time in recent years, but its evening flights have been late more than 10 percent of the time, a rate significantly above its rivals.

Earlier Flights Less Likely to Arrive Late

Percent of flights arriving 90 minutes late or more



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Note: Includes domestic flights from January 2019 to April 2024.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Upshot

The Upshot provides news, analysis and graphics about politics, policy and everyday life.
nytimes.com/upshot

Lake-Effect Storm Bringing Heavy Snow to the Great Lakes

By EMMETT LINDNER

A lake-effect storm in the Great Lakes region that was bringing heavy snow to parts of northern New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania on Friday prompted the closure of highways, disrupting travel after the Thanksgiving holiday, as forecasters warned the storm would "bury" some areas east of Lakes Erie and Ontario.

The lake-effect snow closed a section of westbound Interstate 90 from Hamburg, N.Y., to the Pennsylvania line, the Departments of Transportation for Pennsylvania and New York said.

The storm, which began earlier in the week, had already brought more than eight inches of snow to portions of Marquette County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula by Friday afternoon, according to the National Weather Service.

Portions of Western New York, such as Mayville on the northern end of Chautauqua Lake about 22 miles north of Jamestown, had recorded 17 inches of snow by mid-afternoon on Friday.

Watertown, N.Y., where less than an inch of snow had fallen on Friday afternoon, was forecast to get close to six feet of snow over the next three days.

Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York declared a state of emergency for 11 counties. "We are so accustomed to this kind of storm," Ms. Hochul said in an interview with Spectrum News. "We don't love it, but it is part of who we are as New Yorkers, especially western New York and the North Country."

Hank Sanders contributed reporting.

A.J. RAO/ERIE-TIMES NEWS, VIA USA TODAY NETWORK

Snow in Erie, Pa., on Friday, as a lake-effect storm was expected to bring several feet in parts of the Great Lakes region.

The National Weather Service in Buffalo said the prolonged snow "will bury some areas east of both Lakes Erie and Ontario."

"There will be localized areas that will be paralyzed from the lake snow, with some interstates also being greatly impacted," it added.

The Weather Service warned of extreme impacts from the storm through Monday. The severity of the storm could make driving extremely dangerous or impossible in parts of those regions.

Representatives of hotels in Pennsylvania near Erie, Pa., said they were experiencing cancellations from guests who were unable to reach their destinations.

Chris Smith, who works at a Homewood Suites in Erie, near the Interstate 90 closure, said his hotel was "starting to fill up" as drivers left the snow-covered highways.

Lake-effect storms occur when cold air moves across a large body of warmer water. They typically happen in late fall and early winter.

"The lakes started out at basically a record warm for late November," said David Roth, a forecaster with the Weather Service.

"Even in areas that are used to it, this is their first real lake-effect of the season," he added. "They're going to feel this. This will be a 'welcome to winter' for them."

According to AAA, the automobile organization, nearly 80 million people were expected to travel for Thanksgiving this year. About three million people in the United States were expected to travel by air on Sunday.

Erie International Airport in Pennsylvania was closed on Friday afternoon, and MBS International in Saginaw County, Mich., and Akron-Canton Airport in Ohio were de-icing aircraft, according to the F.A.A.

More than four feet of snow could fall downwind of Lake Ontario through the weekend, and up to three feet of snow was possible across portions of northeastern Ohio and northern Pennsylvania.

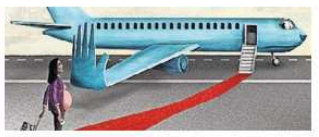
The first lake-effect snowstorm of the season "tends to be pretty exceptional," Mr. Roth said. "When this happens is usually October, or much earlier in November."

Buffalo could receive up to six inches of snow through Sunday, when the Bills host the San Francisco 49ers at their stadium in nearby Orchard Park, N.Y.

While the snow was expected to pile up, an Arctic blast was moving across the Northern Plains and the Midwest on Friday, with the wind chill across parts of the Dakotas and Minnesota plunging to 15 degrees below zero.

The Weather Service said on social media that the cold would persist into next week, with the Northern Plains and parts of the Midwest experiencing their lowest temperatures since mid-February.

4 TECHNOLOGY
There are new tools to add security and even hide sensitive information stored on your phones or tablets.



5 TRAVEL
If you're planning to take a trip while pregnant, be sure to check your airline's policy about flying.

7 SPORTS
Coach Ryan Day and the Buckeyes are hoping to break a three-game losing streak against the Wolverines.

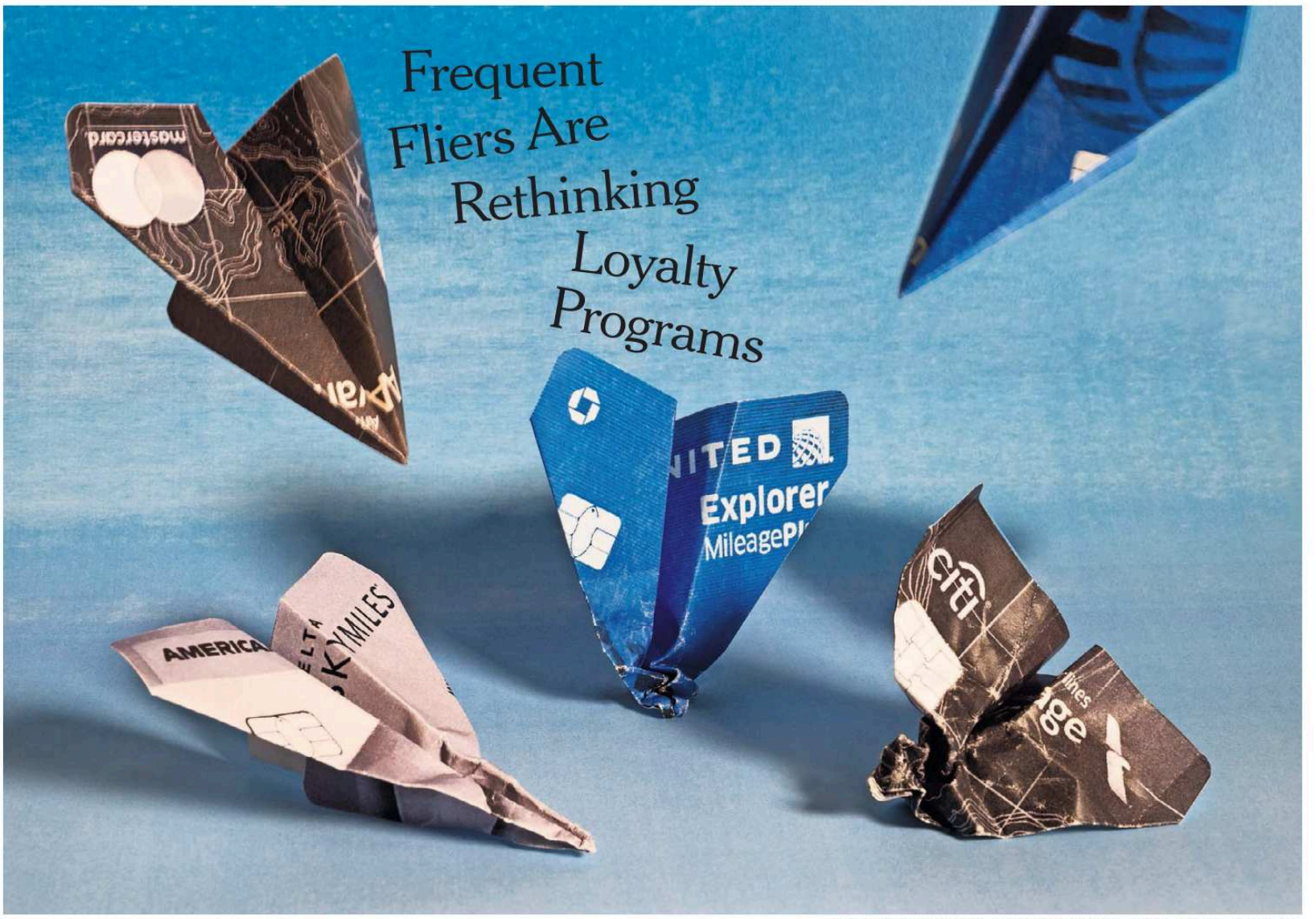


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY BEN DENZER; SOURCE PHOTOGRAPHS BY PRIYA ALMELKAR, MATT GWIN AND CECILIA ROSA

After years accruing points and miles, some travelers are frustrated with changing airline rewards programs and have stopped chasing status and adopted different strategies when booking flights.

By MIKE DANG

When SuzAnn Brantner moved to Indiana from Los Angeles during the coronavirus pandemic, she had been a longtime Delta Air Lines frequent flier, achieving the highest loyalty status the airline offered: Diamond Medallion. The benefits included expedited security screenings, priority boarding and top preference for complimentary first-class upgrades.

"I just always loved Delta," Ms. Brantner, a 50-year-old marketing executive, said. She traveled every month because of her job and made sure to book all her flights with Delta — even if she had to make a connection and other airlines offered a direct flight. This made it easy to maintain her status.

But last year, when Delta announced it would be making modifications to its frequent-flier program, Ms. Brantner began to question her loyalty.

She is hardly alone. On Reddit communities dedicated to three major domestic carriers — Delta, United Airlines and American Airlines — some users are wondering whether maintaining airline loyalty status is worth it anymore as they calculate how much they will need to spend and travel for the rest of the year in order to reach certain status levels next year.

After The New York Times asked readers how they felt about their loyalty programs, more than 100 wrote in to say they were done chasing airline status. Some of the respondents said they were considering canceling their airline credit cards, where banks team up with airlines to offer additional benefits like lounge access, and which offer more opportunities to earn status tied to spending. Many expressed disappointment at how they had spent years accruing points and miles with their chosen airlines only for them to become significantly devalued as airlines made changes to their programs.

Ms. Brantner recalled a time when she had to spend $15,000 each year with Delta to reach the top-tier status. Now the company is asking customers to spend $28,000 annually to earn Diamond status. She also learned that her American Express Delta Reserve credit card would be imposing restrictions on how many times she could use the airline's Sky Club lounges — unless she spent at least $75,000 on her card each year.

Enough was enough. Ms. Brantner has begun flying with American when she needs to go to Los Angeles because the airline offers more convenient direct flights from Indianapolis. When the Killers, her favorite band, had a residency in Las Vegas this year, she flew direct on Southwest Airlines to see them.

"I was like, 'Why am I torturing myself doing these connections?'" Ms. Brantner said. "I'm not going to go with just any airline. I'm just going to do what's best for me."

She said she had called American Express to cancel her Delta

CONTINUED ON PAGE B5

Art and Entertainment Worlds Are Taking On A.I.

By ERIN GRIFFITH

SAN FRANCISCO — Inside a curved glass building next to the Golden State Warriors' arena in San Francisco, eight cans of Spam with tiny arms whirred to life, tapping out artificial-intelligence-generated word slop on miniature keyboards. They were part of the Misalignment A.I. Museum, a gallery dedicated to A.I.-inspired art.

Across town, in the basement of a Lower Haight boutique, a group of tech workers delivered stand-up comedy sets about programming languages, ChatGPT and Nvidia's stock price for Artificially Unintelligent, a tech-themed comedy show.

And a month earlier, on a foggy summer night in San Francisco's Glen Park neighborhood, a group of tech workers gathered at a mid-century house being used as a start-up office for a reading of "Doomers," a new, ripped-from-the-headlines play about the weekend that Sam Altman, the chief executive of the start-up OpenAI, was briefly fired.

A.I. is providing the art and entertainment worlds with plenty to fear, from potential copyright violations on a global scale to the loss of jobs taken by a soulless ma-

CONTINUED ON PAGE B4

LOREN ELLIOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A detail of the piece titled "Spambots" by Neil Mendoza at the Misalignment A.I. Museum in San Francisco.

Pharma Is Bracing For Tension

By Rebecca Robbins, Christina Jewett and Kate Kelly

Drug company executives had hoped that a second Trump administration would be staffed by friendly health policy officials who would reduce regulation and help their industry boom.

But some of President-elect Donald Trump's proposed nominees are instead alarming drug makers, according to interviews with people in the industry.

For health secretary, Mr. Trump chose Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a longtime vaccine skeptic with no medical or public health training who has accused drug companies of the "mass poisoning" of Americans.

Mr. Trump's pick to lead the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is Dr. Dave Weldon, a former congressman from Florida who raised doubts about vaccines and pushed to move most vaccine safety research from the agency.

And Mr. Trump's choice to run the Centers for Medicare and

CONTINUED ON PAGE B3

Picky Buyers Cast Shadow Over Retail

By DANIELLE KAYE and JORDYN HOLMAN

Shoppers are heading into the Black Friday weekend unsure how wide to open their wallets, retailers say, with many still feeling the squeeze of inflation and also worried that tariffs could make things even more expensive if they wait too long to buy.

Black Friday marks the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season, a make-or-break period for many retailers. Recent data suggests that consumer spending, the engine of the U.S. economy, remains relatively robust.

But reports from retailers hint at diverging fortunes, as shoppers have grown pickier about what they buy and where they buy it. An executive at Target described consumers as shifting from "resilient" to "resourceful." A leader at Walmart said shoppers "seek value to maximize their budgets."

These spending patterns are creating winners and losers in corporate America, perhaps most

CONTINUED ON PAGE B3

The Digest

INTERNATIONAL

Canada Accuses Google Of Ad Tech Monopoly

JOSH EDELSON/AFP — GETTY IMAGES

Canada's competition authority on Thursday accused Google of abusing its tools for buying and selling online advertising to create a monopoly, and filed a complaint seeking to force the company to sell two of its main advertising technology services.

The case strikes at the heart of Google's business and echoes an ongoing U.S. antitrust lawsuit against the Silicon Valley giant.

Both cases come amid four other lawsuits filed in the United States against Google since 2020 and other efforts by officials around the world to reign in the power that large technological companies like Google, Amazon and Apple hold over information and commerce online.

Canada is also attempting to use new laws to limit harms caused by social media.

As was the case when the U.S. Justice Department brought its case in 2023, Google rejected the Canadian bureau's charges. *IAN AUSTEN*

INTERNATIONAL

Amazon Workers in India Walk Out on Black Friday

Amazon staff in India have joined strike action calling for better wages and working conditions as the company prepares for one of the busiest shopping periods of the year.

About 200 warehouse workers and delivery drivers rallied in the capital, New Delhi, under a "Make Amazon Pay" banner. Some donned masks of Amazon chief Jeff Bezos and joined hands against the Seattle-based company's practices.

The walkout on Black Friday, which starts one of the biggest shopping weekends of the year, was repeated at Amazon warehouses in other countries as workers called for higher wages, better working conditions, and union rights.

Amazon, in a statement issued in India, accused the workers of "intentionally misleading and continuing to promote a false narrative." *ASSOCIATED PRESS*

RETAIL

Swift Fans Line Up At Target for New Items

Young Taylor Swift fans and their parents lined up outside some of Target's nearly 2,000 U.S. stores early on Black Friday to buy copies of her new Eras Tour book and vinyl album.

Hoping to buck a long stretch of slowing sales at Target stores, with penny-pinched shoppers making purchases at rival retailers, the big-box chain teamed up with Ms. Swift to build on the fan momentum she experienced following her Eras Tour concerts.

Several customers queued up outside Target stores as early as 5 a.m. ET in freezing temperatures, with most of them there to snap up Swift merchandise.

"Yeah, it's really cold, but we're here to get Taylor Swift's tour book and her latest vinyl drop," Carlos Miracle, a 31-year old Swift fan, said while waiting outside a Chicago store.

Target is also making available a vinyl version of "The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology" for the first time. *REUTERS*

S&P 500 INDEX
+0.6%
6,032.38

DOW JONES INDUSTRIALS
+0.4%
44,910.65

NASDAQ COMPOSITE INDEX
+0.8%
19,218.17

10-YEAR TREASURY YIELD
4.17%
−0.077 points

CRUDE OIL (U.S.)
$68.00
−$0.72

GOLD (N.Y.)
$2,681.00
+$16.20

Stocks & Bonds

Markets Resume Post-Election Rise on Shorter Trading Day

By JEFF SOMMER

Despite a furor set off by President-elect Donald J. Trump's latest pronouncements about tariffs and immigration, the stock market resumed its upward surge in holiday-shortened trading on Friday, propelling the benchmark S&P 500 to its best monthly gain since November 2023.

The market retreated briefly earlier in the week after Mr. Trump declared that he would impose 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico on his first day in office, as well as new 10 percent tariffs on China. He linked the tariffs to what he said was the need to curb the inflow of drugs and undocumented immigrants. The three countries protested — and after a short retreat, the market shrugged off the incident.

The S&P 500 rose 0.6 percent on Friday, closing at a new high of 6,032.38, at 1 p.m., after a day off for the Thanksgiving holiday. Friday's climb propelled the index to a gain of 1.1 percent for the week. It was the last trading day of November, and the index rose 5.7 percent for the month, according to FactSet.

That continued a surge that began even before the election, when Wall Street began to predict that Mr. Trump would win. His proposals for cutting taxes and easing the regulatory burden on businesses have been greeted with enthusiasm in the markets.

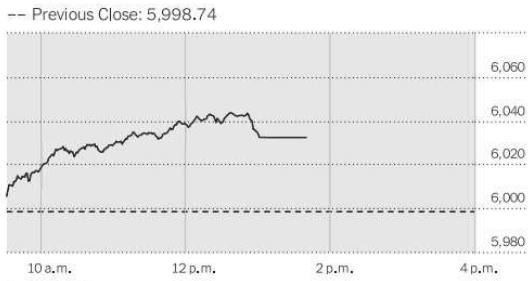
With one month left in 2024, the S&P 500 is up 26.5 percent for the year, and 32.6 percent for the past 12 months, sizzling returns by any measure.

Here's what else to know about markets:

- Bond yields, which had drifted upward earlier in the month, retreated, with the yield on the 10-year Treasury note falling below 4.2 percent, according to FactSet.
- Palantir was the best performer in the S&P 500 for the month with a gain of more than 60 percent. It has benefited from strong earnings and its status as a military contractor with a expertise in artificial intelligence.
- Celanese, a chemical supplier, was the worst monthly performer, with a loss of almost 42 percent. The market punished a poor earnings performance and a warning by the company that it expected "persistent demand weakness" in key business segments in the months ahead.
- In Europe, the STOXX 600 index rose on Friday and eked out its first monthly gain since May on expectations of a quarter point interest rate cut by the European Central Bank in December. The French CAC 40 share index was down 2.3 percent for the month, however, amid a budget and political crisis. French bond yields have risen, reflecting worries about the government's fiscal problems.

The S&P 500 Index

Position of the S&P 500 index at 1-minute intervals on Friday



Source: FactSet THE NEW YORK TIMES

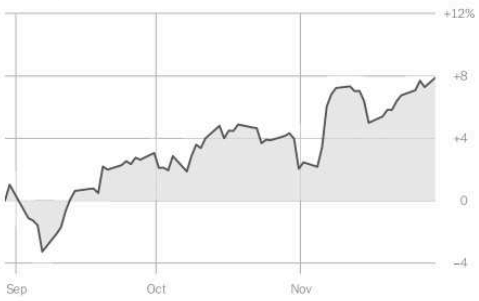
BRENDAN McDERMID/REUTERS

Friday was the last trading day of November, and the benchmark S&P 500 finished the month with a gain of 5.7 percent, according to FactSet.

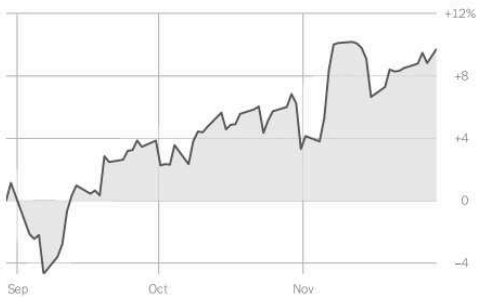
What Happened in Stock Markets Yesterday

POWERED BY FACTSET

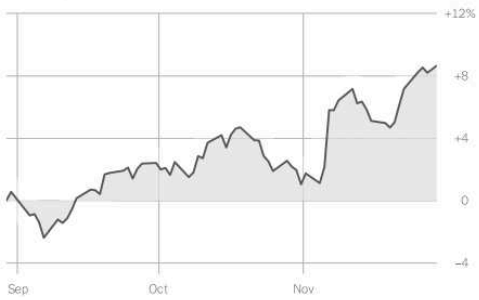
S&P 500 6,032.38 ↑+0.6%
3 month performance: **+7.9%**



Nasdaq Composite Index 19,218.17 ↑+0.8%
3 month performance: **+9.7%**



Dow Jones Industrials 44,910.65 ↑+0.4%
3 month performance: **+8.7%**



Best performers

S&P 500 COMPANIES	CLOSE	CHANGE
1. Ralph Lauren 'A' (RL)	$231.40	+3.9%
2. Tesla (TSLA)	$345.16	+3.7
3. First Solar (FSLR)	$199.27	+3.5
4. VISTRA (VST)	$159.84	+3.4
5. Lam Research (LRCX)	$73.88	+3.2
6. Las Vegas Sands Co. (LVS)	$53.06	+3.2
7. Ulta Beauty (ULTA)	$386.64	+3.0
8. Wynn Resorts (WYNN)	$94.38	+3.0
9. Mosaic (MOS)	$26.46	+2.8
10. NRG Energy (NRG)	$101.61	+2.8

Worst performers

S&P 500 COMPANIES	CLOSE	CHANGE
1. Super Micro Computer (SMCI)	$32.64	−6.9%
2. Verisign (VRSN)	$187.18	−2.3
3. Texas Pacific Land (TPL)	$1,600.09	−2.2
4. Estee Lauder 'A' (EL)	$72.12	−2.0
5. Rollins (ROL)	$50.33	−1.6
6. Airbnb A (ABNB)	$136.11	−1.6
7. Merck & Co. (MRK)	$101.64	−1.4
8. Enphase Energy (ENPH)	$71.35	−1.4
9. Wells Fargo (WFC)	$76.17	−1.3
10. SOLVENTUMPAR (SOLV)	$71.51	−1.3

Most active

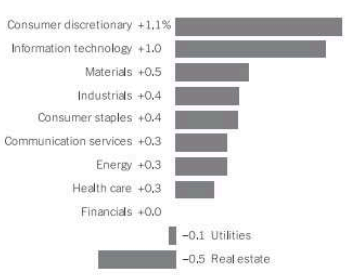
S&P 500 COMPANIES	CLOSE	CHANGE	VOLUME IN MIL.
1. NVIDIA (NVDA)	$138.25	+2.2%	142
2. Super Micro Computer (SMCI)	$32.64	−6.9	60
3. Tesla (TSLA)	$345.16	+3.7	37
4. Intel (INTC)	$24.05	+1.7	37
5. Palantir Technologies (PLTR)	$67.08	+1.6	30
6. Ford Motor (F)	$11.13	+0.3	29
7. Apple (AAPL)	$237.33	+1.0	28
8. Amazon.com (AMZN)	$207.89	+1.0	25
9. Bank of America (BAC)	$47.51	−0.5	23
10. Pfizer Inc (PFE)	$26.21	+1.5	22

World stocks

	TOTAL RETURN 1 YR	TOTAL RETURN 5 YRS	TOTAL ASSETS IN BIL.
1. Vanguard Total International Stock Index Fund Institutional Shares (VTSNX)	+23.4%	+6.0%	441.7
2. Vanguard Developed Markets Index Fund Investor Shares (VDVIX)	+22.4	+6.3	197.3
3. American Funds EuroPacific Growth Fund Class R-6 (RERGX)	+23.5	+5.9	133.3
4. Vanguard FTSE All-World ex-US Index Fund Institutional Plus Shares (VFWPX)	+23.5	+6.1	56.7
5. Fidelity International Index Fund (FSPSX)	+22.4	+6.4	52.9
6. Dodge & Cox International Stock Fund Class X (DOXFX)	+22.5	+7.5	49.3
7. Goldman Sachs GQG Partners International Opportunities Fund Class A (GSIHX)	+29.2	+10.4	48.6
8. Fidelity Series Global ex U.S. Index Fund (FSGEX)	+23.6	+5.8	48.2
9. Vanguard International Growth Fund Investor Shares (VWIGX)	+31.8	+9.1	44.8
10. Strategic Advisers Fidelity International Fund (FUSIX)	+23.6	+7.2	42.3

Source: Morningstar

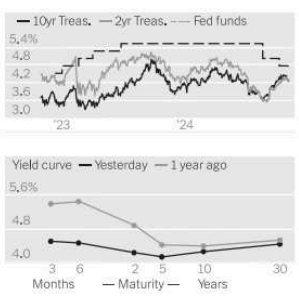
Sector performance
S&P 500 SECTORS



How stock markets fared yesterday in Asia ... ... in Europe ... and North America

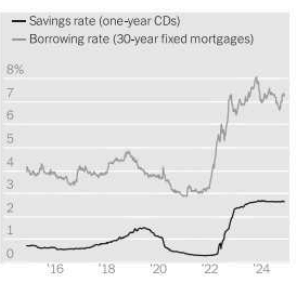
What Is Happening in Other Markets and the Economy

Bonds

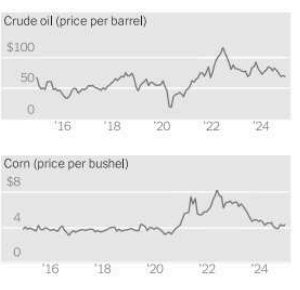


Currencies

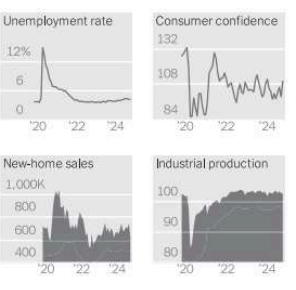
Consumer rates



Commodities



Economy



RETAIL | POLICY

Picky Buyers Cast Shadow Over Retail, Selecting Winners and Losers

FROM FIRST BUSINESS PAGE

starkly illustrated by Walmart and Target.

Last week, Walmart beat analysts' estimates for sales and raised its forecast for the full year for the second time in three months. Its share price jumped higher, setting fresh records.

A day later, Target — which has more discretionary categories like apparel and home décor — badly missed sales expectations, cut its forecast and saw the steepest drop in its stock in years.

The picture that is forming shows sellers that are focused on discretionary or big-ticket purchases are coming under pressure as shoppers, including more affluent ones, spend more judiciously at places that offer deals and lower-cost items.

The National Retail Federation projected U.S. holiday sales to grow as much as 3.5 percent this year, slower than in recent years but in line with averages before the pandemic.

Walmart, the nation's largest retailer, is emerging as one of the winners before the holiday season. The company reported that its U.S. sales had increased 5 percent in its most recent quarter, comfortably surpassing Wall Street estimates. Higher-income households accounted for most of the retailer's market share gains, the company said.

Amazon's e-commerce business in North America grew 9 percent in its most recent quarter, even as consumers shifted their spending to lower-cost products, contributing to a record-breaking quarter for the company.

The tech giant is positioning itself to keep winning over shoppers looking for deals. This month, it unveiled Amazon Haul, a feature in its mobile app that replicates the shopping experience at rivals like Temu, with a kaleidoscope of low-priced items: Christmas tree-themed iPhone cases are $2.99, and a four-pack of plastic headbands goes for $3.99.

TJX, the owner of T.J. Maxx and Marshalls, also beat analysts' estimates for its most recent quarter and raised its full-year forecast. The rise in sales was driven by more customer visits, rather than shoppers' spending more per visit, which John Joseph Klinger, TJX's chief financial officer, told analysts was "a great indicator of the strength of our value proposition." Strong results from Ross, a discount clothing retailer, reinforced the picture.

Richard Dickson, the chief executive of Gap, said the chain was seeing "strong responses to our value proposition from higher-end consumers." Costco and BJ's both announced increases in their membership fees for the first time in years, a sign of confidence after reporting better-than-expected earnings.

Then there is Target. Sales at its stores last quarter fell 1.9 percent from a year earlier, and the company cut its full-year profit forecast. Its shares tumbled more than 20 percent on the day it reported the results.

Brian Cornell, Target's chief executive, told investors that shoppers were "waiting to buy until last moment of need, focusing on deals and then stocking up when they find them."

Michael Baker, managing director at D.A. Davidson, a brokerage, wrote in a note to clients that Target's difficulty navigating the changing economic conditions was "a function of a product positioning that is better suited to a more bullish spending environment."

Some big department chains with lots of middle-income customers have also missed the mark, losing ground to discounters and online sellers, among others, and disappointing investors with weak sales, murky outlooks and other issues.

Macy's, which is in the midst of a turnaround that includes closing 150 of its stores over the next three years, reported mixed results this week. They were overshadowed, however, by an accounting issue that forced the company to delay its full earnings report. Macy's discovered that an employee had misstated and hidden up to $154 million in delivery expenses over the past few years.

Kohl's, which announced a new chief executive this week, reported a 9 percent drop in third-quarter sales. Its shares promptly plunged to their lowest level since 2020, and the retailer warned of a "highly competitive holiday season," slashing its forecast for the rest of the year.

DAVE SANDERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

With shoppers sifting through deals, Walmart is reporting higher sales while Target is struggling. Crowds at Crossgates Mall in Albany, N.Y., on Friday.

Also struggling are home furnishings and home improvement retailers, like Lowe's and Home Depot, as interest rates, which remain relatively high, depress demand for big-ticket items that require financing.

Consumers "continue to face affordability challenges as both inflation and interest rates are putting pressures on their wallet," Marvin Ellison, the chief executive of Lowe's, told investors. Appliances and flooring are among the purchases that many people have put off, executives said.

Still, "you have to distinguish between a company that's struggling and an industry that's struggling," said Nikki Baird, vice president of strategy at Aptos, a technology company that works with retailers. "I think this is going to be a better holiday season than people expected, but it's not evenly applied."

Some higher-end retailers appear to be doing well, like Williams-Sonoma, the kitchen supply and home furnishings chain, which tends to cater to more affluent households. Laura J. Alber, the company's chief executive, told investors after a better-than-expected earnings report that "it's really hard to know exactly what's going on with the consumer," but that shoppers were "probably a little bit better off than everybody thinks."

Other factors could lift spending in the crucial final weeks of the year. Americans might be "taking a big sigh of relief" after the presidential election lacked a contested result or the violence that some feared, said Joe Feldman, a retail analyst at Telsey Advisory Group.

"The consumer has kind of moved forward, like, 'All right, it's time to have a good holiday season,'" Mr. Feldman said.

Also the sweeping tariffs pledged by President-elect Donald J. Trump could encourage spending on higher-cost items, before the levies raise prices further. That could help the consumer electronics sector, which has seen mixed results as shoppers have cut back on discretionary spending, Ms. Baird said. Best Buy recently cut its full-year sales forecast, pointing to "softer-than-expected sales" in the past few months.

If retail sales prove strong for the rest of the year, "it's going to be a question of how much is this a shift in consumer behavior because they're expecting tariffs," Ms. Baird added, versus a sign of underlying economic strength.

Drug Companies, at Odds With Trump's Choices for Health Policy, Face Conflict

FROM FIRST BUSINESS PAGE

Medicaid Services, the former television host Dr. Mehmet Oz, has scant experience in managing a large bureaucracy like the one he may now oversee; the agency is in charge of health care programs that cover more than 150 million Americans.

In Mr. Trump's first term as president, pharmaceutical executives largely cheered his health policy nominees. They had ties to the moderate wing of the Republican Party and decades of conventional experience, including at major drug companies.

John LaMattina, who was once the top scientist at Pfizer and is now a senior partner at PureTech Health, a firm that creates biotech startups, said of those officials: "You could disagree with them, but at least there's a certain knowledge base and they've given serious thought to these issues."

He added: "We're now seeing some people without any sort of background, and that's worrisome."

The implications remain unclear for Americans who rely on medications or on widespread immunity from diseases that, for now, are rare. Some in the Trump administration want to speed drug approvals, potentially seeding the market with drugs of uncertain effectiveness. Mr. Kennedy has in some forums called for more independent safety reviews of established vaccines, and at other times he has demanded fewer constraints on unconventional and unproven treatments.

But Mr. Kennedy has also tapped in to veins of outrage among consumers and lawmakers, who have long vilified drug companies for setting high prices on certain drugs and reaping billions of dollars in profits rather than putting patients first.

In choosing such a vociferous critic as Mr. Kennedy, the president-elect stunned the sector, causing vaccine and biotechnology stocks to plummet temporarily.

And though Mr. Kennedy most recently said that he would not take vaccines away from Americans who want them, even a modest reduction in the number of people receiving certain shots could spook investors and translate into hundreds of millions of dollars of lost revenue. The industry is also concerned that drug approvals could be delayed if Mr. Kennedy makes good on his threats to fire drug regulators, or if they quit in droves to avoid working under his leadership.

"There was cautious optimism on Trump when he won, and that was very rapidly replaced with concern over R.F.K. Jr.," said Brian Skorney, a drug industry analyst at the investment bank Baird.

Drug companies' political action committees made millions of dollars in contributions to both Democrats and Republicans this election cycle, and the industry's lobbying groups can wield considerable influence over policy and legislation.

Top pharmaceutical executives have said little publicly about Mr. Trump's picks for health policy positions, seeking to avoid alienating the people who would regulate them. Their lobbying groups have publicly issued polite statements saying they want to work constructively with the administration.

But Derek Lowe, a longtime pharmaceutical researcher and industry commentator, has sharply criticized Mr. Kennedy on his blog, calling him "a demagogue whose positions on key public health issues like vaccination are nothing short of disastrous."

"You really can't engage with someone like that. There is no common ground," Mr. Lowe said in an interview.

Drug industry officials have a long list of concerns about Mr. Kennedy, who did not return a request for comment for this article. They are particularly worried that he could seek to undermine childhood vaccines; one way would be for him to push to revise the government's recommendations on immunizations.

Mr. Kennedy has also called for overturning legal protections that shield vaccine makers from litigation when people are seriously harmed by vaccines — a change that would upend an established compensation program and could expose the industry to costly lawsuits.

The stakes appear to be highest for companies that make vaccines. About a fifth of Merck's revenue comes from two types of vaccines that Mr. Kennedy has targeted: a vaccine against the human papillomavirus that has averted thousands of cancer cases, and the shots that children receive to protect them against measles, mumps and rubella. (Merck declined to comment.)

Vaccine sales represent about 3 percent of the industry's overall prescription drug revenues, according to IQVIA, an industry data provider. With some exceptions, vaccines tend to generate relatively low returns compared with profits from more expensive products used for diseases like cancer and arthritis.

Drug manufacturers also fear the effect Mr. Kennedy could have at the Food and Drug Administration. They often complain that the agency can be too onerous, but their business model is reliant on a well-staffed F.D.A. that can weed out would-be competitors that haven't met its standards for safety and effectiveness.

Mr. Kennedy regularly criticizes the F.D.A. as "corrupt" and too close to the drug industry. He has denounced the fees the agency receives from makers of medical devices and drugs, which make up about half of its $7.2 billion annual budget.

It's unclear how Mr. Kennedy's views will mesh with those of Jim O'Neill, a Silicon Valley investor and former government official who would serve as his deputy if he is confirmed. Mr. O'Neill, a former top aide to the billionaire Peter Thiel, has called for approving drugs once they've been shown to be safe but before they have been shown to be effective. That idea goes well beyond the deregulation favored by most pharmaceutical executives.

The stage is set for tense battles over regulatory changes.

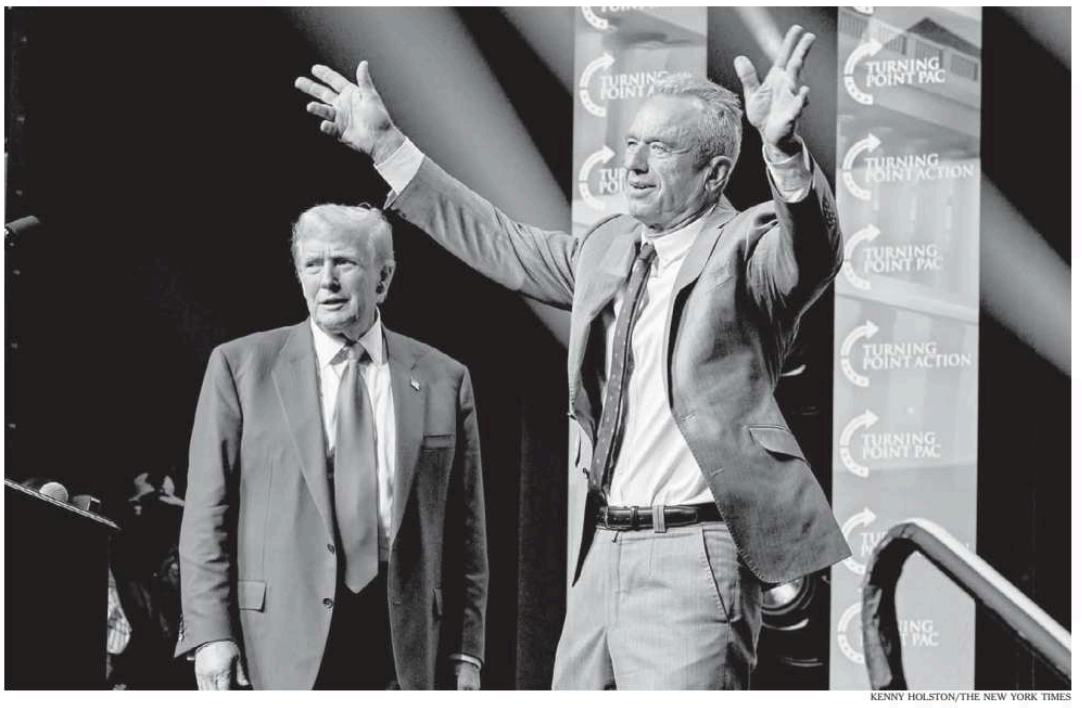
Karoline Leavitt, a spokeswoman for Mr. Trump's transition who will be his press secretary, described the president-elect's choices for administration posts as "highly qualified" and reflective of "his priority to put America First."

Although lawmakers in both parties frequently criticize the drug industry for charging high prices, Mr. Kennedy paints pharmaceutical companies in a much harsher light.

In an interview last year, Mr. Kennedy called vaccine makers "the most corrupt companies in the world" and "serial felons." He has advanced falsehoods about the science underlying some of the industry's most influential products, suggesting that vaccines cause autism and that H.I.V. may not be the true cause of AIDS. He has embraced an increasingly popular notion that healthy food and lifestyle changes — not pharmaceutical products — will heal sick people. Referring to drug companies, he wrote on X this year, "The sicker we get the richer and more powerful they become."

"His view of our world seems to be that everything is a conspiracy," said Brad Loncar, a former biotech investor who now runs BiotechTV, an industry media company. "If you really know our industry, it's made up of well-intentioned, smart people, and it's one of the most innovative sectors of our entire economy."

Pharmaceutical officials were relieved by Mr. Trump's pick to lead the F.D.A., Dr. Martin Makary, who has a contrarian bent but has been aligned with scientific consensus on vaccine safety and is not seen as a threat to unwind the status quo.



KENNY HOLSTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President-elect Donald J. Trump's pick for health secretary, has spoken out for independent safety reviews of established vaccines.

Drug companies hope to have an ally in Vivek Ramaswamy, who made his fortune as a biotechnology executive and has been named to lead a government efficiency effort alongside Elon Musk. Mr. Ramaswamy has been critical of what he describes as regulatory red tape that slows new drug approvals.

And Mr. O'Neill, the president-elect's choice for deputy health secretary, has close ties to some biotechnology and medical technology companies, though he is less well-connected to major industry players.

Bracing for the potential of public attacks and new proposals that could hurt their bottom lines, drug companies are said to be reaching out to contacts close to Mr. Trump in hopes of influencing the incoming administration. Some are also considering new ways to defend their businesses from government initiatives they consider detrimental.

"There's no playbook for dealing with these disruptive figures like Kennedy," said Sam Geduldig, managing partner of the right-leaning lobbying firm CGCN Group.

Other lobbyists said they are instructing pharmaceutical clients not to hit the panic button yet. Once Congress returns after the Thanksgiving break, Mr. Kennedy is expected to make the rounds on Capitol Hill.

He could face trouble winning the support he needs from Senate Republicans to be confirmed because of his record on vaccines, his past support for abortion rights and his ideas about overhauling the food system.

Drug industry officials have long regarded Mr. Trump as a wild card, just as likely to be a boon as a foe.

In 2020, the Trump administration's Operation Warp Speed worked closely with drug makers and poured billions of dollars into producing highly effective Covid shots in record time, saving countless lives. Mr. Trump's pandemic-era health secretary, Alex Azar, spoke with admiration that year about "our partners in the private sector."

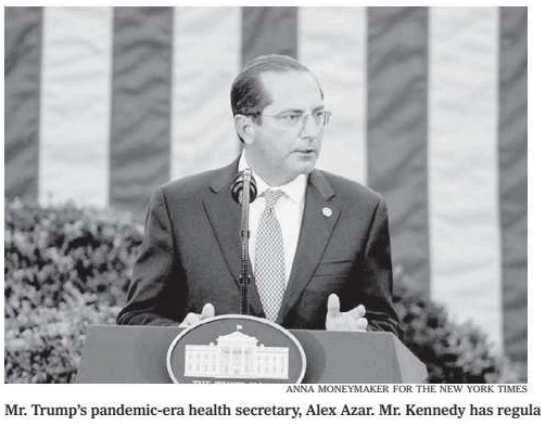
But this year, Mr. Trump spoke little about Operation Warp Speed.

With some exceptions, the drug industry has been in something of a slump since the heights of the pandemic, when it enjoyed a boost in its public image and investors eager to get in on huge gains poured money into drug stocks.

But trust in vaccines and public health institutions has eroded at the same time as the bubble in the biotech markets has deflated. Among major Covid vaccine makers, Moderna's stock price is down tenfold, and Pfizer's stock price has fallen by half, from their high-water marks in 2021. An index of smaller biotechnology stocks is down by close to half.

Drug company officials still see opportunities to benefit from Mr. Trump's win.

The industry is looking forward to Mr. Trump replacing Lina Khan, the chair of the Federal Trade Commission, as he is expected to do. She has been aggressive in taking on big business, including pharma.



ANNA MONEYMAKER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

ANDREW MANGUM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mr. Trump's pandemic-era health secretary, Alex Azar. Mr. Kennedy has regularly criticized the F.D.A., saying it is too aligned with the drug industry.

TECHNOLOGY

Creative Community Is Now Taking On A.I.

FROM FIRST BUSINESS PAGE

chine. But A.I. is also quickly becoming fodder for the creative community.

The technology has long been a staple of science fiction, but now, two years into the boom kicked off by OpenAI's ChatGPT, the issues raised by those movies and books all feel a little more real. More artists, playwrights and comedians are finding inspiration in the A.I. technology that's currently available: its ethical quandaries, its impact, its risks, its absurdities and even its executives.

Audiences are eating it up. "Doomers" is set to have an official run early next year in New York and San Francisco, after raising funding via Kickstarter. The Misalignment A.I. Museum, which started in 2023 as an eight-week pop-up, is set to move into a larger, permanent space in San Francisco's Mission Bay neighborhood and reopen in February. And Artificially Unintelligent has become a monthly event and is seeking to expand into other cities.

Some of the creative work about A.I. is coming from tech industry insiders laughing at the hype or raising alarms about the dangers. Some of it is coming from outsiders fascinated by the industry's intrigue.

A.I. has become a meaty topic for artists to dissect, invoke and mock even as they fight its use as a tool in their fields. In October, more than 10,000 actors, authors and musicians signed a letter opposing the use of their works to train A.I. systems.

At least 10 groups, including voice actors, the Recording Industry Association of America and The New York Times, have sued A.I. companies, claiming the technology unlawfully used copyrighted work without permission. And many artists, from graphic designers to movie stars, have expressed concern that the A.I. could soon replace them.

"It's definitely a big topic that's affecting us all, and we should have everyone who is affected by it be part of the conversation," said Audrey Kim, the museum's founder and curator.

LOREN ELLIOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Audrey Kim, founder of the Misalignment A.I. Museum, with tapestries designed by the musician Grimes using A.I.

LOREN ELLIOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

LOREN ELLIOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

An interactive exhibit at the museum, and, right, Raymond Yao, who works at the crypto company Coinbase.

LOREN ELLIOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Misalignment A.I. Museum in San Francisco is set to move to a bigger, permanent space next year.

Asking the Big Questions

Ms. Kim has been thinking about A.I. for at least a decade, starting when she worked in operations at Cruise, the autonomous vehicle company now owned by General Motors. Her colleagues would have lunchtime debates about the role of A.I. in society. In recent years, as that debate became more mainstream, Ms. Kim decided that art could be a way to bridge the gap between the people building A.I. and the rest of us.

Initially her museum, which is a nonprofit supported by donations, focused entirely on addressing the risks of A.I. But through discussions with people working in tech, Ms. Kim, realized there was no consensus among techies on what A.I.'s risks to humanity were, or even a universal understanding about how it worked. So she shifted to education and asking the big questions.

One exhibit is a phone booth made for conversations with an A.I. version of the television legend Fred Rogers. The exhibit breaks down all the different pieces of technology that were used to create it, including the speech-to-text converter that interprets the visitor's voice, the A.I. system — called a large language model — that creates the Fred Rogers-like personality and the text-to-speech model that simulates his voice, "so it's not just like this nebulous, vague A.I.," Ms. Kim said.

A sculpture in the shape of two humans embracing is made of paper clips, evoking a popular theory of A.I.-induced doom. (Told to make paper clips, an A.I. model could decide that humans get in the way of making more paper clips and kill them.)

"I don't think it's going to happen," Ms. Kim said of the paper clip apocalypse while giving a tour of the museum, "but one of the main dangers of A.I. is not having a stop valve."

A piece called "Sonosynthesis" features a grand piano that plays A.I.-generated music in response to close-up images of bacteria. It's designed to provoke discussions about who should get the rights to the music: the researchers who built the A.I., the artists who created the music used to train the A.I. or the scientists who grew the bacteria that inspired the music.

Many of the pieces, like an A.I. palm reader or a Broomba (a broom on a Roomba vacuum), are playful. A clown puppet that cries for help in the visitor's voice is terrifying.

Other exhibits are purely aesthetic. Ms. Kim unfurled a pair of seven-foot neon pink and blue tapestries called "Marie Antoinette After the Singularity," designed using A.I. tools by the musician Grimes, who has encouraged fans to make A.I. music using her voice. To create the pieces and advise on the placement of the crests, Ms. Kim contracted Factum Arte, a group in Madrid whose nonprofit arm worked on one of Henry VIII's tapestries.

Ms. Kim, who embodies the museum's winking, whimsical spirit on tours, considers herself a tech optimist. "The future is not set," she said. "It's what we're doing today that's going to make that or break that."

Millennials With Power

"Doomers" takes a different view. Matthew Gasda said he had been inspired to write the play after following Mr. Altman's firing on social media last year. The abrupt ouster set off a public debate over potential dangers of OpenAI's technology and whether Mr. Altman was ignoring them.

While researching those conversations, Mr. Gasda, 35, decided that the people building this new technology were not any more qualified to have debates about its role in society than anyone else.

"It's just millennials with a ton of power," he said.

Mr. Gasda's previous plays were similarly of the moment. "Zoomers" was about young people in New York. "Dimes Square" was about the city's postpandemic downtown scene. He often stages casual readings of drafts of his scripts, then collects audience feedback and adapts. He told the audience in San Francisco that this process might be familiar.

"You all know about beta testing and releasing products that don't work," he said to laughter.

That version of "Doomers" hit on tropes familiar to anyone who has followed tech culture in recent years: polycules, Waymo, p(doom), ketamine. The characters, based on Mr. Altman and his peers at OpenAI, had heated ethical debates about benevolence and abundance. At one point, Mr. Altman's character (called Seth in the play) grabs a knife and demands that someone stab him because doing so would lower the probability of A.I.-induced doom.

Some of the early viewers worked at Anthropic, a rival to OpenAI, and they agreed with the play's message that A.I. poses a threat to the world. Mr. Gasda said the wave of resignations at OpenAI in recent months further validated his thesis.

"I told the actors, 'I think we're onto something here,'" he said.

RACHAEL ZAHN/AVENUE Z

Neal Patel at Artificially Unintelligent, a comedy show about working in tech.

Court Jesters

At Artificially Unintelligent, the threat from A.I. was not quite as dire. Onstage, the host, Neal Patel, surveyed the audience of 120 about their roles in the industry, cheering on the "value-add engineers" and poking fun at the people with "nontechnical fake email jobs." To the founders, he asked, "Why are you here and not building?"

He joked that A.I. would soon take everyone's jobs.

Mr. Patel, 24, started his comedy group, Not-So-Daily Stand Up, in part because he and his fellow techie comedians kept hearing other comedians make jokes about technology that misunderstood how it worked. The group's roster of around 55 comedians all have day jobs in tech. (Mr. Patel is an engineer.)

"The credentials back up the jokes," he said.

Even as A.I. threatens to replace workers, including engineers, Mr. Patel said, a common theme among his peers is how limited the technology's abilities actually are.

"We're all dealing with the same crap where a nontechnical manager says, 'Can we use A.I. for that?' And we say, 'No.' And they say, 'Try it anyway,'" Mr. Patel said.

Lately, tech companies have invited Mr. Patel's comedy group to come roast them. The setup tests whether Silicon Valley's famous "radical candor" extends to delicate egos of those at the top. But comedians can get away with saying things others can't, Mr. Patel said. "It's almost like us being a bunch of court jesters."

Adding Layers of Security To Your Phone or Tablet

Tech Tip

By J. D. BIERSDORFER

Losing a smartphone or tablet stuffed with your life's details can be a nightmare, but your privacy may also be at risk in less obvious situations — like if you leave your unlocked phone unattended or if the children know your tablet's passcode. While apps for financial or medical matters typically require their own passwords (and Apple's Photos and Google Photos can hide specific pictures), the latest versions of iOS and Android offer new tools for further shielding sensitive content on your device. Here's a quick overview.

Locking Apps That Don't Need a Passcode

Apple's iOS 18, released in September, now includes the ability to lock apps that don't already require a passcode, Face ID or Touch ID to open them. Apple notes that look-alike siblings and children could bypass Face ID, so use a secret passcode if that's a concern.

To lock an app, find it on the iPhone's or iPad's home screen (or in the App Library) and press your finger on its icon. In the pop-up menu, select "Require Face ID" or the security method you normally use.

Tap "Require Face ID" again when prompted. To open that app going forward, you'll need to unlock it.

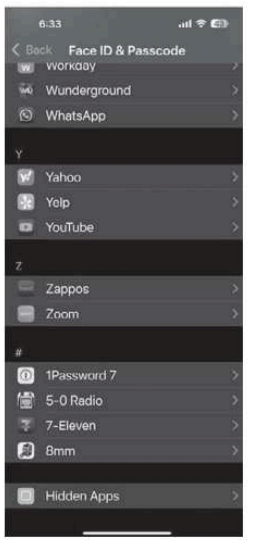
To remove the lock from an app, press down on its icon and select "Don't Require Face ID" from the menu.

If locking is not enough, you can also now hide specific apps (and not just entire home-screen pages).

While Apple's default iOS apps can't be hidden, you can put the invisibility cloak on the ones you have downloaded from the App Store. Just press your finger on an app's icon, choose "Require Face ID" and tap "Hide and Require Face ID" from the menu.

Hidden apps won't show up in searches or provide notifications. They appear as blank icons in a folder at the bottom of the App Library screen. Tap the Hidden folder to authenticate and unlock it so you can use the apps. (Alternatively, open Settings, select Apps and scroll to the bottom to see the Hidden Apps menu.)

To make a hidden app visible again, find its icon in one of these places, press on it and choose "Don't Require Face ID." You may have to manually add it back to your home screen from the icon's pop-up menu.



To take off the lock, top, press "Don't Require Face ID." Above, you can find hidden apps in the Hidden folder on the iOS App Library screen or at the end of the app list in the Face ID & Passcode settings.

Check Settings to Secure Android Apps

Tools included with Android phones vary based on the system version, the manufacturer and the carrier. These combinations can hide and lock apps, so check your settings for options.

For example, many Samsung Galaxy devices have a "Hide apps on Home and Apps screens" option. And most Galaxy models can lock sensitive apps in the Secure Folder, which can be found in the security settings. Once you follow the steps to enable the Secure Folder, you need to supply a passcode to get to the items within it.

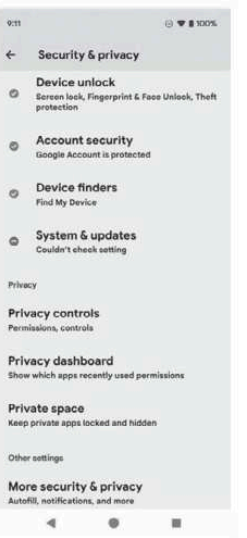
In its Android 15 system released last month, Google added a "private space" feature, which allows you to install apps into a digital vault that requires a password or another authentication to open. Once you set it up, you can switch between using apps in your private space and those in your regular collection.

Google's Android Help site has a lengthy guide to setting up and using a private space. But to get started, go to the Settings app, tap "Security & Privacy," scroll down and select "Private Space."

You need to unlock your device with your authentication method to proceed. Tap the "Set Up" button to be guided through the steps for configuring the private space, which includes creating (or signing into) a separate Google Account and installing apps into it. This action walls off those applications from the rest of the device — and keeps that data from syncing with your main Google Account.

You must choose a way to unlock the private space (like fingerprint recognition or a PIN), which can differ from your main device lock. Keep in mind that apps stop running when the private space is locked. Google advises that apps that use the phone's sensors to track information or that run in the background are not suitable for stashing in a private space.

Once you have established your private space, you can find it by scrolling to the bottom of the All Apps screen. Tap the lock icon to open or close the space. If you really want invisibility, tap the gear icon and choose the option to hide the private space when it's locked. To find it yourself, enter "private space" in the Android search bar.



Setting up your secret app vault in Android 15 starts with selecting the Private Space option in the Security & Privacy settings and then following the steps on the screen.

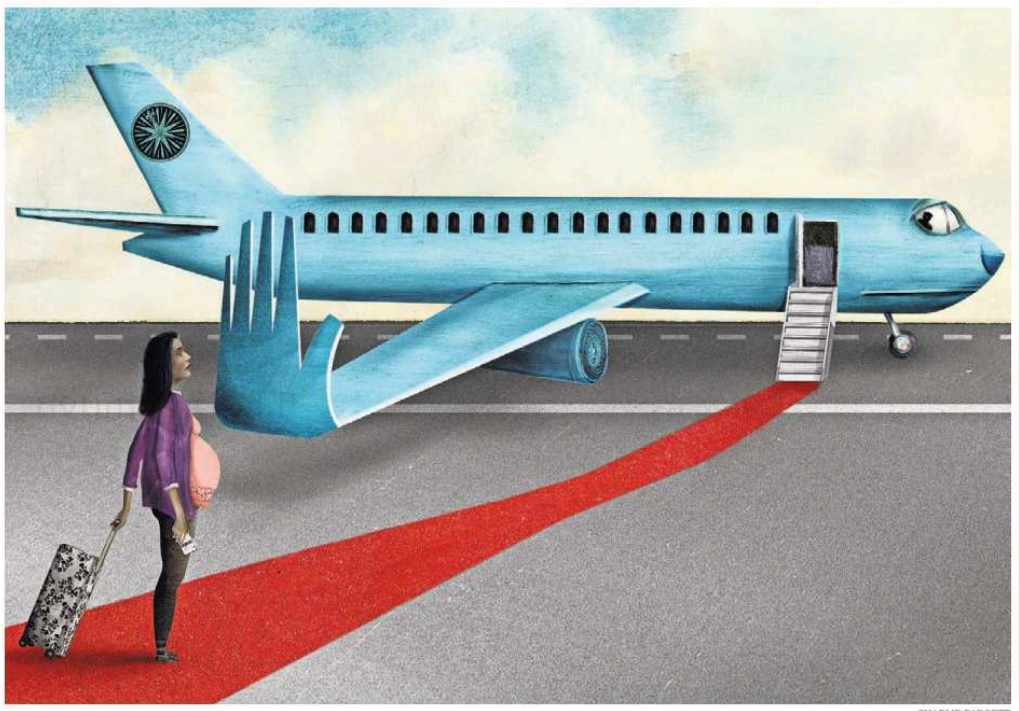
TRAVEL | FOOD

Airline Rules for Pregnant Passengers

A company's policy required a doctor's note for anyone more than 28 weeks along.

Tripped Up

By SETH KUGEL



CHARLIE PADGETT

Dear Tripped Up,
On the evening of July 19, six members of my family were set to fly La Compagnie, a French business-class-only airline, from Newark Liberty International Airport to Nice, France, for a long-planned trip that included the Paris Olympics. When my husband and I arrived at the airport, the other four had already gone through security. The La Compagnie agent congratulated me on my (obvious) pregnancy and asked how far along I was. I answered truthfully: 28 weeks and a day. She said I needed a letter from my doctor saying I was OK to fly. But every doctor and midwife I had spoken to about the trip reassured me it was safe, including the midwife I saw the day before at my 28-week checkup. Even though she was attending someone else's labor that evening, she managed to send a letter, first through a patient portal and then via email directly to La Compagnie, along with her provider identifier number and, when the staff insisted, a photo of her hospital ID. But even after I did everything they asked, the agent told me the crew had determined I could not board. The La Compagnie desk was closing for the night, and the agent gave me a number to call to rebook. But with no guarantee I would be able to fly, even if there were seats available in the coming days, we booked a flight for the next evening on Air France for about $6,560 each — a steep increase from our $3,530 La Compagnie tickets. La Compagnie offered to return the original $3,530 each, but I believe they were wrong to deny us boarding and should compensate us for the cost of the last-minute flight instead. Can you help?
EMMA, BROOKLYN, N.Y.

Dear Emma,
Your frustrating and ultimately expensive evening in Newark raises a number of questions, but the thorniest is: How much responsibility did you have to verify the pregnancy policy of the airline before you traveled?

It turns out La Compagnie is one of a small group of global airlines — including Turkish, Ryanair, Qantas and Cathay Pacific — that require pregnant passengers to present a medical certificate clearing them to fly once they are past the 28-week mark.

La Compagnie's written policy states this explicitly, as do those of its fellow outliers. But quite unlike them, the company's policy is nowhere to be found online — or on any of the documentation you forwarded me.

I finally got my hands on it from Anne Crespo, a spokeswoman for the airline, who in September sent a screenshot from an internal document. The policy states that pregnant passengers between 28 and 35 weeks require a medical certificate confirming their stage of pregnancy and declaring them fit to fly. It specifically notes that a "medical certificate completed by a registered midwife cannot be accepted."

Ms. Crespo said that the same information was in La Compagnie's general conditions of carriage, but at least in the online version, it is not. She added that the carrier planned to add the information to a new section of the website by early October (it did not). When I followed up later, she told me the date had been pushed to mid-November. As of Nov. 20, it's not there.

She said La Compagnie would not cover the more expensive Air France ticket. "We can't pay for the difference since we offered to her to depart later with a proper medical certificate and she refused," she wrote.

But the offer to refund your original ticket still held. "This is more than some other airline would have done in such conditions," she wrote.

It is also more than La Compagnie pledges to do in the one substantive passage on its website where pregnancy is mentioned. Article 4 of its contract of carriage states that if a pregnant passenger is denied boarding because "the arrangements reasonably required for their carriage have not been made prior to check-in," then no refund is required. It does not explain what those required arrangements are.

That's my translation, anyway, because the English-language version of La Compagnie's contract of carriage leaves three of its 22 articles, including Article 4, in French. (The same is true of the Italian version. Obviously, La Compagnie needs to work on its communications skills.)

Despite all these obstacles, some might argue that you should have called or emailed the airline beforehand to ask about its policy, or at least that your medical team should have encouraged you to do so.

A quick web search for advice on traveling while pregnant led me to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' opinion on the subject.

"Most commercial airlines allow pregnant women to fly up to 36 weeks of gestation," it reads. "Some restrict pregnant women from international flights earlier in gestation and some require documentation of gestational age. For specific airline requirements, women should check with the individual carrier."

Advice for pregnant travelers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is similar: "Some airlines will let you fly until 36 weeks, but others may have an earlier cutoff," it writes, noting that pregnant travelers should check.

U.S. carriers seem to have a much more laissez-faire policy toward pregnant travelers: American Airlines and United Airlines generally require medical clearance only after 36 weeks; Delta Air Lines, Spirit Airlines, Alaska Airlines and Southwest Airlines do not require it at all, and others fall in between.

I called La Compagnie's customer service number to see what would happen. The courteous representative who answered put me on a brief hold, came back and explained the policy accurately, including the requirement that the letter could not be from a midwife.

I realize that calling them seems easy to do in hindsight, and does not take away from your frustration at what happened.

It sounds as if La Compagnie's ground staff at Newark put in a good-faith effort to try to get you on the plane, but did make a vital error: not telling you explicitly about the "no midwives" rule. (Many airlines do accept letters from midwives.) If they had, you might have had a fighting chance to get a doctor's letter before the gate closed.

I also totally get why, without this vital information, you did not trust La Compagnie enough to try to get on the next day's flight, especially when a trip to the Olympics was on the line and your family members had gone ahead without you. You also noted that La Compagnie's customer service phone lines closed less than an hour after you were denied boarding, so unless you had called right away, you would have had to wait for the next day just to find out if you'd be able to get on a flight that weekend (and that next day was a Saturday — so imagine the stressful scramble to get a letter from a doctor).

I'm sorry I was unable to get more for you — not even an apology. I'd take the refund while the offer is still there. "We won't wait ages," Ms. Crespo wrote to me, with surprising frankness.

La Compagnie's planes might be luxurious, but to me, its customer relations skills seem to be coach class at best.

If you need advice about a best-laid travel plan that went awry, **send an email to TrippedUp@nytimes.com.**

Amid Changes, Frequent Fliers Are Rethinking Loyalty Plans

FROM FIRST BUSINESS PAGE

Reserve card but was offered $300 to hold on to it, so she's keeping it for another year.

What the Airlines Say

Airlines often have good reasons for updating their rules and programs, even if it means upsetting some longtime customers. In Delta's case, its airport lounges were setting record highs for visits, leading to overcrowding. This year, the airline has been selling 88 percent of its first-class seats, compared with just 14 percent in 2011, making fewer upgrades available to its status holders.

"We highly value the loyalty our SkyMiles and card members continue to show the Delta brand by engaging with us at record levels," a Delta representative said. At American Express, a representative said the company continued to have "strong retention and engagement levels in the Delta cobrand card portfolio."

In a statement, United said its MileagePlus program was growing at a record pace. The company recently announced new rules that required passengers to fly more and spend more to earn status. American, in contrast, updated its loyalty program this year to offer new perks and kept its thresholds for earning status the same as in recent years.

When airlines make it more difficult for fliers to meet certain thresholds for status, those who do face less competition for upgrade perks, making holding status feel more exclusive. Still, some frequent fliers like Dan Daley think the programs are no longer worth it after years of elite status.

Mr. Daley, a freelance journalist, has flown more than four million miles with American and has held Executive Platinum status — the airline's most coveted tier — for 17 years. To maintain his status, he would often do what is known as a mileage run — for example, taking a day trip to Paris to have lunch with the sole purpose of accumulating frequent-flier miles.

Having top-tier status made him recognizable to gate agents and other employees at American, and he said he was greeted as if he were family whenever he traveled. But over the years, watching the airline change its reward structure and seeing his accrued miles become devalued began to bother him.

"I saw the game was becoming rigged," Mr. Daley, 71, said.

A few years ago, he decided to ditch his status and began employing a new strategy: Fly less and simply buy a first-class ticket on whichever airline offered him the best deal. He no longer had to hope that his status would give him an upgrade.

"It's been a much better ride ever since," he said.

When asked how the airline was trying to hold on to longtime customers who might be eyeing other carriers, a representative for American said it had introduced more ways for travelers to use their miles and was now "providing rewards before and between status levels."

The Alternatives

One of Rachel Lipson's oldest credit cards is a Delta SkyMiles card that she signed up for when she was in her 20s. She used to put all of her spending on the card to maintain status and accrue mileage, but has since stopped.

"Once every couple of years, I would be able to get a free trip out of it," Ms. Lipson, 43, said. "I thought it was so magical. Fast-forward to now, it's not going to get you much."

She now runs a business, Brooklyn Family Travelers, that teaches families how to strategically book trips using the right credit cards and how to maximize rewards points.

"I think that there's an opportunity cost to putting all your spending on one airline card," she said. "You're married to that airline. So then if there's a devaluation with the points or the miles, you're really vulnerable to that devaluation."

She said certain credit cards could automatically give travelers hotel status or flight perks if they simply held the card and enrolled in programs. Many also offer perks like Global Entry or Clear, which can help travelers move through airports more quickly.

Mr. Daley's American Express Platinum credit card is not tied to any airline, but it still helps get him lounge access when he's at an airport, including the bank's high-end Centurion lounges.

This is appealing to travelers like Ms. Brantner, who said she did not have time to figure out how to maximize rewards points.

"It's too much work," she said. "Just get me in the lounge and I'm happy."

The Thanksgiving Leftover Sandwich Now Transcends the Holiday

By KORSHA WILSON

KEARNY, N.J. — In a 1915 essay in a trade journal encouraging candy store owners to broaden their offerings with "dainty, quick lunch" options, the writer Frank B. Kahn recommended adding a "Thanksgiving Sandwich special" of turkey meat, cranberry sauce and mayonnaise to menus. "Be sure this is seasoned right," he wrote, "and advertise well."

It's doubtful Mr. Kahn could have ever imagined the Wawa Gobbler, a seasonal hoagie available at Wawa convenience stores, which dot the East Coast from Pennsylvania to Florida.

Far from dainty, this hoagie is a full Thanksgiving meal stuffed into a soft roll: tender pieces of turkey topped with herby stuffing, fuchsia cranberry sauce and a glut of tawny gravy that soaks and slicks the bread, encouraging it to congeal into one, satisfying mess of a sandwich. (The sandwich contents are also available as a bowl, over a bed of mashed potatoes.)

Whether you call it a gobbler, a pilgrim (as it's known in New England, where it's a common sight on restaurant menus) or just a leftovers sandwich, the tradition of piling Thanksgiving scraps onto bread has been chronicled in books and newspapers since the early 20th century, and may stretch back earlier.

The magic of the sandwich lies in how it offers a bit of portable nostalgia, thanks to the inclusion of "a specific set of standard holiday foods," said Barry W. Enderwick, the creator of the Sandwiches of History TikTok and Instagram accounts, and the author of a new cookbook of the same name. Sure, variations exist, like mashed sweet potatoes in place of white potatoes, or a slice of gravy-soaked bread à la "the Moist Maker" popularized by the TV show "Friends," but the main components are often untouched. "People have strong opinions about it," Mr. Enderwick said. "People are invested in what they've come to understand it to be and they go to bat for it."

More and more chains, like Firehouse Subs and Earl of Sandwich, are offering their takes on the leftovers sandwich weeks, sometimes months, before the holiday season even begins. Publix, the Florida-based supermarket chain, introduced its Turkey Cranberry Holiday Sub in 2020 with sliced deli turkey, cranberry-orange relish, bacon and Gruyère. (The Thanksgiving sandwich has even made it to the frozen food aisle of the supermarket with DiGiorno's Thanksgiving pizza, featuring roasted turkey, sweet potatoes, green beans and cranberries, available at Kroger stores through Nov. 28. It sold out nationwide last year.)

At Lenwich, the sandwich chain with locations in Manhattan and South Korea, the hot turkey sandwich with stuffing, gravy and thick slices of jellied cranberry sauce has been on the menu since 1989, when the chain first opened. A representative estimated that tens of thousands of the sandwiches are sold each holiday season across 18 Lenwich locations.

But the Wawa Gobbler may be king of them all. Introduced in 2005, the sandwich has a cult following, with fans seeing its arrival at their local Wawa as the official harbinger of the holiday season. Bright signs at Wawa stores declare that "the Gobbler is back."

On Sept. 23, the day the sandwich arrived this year, a user on the Wawa subreddit who said they had fallen in love with it and waited for its return wished everyone a "Happy gobbler day!" On a gobbler-related Wawa Instagram post featuring Jason and Kylie Kelce, a commenter lamented not having the sandwich in the midst of a medical emergency: "I'm in the hospital and all I want is the gobbler."

ANTHONY NAZARIO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Sandwiches made with turkey, gravy, stuffing, potatoes and cranberries go back more than a century, and these days are available at various chains and local shops. Wawa's Gobbler, introduced in 2005, has a strong following.

> **'I'm in the hospital and all I want is the gobbler.'**
> Commenter on a Wawa Instagram post

Calling the sandwich a "fan favorite and tradition for many," Lori Bruce, a senior media relations manager at Wawa, said the Pennsylvania-based chain sells more than 2 million Gobbler hoagies and bowls annually at its 1,050 locations.

Some sandwich shops have found that the gobbler's appeal goes beyond the holidays, adding the item to their menu year round. Last year, when a customer failed to pick up a Thanksgiving order of a whole roasted turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce, Neamet Elsayed, the owner of the Little Grocery in Hoboken, N.J., decided to add a Thanksgiving-inspired turkey sandwich on a sesame baguette to the menu. It was a hit.

"Our customers just loved it, so we added it to the menu," he said. Today it's one the restaurant's best sellers, requiring Mr. Elsayed and the team to roast multiple turkeys a week to meet demand.

He thinks we'll only see more gobbler variations in the years ahead. "Honestly, I wouldn't be surprised if McDonald's started selling these turkey sandwiches," he said.

N

Sports
The New York Times

HOCKEY

'It was that moment where you're like, "My childhood dream is coming true."'
JOCELYNE LAROCQUE, Toronto defender, on taking the ice in the Professional Women's Hockey League's first season.

MIMI d'AUTREMONT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

FRANK GUNN/THE CANADIAN PRESS, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

GRAHAM HUGHES/THE CANADIAN PRESS, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

From left: New York's Abbey Levy, left, and Ottawa's Emerance Maschmeyer in February; Billie Jean King at the league's inaugural game on Jan. 1; and setting an attendance record in Montreal in April.

Women's League Sets Lofty Goals in Second Season

An influx of talent and the prospect of expansion are ratcheting up expectations.

By HAILEY SALVIAN
The Athletic

TROY PARLA/GETTY IMAGES

Above, Minnesota after defeating Boston to win the first Walter Cup in May. Below, the teams competing in one of the league's first-ever games in January.

Marie-Philip Poulin stood on the blue line at the Bell Centre, fighting back tears.

She had just been introduced to a record crowd in Montreal and the fans were giving her a deafening ovation. Poulin, the best women's hockey player in the world for almost a decade, typically gets the loudest pregame cheer, especially in her home province of Quebec. But this applause — delivered by 21,105 people — was different.

"Honestly, I didn't know what to do, how to react, the emotions were so high," Poulin said. Having the Bell Centre packed for women's hockey, she added, felt like "we finally made it."

That game on April 20 broke the attendance record for women's hockey, one of many milestones for the inaugural season of the Professional Women's Hockey League.

Since its launch in January, the six-team league featuring the world's best players has largely been heralded as a success. Millions of viewers tuned in for games, attendance records were broken, and demand for tickets in some markets was so high that teams have moved into bigger venues. And last month, the league announced that it was preparing for expansion as early as the 2025-26 season.

But there were bumps along the way, and with the arrival of the P.W.H.L.'s second season, which begins on Saturday, big-picture questions loom. Now that the league is no longer sparkling new, can it maintain momentum? And what needs to happen to set the P.W.H.L. up for long-term success?

Stan Kasten, the president and part-owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers, will help answer those questions.

Five days into the inaugural season, Kasten had seen enough. He had been on a tour of the league, making stops at home openers during the first week. He visited Toronto for the first P.W.H.L. game on Jan. 1, attended a sellout in Ottawa the next day, and watched games in New York and Boston. Then Kasten got to Minnesota for the team's home opener, which set an attendance record for women's pro hockey with over 13,000 fans at the Xcel Energy Center.

"That was the day I knew this was going to work," Kasten said.

The longtime sports executive became a central figure in women's hockey after the Dodgers majority owner, Mark Walter, and his wife, Kimbra, agreed to bankroll a new professional women's hockey league.

The P.W.H.L. came together in a six-month sprint. Six markets and venues were chosen. A 72-game schedule was assembled. General managers and coaches and league staff were hired. Players were signed and drafted. With so little time, teams played without traditional names, logos or jerseys.

"I will look back in amazement that we did it," Kasten said. "We set the six months as our goal." He added, "I was too dumb to know it wasn't possible."

The inaugural game on Jan. 1, between Toronto and New York, was sold out, albeit at Toronto's 2,600-seat venue. Tennis legend Billie Jean King, who sits on the league's advisory board, dropped the ceremonial puck alongside the P.W.H.L.'s senior vice president of hockey operations, Jayna Hefford. The game reached over 3 million viewers on Canadian television networks and the league's YouTube stream.

"It was that moment where you're like, 'My childhood dream is coming true,'" said Toronto defender Jocelyne Larocque. "I had tears in my eyes because as a kid, my dream was to play pro hockey. And then, as you get a bit older, you think because I'm a woman, this isn't going to happen for me."

The honeymoon phase didn't end after the first few weeks of the season. The league kept breaking attendance records and, overall, beat its modest attendance projections for the inaugural year. According to Kasten, the internal projection was around 1,000 fans per game and they drew more than 5,000.

Games throughout the season were up-tempo, highly skilled and surprisingly physical. They were also easy to watch, since every game was available on YouTube for free.

"I just don't think a lot of people understood the skill level and the athleticism of these players," Ottawa's general manager, Mike Hirshfeld, said. "And I think once they saw that, it became really attractive."

The league landed several partnerships with major brands, such as Air Canada, Scotiabank, Bauer and Barbie, and also worked with the N.H.L., going to All-Star Weekend and playing two neutral-site games at N.H.L. venues in Pittsburgh and Detroit.

But the inaugural season was far from perfect.

P.W.H.L. merchandise sold well despite a lack of team names or logos, but the rollout was criticized because of supply issues and the limited size ranges.

The New York franchise played in three different rinks and struggled to draw fans, finishing with the worst attendance in the league. One game in Bridgeport, Conn., had only 728 fans — the league's only game with fewer than 1,000.

And just nine days after Minnesota won the first Walter Cup, the league announced it was parting ways with the team's general manager, Natalie Darwitz, "effective immediately."

Some reports suggested there was a rift between Darwitz — a prominent figure in Minnesota hockey and now a Hockey Hall of Fame inductee — and head coach Ken Klee, with some influential players siding with Klee. However, the league maintained the decision came after a review of the team's operations that found "there wasn't a path forward with the current personnel in place."

When the P.W.H.L. hosted the 2024 draft and awards in St. Paul, Minn., four days after Darwitz departed, fans were dispirited. Klee, who was responsible for the team's draft picks, was booed at points during the night. He was also heavily criticized for selecting Britta Curl, who stirred controversy in the weeks leading up to the draft for her social media activity.

When asked about Darwitz's departure this month, Minnesota captain Kendall Coyne Schofield said it was a league decision.

"It's pro hockey. Things happen," Klee said. "We're excited to get the season going."

If the P.W.H.L.'s first season was about celebrating the league's existence, its sophomore year will focus on maintaining momentum while remaining in start-up mode.

"We are far from a finished product," Kasten said.

The league has taken several positive steps in its first real offseason.

In September, it unveiled team names and logos; jerseys were released this month. The new merchandise includes more design options and size ranges.

New York moved to a new venue, the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J., where the team played in front of its biggest crowd (5,132) last season. Toronto and Montreal also moved into bigger venues full-time. Even with a capacity of 8,150 at Coca-Cola Coliseum, Toronto's season-tickets sold out for a second year in a row.

This season, the league will play nine neutral-site games, mostly in N.H.L. buildings including Seattle, Vancouver, Denver and St. Louis.

As for expansion, up to two teams could be added as soon as the 2025-26 season.

"I don't know if we do it," Kasten said. "But we're looking at it because the interest is really there."

How expansion might proceed is a work in progress. All six P.W.H.L. teams, as well as the league itself, are owned by the Walters. The single-entity ownership model was critical, Kasten said, to the league getting up and running as quickly as it did.

Women's hockey has attempted individual ownership in the past. The original National Women's Hockey League folded, in part, because owners stopped seeing the value in investing. The Premier Hockey Federation, which shut down in 2023, had sold some teams, but the league's main financial backers — John and Johanna Boynton — still owned four of the league's seven teams.

"I love how it has worked for us so far. I don't know when that model stops being the most efficient, if ever," Kasten said. "Could that change in the future? I suppose it could, but we don't have any plans to change it now."

For all the progress made during this offseason, the P.W.H.L. does not have the kind of media rights deals that are traditional in men's pro sports, and those more recently signed in women's professional basketball and soccer.

"Let's face it, until we get a mature media plan and media revenue, we won't really be a full-fledged league," said Kasten.

Last season, every game was broadcast on the league's YouTube channel. This season, however, Canadian audiences won't have access to the P.W.H.L.'s YouTube stream. Those streaming rights are now exclusive to the league's Canadian broadcast partners, which include TSN, CBC and Amazon Prime. U.S. broadcast rights have not been announced. Pulling games off YouTube in Canadian markets is a hit to access and visibility, but the league is expected to make more money from an increase in rights fees.

But perhaps the biggest change in the second year will be a focus not so much on milestones and records, but more on the game itself.

"There were a lot of firsts last year and a lot of emotional moments — moments that were bigger than hockey," Poulin said. "This year is about making it normal that we play in bigger buildings that sell out, that people are excited. And now we're just going to play hockey, because that's our job."

MADDIE MEYER/GETTY IMAGES

'We are far from a finished product.'
STAN KASTEN, a longtime sports executive who is a central figure in the P.W.H.L.

Hailey Salvian is a staff writer for The Athletic covering women's hockey and the N.H.L.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Texas-Texas A&M Tops List of Rivalry Games With Playoff Stakes

By JUSTIN WILLIAMS
The Athletic

Thanksgiving Week has blessed us with rivalry games — old and renewed — featuring endless conference tiebreaker and College Football Playoff scenarios. The games include Michigan at Ohio State, a top-15 Palmetto Bowl and the return of Texas versus Texas A&M.

All games are on Saturday; all times are Eastern. Rankings are from the College Football Playoff standings.

SARA DIGGINS/USA TODAY SPORTS, VIA REUTERS

Above, Texas running back Quintrevion Wisner scoring against Kentucky. The Longhorns will face Texas A&M on Saturday after a long break from the rivalry. Below left, Notre Dame's Riley Leonard will try to avoid an upset against Southern California. Below right, Miami Coach Mario Cristobal and receiver Xavier Restrepo will take on Syracuse.

No. 3 Texas (10-1) at No. 20 Texas A&M (8-3)

7:30 p.m., ABC

I suppose conference realignment isn't all bad. It revived this game after a 12-season hiatus, bringing back a bitter in-state rivalry with decades of back story and ill will. And while the game is no longer on Thanksgiving Day, it sets up about as well as the Southeastern Conference and college football fans could wish for, with a top-20 showdown to determine who will play Georgia in the SEC championship game. For A&M, a win keeps its playoff hopes alive and sends the Aggies to their first conference title game since winning the Big 12 in 1998. For Texas, a playoff spot is all but guaranteed, but if the Longhorns can go into College Station and end A&M's season on a bitter note, they will establish themselves as SEC champs in their inaugural season.

No. 15 South Carolina (8-3) at No. 12 Clemson (9-2)

Noon, ESPN

There are a few layers to this Palmetto Bowl. It's an evenly matched rivalry game between top-15 teams. Clemson is still alive in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship hunt, needing a loss by Miami, but there's also a subplot of whether the winner of this game has a chance to slither into an at-large playoff spot. A more prosaic SEC has helped bolster a three-loss South Carolina with close defeats against Louisiana State and Alabama; a win over Clemson and perhaps some losses elsewhere would give the Gamecocks an argument. On the flip side, Clemson — the first team out in the latest 12-team bracket — is hoping its two losses and a quality win over South Carolina could vault the Tigers into an at-large spot, even if it misses the A.C.C. championship. Would the committee dare to put Clemson in over a two-loss Southern Methodist or Miami team that falls in the conference title game?

Michigan (6-5) at No. 2 Ohio State (10-1)

Noon, Fox

Practically speaking, Ohio State needs a win to secure its spot in the Big Ten title game against Oregon, but The Game obviously goes much deeper than that. These Buckeyes are on a mission to exorcise a number of demons, chief among them their three-game losing streak to Michigan. This isn't the same contending Wolverines program, but in many ways, that puts more pressure on the Buckeyes. Michigan, which still has a solid defense, will get up for this matchup, and Ohio State can't afford to lose, even though it is safely in the playoff even with a loss. It may be a down year for Michigan, and Ohio State may have grander aspirations, but this game remains appointment viewing.

Justin Williams covers college football and basketball for The Athletic.

ADAM HUNGER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

No. 5 Notre Dame (10-1) at Southern California (6-5)

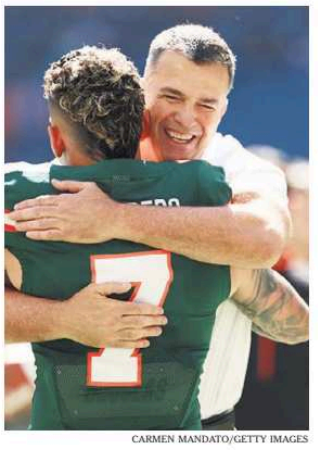
3:30 p.m., CBS

Notre Dame has the worst loss of anyone in the Top 25, but that's old news, particularly with how dominant the Irish have been of late. All of their "quality" wins have lost some luster as well, including the season opener over Texas A&M, but the lack of a second loss so far outweighs all of it in the eyes of the committee. Now the Irish are in line to host a home playoff game if they can survive a rivalry road trip against U.S.C., which, for all its warts, has been good at home in the Coliseum, with its only loss by 3 points in overtime to Penn State. If Notre Dame can better that result, it could jump the No. 4 Nittany Lions in next week's playoff rankings.

No. 24 Kansas State (8-3) at No. 18 Iowa State (9-2)

7:30 p.m., Fox

The rivalry known as Farmageddon is one of the oldest in college football and has been played every year since 1917 — 107 straight seasons. Last year's rendition featured a memorable, snow-covered upset by the Cyclones on the road. This season's is arguably the most important home game in the history of Iowa State football. A victory would put the Cyclones in line to reach the Big 12 championship, with most of the tiebreakers favoring Iowa State and Arizona State. Iowa State, which has never had more than nine wins in a season, could set a program record and have a chance to claim its first conference title since 1912, when it was a member of the Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association.



CARMEN MANDATO/GETTY IMAGES

No. 6 Miami (10-1) at Syracuse (8-3)

3:30 p.m., ESPN

The selection committee has shown it is willing to forgive one loss as far as the rankings are concerned, and the Hurricanes have benefited from being on the right side of all but one of their close calls. Miami moved up two spots in this week's rankings, less because of its blowout of Wake Forest and more because of the carnage elsewhere. The Canes still need a win against Syracuse — the quietest eight-win team in the country? — to clinch a spot in the A.C.C. championship against S.M.U., but if they can get there, they will have a solid case for an at-large playoff berth even with a loss.

No. 16 Arizona State (9-2) at Arizona (4-7)

3:30 p.m., Fox

The first Territorial Cup rivalry of the Big 12 era has more than bragging rights at stake. No team in the Big 12 controls its own destiny, but a win by Arizona State puts it in a very good position to lock up a spot in next week's conference championship, with a playoff berth likely up for grabs. There is only a single, multipart tiebreaker scenario that would keep the Sun Devils out of the conference title game with a victory against their in-state rivals. Getting to that championship would punctuate quite a turnaround season for A.S.U. and its second-year coach, Kenny Dillingham, after the program went 3-9 in 2023 and was picked last in the Big 12's preseason media poll.

No. 8 Tennessee (9-2) at Vanderbilt (6-5)

Noon, ABC

This could be a playoff elimination game for the Vols. Tennessee has no chance of reaching the SEC championship game, and a loss would likely drop the program out of the 12-team field, but if the Vols win, they should be in. That's no gimme on the road against a decent Vanderbilt team, in a league where we just witnessed three top-15 teams lose on the road to unranked opponents. But Tennessee's top-five defense nationally (4.3 yards per play allowed) should be able to bottle up a Commodores offense that hasn't scored more than 24 points since its early October upset of Alabama.

Auburn (5-6) at No. 13 Alabama (8-3)

3:30 p.m., ABC

Alabama, despite suffering its third loss, is still on the bubble. If the selection committee does end up looking for an excuse to keep the Tide in the field, it will require them getting a win in the Iron Bowl on Saturday. Bama faithful are still reeling after the stunning 24-3 loss to Oklahoma, the Tide's most lopsided regular-season loss in two decades, and regardless of whether their playoff hopes are completely sunk, the first-year Coach Kalen DeBoer is desperate to avoid losing to a middling but dangerous Auburn team that just knocked off Texas A&M in quadruple overtime.

California (6-5) at No. 9 Southern Methodist (10-1)

3:30 p.m., ESPN2

S.M.U. has already clinched a spot in the A.C.C. championship game, but the Mustangs still need to win to keep their at-large playoff hopes alive, hovering just above Clemson and the throng of three-loss SEC teams in the latest rankings. A victory would also complete an undefeated inaugural season in A.C.C. play, an impressive feat considering how Cincinnati, Houston and Central Florida have done since making a similar jump from the American Athletic Conference to the power-conference level. It would also match last season's total of 11 wins, with a chance for Coach Rhett Lashlee to then tie S.M.U.'s single-season mark of 12 victories set in 1935.

With Pressure in Tow, Ohio State Confronts Big Moment Against Michigan

By CAMERON TEAGUE ROBINSON
The Athletic

One of Jack Sawyer's best memories of watching the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry game was the Buckeyes' 2016 win at Ohio Stadium.

Sawyer, a defensive end at Ohio State, grew up less than 30 minutes from campus. The rivalry is life in his neighborhood. He remembers watching with his friends as Curtis Samuel scored the winning touchdown to lead the second-ranked Buckeyes over No. 3 Michigan in double overtime.

Sawyer knew he wanted to play at Ohio State and be a part of the rivalry. But he hasn't beaten Michigan yet in his three attempts so far.

"I think going through those trials and tribulations has shaped this team and the coaching staff," Sawyer said. "It hasn't been easy, far from easy, but going through the tough times with each other has brought us to this moment."

That disappointment made it impossible for him to leave Ohio State early for the N.F.L. without taking one last shot at the Wolverines, which the Buckeyes will get on Saturday in Columbus. Ohio State may be heavily favored against a struggling Michigan team that has limped to a 6-5 record, but that doesn't change the magnitude of the moment.

Cameron Teague Robinson covers Ohio State for The Athletic.

Sawyer returned, along with 11 other upperclassmen who made off-season announcements, with one goal at the top of their season to-do list: Beat Michigan

"You come to Ohio State to beat the team up north," senior receiver Emeka Egbuka said. "Handing the gold pants to my mother is a memory I'm looking forward to."

Coach Ryan Day has been one of the best coaches in college football throughout his tenure with the Buckeyes. He has a 66-9 record, and though he doesn't have a national championship, he has five consecutive top-10 finishes, three College Football Playoff bids and two Big Ten titles. The biggest blemish on his career is his Michigan record. It's what Ohio State fans may care about more than anything.

Day is 1-3 against the Wolverines, with losses in the past three seasons. There was the 42-27 loss in 2021 that was supposed to be a one-year blip on the radar, the 45-23 loss in 2022 in which Ohio State was outscored by 28-3 in the second half, and the heartbreaking, 30-24 loss in Ann Arbor last season. The most recent loss particularly stung; Ohio State went on to lose in the Cotton Bowl, while Michigan won the national championship.

JAY LAPRETE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Coach Ryan Day of Ohio State has a 1-3 record against Michigan. He took the losses to heart and has made many changes.

It's the first time Ohio State has lost three in a row in the series since 1995-97.

Day told WBNS-TV in Columbus in his weekly "Game Time" interview that those losses have been the hardest times of his life, aside from losing his father, Raymond Day, in 1988.

"It's one of the worst things that's happened to me in my life, quite honestly," Day said. "We can never have that happen."

Players have seen and felt the impact the losses have had on their coach.

"I think that he's gone through a lot of things people shouldn't have to go through," Egbuka said. "All the scrutiny and things people say about him, but he's a great head coach, and I wouldn't have anybody else leading our team. He says he wants to do it for us, but we want to do it for him, as well."

Last off-season, Day took the losses to heart and made many changes to the team.

Not only is this year's roster more experienced and talented than last year's, but Day made the decision to give up play calling and added Chip Kelly as the offensive coordinator.

"Every decision that's made in the off-season, the coaching staff, the roster, how we practice, schematics, it's all working toward this moment right here," Day said.

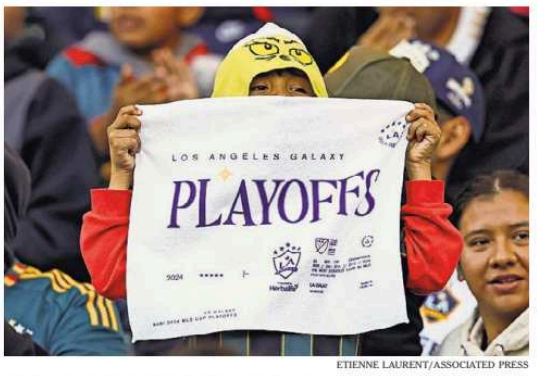
Ohio State has done just nearly everything it needed to do this season to live up to the high expectations it faced during the off-season. The Buckeyes, who spoke openly about their national championship aspirations, are 10-1 with two wins in top-five matchups after last week's win over Indiana, and they are one win away from a Big Ten title game rematch with No. 1 Oregon in Indianapolis. They have effectively locked up a College Football Playoff bid.

The Buckeyes have lost three in a row to the Wolverines.

But the season cannot feel complete without beating Michigan.

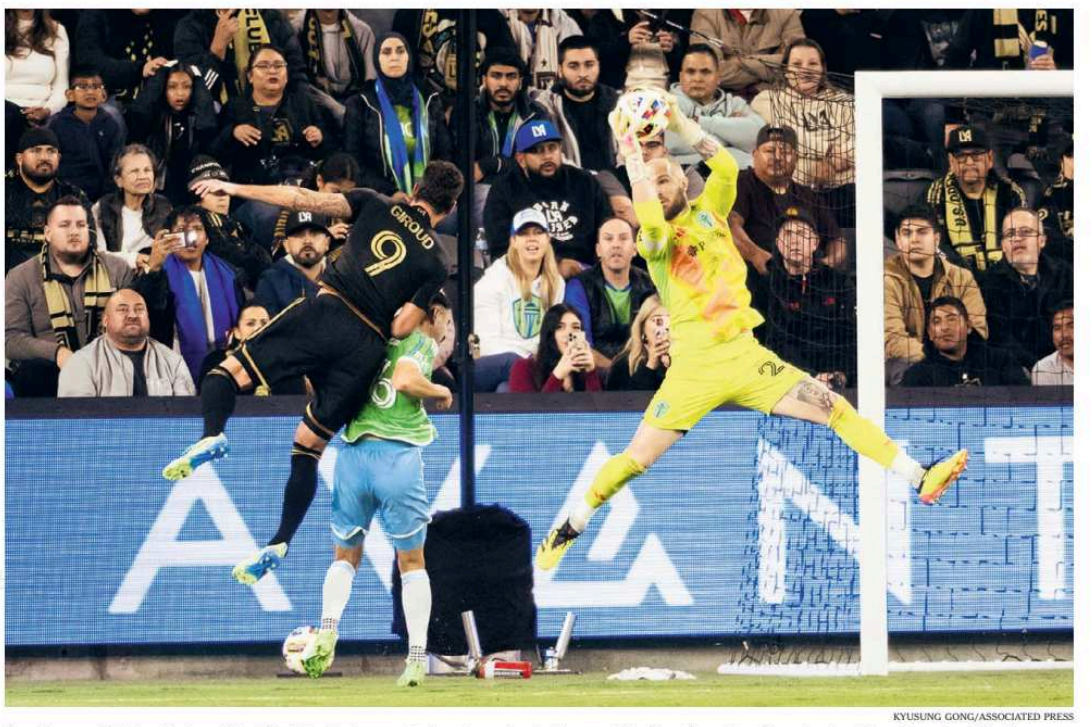
"Everything you worked for and love is on the line against the team you hate the most," Sawyer said. "That's the way it's supposed to be."

SOCCER



ETIENNE LAURENT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Galaxy remain alive in the M.L.S. Cup, but their crosstown rival, Los Angeles FC, a No. 1 seed, has been eliminated.



KYUSUNG GONG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Goalkeeper Stefan Frei and Seattle failed to log a win in advancing to the semifinals, where they knocked out Los Angeles FC, above.

COMMENTARY

Adding a Group Stage May Be Just the Thing That the M.L.S. Needs

By JEFF RUETER
The Athletic

The M.L.S. Cup playoffs are in a state of relative carnage, with Lionel Messi's Inter Miami and the reigning champion Columbus Crew having exited in the first round.

The potential for upsets is a vital factor that makes or breaks neutral intrigue for a postseason. Those came in spades in the first round, from Minnesota United, a No. 6 seed, giving the West a worthy underdog to each of the East's top three teams bowing out to lower-ranked opponents. And in the semifinals, the Seattle Sounders upended Los Angeles FC, a No. 1 seed.

Since 2023, M.L.S. teams have played a best-of-three series in the first round, and this format had plenty of detractors before the league's most famous player was eliminated from contention.

Is all of this fine from an entertainment standpoint? Absolutely. A knockout format is best when upsets are possible, and four of the eight first-round matchups saw the lower seed advance to the next round.

Where that first-round format is clearly flawed, however, is in rewarding teams for regular-season excellence. Soccer is not a sport that often sees teams play each other back to back, much less in a three-match set. Whenever a cup draw pits two teams together immediately before or after a regular-season fixture, it's remarked upon as an oddity, a unique variable for which both teams must account.

Atlanta perfectly executed the ideal approach to pull off a first-round upset in this format. With the first game at the higher seed's venue, one should frustrate the favorite: make some hard challenges, score a shock goal or two, and send a signal of intent. With the second game at the lower seed's stadium, home-field advantage can help flip the script and pull a series level. Game 3 is back to the higher seed's stadium, but the stakes put all the pressure on the favorite — another ideal factor if you're an underdog on the verge of a series win.

Miami did not handle that pressure well. Tata Martino — who has since resigned — continued tinkering with his system and lineup alike, and the result was a far worse version than the side that became the face of M.L.S.

Players have raised additional disapproval about the current format because it doesn't account for the predetermined international window in November. There's also criticism of how ties in regulation are settled and whether it leads to a just result. Two series saw teams advance after winning a pair of shootouts to cap stalemates in regulation, with Seattle and Minnesota moving on to the semifinals without logging a win.

Even on the right side of the result, Seattle — which won the M.L.S. Cup in 2016 and 2019, and finished as runner-up in 2017 — seems underwhelmed with the accomplishment.

"I don't like the structure of the playoffs, the first round in particular," Stefan Frei said after his team's series-opening win against the Houston Dynamo. "You can lose the first game 5-0, tie two games and win both PKs, and now you're going through? I don't like that."

It is possible to find a better balance of entertainment and competitive merit, and in a format that will require fewer explanations for casual and die-hard fans alike.

But this may all be moot if M.L.S. changes its calendar in 2026, as there are no international breaks slated in April or May. All the more reason to find the best format ahead of time.

A group stage that feeds into a knockout bracket comes with immediate familiarity among even the most casual viewers of the sport, mimicking the most-watched event in the landscape: the World Cup.

It seamlessly integrates M.L.S.'s current qualifying format, with eight teams per conference being wholly divisible by four teams per group. If the league wanted to keep a play-in game between the eighth and ninth-place finishers, that's fine — the eighth seed might relish the chance to play host before the group kicks off in earnest.

There are a couple of obvious ways that groups could be assigned. There could be a fixed format based on the conference table that ensures the highest seed gets a more favorable group. Teams that finish second would still have an advantage, but play slightly better opponents in their group.

> Rewarding teams for success in the regular season would benefit a playoff format.

Alternatively, the league could have its qualifiers' coaches and captains fly to their broadcast studio in East Harlem for a tiered draw: 1 and 2 atop their groups, then a one-or-the-other draw between teams 3 and 4, 5 and 6, and then 7 and 8. It might skew the competitive balance a bit, but it's another made-for-streaming event that would stand to be appointment viewing for the involved fan bases.

The regular season would gain importance, as a team's placement in each tier impacts which pot they're in and, with it, how many games they could host. In this proposal, the group's highest seed would host all three of its games — as well-paved a path to advancement as they could earn. The second-ranked team would host two games against lower-ranked opposition, while a team that finishes fifth or sixth would still host the group's final qualifier.

If you want to host a playoff game, you should probably have to finish higher than seventh in your conference — that doesn't seem unfair.

This works under our given constraints and creates a few benefits. First, you avoid the scenario where a team has to wait over three weeks to play its next game. Second, you yield even more games for M.L.S. Season Pass — every single team plays three times, guaranteed, which could allow for a more consistent staggering of matches over multiple weeks.

Every game matters in a group stage, as even a draw (yes, those should be allowed in a group format) can be a qualification-altering result all its own. It would also give M.L.S. another variation on its regular season's finest weekend: Decision Day, when all games in a conference kick off concurrently. This time, it can be spread over two days, with an Eastern group concluding in the early slot, and a Western group serving as a potent nightcap. Repeat with the other two groups tomorrow, with each group's top two finishers advancing to the conference semifinal.

At that point, every team that advances would enter the international break with the same two-week window to game plan and ensure player fitness. A single-elimination bracket wouldn't confuse casual viewers whose lens into the sport is a World Cup. A team's finish in the group would provide the knockout bracket's seeding, which helps keep first and second-place finishers from halfheartedly approaching the group.

And, as it is now (and should be), the M.L.S. Cup would be hosted by the higher-ranked team remaining.

It takes a lot to build consensus among goalkeepers, attacking midfielders, coaches, and fans. The sheer mass of upsets have been fun and good this year, but do raise questions about the efficacy of the format to find a worthy champion. Why not pivot to a proven alternative?

Jeff Rueter covers soccer for The Athletic.

RUNNING

NATE EDWARDS/BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

QWEN ZILIAK/WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

In the first sweep since 2004, Brigham Young University runners, their bodies slathered in olive oil, won the men's and women's Division I cross-country championships in Verona, Wis., on Nov. 23.

Brigham Young Runners' Secret Ingredient to Win N.C.A.A. Titles: Olive Oil

By VICTOR MATHER

Brigham Young University was ready for the N.C.A.A. Division I cross-country championships last week. It had strong men's and women's teams that had each won the Big 12 championship.

But there was a challenge facing B.Y.U. and all the other entrants. The day of the race in Verona, Wis., was going to be pretty cold, with a temperature in the mid-to-high 30s. That would make things less than pleasant for runners in shorts and singlets.

B.Y.U. had a plan both innovative and ancient: having the runners slather their bodies in olive oil, in what the men's coach, Ed Eyestone, called "an old-school running trick."

"We've done it every year if it's cold," said the women's coach, Diljeet Taylor. "It's a trick. You don't see a lot of people doing it."

"I used it as an athlete many times," Eyestone said. "I won the N.C.A.A. title 40 years ago wearing some brown gardening gloves and bare arms and shorts. That was a much worse day. I used olive oil."

B.Y.U.'s trick was very likely theirs alone at this year's championships. "I would guess we were the only ones using it," Eyestone said. "I don't see it as much anymore."

B.Y.U. coaches applied the oil to the runners' legs, backs and arms five minutes before the start, just as the sweats were coming off, while offering last-minute words of encouragement.

So why olive oil? "It keeps the legs warm," Taylor said. In a race where runners wear shorts, she added, "your legs are going to be exposed."

"It insulates your skin and really protects from losing heat and also offers wind protection," she said

But before you go buy a bottle, know that it may not be perfect for all race distances and weather conditions. Eyestone recommends the olive oil coating for races that are less than a half-hour long. (The fastest runners finished the men's 10K race in a little over 28 and a half minutes. The winner of women's 6K race crossed the finish line in a little over 19 minutes.) For marathons, wearing more layers is a smarter idea, he said.

Eyestone also thinks that olive oil works better in moderately cold conditions, as during the cross-country races. "Had it been zero degrees, the guys would have had undershirts and layers," he said. "For skiing, I'd never do this."

But he added: "For a moderately cold day, less than 30 minutes, it's an interesting thing to say, 'We're going old-school today.' It gives them a little extra layer of insulation, and maybe a secret weapon."

Even today, the method is not unheard-of, particularly in the Midwest, where it gets awfully cold by November, when cross-country season typically ends.

More common is petroleum jelly, and swimmers of the English Channel — like Gertrude Ederle in 1926 — were said to have used lard. Eyestone cautioned that petroleum jelly is a lot harder to get off after a race than olive oil.

A high temperature in the 30s is nothing to hardy cross-country runners, who often find themselves in far worse conditions. "When I won in 1984, it was worse," he said. "It had snowed. Many were wearing hats and gloves, undershirts and tights."

The B.Y.U. men also won the national title in 2019, also bathed in olive oil. "It was raining, very cold, miserable, worse conditions," Eyestone said. "We've had a couple of years when the wind chill was negative: Iowa, Indiana; biting, biting cold."

Eyestone said that once when he was running at the U.S. winter cross-country nationals in Missoula, Mont., his mustache froze.

As for the 2024 race, the B.Y.U. women followed Taylor's strategy: "Get out with urgency, in the middle be patient, and in final third, urgency again."

"We got out really well," she said, "then went back a little. Most coaches might panic; for me, that brought comfort." The women won by 17 points over West Virginia.

B.Y.U.'s men took a different tack from their usual approach, though the olive oil probably wasn't the reason. "Typically, we're going to come from behind," Eyestone said. "But our guys got out very well."

Iowa State made up ground, and the lead started to shrink. At the finish, B.Y.U. hung on to win by 13 points.

It was the first men's and women's sweep since the University of Colorado in 2004.

As unusual as the olive oil method may seem, some of the very first athletes in recorded history swore by it.

The ancient Greeks often competed in a coating of olive oil at the Olympics, though for different reasons from B.Y.U.'s team, given the warmer clime of the Mediterranean. The oil served as sunscreen of a sort, and the athletes also believed it would bring them good luck and strength.

So is there a downside at all to olive-oil-anointed running? Eyestone said, "You come across the line smelling like a pizza."

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Jim Abrahams, 80, a Mastermind Of 'Airplane!' and 'Naked Gun,' Dies

By CLAY RISEN

Jim Abrahams, who with the brothers David and Jerry Zucker surely comprised one of the funniest trios of comedy writers in film history, layering on the yucks in classics like "Airplane!" and "The Naked Gun," died on Tuesday at his home in Santa Monica, Calif. He was 80.

His son Joseph said the cause was complications of leukemia.

Mr. Abrahams and the Zucker brothers — often known around Hollywood as the "men from ZAZ" — revolutionized film comedy with their straight-faced, fast-paced parodies of self-serious dramas like 1970s disaster films and police procedurals.

Along the way they littered pop culture with a trail of one-liners seemingly custom-cut to drop into daily conversation: "Have you ever seen a grown man naked?" "Looks like I picked the wrong week to stop sniffing glue." And "Nice beaver!"

Their films spawned an entire genre of spoof comedy, many of them pale, scruffy comparisons to the tight scripts and cleverly paced plots that gave the ZAZ films their punch.

The trio shared writing credits on five films, starting with "Kentucky Fried Movie" (1977), a compilation of parody sketches that grew out of a comedy show they developed after college in Madison, Wis., and took to Los Angeles in 1972. It was directed by John Landis, who would go on to direct "National Lampoon's Animal House" and "The Blues Brothers."

The idea for their second film, "Airplane!" (1980), came after they watched a 1957 thriller called "Zero Hour!" about an ill-fated passenger plane on which the crew is stricken with food poisoning, forcing one of the passengers, a psychologically scarred ex-pilot, to take control.

Minus the rat-a-tat gags, that's basically the plot of "Airplane!" In fact, it tracks the earlier film so closely that the writers bought the rights to it, to make sure they weren't sued.

They shopped the script around to studios, but at first no one bit. Not only did many executives fail to understand their brand of humor, but they resisted the trio's desire to direct and produce the film, as well as their insistence that they cast dramatic actors like Robert Stack and Leslie Nielsen instead of comedians.

Finally, Paramount said yes, but included a clause allowing the studio to fire all three after a week of production.

On the first day, the trio filmed one of the film's iconic scenes, in which a passenger, Dr. Rumack (Mr. Nielsen), discovering that bad fish has poisoned the crew and most of the other passengers, asks the recalcitrant Ted Striker (Robert Hays) for help.

Abrahams and the Zucker brothers spawned a genre of spoof comedy.

"Can you fly this plane and land it?" Rumack asks.

"Surely you can't be serious," Striker replies.

"I am serious. And don't call me Shirley," Rumack says, full of gravitas.

Before you can say "Ha!" the scene has moved on to the next joke.

"When Paramount Pictures watched the dailies and saw that joke and the way it played, they were relieved," Mr. Abrahams told Vulture in 2016. "They finally understood the concept and were much more comfortable dealing with us."

The film, made for just $3.5 million (a little more than $14 million in today's currency), was a blockbuster, earning more than $171 million and winning over hordes of initially skeptical critics. Today "Airplane!" is considered by many to be one of the funniest movies ever made.

The Zuckers and Mr. Abrahams stumbled after "Airplane!" Their follow-up film, "Top Secret" (1984), a spy-thriller spoof starring Val Kilmer, bombed at the box office, though it has since acquired a cult following, while their attempt at a television series, the comedy "Police Squad" (also with Mr. Nielsen), was canceled after just six episodes, despite good reviews.

"We didn't quite get the importance of a story," Mr. Abrahams told Vulture. "We struggled coming up with a story for a while. We came up with a lot of bad ideas."

They rebounded with the movie "Ruthless People" (1986), starring Danny DeVito and Bette Midler, and then with "The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!," a feature-length extension of the TV show directed by David Zucker, with Mr. Nielsen reprising his role as Detective Frank Drebin.

As they had done with "Airplane!" the trio began with a straightforward story — this time about a plot to kill Queen Elizabeth II at a baseball game — on which they draped nonstop jokes, cleverly treading a line between the profane and the absurd.

"We like to think of our humor as innocent," Mr. Abrahams told The Philadelphia Inquirer in 1988. "There's lots of innuendo, but it's childlike. I'd take a 7-year-old to see that. The toilet humor — they'd probably like that the best."

James Steven Abrahams was born on May 10, 1944, in Shorewood, Wis., a northern suburb of Milwaukee. His mother, Louise (Ogens) Abrahams, was an education researcher, and his father, Norman, was a lawyer.

The Zucker boys lived nearby and attended the same synagogue and high school as Mr. Abrahams and later the same college, the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Though Mr. Abrahams was a few years older, the three bonded over their shared love for cutting up in class.

After graduating from college in 1966, Mr. Abrahams became an insurance adjuster and investigator.

One day, David Zucker called. He was assembling a crew of funny men to run an improv group and wanted Mr. Abrahams to help him and Jerry write material. "Kentucky Fried Theater" was born, and so was their shared career.

STEFANIE KEENAN/GETTY IMAGES FOR TCM

UNITED NEWS/POPPERFOTO, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Left, Jim Abrahams at a film festival in 2017. Right, Mr. Abrahams, sitting, with Jerry Zucker, left, and David Zucker in 1980 after the release of "Airplane!", below left, with Julie Hagerty, Leslie Nielsen, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (on floor) and Peter Graves. Below right, Priscilla Presley and Mr. Nielsen in "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (1991), another Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker film.

PARAMOUNT PICTURES, VIA EVERETT COLLECTION

PARAMOUNT/EVERETT COLLECTION

The ZAZ trio's work together ended with two sequels on which Mr. Abrahams and Jerry Zucker were credited only as executive producers: "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (1991), which David Zucker directed, and "Naked Gun 33 ⅓: The Final Insult" (1994), for which David Zucker was one of three writers. Mr. Abrahams went on to direct several films on his own, including "Big Business" (1988), with Bette Midler and Lily Tomlin; "Welcome Home, Roxy Carmichael" (1990), with Winona Ryder; "Hot Shots!" (1991) and "Hot Shots! Part Deux" (1993), both written with Pat Proft; and "Mafia!" (1998). He also wrote "Scary Movie 4" (2006), with Mr. Proft, which David Zucker directed.

He married Nancy Cocuzzo in 1978. In addition to their son Joseph, she survives him, along with another son, Charlie; their daughter, Jamie; and three grandchildren.

As a child, Charlie Abrahams developed a form of epilepsy, which sent his parents searching for a treatment. They eventually succeeded with a high-fat, ketogenic diet, an unconventional cure.

In 1994, Mr. Abrahams created the Charlie Foundation for Ketogenic Therapies to support research. In 1997, he directed " . . . First Do No Harm," a TV movie starring Meryl Streep that loosely tracked his family's experience.

When Vulture asked Mr. Abrahams for his favorite quote from "Airplane!" he said it came in a scene in which Dr. Rumack insists that the crew tell him confidential information. "You can tell me — I'm a doctor," he says, as if his medical training made him an expert in all things.

"My family has absolutely been subjected to medical arrogance," Mr. Abrahams said. "Whatever that mentality is that allowed Leslie to say in the movie, 'You can tell me — I'm a doctor,' has become satiric in my later life instead of just a parodic point of view."

Robert Dixon, 103, Last Surviving Buffalo Soldier and West Point Instructor

By TRIP GABRIEL

The Rev. Robert W. Dixon Sr., the last known survivor of the U.S. Army's all-Black regiments known as Buffalo Soldiers, died on Nov. 15 near Albany, N.Y. He was 103.

His wife, Georgia Dixon, said he died at a rehabilitation center.

During World War II, Mr. Dixon was a corporal stationed at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where members of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment, composed of African Americans, trained cadets in horseback riding and mounted tactics.

Created after the Civil War, the Army's all-Black cavalry and infantry regiments were nicknamed "Buffalo Soldiers" by Native Americans who encountered them in the nation's Western expansion in the post-Civil War 19th century. The name may have been a reference to the soldiers' curly black hair or to the fierceness that buffalo show in fighting. In either case, the soldiers embraced it.

The troops could serve only west of the Mississippi River because most white Southerners would not tolerate armed Black soldiers in their communities. They fought in the Indian Wars and protected settlers moving west. During the Spanish-American War, the experienced horsemen of the 10th Cavalry led the way for Col. Theodore Roosevelt's novice Rough Riders in fighting in Cuba.

In the 20th century, official racism by the Army diminished the role that Buffalo Soldier regiments played in major engagements during both world wars, although some troops saw action in World War II during the invasion of Italy and in the Pacific theater.

UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE/UIG, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Buffalo Soldiers in 1898. During the Spanish-American War, they led the way for the Rough Riders.

At the same time, the horsemanship of the soldiers was officially recognized. Detachments of the Ninth and 10th Cavalry Regiments were assigned to West Point beginning in 1907 to teach military horsemanship to cadets.

Mr. Dixon, who grew up in New York City, enlisted in the Army in 1941 and remained at West Point through the war.

His wife, whom he married in 1977, said she did not know where he learned to ride or what he did at West Point; a disciplined, modest man and a Baptist pastor, he never spoke of his wartime service, preferring to focus on the future.

When she once went horseback riding with a friend, Ms. Dixon said, her husband showed no interest in joining them.

Robert Walter Dixon was born on Sept. 11, 1921, in Manhattan, one of five children of Benjamin Dixon and Louise (Hammond) Dixon.

After the war, he remained in the Hudson Valley, where he worked for IBM in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., retiring in 1977 as a manager of a unit that built computer motherboards. For 19 years, he was the part-time pastor of Central Baptist Church in Salt Point, N.Y., in Dutchess County.

Both he and his wife, a psychiatric nurse, had prior marriages. They moved their blended family to Albany in 1977, when Mr. Dixon was offered the job of pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. He served for 36 years and retired in 2013. From 1998 to 2005, he was president of the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention of New York, an association of Black churches.

He was also active in civic affairs. He helped create the Community Police Review Board in Albany and served as its chair from 1984 to 1998. He led a commission to build a memorial to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the city.

Besides his wife, Mr. Dixon is survived by six children, Carolyn Suber and Terry, David, John, Jacqueline and Robert Dixon Jr.; nine grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. His son Gerald died in the 1980s.

LUANNE M. FERRIS/TIMES UNION

Robert Dixon in 2002 at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, in Albany, N.Y. Born in Manhattan, he enlisted in the Army in 1941.

The Buffalo Soldiers unit at West Point was disbanded in 1946, when the Army became fully mechanized. Two years later, President Harry S. Truman ordered the desegregation of the military. In 2005, Mark Mathews, who was then the oldest living Buffalo Soldier, died at 111 and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

The regiments have also been memorialized in popular culture — in Bob Marley and the Wailers' 1983 song "Buffalo Soldier" and in the 1997 movie "Buffalo Soldiers," with Danny Glover.

Mr. Dixon returned to West Point at 101 to visit a monument to Buffalo Soldiers erected in 2021 on the open grasslands where they had trained future officers. The area is now named Buffalo Soldier Field.

A corporal who trained cadets in horseback riding and mounted tactics.

At a recent celebration of Mr. Dixon's life, Aundrea Matthews, the granddaughter of a Buffalo Soldier who serves as president of the Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point, recalled that Mr. Dixon declined the help offered by cadets during his visit.

"When the soldiers went to grab Rev. Dixon to bring him up, he shook them off," she said. "At 101, he walked by himself, and he saluted the Buffalo Soldier monument."

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Deaths

Ohrenstein, Manfred

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OHRENSTEIN—Manfred. The Trustees and staff of the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust deeply mourn the passing of Museum Co-Founder and Vice - Chair Manfred Ohrenstein. Born in Mannheim, Germany in 1925 his family escaped Germany in November of 1938 and settled in NYC. A prominent civic leader in New York, Ohrenstein represented Manhattan from 1961 to 1994 in the New York State Senate, serving as Minority Leader of for more than half of his tenure. He is survived by his wife Marilyn Bacher Ohrenstein, his children (Nancy Ohrenstein, David Ohrenstein), and four grandchildren (Lydia Wiener, Oliver Wiener, Olivia Ohrenstein, Audrey Ohrenstein).

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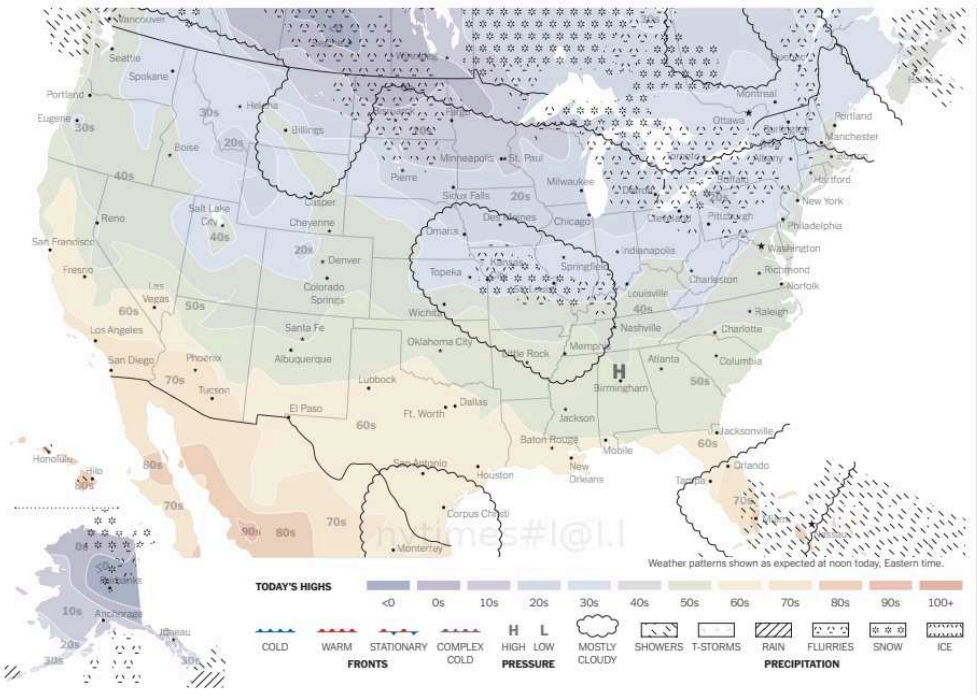
The New York Times

Weather Report

Meteorology by **AccuWeather**



Metropolitan Forecast

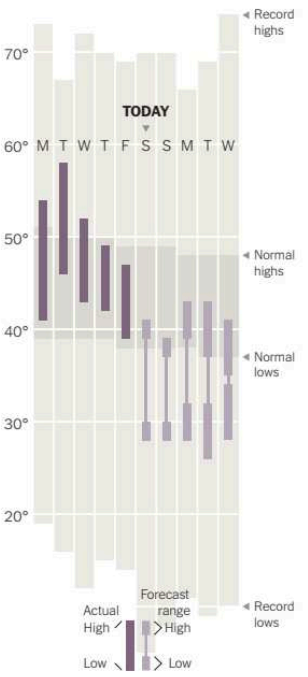
TODAY .....Breezy, quite chilly
High 40. Cold air will move in with the help of a persistent breeze. Temperatures will be much lower than what is typical for the end of November. It will be dry with a few clouds.

TONIGHT .....Mostly clear, cold
Low 29. An unusually cold air mass will settle into the area. Skies will be clear to partly cloudy, and there will be a breeze at times.

TOMORROW .....Sunshine and clouds
High 38. The weather pattern will be mostly the same throughout the day with a cold, dry breeze. Overall, there will be a little more sunshine than clouds.

MONDAY .....Mostly sunny
The weather will be dry and cold, with a wind flow from the west. Skies will be mostly sunny, and temperatures will be below average. High 41.

TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY .....Sunshine, then clouds
Tuesday will be dry and cold with a mix of sunshine and clouds. High 40. Wednesday will remain cold, with variable clouds and perhaps a snow shower at night. High 38.



Highlight: Snow for the Ohio Valley This Weekend

A storm is expected to spread light snow from eastern Kansas to West Virginia this weekend. The storm will remain weak with limited moisture, resulting in snowfall accumulations generally below 2 inches, with the potential for 3 to 6 inches in West Virginia.

National Forecast

Lake-effect snow will fall in the Great Lakes, with the heaviest accumulations downwind of the lakes. Travel south of Buffalo on Interstate 90 and north of Syracuse on I-81 may be difficult, with snowfall rates of 2 to 5 inches per hour and blizzard conditions expected. Heavy snow may lead to road closures and reduced visibility.

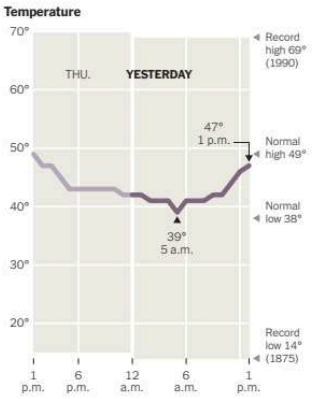
Snow showers and flurries may occur elsewhere throughout upstate and western New York. Lake-effect snow showers on the south shore of Lake Superior and the eastern shore of Lake Michigan may also lead to difficult travel conditions.

Light snow will extend from the central Plains to the Ohio Valley. Much of the rest of the country will be dry. There may be fog over the valleys of the interior West.

Metropolitan Almanac

In Central Park, for the 13 hours ended at 1 p.m. yesterday.

Temperature



Avg. daily departure from normal this month ..... +3.9°
Avg. daily departure from normal this year ..... +2.4°

Reservoir levels (New York City water supply)

Yesterday 59%
Est. normal 81%

Precipitation (in inches)

Yesterday	Trace	Snow	0.0
Record	2.20	Since Oct. 1	0.0

For the last 30 days
Actual 3.35
Normal 3.56

For the last 365 days
Actual 48.55
Normal 49.50
LAST 30 DAYS

Air pressure
High ..... 29.95 9 a.m.
Low ..... 29.82 1 a.m.

Humidity
High ..... 67% 8 a.m.
Low ..... 49% noon

Heating Degree Days
An index of fuel consumption that tracks how far the day's mean temperature fell below 65

Yesterday..... 22
So far this month..... 374
So far this season (since July 1) 532
Normal to date for the season 764

Trends

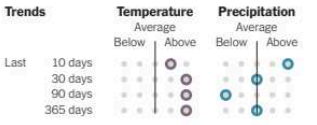


Chart shows how recent temperature and precipitation trends compare with those of the last 30 years.

Cities

High/low temperatures for the 16 hours ended at 4 p.m. yesterday, Eastern time, and precipitation (in inches) for the 16 hours ended at 4 p.m. yesterday.
Expected conditions for today and tomorrow.

C ..... Clouds
F ..... Fog
H ..... Haze
I ..... Ice
PC ..... Partly cloudy
R ..... Rain
Sh ..... Showers
S ..... Sun
Sn ..... Snow
SS ..... Snow showers
T ..... Thunderstorms
Tr ..... Trace
W ..... Windy
– ..... Not available

N.Y.C. region	Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
New York City	47/ 39 Tr	40/ 29 S	38/ 29 PC
Bridgeport	47/ 35 Tr	41/ 27 S	38/ 28 PC
Caldwell	46/ 36 Tr	41/ 25 S	40/ 25 PC
Danbury	44/ 28 0.01	39/ 24 S	37/ 23 PC
Islip	49/ 33 Tr	40/ 26 S	40/ 28 PC
Newark	49/ 34 0	42/ 27 S	41/ 29 PC
Trenton	45/ 32 0	38/ 23 S	38/ 23 PC
White Plains	45/ 33 0.12	39/ 25 S	38/ 27 PC

United States	Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
Albany	42/ 24 Tr	36/ 21 SS	35/ 19 C
Albuquerque	51/ 28 0	53/ 29 PC	55/ 30 S
Anchorage	9/ 0 0	10/ 4 S	14/ 9 S
Atlanta	50/ 31 0	52/ 34 S	55/ 30 PC
Atlantic City	49/ 30 0	40/ 31 W	44/ 29 W
Austin	60/ 35 0	65/ 41 PC	67/ 42 C
Baltimore	46/ 27 0.01	40/ 27 S	43/ 24 PC
Baton Rouge	60/ 36 0	60/ 39 S	67/ 38 S
Birmingham	49/ 27 0	52/ 30 S	57/ 30 PC
Boise	42/ 24 0	41/ 25 PC	42/ 26 S
Boston	45/ 32 0	42/ 29 S	40/ 27 PC
Buffalo	37/ 25 Tr	31/ 24 SS	32/ 26 SS
Burlington	37/ 30 Tr	36/ 26 C	34/ 25 C
Casper	38/ 22 0	39/ 25 PC	41/ 25 S
Charlotte	54/ 28 0	51/ 30 S	53/ 30 PC
Chattanooga	47/ 27 0	49/ 28 S	51/ 28 PC
Chicago	27/ 15 0.02	27/ 16 S	29/ 19 S
Cincinnati	33/ 19 Tr	35/ 24 C	33/ 19 PC
Cleveland	32/ 22 0.01	32/ 23 SS	31/ 28 SS
Colorado Springs	45/ 23 0	46/ 25 S	51/ 24 S
Columbus	33/ 20 Tr	33/ 22 S	30/ 21 SS
Concord, N.H.	43/ 23 0	39/ 21 S	37/ 17 PC
Dallas-Ft. Worth	55/ 39 0	62/ 37 PC	62/ 39 PC
Denver	45/ 22 0	46/ 25 S	48/ 24 S
Des Moines	30/ 14 0	28/ 15 PC	29/ 14 PC
Detroit	32/ 25 0.02	29/ 23 SS	33/ 25 SS
El Paso	61/ 44 0	66/ 42 PC	69/ 43 S
Fargo	10/ -4 0	11/ 5 S	18/ 6 PC
Hartford	49/ 27 0.01	40/ 24 S	38/ 22 PC
Honolulu	84/ 68 0	83/ 67 Sh	84/ 66 S
Houston	62/ 39 0	64/ 45 S	69/ 43 PC
Indianapolis	31/ 18 0.02	33/ 19 C	30/ 15 S
Jackson	54/ 29 0	56/ 31 S	62/ 33 PC
Jacksonville	60/ 36 0.11	59/ 37 S	65/ 35 S
Kansas City	40/ 29 0	34/ 21 Sn	37/ 20 PC
Key West	83/ 70 0	76/ 69 PC	75/ 66 S
Las Vegas	60/ 40 0	63/ 43 S	64/ 44 PC
Lexington	37/ 22 Tr	41/ 29 C	37/ 20 Sn
Little Rock	52/ 30 0	54/ 35 PC	56/ 29 PC
Los Angeles	77/ 54 0	79/ 57 PC	79/ 52 S
Louisville	41/ 24 Tr	41/ 31 C	37/ 20 S
Memphis	48/ 30 0	53/ 35 PC	48/ 29 C
Miami	86/ 68 0	80/ 67 Sh	79/ 61 PC
Milwaukee	27/ 15 Tr	27/ 17 S	31/ 22 PC
Mpls.-St. Paul	20/ 6 0	18/ 10 S	23/ 17 PC
Nashville	46/ 25 0	47/ 33 PC	43/ 24 PC
New Orleans	59/ 44 0	60/ 48 S	64/ 46 S
Norfolk	53/ 33 0	45/ 33 S	51/ 36 PC
Oklahoma City	52/ 33 0	56/ 29 S	53/ 28 S
Omaha	32/ 17 0	28/ 16 C	30/ 14 C
Orlando	73/ 50 0.06	70/ 52 C	71/ 48 S
Philadelphia	48/ 29 Tr	40/ 29 S	41/ 27 PC
Phoenix	75/ 55 0	78/ 53 PC	79/ 54 PC
Pittsburgh	32/ 20 Tr	30/ 22 C	32/ 24 SS
Portland, Me.	44/ 26 0	40/ 24 S	36/ 22 PC
Portland, Ore.	43/ 34 0	45/ 32 PC	48/ 30 PC
Providence	46/ 29 0	41/ 26 S	40/ 26 PC
Raleigh	55/ 29 0	48/ 32 PC	55/ 30 PC
Reno	50/ 19 0	52/ 23 S	51/ 26 S
Richmond	53/ 29 0	46/ 34 PC	52/ 29 PC
Rochester	38/ 26 Tr	34/ 24 SS	33/ 26 SS
Sacramento	61/ 33 0	61/ 37 S	62/ 38 PC
Salt Lake City	42/ 25 0	45/ 25 S	46/ 28 S
San Antonio	61/ 40 0	64/ 50 PC	69/ 47 C
San Diego	73/ 49 0	74/ 48 PC	72/ 50 S
San Francisco	62/ 44 0	62/ 45 PC	64/ 46 PC
San Jose	66/ 41 0	66/ 45 PC	67/ 44 PC
San Juan	88/ 78 0.12	89/ 77 PC	88/ 78 Sh
Seattle	45/ 36 0	46/ 35 PC	47/ 33 PC
Sioux Falls	25/ 7 0	23/ 10 SS	24/ 10 C
Spokane	34/ 26 0	36/ 27 F	37/ 27 PC
St. Louis	39/ 28 0	35/ 22 Sn	36/ 22 S
St. Thomas	85/ 80 0.11	86/ 79 PC	85/ 80 Sh
Syracuse	41/ 28 0.01	37/ 26 SS	34/ 27 SS
Tampa	75/ 49 0.54	67/ 50 C	70/ 49 S
Toledo	31/ 23 Tr	31/ 23 C	34/ 24 SS
Tucson	74/ 48 0	79/ 46 S	80/ 47 S
Tulsa	51/ 36 0	56/ 29 PC	52/ 29 PC
Virginia Beach	54/ 37 0	46/ 37 S	52/ 38 PC
Washington	50/ 31 0.01	42/ 31 S	44/ 29 PC
Wichita	48/ 31 0	46/ 26 PC	49/ 22 PC
Wilmington, Del.	47/ 26 0.01	40/ 24 S	41/ 24 PC

Africa	Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
Algiers	73/ 53 0	72/ 51 S	69/ 49 S
Cairo	70/ 57 0	71/ 54 PC	72/ 54 S
Cape Town	82/ 56 0	75/ 62 W	75/ 62 C
Dakar	90/ 75 0	89/ 74 S	87/ 73 PC
Johannesburg	75/ 51 0	83/ 59 S	87/ 61 S
Nairobi	81/ 60 0.06	79/ 59 T	80/ 59 PC
Tunis	72/ 53 0	66/ 53 S	65/ 51 S

Asia/Pacific	Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
Baghdad	64/ 38 0	64/ 40 S	65/ 39 S
Bangkok	86/ 72 Tr	87/ 73 PC	90/ 75 S
Beijing	58/ 29 0	58/ 29 S	57/ 29 PC
Damascus	63/ 40 0	61/ 35 S	62/ 34 S
Hong Kong	72/ 61 0	69/ 60 PC	71/ 61 S
Jakarta	93/ 77 0.06	96/ 79 C	94/ 78 T
Jerusalem	61/ 47 0.02	61/ 44 S	63/ 45 S
Karachi	89/ 68 0	90/ 66 S	89/ 64 S
Manila	86/ 80 0.02	88/ 76 C	85/ 76 Sh
Mumbai	86/ 73 0	89/ 64 PC	90/ 68 PC
New Delhi	78/ 52 0	78/ 54 S	79/ 54 PC
Riyadh	64/ 48 0	72/ 48 PC	71/ 48 PC
Seoul	45/ 18 0.02	54/ 35 PC	54/ 44 S
Shanghai	59/ 41 0	63/ 44 S	67/ 44 S
Singapore	85/ 77 0.51	89/ 77 T	90/ 78 T
Sydney	73/ 69 1.54	74/ 69 Sh	82/ 69 T
Taipei City	68/ 55 0	75/ 58 C	83/ 63 S
Tehran	55/ 37 0	51/ 37 S	49/ 35 S
Tokyo	61/ 50 0	62/ 47 S	62/ 49 S

Europe	Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
Amsterdam	46/ 34 0	43/ 36 PC	45/ 41 C
Athens	66/ 47 0	66/ 55 Sh	61/ 49 Sh
Berlin	43/ 37 0	42/ 28 S	40/ 31 PC
Brussels	45/ 32 0	45/ 34 PC	47/ 44 PC
Budapest	46/ 39 0.07	47/ 29 S	47/ 26 PC
Copenhagen	42/ 34 0.02	42/ 37 PC	42/ 39 S
Dublin	55/ 51 0.02	58/ 51 C	54/ 40 PC
Edinburgh	50/ 36 0.01	57/ 53 C	56/ 42 PC
Frankfurt	45/ 30 0	43/ 29 S	37/ 31 PC
Geneva	48/ 38 0	42/ 28 PC	46/ 37 S
Helsinki	37/ 30 Tr	43/ 39 Sh	44/ 40 C
Istanbul	57/ 46 0	61/ 51 PC	58/ 50 W
Kyiv	34/ 32 0.17	35/ 32 C	37/ 34 C
Lisbon	68/ 61 0	69/ 56 PC	68/ 53 C
London	50/ 36 0	57/ 51 PC	56/ 46 Sh
Madrid	61/ 37 0	62/ 40 PC	61/ 43 C
Moscow	34/ 28 0.12	35/ 31 C	37/ 31 R
Nice	64/ 52 0	58/ 45 C	60/ 46 S
Oslo	32/ 14 0.07	45/ 41 C	48/ 42 C
Paris	51/ 34 0	46/ 35 PC	51/ 49 PC
Prague	41/ 36 0.06	39/ 26 S	36/ 25 S
Rome	66/ 49 0	57/ 42 S	58/ 39 S
St. Petersburg	40/ 37 0.04	42/ 40 PC	44/ 37 C
Stockholm	36/ 21 0	40/ 37 C	45/ 34 C
Vienna	45/ 36 0.16	43/ 29 PC	46/ 35 S
Warsaw	43/ 34 0.25	40/ 31 C	39/ 30 C

North America	Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
Acapulco	85/ 73 0	86/ 72 S	86/ 72 S
Bermuda	75/ 71 0.15	73/ 64 PC	67/ 63 PC
Edmonton	0/ -2 0.12	-1/-13 Sn	3/ -1 C
Guadalajara	78/ 46 0	84/ 47 S	85/ 47 S
Havana	82/ 61 0	83/ 67 Sh	81/ 67 S
Kingston	84/ 78 0.07	89/ 78 C	89/ 78 C
Martinique	89/ 76 0.03	87/ 75 Sh	88/ 77 Sh
Mexico City	68/ 46 0	77/ 45 S	76/ 45 S
Monterrey	63/ 50 0	69/ 51 PC	71/ 56 PC
Montreal	36/ 28 0.01	36/ 29 C	34/ 26 Sn
Nassau	81/ 72 0	81/ 69 PC	80/ 70 Sh
Panama City	84/ 73 0	87/ 74 R	89/ 75 R
Quebec City	34/ 32 0.08	31/ 24 SS	29/ 19 PC
Santo Domingo	86/ 73 0.04	87/ 73 T	87/ 73 PC
Toronto	36/ 28 Tr	33/ 26 SS	35/ 25 SS
Vancouver	39/ 34 Tr	44/ 38 Sh	47/ 36 PC
Winnipeg	10/ 3 0.11	13/ 10 Sn	21/ 6 C

South America	Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
Buenos Aires	81/ 64 0.24	76/ 68 PC	71/ 56 Sh
Caracas	92/ 76 0.02	90/ 77 R	90/ 77 R
Lima	73/ 64 0	73/ 65 PC	73/ 64 PC
Quito	67/ 49 0.11	68/ 43 R	70/ 49 R
Recife	86/ 81 0	86/ 78 PC	87/ 79 PC
Rio de Janeiro	82/ 77 0.02	83/ 74 C	82/ 75 C
Santiago	84/ 52 0	84/ 46 S	79/ 49 S

Recreational Forecast

Sun, Moon and Planets

	New	First Quarter	Full	Last Quarter
	Dec. 1 1:21 a.m.	Dec. 8	Dec. 15 4:01 a.m.	Dec. 22

Sun	RISE	7:00 a.m.	Moon	R	6:35 a.m.
	SET	4:29 p.m.		S	3:45 p.m.
	NEXT R	7:01 a.m.		R	7:40 a.m.
Jupiter	S	7:49 a.m.	Mars	S	11:15 a.m.
	R	4:57 p.m.		R	8:31 p.m.
Saturn	R	12:42 p.m.	Venus	R	10:21 a.m.
	S	11:48 p.m.		S	7:28 p.m.

Boating

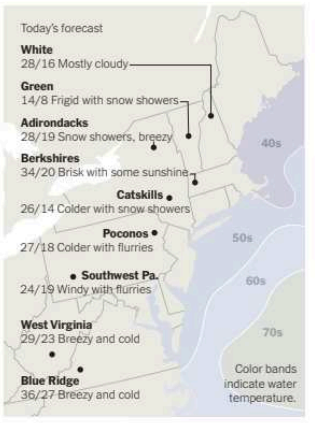
From Montauk Point to Sandy Hook, N.J., out to 20 nautical miles, including Long Island Sound and New York Harbor.

Winds will be from the west at 12-25 knots. Waves will average 2 feet on Long Island Sound and 2-4 feet on the open ocean. Visibility will be unrestricted from start to finish during the day.

High Tides

Atlantic City	6:28 a.m.	6:46 p.m.
Barnegat Inlet	6:40 a.m.	7:04 p.m.
The Battery	7:12 a.m.	7:34 p.m.
Beach Haven	8:05 a.m.	8:27 p.m.
Bridgeport	10:16 a.m.	10:49 p.m.
City Island	10:18 a.m.	11:03 p.m.
Fire Island Lt.	7:33 a.m.	7:55 p.m.
Montauk Point	8:04 a.m.	8:33 p.m.
Northport	10:23 a.m.	10:57 p.m.
Port Washington	10:22 a.m.	11:04 p.m.
Sandy Hook	6:47 a.m.	7:09 p.m.
Shinnecock Inlet	6:31 a.m.	6:54 p.m.
Stamford	10:15 a.m.	10:49 p.m.
Tarrytown	9:01 a.m.	9:23 p.m.
Willets Point	10:19 a.m.	11:04 p.m.

Mountain and Ocean Temperatures



The weather all across the region will be cold for the end of November. It will be breezy to occasionally windy, making it feel even colder. Skies will largely be cloudy, but there will be no more than occasional flurries, with a few exceptions.

The New York Times

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2 HOLIDAY EVENTS
We help you choose which spectacles to explore.

3 THEATER REVIEW
A pair of plays center on artists and their works.

8 TRAVEL
There's a lot to see in Tucson, whether you look at the land or up at the heavens.

Mark Duplass reprises his role as a serial killer in 'The Creep Tapes,' which extends a franchise he created with Patrick Brice.

ELIZABETH WEINBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Found-Footage Baddie Is Back

By ERIK PIEPENBURG

It has been almost 10 years since Mark Duplass put on a monstrous smile in "Creep," a found-footage horror movie about a serial killer named Josef who lures videographers to his home and slaughters them mercilessly on camera.

The role is a universe removed from his Emmy-nominated performance as the high-strung Chip in "The Morning Show," but it's a role he seems to relish. After a "Creep" sequel in 2017, Josef is back again in Shudder's "The Creep Tapes," a TV rarity in that the entire series was done in the found-footage style. Not that Duplass knew that he was doing anything particularly new going in.

"If there's anything fresh about what we're doing it's because there is an ignorance to the form," he said in a recent video interview from his home in Los Angeles. "It didn't strike me that it would be groundbreaking."

Patrick Brice, who with Duplass created the series and wrote and starred in the original "Creep," directed all six half-hour episodes of "The Creep Tapes." (The first two episodes debuted on Shudder and AMC+ on Nov. 15; new ones arrive on Fridays through Dec. 13.) In a separate interview, he said that he had drawn inspiration for the "Creep" franchise from Jim McBride's proto-found-footage horror film, "David Holzman's Diary" (1967), and from the 1980s anthology series "Tales From the Darkside."

"The Creep Tapes" is based on an anthological concept: Every episode is purported to be footage from one of the many videotapes that Josef, as revealed in the first

CONTINUED ON PAGE C5

"This is going to be a comfort show, weirdly, for people who love this character," Mark Duplass said of his horror series "The Creep Tapes."

Movies So Silly They're Classics

How Jim Abrahams turned sight gags and absurd lines into parodies like 'Airplane!'

By ESTHER ZUCKERMAN

It's almost hard to believe that at one point Leslie Nielsen was thought of as a serious actor who was an odd choice to play a comic role like the deadpan doctor in the disaster movie spoof "Airplane!"

But casting the unflappable Nielsen to deliver lines like "I am serious, and don't call me Shirley" in response to the completely reasonable phrase, "Surely you can't be serious," was part of the brilliance of Jim Abrahams, who died on Tuesday at age 80. Along with David and Jerry Zucker, his pals from his youth in Wisconsin, Abrahams was a pioneer of some of the most beloved, gleefully over-the-top comedies in cinema history.

The Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker movies took their extreme silliness extremely seriously. Their actors, like Nielsen, were as committed to the bit as they were. With a few exceptions — like the kidnapping comedy "Ruthless People" (1986) — the Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker mode was parody, taking genres that audiences loved and deliciously skewering them. But their humor was so undeniable that even if you didn't know what they were making fun of you could lose your breath laughing.

When my parents sat me down at a

CONTINUED ON PAGE C5

ZACHARY WOOLFE
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Puccini Died, And So Did A Tradition

A century after his death, the composer still dominates opera like no one since.

THERE'S A KNOCK at the door.

A poor young poet is struggling to write in his attic apartment when he is interrupted by the sickly seamstress who lives downstairs. Her candle has gone out; can he light it?

Barely 15 minutes later, these two strangers are singing ecstatically about their love. Implausible, right? But when a performance of Giacomo Puccini's "La Bohème" is working its hot magic, nothing could be more believable.

And nothing could be more essentially operatic than such a scene, with the emotions compressed and heightened through music. Puccini, who died 100 years ago, on Nov. 29, 1924, proved himself again and again a master of moments like this: unleashing a Technicolor extravagance of feeling while at the same time conveying plain, simple truth.

CONTINUED ON PAGE C4

A. DUPONT/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION

The opera composer Giacomo Puccini in 1908. He died 100 years ago, on Nov. 29, 1924.

KIRSTEN LUCE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Winter's Holiday Wonderlands

Events, displays and performances in New York include old and future favorites, among them many variations on 'The Nutcracker.'

By ANNIE AGUIAR

The holidays have arrived in New York City. Festivities of all sorts, from annual classics like "The Nutcracker" to ice skating and twinkling light displays, are opening for the season. Here are shows and events to attend.

'The Nutcracker'

At Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater, the New York City Ballet will present its annual "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker" (through Jan. 4), with more than 125 children in two alternating casts from the School of American Ballet and a one-ton Christmas tree that grows to more than 40 feet tall. A sensory-friendly performance will take place on Jan. 5.

Brooklyn will see a bevy of works reimagining the classic. Two are hip-hop ballet versions, with "The Brooklyn Nutcracker" at the Theater at City Tech (Dec. 12-15) and "The Hip-Hop Nutcracker" at Kings Theater (Dec. 23). "The Hard Nut" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (Dec. 12-22) refashions the story in the style of witty cartoon Americana.

At the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts in the Bronx, the Westchester Ballet Company, a youth troupe of dancers from 6 to 18 years old, will perform "The Nutcracker" (Dec. 13-15). And at the Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College, the New York Theater Ballet will present its one-hour version for ages 3 and up, with choreography by Keith Michael (Sunday).

'The Magic Flute'

The Metropolitan Opera will present its annual family-friendly abridged version of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," with the director Julie Taymor's signature fantastical puppets (Dec. 12-Jan. 4). Tickets for the Dec. 14 matinee will double as entry for the Met's Holiday Open House, with demonstrations by the Met's musicians, actors, dancers and backstage and artistic staff.

Carnegie Hall

Carnegie Hall will present "An Irish Christmas with Keith & Kristyn Getty and Friends" (Dec. 16) and two nights of holiday music with the New York Pops and the Broadway performer Jessica Vosk (Dec. 20 and 21). And the Oratorio Society of New York will present its 150th consecutive performance of Handel's "Messiah" (Dec. 23).

New York Philharmonic

At David Geffen Hall, the New York Philharmonic will perform Handel's "Messiah" conducted by Ton Koopman (Dec. 11-14), and a sampler of holiday music in "Sounds of the Season" (Dec. 14 and 15). The Philharmonic will also present "'Elf' in Concert," screenings of the Will Ferrell comedy with a live performance of its score (Dec. 19-22).

Jazz at Lincoln Center

At the intimate Dizzy's Club overlooking Central Park, holiday programming includes Matt Wilson's "Christmas Tree-O" (Dec. 16), Joe McCarthy's Afro-Latin big band version of "The Nutcracker Suite" (Dec. 17 and 18) and the pianist and composer Christian Sands's quartet (Dec. 21-24).

The annual "Big Band Holidays" returns to the Rose Theater (Dec. 18-22), with the jazz vocalists Ekep Nkwelle and Robbie Lee and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra performing classic holiday standards. The matinee show on Dec. 22 will be a special performance for children and adults with autism, sensory and communication disorders or learning disabilities.

KHOLOOD EID FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

KIRSTEN LUCE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

HIROKO MASUIKE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Hanukkah

Hanukkah begins this year at sundown on Dec. 25, and it will be commemorated with the lighting of several extremely large menorahs in the city.

At Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza, the lighting of the menorah kicks off with a special concert event (Dec. 25), and will be lighted each night with hot latkes, live music and gifts for children.

At Manhattan's Grand Army Plaza, another huge menorah will be lighted every day of Hanukkah around sundown. Hudson Yards will also feature a giant menorah, with a live lighting for each night of Hanukkah.

Light Shows

Lightscape at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (through Jan. 5) leads evening visitors along an illuminated trail. Special evenings only for people 21 years and older will offer mulled wine and spiked hot chocolate for the walk (Dec. 12 and 19).

The Tianyu Lights Festival in Queens (through Jan. 19) turns Citi Field in Flushing into a whimsical magical forest.

The Bronx Zoo Holiday Lights event (through Jan. 5) features lights and wildlife lanterns in the shape of zoo animals across different themed trails, in addition to a children's holiday train and ice-carving demonstrations.

Ice Skating

Ice skaters have the whole winter, not just the holiday season, to indulge in the sport at various locations. In Manhattan: Wollman Rink in Central Park, the Rink at Rockefeller Center and the Winter Village at Bryant Park. In Brooklyn: the Emily Warren Roebling Plaza under the Brooklyn Bridge and the LeFrak Center at Lakeside in Prospect Park. In Queens: City Ice Pavilion in Long Island City and World Ice Arena in Flushing. And the Staten Island Skating Pavilion also offers public sessions.

Window Displays

Although Saks Fifth Avenue has called off its light show this year, its signature window display will continue. Other classic window displays, including those at Bergdorf Goodman, Macy's and Bloomingdale's, are also open for seasonal perusing.

Holiday Trains

The New York Botanical Garden's Holiday Train Show (through Jan. 20) presents a miniature version of New York City made from acorns and tree bark.

Grand Central Terminal's Holiday Train Show (through February), in the New York Transit Museum's Grand Central Gallery, features a miniature replica of Grand Central Terminal and collections of model trains, including Metro-North, the Polar Express and vintage subway train sets.

For a decidedly not miniature festive train experience, the New York Transit Museum's Holiday Nostalgia Rides let subway fans ride a 1930s subway car each Sunday in December.

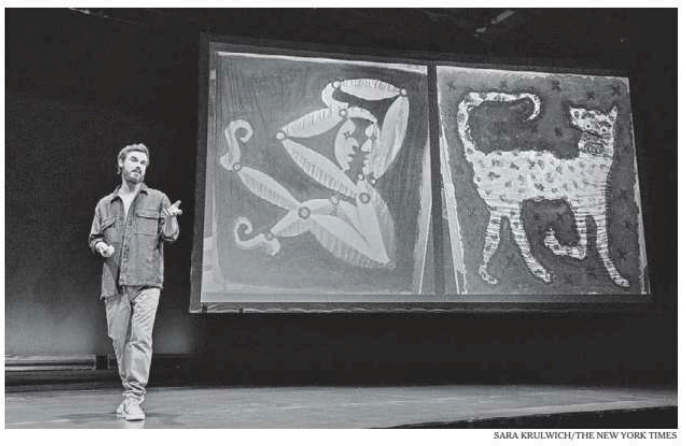
A sampling of the city's holiday bounty, from top: the New York City Ballet's "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker" at Lincoln Center; Lightscape at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden; Wollman Rink in Central Park; and one of Macy's window displays in Midtown.

RHODA FENG | THEATER REVIEW

Talking About Art From Now and 400 Years Ago

Two plays depict the struggles and achievements of creative minds in disparate eras.

JAMES LEYNSE



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, Kate Hamill in "The Light and the Dark (The Life and Times of Artemisia Gentileschi)," about a 17th-century woman who fought her way into the art world. Left, Sam Kissajukian in his one-man show "300 Paintings."

QUICK! Which 17th-century female artist fought her way into the male-dominated art world, prevailed in a rape trial and alchemized her struggles into revolutionary art? If the name Artemisia Gentileschi doesn't leap to one's lips, Kate Hamill's play "The Light and the Dark" at 59E59 Theaters offers a generous introduction.

Heavy emphasis on "introduction." Much of the information in the play's 145 minutes will be familiar to anyone who has spent time reading Gentileschi's Wikipedia page or has seen other recent plays inspired by her life.

There are two Artemisias in the show: the historical Baroque painter and a docent-like narrator. Both are played by Hamill, who has unwisely asked the narrator to ride shotgun to the artist. Under the slack direction of Jade King Carroll, "The Light and the Dark" often feels more like an art history lecture than a play. The first act, especially, hews much too closely to biographical exposition. Standing next to a blank canvas on a set that evokes an artist's studio, Artemisia talks to us about the art of composition before taking us back in time to her youth.

As a child, she idolizes first the work of her father, Orazio (Wynn Harmon, posed like an off-duty Greek statue), then Caravaggio, whose works of fleshy realism crack open the world for her. The entrance of Agostino Tassi (Matthew Saldivar), a papal painter who frequents Orazio's studio, spells trouble. He contrives to spend more time alone with Artemisia; during one of his visits, after he has bribed the Gentileschis' serving woman (a versatile Joey Parsons) to vacate the room, he rapes Artemisia.

Strangely, no mention is made of her three younger brothers, who also trained as apprentices to Orazio and who might have served as dramatic counterpoints for the young female artist.

More consequentially, Hamill, who is one of the most produced playwrights in the country, departs from the historical record in a trial scene. Court records of the rape trial preserved at the Archivio di Stato in Rome show that Artemisia averred that she threw a knife at Tassi after he raped her the first time; in the play, she simply lets it drop by her side. "I am not a heroine of some old story. I cannot hold the knife," she says meekly.

The art critic Dave Hickey wrote that "talk is art's optimum climate" — an idea that is gloriously affirmed in Sam Kissajukian's "300 Paintings," a bracing one-man show at Vineyard Theater.

Unfolding like a work of origami, the show is many things: a candid exploration of the Australian comedian's bipolar disorder, wrapped in a whistle-stop art tour and enfolded in a stand-up comedy routine. Despite its several PowerPoint slides, the performance never feels like a chalky lecture.

Its premise — Kissajukian quit comedy in 2021 and spends much of his acts-grinding show critiquing his own art — initially calls to mind another ouroboros-like work by another Australian comedian: Hannah Gadsby's anti-comedy special "Nanette."

Like Gadsby — and the British comedian James Acaster, who has also talked about quitting comedy — Kissajukian refuses to make heavy weather of his mental health struggles and is unafraid to reveal the crooked timber of his humanity, to borrow from T.S. Eliot, which came into clearest relief for him during a five-month manic spell.

What he lost in sleep and melanin during the coronavirus pandemic, he more than made up for in a series of striking paintings. The titular works, which are projected on a large screen and many of which adorn the walls of the Vineyard Theater, spilled out of him during bouts of lucid dreaming. They include personal portraits, Joseph Cornell-like vivariums and impish, Keith Haring-esque drawings.

It's not long before the untutored artist attracts attention from the art world: He is invited, twice, to exhibit his work at the Brisbane Powerhouse.

Genially grouchy jokes take pride of place in the show, but some of Kissajukian's blunt-force observations don't work as well as others: He lazily calls van Gogh the "best artist" because he had five types of mental illness. "I'm really looking into how to get more," he tells us, tossing unnecessary logs onto the tortured-artist fire.

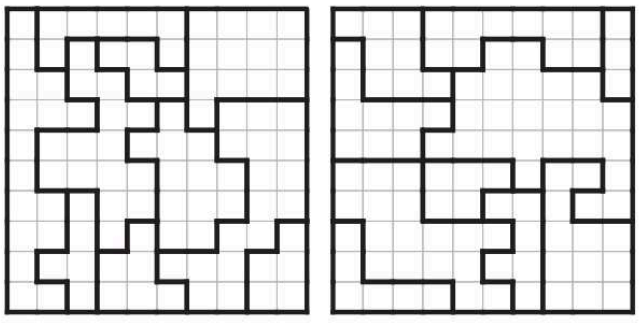
But for the most part, one marvels at Kissajukian's ability to advance two provocative ideas for every one retracted. One of his best bits includes the creation of a business proposition to run a business that makes no money.

A fleet 65 minutes, the show breezes by. In the spirit of salons, "300 Paintings" also invites audience members to immerse themselves in Kissajukian's art after the show — and to talk about it.

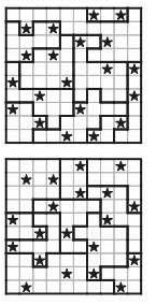
The Light and the Dark (The Life and Times of Artemisia Gentileschi)
Through Dec. 15 at 59E59 Theaters in Manhattan; 59e59.org. Running time: 2 hours 25 minutes.

300 Paintings
Through Dec. 15 at Vineyard Theater in Manhattan; vineyardtheatre.org. Running time: 1 hour 5 minutes.

Two Not Touch



ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES



Put two stars in each row, column and region of the grid. No two stars may touch, not even diagonally.

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Wit Twister

Beside the _ _ _ _ _ River, in a lonely _ _ _ _ _ of trees

The _ _ _ _ _ of his misfortunes brought a Texan to his knees.

But then a quiet voice he heard: "Today you didn't win,

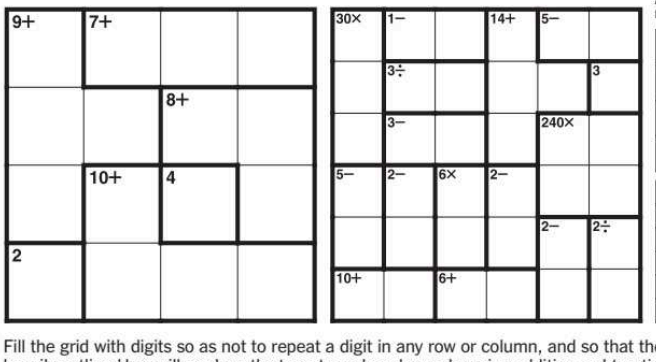
Yet he who _ _ _ _ _ with pain and loss will rise to fight again."

Complete the verse with words that are anagrams of each other. Each underline represents a letter.

PUZZLE BY STUART CLELAND

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER Martina Navratilova

KenKen



ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES

1	4	3	2
2	1	4	3
4	3	2	1
3	2	1	4

5	1	2	6	4	3
6	4	1	5	3	2
4	2	3	1	6	5
2	5	6	3	1	4
3	6	4	2	5	1
1	3	5	4	2	6

Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

For more games: www.nytimes.com/games

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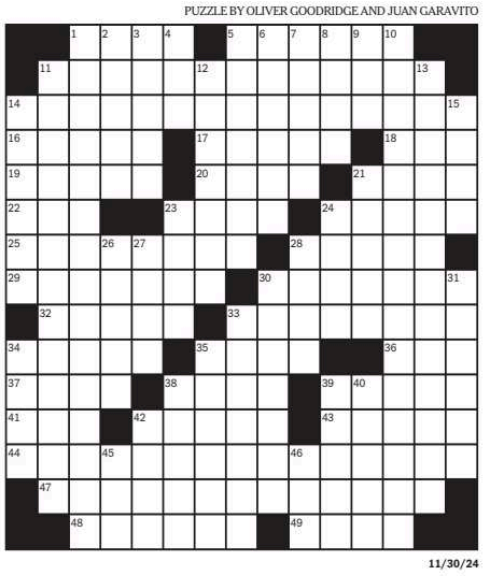
Crossword | Edited by Joel Fagliano

PUZZLE BY OLIVER GOODRIDGE AND JUAN GARAVITO



11/30/24

ACROSS

1 Handle of a knife
5 "And ...?"
11 "Say ..."
14 Haughty self-important question
16 Boast in a 1987 Michael Jackson hit
17 Airport transports, perhaps
18 Export from Jamaica
19 "Nature always ___ the colors of the spirit": Ralph Waldo Emerson
20 Petite ___
21 Number of fingers on dos manos
22 Recipe fig.
23 Be all in a tizzy
24 Complicated
25 Ready to rinse, say
28 Shared
29 Cooks up, so to speak
30 Horse race measures
32 Went wrong
33 Painting technique in which the artist applies new paint atop a just-painted layer
34 Etc., etc.
35 Longtime candy company based in San Francisco
36 Color akin to amarillo
37 Cart for the Budweiser Clydesdales, e.g.
38 Speck
39 Termite, e.g.
41 Fired (up), in old slang
42 Japanese game using pentagonal pieces
43 Jack ___, Best Supporting Actor nominee for 1940's "The Great Dictator"
44 Fateful encounter
47 Where cold cases are frequently opened
48 Nearly every third baseman and shortstop in M.L.B. history
49 Sign of hunger

DOWN

1 At-home distraction?
2 Like the crowd after a buzzer beater, say
3 Quarrels
4 Sound accompanying a shake of the head
5 Attacked, as a castle
6 "Hang on a second ..."
7 Request to be impressed
8 Expressions of befuddlement
9 Since
10 Breakup line
11 End result of a starter
12 The so-called "heart of the scorpion" in the night sky
13 Assumes control
14 Holiday honoring Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of fortune
15 Hard to navigate
21 Stoop (to)
23 Mr. Rogers, to his neighbors
24 Prefix from the Greek for "alone"
26 Styles of singing
27 Hot times in la cité
28 Leaves in a hurry, informally
30 It flows where the wind blows
31 One of 11 for Big Ben
33 Like an important decision
34 Reason one might get extended time on the PSAT
35 Tried to hit
38 "___ is it?"
39 Nova preceder
40 Like some horse feed
42 Gulp
45 "___ and the Thirteenth Confession" (Laura Nyro album)
46 Subject of a ganzfeld experiment, in brief

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

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

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Answers And Advice On Tickets

Here's what you should know about nabbing seats for shows on Broadway and beyond.

By LAURA COLLINS-HUGHES

People always want to know the secret to buying Broadway tickets — whether there's some better way than the box office, or a magic trick for snagging seats to an ultra-hot show (preferably, without having to pay full price).

If you're looking for a deal on a huge hit, you will search in vain. But lots of other shows offer discounts. Some may be in previews (which means critics haven't yet weighed in) or, having been around a while, are running low on fuel. Excellent productions might be in the mix.

As long as you're willing to be flexible, and put in a little work, it's easy enough to assemble the kind of theatergoing experience you'll enjoy. Here's how to navigate it all.

Where do I begin?

To guard against the heartbreak of counterfeit tickets, your safest bet is to buy them through the show's website, which will often reroute you to a site like Telecharge or Broadway Direct to complete the purchase. If accessibility is a priority for your visit, take a look at the wonderfully comprehensive and detailed site theatreaccess.nyc before you decide on a show.

Is it worth going to the theater's box office?

Yes, if you have the time. Not only can you ask the ticket seller's advice on the best seats for your price point, you can also avoid the hefty online service fees. If you have a discount code, like the ones sometimes offered on theatermania.com or broadwaybox.com, it should work in person, too. But do check on the box office's hours before heading out.

Is there an app I can use?

The TodayTix app is a trustworthy source for often-discounted Broadway tickets, which users buy online. For some shows, you can choose your exact seats; for others, you pick the general section where you want to sit, and TodayTix assigns your seats. Whether you get bar-coded electronic tickets delivered to your device or physical tickets that you pick up at the theater box office depends on the show.

Before you buy, though, it's worth comparing prices on the show site against those on TodayTix. The app can also be used for entering some shows' digital lotteries, which offer the chance to buy cheap tickets if you win, or for finding digital same-day rush tickets.

Should I join the TKTS line?

TKTS, that discount-ticket mainstay of Times Square, sells same-day matinee and evening tickets, as well as next-day matinee tickets, at up to 50 percent off. There is also a satellite booth at Lincoln Center. On the TKTS app, or online, you can see in real time which shows are on sale at which location, and what tickets cost.

But that doesn't mean there will be any seats left for the show you want by the time you get up to the window, and you have to buy them in person. (For a few Off Broadway shows, sales are cash only.) Options are most plentiful right after the booths open each day (hours vary so check the website), but new tickets are released all day, even as curtain time nears, so going later can be lucky, too.

TDF, the nonprofit organization that runs TKTS, also has a membership program offering discounted tickets online, sometimes well in advance, for Broadway and beyond. You can check whether you qualify for membership at tdf.org.

How do lotteries and rush tickets work?

Many shows, though not the monster hits, offer same-day rush tickets — either at the box office or online — for much less than full price. Some also sell standing-room tickets if a show is sold out. Don't count on lucking into these, because availability varies — but it's worth a shot. Conveniently, Playbill keeps a running online tab of individual shows' policies on digital lotteries, rush tickets (sometimes just for students, often for everyone), standing room and other discounts.

What if I have to cancel?

Don't bet on refunds or exchanges. In the early stages of its reopening after the pandemic shutdown, Broadway was eager to reassure ticket buyers with flexible policies on exchanges and cancellations. That is not the case anymore.

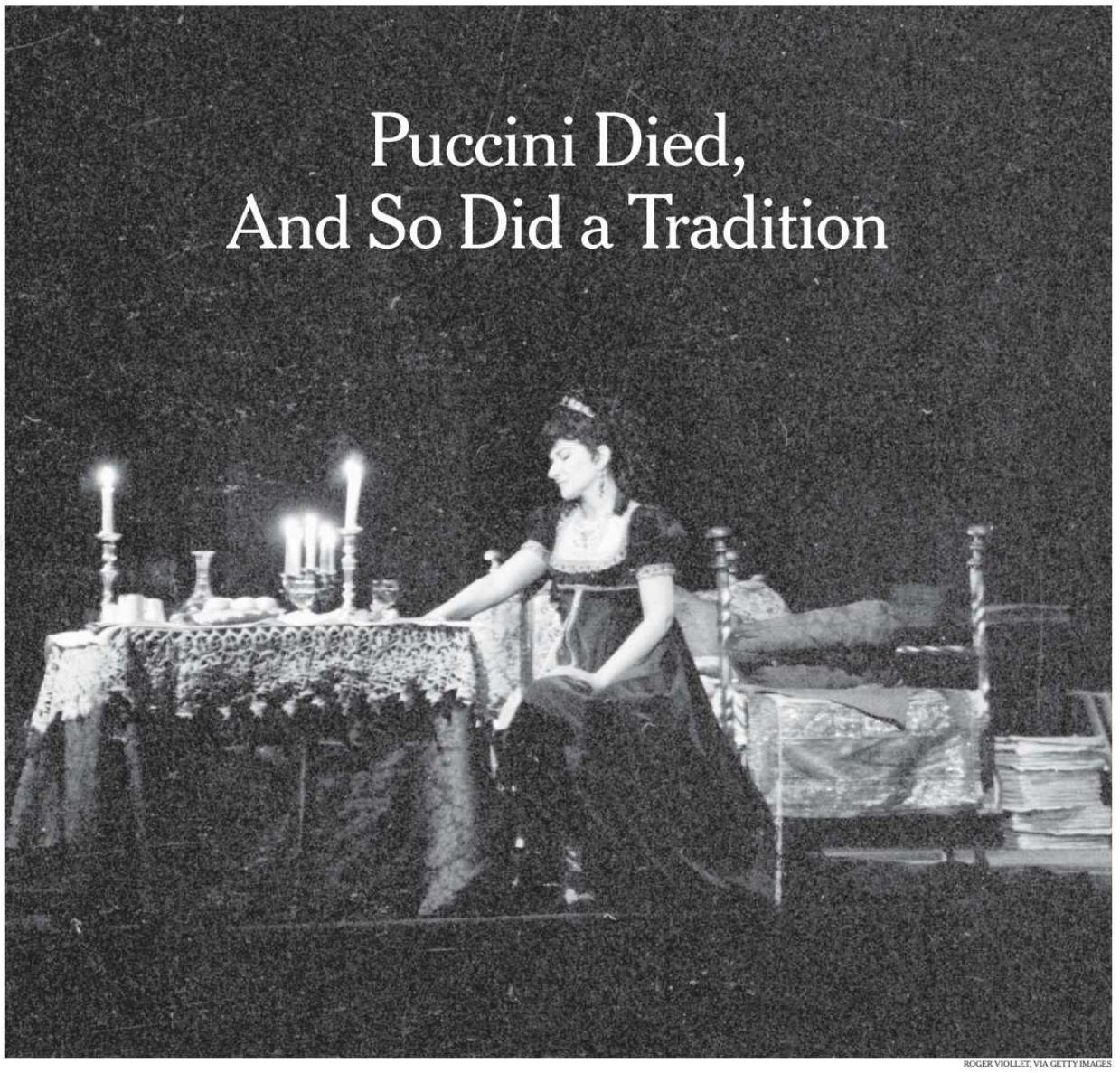
Is there an upside to bad weather?

If it's cascading from the heavens, that may be your chance to snap up some suddenly available seats at the box office, though be prepared to pay face value. Your odds of winning a ticket lottery are better on days like that, too.

Film at Lincoln Center
THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG 12:30, 3:45, 7:00PM
A TRAVELER'S NEEDS DAILY: 1:30PM
ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT 1:15, 3:45, 6:20, 8:45PM
ANORA DAILY: 3:30, 6:15, 9:00PM
144 & 165 W. 65th St. filmlinc.org

ZACHARY WOOLFE | CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Puccini Died, And So Did a Tradition



ROGER VIOLLET, VIA GETTY IMAGES

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A painter assuring his jealous girlfriend that her eyes are the most beautiful in the world. A prince, pursued by a city desperate to know his name, promising that it will remain a secret. A teenage geisha convinced her husband will come back to her.

Once you know these passages, just thinking about them can bring you to tears. Spoken, the texts would be generic, sentimental, even laughable. Set to Puccini's music, they suggest the most sincere and profound experiences that humans are capable of.

A century on, it can be said confidently: With Puccini died the great opera tradition. There have been extraordinary works created since his death, but next to none have penetrated the public consciousness, or the core repertoire.

Out of the vacuum left by the 19th-century giant Giuseppe Verdi, whose final opera premiered in 1893, Puccini emerged just in time for — then dominated — the twilight of the art form's mainstream centrality. His career coincided with social, political and cultural upheavals that calcified the canon and brought modernist styles to the forefront of fashionable composition. Stunning operas were written in that mode, but few that spread beyond connoisseurs.

What made Puccini the Dickens of opera, able to manage the elusive combination of nearly universal accessibility and deep sophistication? His melodies are sumptuous yet irresistibly straightforward; the propulsive activity in his scores is dotted with seductive oases of breathtaking emotional expansiveness. His music pours forth, never square or regular — a near-continuous flow that shows the influence of Wagner.

But Puccini wasn't interested in the mythic scale and symbols, the portentous poetry, of Wagnerian opera. He placed himself at the service of the concrete, the everyday, the intimate.

He often rued these limited ambitions, and mulled taking on the kind of grander canvases, with their political and philosophical reverberations, that had become inextricably linked with Verdi. But Puccini's modest scope — his gift for what he called his "cosettine," his "little things" — is what has made his operas instantly approachable across the globe, for newcomers and aficionados alike.

From the first, bounding bars of "La Bohème," you're inside it, embraced and immersed. But it isn't grand. Criticized throughout his career for relying on small-scale, precious subjects rather than sweeping historical plots, he has something in common with Jane Austen, who teased that she wrote her novels on "a little bit of ivory, two inches wide."

Puccini wasn't taken seriously by scholars until long after his death. Like Dickens, he was dismissed by many critics as a trashy hack, a guilty pleasure. Mahler and Britten disdained his work. The influential musicologist Joseph Kerman notoriously panned "Tosca" as a "shabby little shocker."

Puccini's listeners (like Dickens's readers) have never been fooled. But the art form drifted away from him. His sound world and techniques, fused with the aesthetics of Viennese operetta — a coupling he tried in the wistful "La Rondine" — gave rise to the mass popularity of Rodgers and Hammerstein. The home of Puccini's truest descendants was Broadway.

With opera's classics remaining stubbornly constant over the past 100 years, variety has come in their presentation. Works by the likes of Mozart, Verdi and Wagner offer ample grist for stage directors eager to update and deconstruct, because their themes transcend the particulars of their settings. But Puccini's "Tosca," for example, is not about anything other than what it's about; when a production places it in another place or time than its three very specific locations in Rome in June 1800, it seems to miss the point.

Like Richard Strauss, the other titan of opera's dusk, Puccini had one foot in the 19th century and the other in the 20th, balancing — sometimes uncomfortably — romanticism and modernism. His music is always direct, yet cloaked in complex, sensuous harmonies that he learned from progressive contemporaries like Debussy, and splashed with the local color of a wedding day in Nagasaki, gold-rush California or fairy-tale Peking.

Through subtle command of the orchestra, he created uncannily persuasive atmospheres. At the start of the third act of "La Bohème," winter grips Paris. The shock of the cold is there in the loud, abrupt pair of notes as the curtain sweeps open — a slap across a frozen face.

A soft but terse march in the flute and harp is a pricking chill, which deepens in a muted chord that builds from the bottom to the top of the strings, then the woodwinds. The cellos shiver, almost inaudibly, below. In just a few seconds, Puccini conjures February, frigid and lonely.

Of the important opera composers, Puccini may be the one who depended least on text; the music and visual-theatrical spectacle are what define his works. At a performance early in the life of "Tosca," the soprano Maria Jeritza tripped during her cat-and-mouse fight with Scarpia, and ended up prone on the floor for the aria "Vissi d'arte."

This became a traditional position for singers of the aria, to the point that audiences might have assumed it was indicated in the libretto. There's no customary way for sopranos to stand when they sing "Dove sono" (from Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro") or "O patria mia" (from Verdi's "Aida"). The fact that we *see* Puccini's operas as much as we hear them was crucial to their popularity through the rise of film and television.

Just before Christmas in 1858 in Lucca, a city in Tuscany, Puccini was born into a dynasty of professional musicians and composers that went back four generations. When his father died, just after Giacomo's fifth birthday, one of the eulogies made clear that the boy, the oldest son, was expected to carry on the family tradition.

He was not, at first, a particularly promising student. If his mother, Albina — who was widowed in her mid-30s, with seven children and another on the way — had not been extraordinarily driven on her son's behalf, Puccini might well have fallen through the provincial cracks.

But she pressed him on and supported him completely, and he responded with utter adoration. (Some have detected traces of their relationship in the heart-rending mother-child plots of "Madama Butterfly" and "Suor Angelica," in the maternal Minnie of the Wild West romance "La Fanciulla del West," and in the idealized women who appear in almost all his operas.)

Puccini studied scores as part of his lessons. But it was only after he traveled to Pisa in 1876 to see "Aida" — then just a few years old — that, he later recalled, "I felt a musical window had opened for me."

His sense of discipline grew as he entered the conservatory in Milan, with a commitment to his craft that helped him endure the money-scraping lifestyle that he would later draw on to make the bleak yet merry poverty of "La Bohème" so endearingly vivid.

His early opera "Le Villi," based on the story that also inspired the ballet "Giselle," lost a major competition, but was rescued by a successful run in 1884 that established Puccini as a rising star. The eminent publisher Giulio Ricordi took him under his wing, sticking by him even as his next opera, "Edgar," foundered and his decision to live with a married woman mired him in scandal.

Ricordi's stubborn support paid off when "Manon Lescaut" (1893) became a celebrity-making hit. It was Puccini's first collaboration with the librettists Luigi Illica (who was adept at scenarios and initial drafts) and Giuseppe Giacosa (who massaged them into poetry). Illica and Giacosa worked on the mighty run that followed: "La Bohème," which premiered in 1896; "Tosca," in 1900; and "Madama Butterfly," which had an infamous first-night fiasco in Milan in 1904.

Even as these works are crowded with bits of business and blocking, the whole machine of realism, they are always moving. "Keep it fast, and easy to stage," he wrote to Illica as they worked on "Bohème." "Lighten up the stage action."

Puccini's later operas demonstrate his increasing taste for rueful melancholy over melodramatic brutality. Neither "La Fanciulla del West" (1910) nor "La Rondine" (1917) ends jovially, but neither ends with deaths. While his trio of one-acts, "Il Trittico" (1918), begins, in its usual order, with the grim "Il Tabarro," it moves on to the transfiguration of "Suor Angelica" and the witty farce of "Gianni Schicchi."

Puccini was a chain smoker, and eventually developed cancer of the throat, a particularly tragic outcome for the creator of some of the most glorious music ever sung. After he died in Brussels, where he had traveled for treatment, the Corriere della Sera newspaper mourned a "gentle maker of melodies of sorrow and grace."

"Turandot," his last opera, set in a fantastical ancient China, melts an ice princess into a radiant lover, and its ending was to be Puccini's most plainly celebratory. Coming in the wake of World War I, at a moment when culture was moving on — Schoenberg was developing his 12-tone technique at the same time — the whole thing was a throwback to the lavish, old-fashioned exoticism of "Aida," the opera that had opened the window of music to Puccini nearly half a century earlier. But he was not able to finish it.

While the last scene of "Turandot" was completed from Puccini's sketches by the composer Franco Alfano, those final minutes were not played at the premiere on April 25, 1926. At that first performance, the put-upon slave girl Liù killed herself, the chorus murmured its regret, and then the conductor, the devoted Puccinian Arturo Toscanini, stopped the orchestra and put down his baton.

With words that could speak for the three-century Italian tradition, he said the performance was over. "Here the opera ends," Toscanini announced to the audience, "because at this point the maestro died."

Above, Maria Callas in "Tosca," circa 1965, in Paris. Below, Renata Scotto (right, with Claudia Catania) in the title role of "Madama Butterfly" in 1986 at the Metropolitan Opera.

A career coincided with social, political and cultural upheavals.

SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Found-Footage Baddie Is Back

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movie, has been amassing in his closet, each labeled with a victim's name.

Basing the show on a depraved VHS library, Brice said, allowed him and Duplass to explore more "Creep" but "not have to fully commit to a third film." But there was another benefit.

"I'm going to look smart," Duplass said, "as if I had planted them there in order to make a TV show, which was 100 percent not the case."

Duplass talked about the challenges of turning "Creep" into a half-hour series and about the perils of being too polite. These are edited excerpts from the conversation.

Why did you decide to expand "Creep" into episodic television?

Pure creative willy-nilly and Machiavellian, exacting business acumen. We really struggled to come up with the movie that would be "Creep 3." At the same time, I joined "The Morning Show," which takes six months a year for me. The extra time Patrick and I used to have to be little idiots in the woods, finding the structure of a movie over the course of a year, which was the process for "Creep," was not practical for us.

What's different about building dread over 25 minutes versus 90?

I have some experience working in the TV space with "Room 104," that show I did for HBO. I was able to see what the 22-to-25-minute banger, thrilling, horror, darkly comedic episode could be, although "Room 104" was genre-agnostic.

But the traditional structure of a half-hour episode of television is unhelpful for "The Creep Tapes." Normally you want lots of small scenes and to keep your pacing up. Part of what works well for "Creep Tapes" are these six- to eight-minute-long, deeply unsettling, rambling monologues, which have no place in 25-minute episodes. We had to learn how to embrace those and shrink some of the story lines down into simpler forms.

I wanted "The Creep Tapes" to feel, as crazy as it sounds, the way I felt with my family during the pandemic when we binge-watched "Friends" and "Seinfeld." There's a cold open, and the credit sequence hits, and we just feel comfortable. This is going to be a comfort show, weirdly, for people who love this character. It's the comfort of discomfort.

There's a lot more comedy in the series than in the films.

We found that by incorporating more humor into it, people got way more relaxed. When it came time for the scares, they got *got* at a more intense level. The humor allows us to bring back the shock factor that we've lost by the fact that everybody already knows I'm a killer.

How improvised is it?

It's at once the most improvised thing I've ever done and the most intensely scripted. We walk into the process usually with an outline that has all the beats of the story. Because we're all living together at this cabin we've rented, sometimes in Crestline [in the San Bernardino Mountains, in California], sometimes in the woods east of San Diego. We're writing it the night before and while we are shooting the scene. Because it's found footage, there's no coverage. You can't just improvise and edit it down later. You have to pace it out perfectly. By the time the take is done, that's actually the finishing of the writing.

How do you make it believable that anyone would stick around with a guy who's obviously a weirdo?

I have stayed too long in one of these situations before. I believe people are good. I have a little bit of a hero complex, and I feel I might be able to be helpful. It can get me into trouble. I don't find it unbelievable that these people would stay.

When I was, like, 23, I moved to New York. I needed a loft bed and found one on Craigslist. The guy said come over, I'll have it disassembled for you. I came over with my van — I was a musician at the time — and he was in a very distraught emotional state, and the bed was not yet disassembled. His wife had just left him. I sat in this apartment with him and helped him disassemble it. I look back on that now and I'm like, I ignored so many warning signs. But I wanted to help him. I didn't want to be rude and leave. All these polite society things kept me there.

There's a homoerotic quality to how Josef interacts with men. He's almost flirting to get them on his side, right?

Josef transcends classifications. It's not that he's bisexual or pansexual. He is deeply in love with connection. He's the same with pets and maybe even inanimate objects in his kitchen. He loves "Forrest Gump." He's pure of heart and speaks his mind without any filters. When it doesn't work out for him, he gets very upset.

"Creep" and "Creep 2" were on Netflix. Why the move to Shudder?

At the time, Netflix was the perfect fit. Back then, a lot of filmmakers didn't want to be on Netflix because they wouldn't get a theatrical release. But I thought, I am going to get a ton of eyeballs on it, and most importantly, Netflix really appreciates me. I felt like a big fish in a small sea. That's no longer the case, and that's OK.

We made "The Creep Tapes" independently. We took it around town, and some people passed, but a lot of people said, "We want to do this." These bigger streamers, they'll buy you, but if you don't hit and give them billions of viewers in the first season, they'll cancel you. I was surprised we ended up going with Shudder, but they make us feel like the "Morning Show" of Shudder.

Will there be more "Creep Tapes"?

We have a good idea of about eight that we really love. But I hope we get to make a season every year for the next 40 years.

ELIZABETH WEINBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

SHUDDER

Above, the Emmy-nominated actor Mark Duplass in Los Angeles. Right, in "The Creep Tapes," he plays Josef, right, who has amassed many videotapes, each labeled with a victim's name. "The humor allows us to bring back the shock factor that we've lost by the fact that everybody already knows I'm a killer," he said.

Making Movies So Silly They're Classics

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young age to watch "Airplane!," I had never seen any of the flicks it was riffing on, like "Airport" (1970) or "The Poseidon Adventure" (1972), the latter of which also featured Nielsen. Instead, I was captivated by the sheer absurdity and sometimes perplexing strangeness. The quotable lines are legion, but the bizarrely funny images are also why "Airplane!" lingers so large in the cultural memory.

For me, it's the eggs. During the flight where nothing can seem to go right, Nielsen's Dr. Rumack attends to a woman who is feeling ill. With ominous music in the background he starts gently, but firmly extracting a series of eggs from her mouth. After the third one comes out, he cracks it against the side of a cup. A little bird flies out. The tension that exists in the scene is real and almost frightening, the woman's face contorting like something out of a horror film, but the result is just so ridiculous.

Of course, if you do know the material that Abrahams was spoofing, there is an added joy to watching his work. Without the Zucker brothers, Abrahams directed "Hot Shots!" (1991) and "Hot Shots! Part Deux" (1993), both starring Charlie Sheen and both taking on gonzo masculine action movies like "Top Gun" (1986) and the entries in the Rambo franchise.

Midway through "Part Deux," Sheen's hardened former Navy pilot Topper is floating down a river in Iraq and journaling, with a voice-over that sounds an awful lot like the one delivered by the character played by Sheen's father, Martin, in Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now." That's giggle-worthy enough, but soon enough Abrahams cuts to another boat where Martin, as his "Apocalypse Now" soldier Benjamin L. Willard, is also in monologue.

Not content to let that be the joke, as the vessels pass each other, the father and son stand up, point at one another, and shout, "I loved you in 'Wall Street,'" breaking the fourth wall but adding another layer of reference, this one to the 1987 Oliver Stone drama in which they both starred.

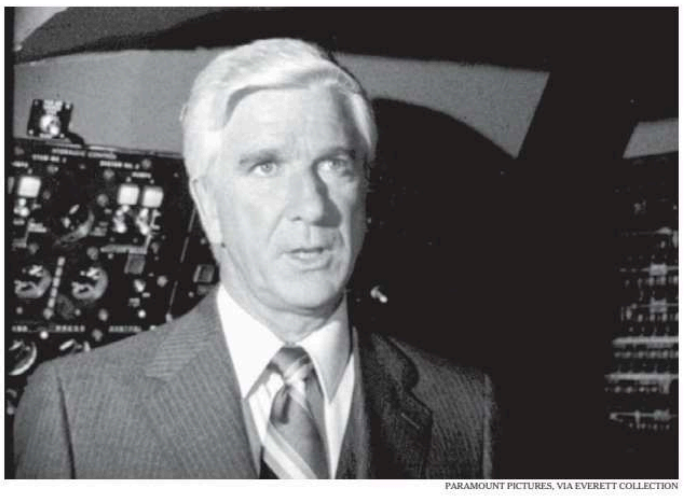
The reason the moment is so funny is because it requires a level of intensity from the Sheens, who have to play everything, down to the compliment, with straight faces. But that is the joy of this brand of comedy.

Reflecting on the infamous "Shirley" line from "Airplane!" in an interview with Vulture in 2016, Abrahams said, "I like to think, even today, when you hear in the news somebody say 'surely' this, or 'surely' that, I like to think that there's a whole bunch of people around the world who hear that and kinda chuckle to themselves because they remember the line and they know they don't have to take that seriously."

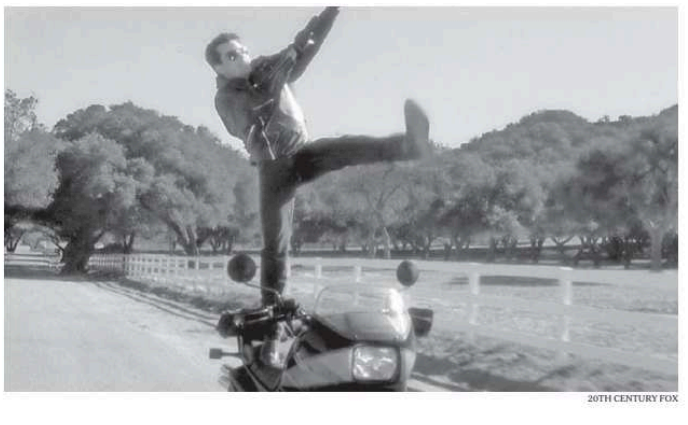
Yet the beauty of the Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker punchlines is that their characters don't know they are making them. Nielsen played both Dr. Rumack and his "Naked Gun" cop Frank Drebin with the gravitas of someone vying for an Oscar. (Just watch Frank try to bribe a source and end up taking the bribes himself.)

Abrahams and his cohort got everyone from Nielsen to Priscilla Presley, his costar in the "Naked Gun" movies, to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, an "Airplane!" standout, to submit to their wackiness. Audiences just had to sit back and laugh.

The actors were as committed to the bit as the directors were.



PARAMOUNT PICTURES, VIA EVERETT COLLECTION



20TH CENTURY FOX

Leslie Nielsen, above, in "Airplane!" and Charlie Sheen, right, in "Hot Shots! Part Deux," among the director Jim Abrahams's best-known films.

EMILY LaBARGE | ART REVIEW

A Pair of Artists Made A.I. Sing. It Was Beautiful.

But the visuals in Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst's first large-scale solo museum show are less impressive.

FOREIGN BODY PRODUCTIONS

LONDON — Although it's easy to feel alienated by the opaque processes behind artificial intelligence and fearful that the technology isn't regulated, the artists Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst want you to know that A.I. can be beautiful.

Their exhibition "The Call," at the Serpentine Galleries here through Feb. 2, is the first large-scale solo museum show for the artist duo, who have long been at the forefront of A.I.'s creative possibilities.

Herndon — who was born in Tennessee, grew up singing in church choirs and later received a Ph.D. in music composition from Stanford — has made cutting-edge, A.I.-inflected pop music for over a decade. With Dryhurst, a British artist who is also her husband, she has branched out to make tools that help creatives monitor the use of their data online, and recently, into the visual arts.

FOREIGN BODY PRODUCTIONS

LEON CHEW/SERPENTINE

Holly Herndon, top and conducting with Mat Dryhurst, above. The two have worked with choirs from across the United Kingdom to produce training data for choral A.I. models. Their show at the Serpentine Galleries in London includes the sculptural installations "The Wheel," above right, and "The Hearth," right.

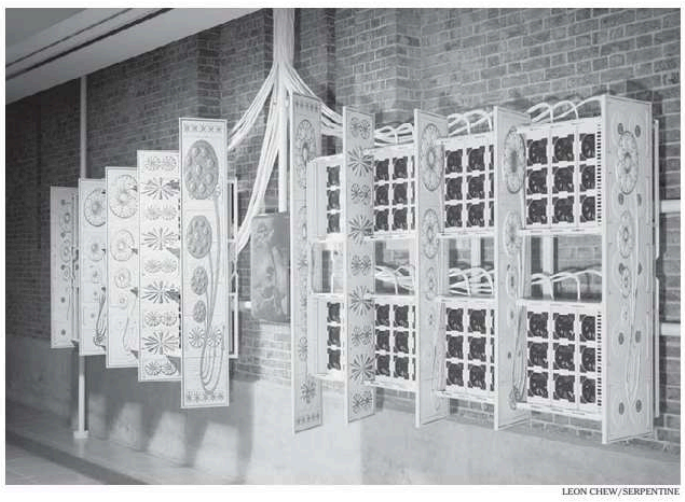
The couple's work "xhairymutantx," commissioned for this year's Whitney Biennial, uses A.I. text prompts to produce an infinite series of Herndon portraits that highlight the playful nature of digital identities.

The Serpentine show combines musical and visual elements. With the varied a cappella choral traditions of Britain in mind, Herndon and Dryhurst worked with diverse choirs across the country, from classical to contemporary groups of assorted sizes, to produce training data for an A.I. model. In a wall text, the artists explain that "The Call" consists of more than just the A.I.'s output. They also consider the collection of the data and the training of the machine as works of art.

"We're offering a beautiful way to make A.I.," the artists' statement adds. Their utopian take is that A.I. is collectively made: It learns from whatever it is exposed to and can therefore be shaped for good.

An open call for singers took Herndon and Dryhurst from Bristol to Leeds, London to Belfast, Salford to Penarth and beyond, with 15 choirs taking part. At each location, the singers were presented with a special songbook of hymns and musical exercises devised by the artists to cover the widest range of musical and phonetic samples to train the A.I. model.

Where some might see sinister portents of "2001: A Space Odyssey" or "The Terminator," the artists see creative possibility and beauty. They recorded each choir in its traditional home, including community halls and churches, preserving the acoustics of each space. The singers were arranged in a circle around a central microphone so that the sound captured is diffuse and multidirectional. Far from being engaged in a rote or rigid process, participants were encouraged to interpret the scores as they wished.



LEON CHEW/SERPENTINE

The result, which echoes from speakers throughout the Serpentine's cavernous brick spaces, is uncanny, exquisite, unpredictable. Fed through the A.I. model, the voices of the choirs come back ghostly and ethereal. Individual voices weave in and out, harmonies overlap and tunes that seem recognizable, but just out of reach, loop and swell. It makes you feel as if you are the microphone at the center of a vast chorus.

The Call
Through Feb. 2 at the Serpentine Galleries in London; serpentinegalleries.org.

But the magic ends here.

With such a conceptually fascinating and sonically gorgeous project, it's hard (for me, impossible) to see why the "output" also included a series of cumbersome and artless sculptural installations inexplicably farmed out to the Berlin-based architecture studio sub, known for its collaborations with the fashion house Balenciaga. The exhibition describes its three spaces as visual representations of the A.I. training process (the accompanying booklet also offers a series of schematic diagrams), but they are ungainly and hard to grasp.

The first, "The Hearth," opens the show with a kind of altarpiece of white cables, whirring fans and panels decorated with white and gold patterns and a gold panel at its center depicting an infant blowing into an ancient wind instrument. In the next room, "The Wheel," a giant chandelier-like object is printed with gilded images of mysterious cloaked figures in procession, and rigid, plasticized pages of Herndon and Dryhurst's songbook hang from the sculpture with chains.

The last section "The Oratory," consists of two private, curtained rooms where you can engage with the choral A.I. model yourself by singing into a microphone. (Unfortunately, I could mostly hear my own voice trying out Laurie Anderson's "O Superman.")

For all Herndon and Dryhurst's engagement with ideas of accessibility, pedagogy and collaboration, and their stated aim of making something beautiful, the exhibition's physical installation serves only to mystify and, to some extent, confuse.

The careful, complex process undertaken by the two artists with their 15 choirs is crudely materialized in these objects that vaguely and uncritically gesture at religion and ritual with muddled images that, for many tech-skeptics, will gesture at unthinking veneration.

More than neural networks, the whirring fans of "the "Hearth" installation reminded me of A.I.'s huge carbon footprint and the huge amounts of electricity it sucks up: a pressing collective concern of another variety. In the end, I closed my eyes and concentrated on hearing something beautiful made with A.I. Maybe, someday, we'll be able to see it, too.

Judge Denies Sean Combs's Third Bail Request

Concerns about obstruction of justice, witness tampering and public safety are cited.

By BEN SISARIO and JULIA JACOBS

Sean Combs, the embattled music mogul who has been charged with sex trafficking and racketeering, was denied bail again this week after a federal judge rejected his lawyers' third attempt to challenge his detention.

Judge Arun Subramanian wrote in the order that prosecutors had presented evidence of Mr. Combs's propensity for violence and that he had violated jail regulations by trying to obscure his communications with the outside world.

The judge wrote that "there is evidence supporting a serious risk of witness tampering."

The decision orders Mr. Combs to remain at the Metropolitan Detention Center, a hulking federal facility on the Brooklyn waterfront, until his trial, which is scheduled for May. Mr. Combs, 55, has been detained since his arrest in September after a nearly 10-month federal investigation.

After Mr. Combs's arrest, his lawyers offered a robust bail package that they argued was more than sufficient to assuage the court's concerns about the risks of his release. They offered a $50 million bond, secured by Mr. Combs's Florida mansion and said that Mr. Combs would pay for round-the-clock security, with visitors restricted to family. Apart from contact with his lawyers, he would have no access to phones or the internet.

Prosecutors asserted that there was no way the government could trust that private security guards, paid for by Mr. Combs, could be depended on to prevent efforts toward obstructing justice, which, they argued, he had been engaging in before and after his indictment.

Judge Subramanian agreed, writing in the order that "the Court doubts the sufficiency of any conditions that place trust in Combs and individuals in his employ — like a private security detail — to follow those conditions."

At a bail hearing on Nov. 22, the judge rejected the idea of Mr. Combs remaining at his Miami-area home, noting that the property had access to a dock. Instead, Mr. Combs's lawyers proposed a Manhattan apartment.

The first two judges who considered the bail issue were convinced by the government's arguments that Mr. Combs posed a danger to the safety of others. Those arguments relied largely on leaked hotel security footage from 2016 of Mr. Combs abusing his girlfriend, the singer Cassie, whose real name is Casandra Ventura, which was broadcast in May by CNN. Ms. Ventura, who filed a bombshell civil suit a year ago, is the center of the government's case, though she is identified only as "Victim-1" in its indictment.

Judge Subramanian echoed that concern for Mr. Combs's "propensity for violence," noting a text message from Ms. Ventura sent after the hotel assault that said: "I have a black eye and a fat lip. You are sick for thinking it's OK to do what you've done."

The indictment charged Mr. Combs with sex trafficking, racketeering conspiracy, and transportation to engage in prostitution, and describes him as the boss of a yearslong criminal enterprise that threatened and abused women. Mr. Combs has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

MICHAEL LOCCISANO/FILMMAGIC, GETTY IMAGES

Lawyers proposed that Sean Combs be allowed to await trial, now scheduled for May, at his Miami mansion. Instead he will remain in a Brooklyn jail.

The video of Ms. Ventura had been a focal point of the detention efforts with Andrew L. Carter Jr., the district court judge first assigned to the case, calling it "disturbing" during a September bail hearing. Judge Carter later recused himself because of a professional and social relationship with a new lawyer hired by Mr. Combs's team.

In their third attempt at securing bail, Mr. Combs's lawyers sought to undercut the impact of that video by arguing that the government had not presented the footage in good faith, accusing prosecutors of omitting key scenes and presenting events out of order.

At the hearing last week, Christy Slavik, one of the prosecutors, said there was no mistaking Mr. Combs's violent conduct on the video, which involved striking, kicking and dragging Ms. Ventura.

Prosecutors have worked to keep Mr. Combs in jail by arguing that he has engaged in efforts to obstruct the prosecution, both before and after he was indicted in September. They have accused him of contacting witnesses, paying a potential witness to make a public statement in his favor and using a three-way phone call from inside jail to contact an alleged co-conspirator.

In Wednesday's order, Judge Subramanian took particular issue with Mr. Combs's contact with a grand jury witness whom prosecutors had identified as a "male commercial sex worker." The judge noted that Mr. Combs's lawyers could not explain his efforts to call and text the witness even after his grand jury testimony, or why Mr. Combs deleted texts with the witness.

Mr. Combs's lawyers argued that their defendant's contacts with witnesses have been "innocuous" and were intended to help build up his defense for trial. They underscored that the government had pointed to no threatening communications.

The grand jury has continued to meet since Mr. Combs was charged, and prosecutors have said that their investigation is continuing.

Mr. Combs may continue to challenge his detention. Last month, he filed an appeal with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, which has been put on pause while his lawyers pursued the most recent appeal at the district level.

Travel

Where to Go for a Cuddle, or Something More

The European sex party scene has been booming since the pandemic, and people are crossing oceans to be part of it.

By ESME BENJAMIN

Olivia and her husband were on a romantic getaway. They had been finding it hard to "do anything spicy at home at all," she said, what with their two teenage children around and the dirty laundry piling up. A weekend in Venice at the end of the city's annual carnival, in February, seemed like the perfect way to reconnect. But instead of a gondola ride or a canal-side dinner, their itinerary revolved around a masquerade ball and, possibly, sex with strangers.

Their faces hidden behind intricately decorated masks, the couple made their way to a private Venetian palazzo. Around 150 guests sipped champagne and ate oysters while listening to a classical pianist and string quartet, while downstairs a "dungeon master" demonstrated spanking and other basic B.D.S.M. techniques. At 10 p.m., guests were invited to remove their masks — the playrooms (spaces reserved for consensual sexual encounters) were now open.

"I mean, that was the best way to see Venice," said Olivia, a photographer based in New York and London who agreed to speak on the condition that only her first name was used. Although Olivia has been a longtime member of Killing Kittens, the female-focused sex party club that hosted the ball, this was the first time she and her husband had traveled abroad to attend an event. They didn't meet another couple they were interested in, but the party still had the intended effect on their sex life. "We just watched and then enjoyed our own fun afterward, with the memories," Olivia said.

According to Killing Kittens's founder, Emma Sayle, approximately 60 to 70 percent of the party guests flew in from abroad, paying 500 pounds (around $630) per couple to explore their turn-ons. (A Killing Kittens membership is free to all female and nonbinary people, though a "verification fee" of £20 is required to complete the sign-up process, book tickets and gain access to community chats. Men can join as guest members, allowing them to attend parties as the plus-one of a full member or book tickets to singles' events.)

"We've always had a very international crowd," said Ms. Sayle, adding that Killing Kittens members travel to Europe from as far away as the Western United States and Australia to attend parties in French châteaus and English country manors.

After the connection-starved pandemic era, the tourism industry embraced sexual wellness as a component of the wellness trend (now estimated to be worth more than $651 billion globally, according to the Global Wellness Institute), with workshops, couples retreats and doctor-led programs.

Now the international sex party scene is booming. Killing Kittens, which is based in London, says ticket sales have risen as much as 500 percent since the pandemic, and it recently introduced a KK Cruise, a sex-party-at-sea offering, and the KK Homme, a party billed for "gay, bisexual men and their allies."

The British company Pinky Promise, which bills itself as a platform to "explore, heal and express your sexuality," also noticed a surge in ticket sales to its parties. According to its founder, Jared Philippo, Pinky Promise now hosts an average of around 1,100 guests at parties in London, Berlin and Paris, up from 400 before the pandemic.

It's not just couples who are fueling the trend; solo travelers are also flying for sex parties. Last summer, Louise, a grant adviser based in London who asked that her last name be omitted to preserve her privacy, headed to the Peacock Garden, a queer-friendly pop-up sex party, at Amsterdam's Age of Aquarius festival. While Louise had previously traveled with partners and friends to attend sex parties, she hoped going alone would allow her to be led entirely by her own desires.

CHUYIN WANG

"If I decide to spend the whole weekend just dancing on the dance floor, I can," she said before her trip. "And if I want to attend a bunch of workshops, I can, and if I want to, you know, indulge in play and whatever, I can."

Ally Iseman, the founder of Passport 2 Pleasure, a relationship-coaching service for couples, believes the open-mindedness travel inspires can amplify the sex party experience.

"Destination sex puts you in a curiosity state," she said. "You might try things that you wouldn't have normally."

It's not just couples who are getting involved; solo travelers are doing it too.

It's also an opportunity, Ms. Iseman added, to see how the cultural differences of each place manifest in erotic expression.

Tailoring the party to the destination is a key aspect for Mr. Philippo when he plans Pinky Promise events. The "cuddle corner," where guests can sip tea and get cozy, is a big hit in London. Less so in Berlin, a city whose hedonistic nightlife began fueling tourism after the fall of the Berlin Wall and where sexuality is as central to the clubbing experience as music. Many of that city's venues feature dark rooms, a no-frills version of a playroom, where partygoers can engage in sexual acts in relative privacy.

"The scene was already thriving in Berlin," said Mr. Philippo, whose events always have a colorful dress code, typically feature cabaret performances and cost £30 per ticket. "What we brought to it was more of a new destination for people to explore the more sensual, playful, theatrical side around sexuality."

Sex parties aim to provide a judgment-free, respectful environment, which attracts a large number of L.G.B.T.Q. and polyamorous people — communities that may not always feel comfortable or safe expressing their sexuality when traveling to unfamiliar places.

While planning a trip to Berlin to attend Pornceptual, a party that celebrates erotic art and draws up to 2,000 attendees for each event, Drew Wyllie, a bisexual content creator based in Mexico City, used the sex-positive dating app Pure to meet other attendees. Mr. Wyllie emphasized that these events can simply be a social, inclusive place to dress up, dance and flirt without being sexualized or objectified.

"There's a list of conducts that you have to agree on before entering," he said, referring to Pornceptual's "safe-space guidelines," which include rules on consent, respectful interactions and taking responsibility for acts of misconduct. Similar guidelines are common among sex parties, making the rules clear to all attendees. "It feels like a safe environment to explore your sexuality," Mr. Wyllie said.

Jonathan Manders, a product manager in London who attends sex parties about once a month, notes that the sex party regulars are more cautious around "tourists" — newbies who are eager but inexperienced.

"Even though I love the space and recommend it to anyone who's interested, if you're completely inexperienced with, you know, boundaries and consent, or you tend to avoid confrontation and you struggle to say no to people, it's probably better not to enter the playrooms until you've worked on that a little bit," Mr. Manders said.

His advice for anyone attending their first party — besides clearly discussing boundaries and consent with partners — is to make an effort to dress up, don't get too intoxicated and try not to have expectations. "You might not have any play experiences, or you might go and you might have more than you were intending," he said.

Before any Pinky Promise event, attendees receive an email reminding them of the code of conduct, which includes using "clear direct verbal communication," respecting confidentiality (photography is prohibited) and taking a "mindful approach" when consuming intoxicating substances. Safeguarding team members in high-visibility vests are positioned throughout the event, including at the door to the playroom, where they assess attendee preparedness before they enter, asking questions like whether they have clearly defined boundaries with their partner.

While defining and maintaining boundaries is essential to having a positive experience at a sex party, stepping out of one's comfort zone can be part of the appeal.

This year, Mr. Manders flew solo to Paris to attend a Pinky Promise sex party.

"I wasn't really sure what the night would be like and if people would speak English, so there was certainly some nerves around that," he said. Bolstered by the "pure electric" atmosphere, Mr. Manders didn't take long to make new friends, and he found himself among the last partygoers, staying at the venue until nearly 7 a.m.

"Since coming home from that party in France, I've been having a very extroverted phase," he said. "The electricity came home with me."

Arrivederci to Annoying Tourist Trappings

Florence considers banning golf carts, loudspeakers and lockboxes in its historic core.

By PAIGE McCLANAHAN

Leaders in Florence, Italy, have unveiled a new plan to tackle problems with tourism in the Tuscan city, which has been a prime destination for leisure travelers for more than three centuries.

The 10-point plan was announced this month — as Florence hosted a meeting of high-level tourism officials from the Group of 7 nations (Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States). The timing was not a coincidence.

"We're sending a clear message to G7 leaders that there is a need for rules and tools to deal with an ever-growing tourism that cannot and must not undermine the quality of life of residents," Sara Funaro, the mayor of Florence, wrote in an email.

Here is what travelers need to know about the measures.

SUSAN WRIGHT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Florence, Italy, has developed new measures to make the tourism burden more bearable for those who live there.

What is Florence aiming to ban?

The proposal includes a ban on lockboxes outside accommodations within the city's UNESCO-listed historic center (in response to both aesthetic and safety concerns). There are also bans on golf carts, rickshaws and other "atypical vehicles" for the purposes of tourism; amplifiers and loudspeakers used by tour guides will also be prohibited. Such measures are intended to ease challenges in crowded areas.

"The data that we always remember is that 95 percent of the tourist presence in Florence is concentrated in five square kilometers, which are those that suffer the most from tourist pressure," Jacopo Vicini, Florence's councilor for economic development and tourism, said in a statement.

Other points in the plan aim to improve data sharing, policy coordination, and consultation with local residents and businesses on tourism.

"The message we want to give is that we care about our city, and we care that Florence can be attractive, but above all livable for residents," Ms. Funaro said. "Our primary objective is to ensure that our city can maintain its roots, its nature and its identity."

Why is this coming now?

Florence — a city with about 367,000 residents — hosted nearly nine million overnight visitors in 2023, as well as 1.5 million day trippers. And the mayor's office says that those numbers are increasing.

"There are so many people that it's impossible to walk and enjoy the city center," said Giulia Giannattasio, a Florence resident and the receptionist at the Hotel Bella Firenze, a three-star hotel near the train station.

Ms. Funaro, the mayor, acknowledged that "coexistence between residents and tourists has become increasingly complex" since the pandemic, noting that the pressures are greatest for the residents of the city's historic center.

She also acknowledged recent protests targeting tourist lockboxes used to access short-term vacation rentals — in which hundreds of lockboxes in the city center were covered in red tape. This is an issue "that we've been addressing for a long time," Ms. Funaro said.

When will the measures take effect?

Florence authorities have approved the proposal, but some of the measures require further approvals or changes to city regulations before they can come into force. The mayor's office indicated that such measures should take effect at the beginning of 2025. Other points in the plan, including a communication campaign on sustainable tourism, are already underway.

How will the measures affect visitors?

Most visitors to the city will see little immediate impact. Visitors who opt for a short-term apartment rental in Florence's historic center will find that property owners use something other than a lockbox to allow them to gain entry to their accommodations. Instead, the host might greet them.

For Marco Verzí, the president of the Florence chapter of Federagit, a national association of tour guides and tour managers, the banning of the lockboxes is at once a question of maintaining the city's historic identity — and ensuring security.

"If you're not checking who is getting access to the apartment, then whoever made the booking can forward the information to someone else and you can't control who has access to the apartment," said Mr. Verzí, who has been a tour guide in Florence for two decades.

"We have been waiting for some of these measures for three years," he added, speaking of the new plan. "We're just happy to hear that the mayor is protecting the city from some evident threats — for residents and for tourists."

A bid to ensure that a city can maintain its roots and its nature.

36 HOURS

TUCSON, ARIZ.

After triple-digit summer temperatures and 90-degree days that linger well into October, late fall restores an ultra-outdoorsy vibe to this mountain-ringed college town in the Sonoran Desert, an hour north of Mexico. A sure sign of the sweet season in Arizona's second-largest city: thousands of cyclists flocking to El Tour de Tucson (which took place last weekend), one of the nation's biggest road races and a Technicolor Lycra-clad reminder of the joys of exploring on two wheels when the weather turns reliably, ridiculously pleasant. Between your own adventures on the local trails, try a new spin on traditional Sonoran spirits, stargaze from a sky island, take in a juried exhibition of local artwork at the Arizona Biennial (through Feb. 9) and devour as many stuffed, steaming tortillas as possible. *ABBIE KOZOLCHYK*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NATE ABBOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Friday

3 P.M. | MEET FOUR-LEGGED LOCALS

Get to know some of Tucson's most fascinating creatures at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum — more of a zoo than the name would suggest — about a 30-minute drive west of town (general admission, $29.95). From a series of winding pathways (most of the exhibits are outdoors and designed to blend into the surrounding wilderness), look out for javelinas (picture shrunken wild boar impersonators), bighorn sheep, various wildcats and — yes, in the same area as the resident coyote — a roadrunner. Perhaps most surprising to visitors who've never contemplated desert waterways (Tucson has a few): the absurdly adorable otter and beaver. The museum's mountain and valley views at golden hour also make the visit worthwhile.

5 P.M. | CHASE THE SETTING SUN

Gates Pass, a main artery to the Desert Museum, is a renowned sunset lookout. Locals debate the best spots to pull over along the twists and turns, but one pairing that works especially well for its diversity of landscapes and views is, first, the parking area for the David Yetman West Trailhead, then the Gates Pass Overlook Trailhead. Wherever you stop, take the occasional break from the setting sun to turn and watch the mountains and valleys glow pink, orange and gold around you. Once the color fades, drive back to town flanked by an army of saguaros in dreamy silhouette.

6:30 P.M. | SAVOR A SHOW

While the drama has died down a bit at Hotel Congress since a 1934 fire led the police to John Dillinger — the F.B.I.'s first public enemy No. 1 — the downtown institution remains one of Tucson's liveliest scenes. Three stages host performers of all kinds, from metal to mariachi — and sometimes, Metalachi (many shows are free; tickets rarely exceed $35). A typical Friday-night lineup includes multiple performances between 6:30 and 11:30 p.m., so you can easily grab dinner before or after at the on-site Cup Café, where wine bottle chandeliers light up the cozy jumble of tables, banquettes and bar stools. Start with the Barrio Heartbreaker: sliced baguette from the beloved Barrio Bread bakery with warm Brie, marmalade, roasted garlic and sliced apples, among other accompaniments ($19).

10:30 P.M. | GET SONORAN SPIRITS

Hidden inside an old Veterans of Foreign Wars building, a quick walk from Hotel Congress, are two new sister bars: the street-level Sonora Moonshine Co. and the underground Prohibición. They are the brainchild of Es Teran, who also owns Borderlands Brewing Co., known for cactus-infused I.P.A., horchata cream ale and other local brews. Now he hopes to expand appreciation of agave. Both bars stock various bacanoras — a moonshine that went from prohibition in 1915 to denomination of origin in 2000 — and other agave spirits. Try the Oaxacan Old Fashioned: mezcal añejo with mesquite-smoked mole and piloncillo, a raw cane sugar ($14, or $12 once the 10 p.m. happy hour starts).

Saturday

8 A.M. | BUILD BURRITOS

Steaming, stretchy flour tortillas — another Sonoran staple — are used to particularly decadent effect in Tucson's beloved breakfast burritos. Two favorite purveyors are a 30-second walk from each other on the east side of town: Paco's Mexican Food and Amelia's Mexican Kitchen. The conjoined parking lots will be jammed on a Saturday morning, as will the line at Paco's drive-through, where the most popular breakfast burritos with chorizo or bacon and cheese are $5.45. At Amelia's, the best seller is the machaca (beef) burrito with eggs, pico de gallo, potatoes and cheese ($11.99), but vegans and vegetarians do well here, too, given the build-your-own menu.

8:30 A.M. | HIT THE TRAILS

Tucked into the Santa Catalina Mountains on Tucson's northeast side, Sabino Canyon dazzles even the annual-pass holders who hike or run here regularly (daily fee, $8 per car). Stop into the visitors' center for information on the short nature loops and half-day hikes, or if you find yourself so overcome by the saguaro-studded canyon walls and cottonwood-lined creek that you're tempted to scrap the rest of today's docket, consider a full-day hike, such as the aptly named Seven Falls (about eight miles round-trip). The easiest way to explore the canyon, however, is to stick to the paved road — an approximately two-hour walk round-trip, or a 60-minute narrated ride on an electric shuttle that departs hourly from 9 a.m. ($15 for adults). Back near the visitors' center, refresh with an iced latte from Old Pueblo Coffee's tiny pink trailer.

NOON | SHOP AND NOSH

The downtown-adjacent Fourth Avenue is indie shop central. Visit the Tucson Herb Store for creosote branch bundles to make your shower smell like a desert rain, Antigone Books for an intro to the Southwestern literary scene, 440 & Co. for saguaro-bloom-scented candles in minimalist ceramics, and Pop Cycle for maximalist Western wear and art. To refuel, hit Boca for tacos and as many of the chef Maria Mazon's ever-evolving array of house-made salsas as you can manage. And if you stay on Fourth Avenue into the night, head to Sky Bar Tucson for bubbling slices from the Brooklyn Pizza Company's solar-powered oven next door (from $3.45).

3 P.M. | ENJOY ASTRONOMY

Famed for its night skies, Tucson is surrounded by mountaintop observatories, where the Smithsonian, the Vatican and the National Science Foundation, among others, operate telescopes. Watch the 45-minute "Touring the Solar System" or "Tucson Sky & Beyond" at the University of Arizona's Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium's theater ($14 for show-only ticket; $26.95 includes entry to exhibits). More dedicated stargazers, including kids, will enjoy the afternoon-into-evening, dinner-included programming at nearby observatories on sky islands (isolated high-elevation peaks; you'll want to wear your winter layers): Mount Lemmon SkyCenter from ($60), a little more than an hour's drive northeast of town, and Kitt Peak National Observatory (from $71) farther to the southwest. At both sites, scientists lead staggering viewings through telescopes.

10:30 P.M. | GET A GOOD NIGHTCAP

One of the coziest spots for a late-night drink occupies — of all places — a former funeral home in the Armory Park neighborhood. Sure, the Owls Club is said to house a few lingering spirits, but there are so many live souls milling about the dimly lit succession of nooks and crannies that you'd never know. Order a Besito Rojo (chamomile-infused mezcal, charred-mesquite-flavored Angostura bitters, lemon-lime juice and honey; $16) from the bar, then pick your favorite perch — perhaps on an old chapel pew or by a fire pit out back.

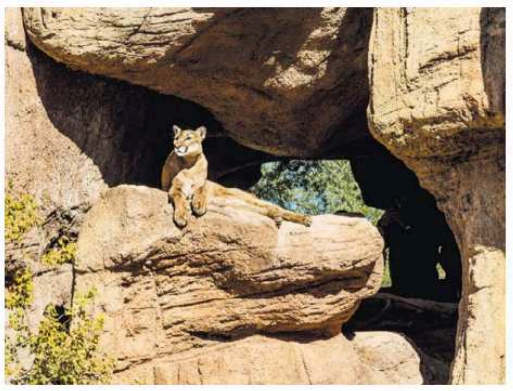
Sunday

8 A.M. | FUEL UP AND RIDE

Stop by Barista del Barrio for a breakfast burrito — another contender for Tucson's best — then time-travel on Tucson Bike Tours' 9 a.m. historic city tour — an approximately two-hour, nine-mile route through landmarks ($55). See the Barrio Viejo, with its Sonoran rowhouses and candle-filled El Tiradito (a two-timing folk hero's shrine that kept a highway from being built through the neighborhood); the old Southern Pacific train depot, where the gunfighters Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday still stand (in bronze) at the scene of a shootout; and Armory Park, where a former gentlemen's club that hosted John Wayne and Buffalo Bill sits down the street from Tucson's main cathedral. If you prefer exploring on foot, consider the Presidio San Agustín del Tucson Museum's 10 a.m., 90-minute Barrio Viejo walking tour ($30).

NOON | COMMUNE WITH ART

At the Tucson Museum of Art's Arizona Biennial galleries, 42 jury-selected works are captivating viewers (through Feb. 9; general admission, $15). The museum, which is celebrating its 100th birthday, has gone especially big on the biennial with the exhibition's first expansion into the 19th-century Edward Nye Fish House, one of a few surrounding adobes. La Casa Cordova — another museum-owned adobe and one of the oldest houses in town — has just reopened after a renovation in time to display a local festive-season favorite: "El Nacimiento," a Nativity scene that fills an entire room (until March). Head to the neighboring Old Town Artisans, a series of shops and restaurants in Sonoran rowhouses. JoJo's leafy courtyard is Sunday-brunch perfection.



Clockwise from top: Gates Pass, a renowned location for viewing sunsets; a mountain lion at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum; the courtyard at Mercado San Agustín; a breakfast burrito at Paco's Mexican Food; and the band Wholly Cats Swing Club at the Century Room at Hotel Congress.

KEY STOPS

Barrio Viejo — also known as Barrio Historico or Barrio Libre — is one of the oldest parts of Tucson.

Sabino Canyon's soaring, saguaro-studded walls and frequently rushing creek make for some of Tucson's most dramatic hikes.

Hotel Congress dishes out great food, live entertainment and 105 years' worth of colorful history.

WHERE TO EAT

Cup Café in the lobby of Hotel Congress, serves neighborhood favorites such as mesquite-smoked ribs and a country-fried-tofu sandwich.

Sonora Moonshine Co. and **Prohibición** serve creative agave-based drinks.

Paco's Mexican Food dishes out some of Tucson's best breakfast burritos, in a town full of worthy contenders.

Amelia's Mexican Kitchen, a few paces from Paco's, is home to rival breakfast burritos — and holds the advantage for vegans.

Old Pueblo Coffee serves lattes, matcha, chai and treats from a little pink trailer at the bottom of Sabino Canyon.

WHERE TO STAY

Arizona Inn is a sprawling 1930 Spanish Colonial Revival landmark on a quiet strip in the city center. The genteel and old-timey rooms start at $239 in late fall.

Graduate by Hilton Tucson, on the University of Arizona's campus, has in-room nods to neighborhood legends. Gorgeous campus, city and mountain views abound from the higher floors, and particularly from the rooftop, where you'll want to claim a spot by one of the fire pits at night. Rooms start at $125 in late fall.

Voco the Tuxon, a retro-feeling motel complex splashed with murals by a local artist, sits below the city's signature Sentinel Peak (also known as A Mountain). You may find live music in the lobby, a D.J. by the pool and telescope-aided stargazing sessions in the garden. Rooms start at $108 in late fall.

Good **short-term-rental** neighborhoods include the Barrio Viejo, where you can stay in beautifully restored adobe rowhouses, and Blenman-Elm, also historic and centrally located but with a wider variety of architectural styles. For more nature and wider vistas, look in the foothills of the Santa Catalina or Tucson Mountains.

nytimes.com/travel

Cooking

What to Make Next Week

We'll spare you any turkey recipes this time around. Instead, for the start of December, we have several vegetarian dishes, such as a salad of brussels sprouts brightened with pomegranate and pistachios, a plush lentil tomato soup and a spicy tofu and green beans with chile crisp. Chicken au poivre has a fancy feel, and olive oil baked salmon is no-fuss and foolproof. As for readers observing National Comfort Food Day this Thursday, deciding which dish among them is the most comforting is entirely up to you.

Visit NYT Cooking for thousands more recipes, advice and inspiration: nytcooking.com

CHRISTOPHER TESTANI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: CHRIS LANIER. PROP STYLIST: CARLA GONZALEZ-HART.

Tofu and Green Beans With Chile Crisp

My recipe for tofu and green beans with chile crisp is a sheet-pan dinner of distinction, excellent with steamed rice and extra chile crisp. You want a hot oven so that the tofu browns and the green beans really blister. *SAM SIFTON*

BY SAM SIFTON
TIME: 30 MINUTES
YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- **3 tablespoons chile-crisp condiment, plus more for serving**
- **3 tablespoons soy sauce**
- **1½ tablespoons Chinese black vinegar**
- **1½ teaspoons sesame oil**
- **1 teaspoon honey**
- **2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced**
- **1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger**
- **2 tablespoons chopped scallions**
- **2 tablespoons chopped cilantro**
- **1 (14-ounce) package extra-firm tofu, drained and sliced crosswise into 8 (½-inch-thick) slabs**
- **¾ pound green beans**
- **1 tablespoon neutral oil, like canola or grapeseed**
- **White rice, for serving**

1. Heat oven to 450 degrees. In a baking dish or casserole, whisk together the chile crisp, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, honey, garlic, ginger, scallions and cilantro.

2. Add the tofu slices to the dish, and coat them with the sauce, then allow to marinate for as long as it takes to heat the oven and trim the green beans.

3. Add the green beans to a large sheet pan, then drizzle the neutral oil on top and toss to coat. Slide the green beans to the sides of the pan, and arrange the slices of tofu in an even layer in the center of the pan. Pour remaining marinade over the tofu, and place in oven.

4. Roast until the green beans start to blister, 20 to 25 minutes. Serve immediately with rice and extra chile crisp on the side.

ARMANDO RAFAEL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: CYD RAFTUS McDOWELL.

Chicken au Poivre

What do you cook when you decide to do something nice for yourself for dinner, something a little fancy — or that just feels a little fancy? I know what I'll be making next time: Kay Chun's new recipe for chicken au poivre, a steakless version of the irresistibly peppery classic. Serve it with egg noodles, a green salad and a bottle of red wine. Be good to yourself! You're worth it! *EMILY WEINSTEIN*

BY KAY CHUN
TIME: 15 MINUTES
YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- **1 tablespoon whole black peppercorns**
- **2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- **8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 2 pounds)**
- **Salt**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **2 tablespoons minced shallot**
- **1 cup low-sodium chicken broth**
- **½ cup heavy cream**
- **3 thyme sprigs**
- **1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- **1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley, plus more for garnishing**
- **Crusty bread or egg noodles (optional), for serving**

1. Place peppercorns in a small resealable bag. Using a mallet or the bottom of a saucepan, gently crush the peppercorns until coarsely cracked. (Alternatively, you can use a mortar and pestle.) Set aside.

2. In a 12-inch cast-iron or other heavy skillet, heat oil over medium. Season chicken with salt. In two batches, sear chicken until light golden all over, about 5 minutes per batch. Transfer to a plate. Pour off any remaining oil in the skillet.

3. Add butter and shallot to the skillet and cook, stirring, until butter is melted and shallot is softened, 1 minute. Add broth, heavy cream, thyme sprigs and cracked peppercorns and mix well, stirring to lift up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan.

4. Add chicken (and any accumulated juices), bring to a simmer and cook, turning and basting occasionally with the sauce, until cooked through and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the thigh registers 165 degrees, 6 to 8 minutes.

5. Divide chicken among 4 serving plates and discard thyme.

6. Add lemon juice to the skillet and stir until sauce is slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and stir in parsley.

7. Spoon the sauce over the chicken and garnish with more parsley. Serve with crusty bread or egg noodles, if desired.

KERRI BREWER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: SPENCER RICHARDS.

Lentil Tomato Soup

If there's a chill in the air where you are, you won't find a more warming, simple meal than Carolina Gelen's lentil tomato soup. Made with both butter and heavy cream browned until the milk solids caramelize, it's on the richer, plusher side of tomato soup recipes, and all the more sustaining for it. *MELISSA CLARK*

BY CAROLINA GELEN
TIME: 30 MINUTES
YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- **4 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **1⅓ cups heavy cream**
- **2 medium shallots, finely chopped**
- **1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes**
- **1 (15-ounce) can lentils, rinsed**
- **Salt**

1. In a medium pot over medium heat, melt the butter. Carefully add 1 cup heavy cream and bring to a boil over medium-high. Reduce the temperature to medium and simmer, occasionally stirring for 5 minutes, until the cream thickens, reduces to about a third of its initial volume, and resembles melted cheese while developing brown bits around the pot.

2. Add the shallots and continue stirring for 4 to 5 minutes, until there's very little cream at the bottom and caramelized brown bits all around the sides of the pot.

3. Add the tomatoes and their juices, crushing them with your hands as you add them to the pot, or crush them inside the pot, using a potato masher. Add the lentils, 2 cups of water and a big pinch of salt to season all the liquid. Scrape the brown bits off the bottom and sides of the pot into the liquid, using a wooden spoon or spatula.

4. Bring to a boil over medium-high. Partly cover the pot with a lid and boil, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Add the remaining ⅓ cup of cream and season with more salt, if needed.

5. Serve right away, or blend the soup using an immersion blender until as creamy as desired.

DAVID MALOSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: SIMON ANDREWS.

Brussels Sprouts Salad With Pomegranate and Pistachios

Sheela Prakash's brussels sprouts salad with pomegranate and pistachios provides plenty of crunch, acid and verve. Tabbouleh-esque, her recipe fuses the Levantine salad with more autumnal ingredients, but maintains the traditional bulgur to keep it hearty and vegan. *TANYA SICHYNSKY*

BY SHEELA PRAKASH
TIME: 40 MINUTES
YIELD: 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

- **½ cup bulgur**
- **¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 medium lemon, juiced (about 3 tablespoons)**
- **2 teaspoons sumac (or 2 teaspoons freshly grated lemon zest)**
- **1 teaspoon honey or maple syrup**
- **Salt and black pepper**
- **1 pound brussels sprouts**
- **4 medium scallions, thinly sliced**
- **1 cup loosely packed mint leaves, finely chopped**
- **¾ cup pomegranate seeds**
- **½ cup roasted salted pistachios, roughly chopped**

1. In a medium saucepan, combine bulgur and 1½ cups water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and cover and cook for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Drain through a fine-mesh strainer to remove any excess water.

2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk the olive oil, lemon juice, sumac, honey, ¾ teaspoon salt and several grinds of black pepper until combined and emulsified. Trim and thinly slice brussels sprouts (or shred using the shredding disk of a food processor), add to the bowl, and toss to coat well in the dressing.

3. Add the cooked bulgur to the bowl, along with the scallions, mint and pomegranate seeds; toss to combine. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed. (The salad can be made up to one day ahead of time and refrigerated in an airtight container. Bring to room temperature and taste and season before serving, adding more lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper as needed.) Stir in the pistachios just before serving.

ARMANDO RAFAEL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: SIMON ANDREWS.

Olive Oil Baked Salmon

For a no-fuss fish dish that welcomes improvisation, there's Ali Slagle's olive oil baked salmon. "I love when NYT Cooking gives us template recipes like this," wrote Daniella, a reader. "The technique is foolproof and open to endless adaptations. I made mine with lots of lemon peel, sliced olives and an extra squeeze of lemon." *MIA LEIMKUHLER*

BY ALI SLAGLE
TIME: 25 MINUTES
YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

- **¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **4 (6-ounce) salmon fillets or 1 (1½-pound) salmon fillet (skin-on or skinless), patted dry**
- **Salt and pepper**
- **2 lemons**
- **Optional flavorings: rosemary, thyme or oregano sprigs; smashed garlic; fresh or dried chile; olives; anchovies; bay leaves; crushed fennel or coriander seeds**

1. Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Drizzle the oil in a baking dish that will fit the salmon. Place the salmon in the dish, skin-side down if applicable. Season with salt and pepper.

2. Using a vegetable peeler, peel thick strips of zest from 1 lemon, then add to the baking dish. Juice 3 tablespoons of the lemon and pour over the salmon. Nestle in the optional flavorings if using. Bake, basting halfway through with the lemon oil, until just cooked through, 13 to 20 minutes, depending on the size of the fillets. (You will know if the salmon is done when the fish flakes when cut into with a knife or fork or when an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part reaches 120 degrees.)

3. Transfer the salmon to plates to rest at least 5 minutes; discard the skin if applicable. Remove and discard the lemon peels and any aromatics you don't want to eat, like herb sprigs. Squeeze about 1 tablespoon of the reserved lemon juice into the baking dish until the sauce is tangy but not puckery. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Eat the salmon with a spoonful of the lemon sauce.