



NEWSBRIEFS

Federal dependency

With the tax filing deadline drawing near but some states receiving far more in federal aid than they pay in taxes, the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its report on *2024's Most & Least Federally Dependent States*, as well as expert commentary. This report illustrates the extent to which states are independent economically. In order to identify which states most and least depend on federal support, WalletHub compared the 50 states across three key metrics: return on taxes paid to the federal government, federal funding as a share of state revenue, and share of federal jobs. Texas was rated 21st in the report ranking (1-Most Dependent, 25-Avg.):

- 10th – Federal Funding as a Share of State Government Revenue;
- 33rd – Share of Federal Jobs;
- 37th – Return on Taxes Paid to the Federal Government; and
- 41st – Residents Dependent on Federal Dollars.

“Regardless of whether the distribution of federal funds is fair or not, living in one of the most federally dependent states can be beneficial for residents. For every dollar residents of the top states pay in taxes, they get several dollars back in federal funding, which often leads to higher-quality infrastructure, education, public health and more. Alaska is the most federally dependent state, with over 57% of the state’s revenue coming from federal funding. For every \$1 that residents pay in taxes, the state receives \$2.47 in federal funding. Plus, nearly 5% of Alaska’s workforce is employed by the federal government, one of the highest rates in the country.”

– Cassandra Happe
WalletHub Analyst

Expert Commentary

Which programs should be a state/local responsibility and which should be a federal responsibility?

“Federal resources are more likely to support programs that are intended to increase societal benefits or reduce societal costs. For example, Title I funds in

See BRIEFS, Page 5

A real family man is one that looks at his new child as an addition rather than a deduction.

– Quips & Quotes



– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

DEMAND SIDE – Water is already flowing in the Rio Grande. This year’s early water release represents a welcome relief for water planners and El Paso County’s upper and lower valley farmers.

Early release of Rio Grande water welcomed by farmers

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Proposed in 1906 and constructed between 1911 and 1916, Elephant Butte Dam-located in New Mexico near the Texas state line and Mexico’s northern border-was specifically built to help calculate how much water the United States would deliver to Mexico. Now, more importantly, it also gauges the amount of water Southern New Mexico and West Texas farmers receive to irrigate their crops during the spring and summer months.

Elephant Butte Dam was a major engineering feat in its day. The enormous concrete dam is the major feature of the Elephant Butte National Register Historic District. At the time of its construction, the dam was the second-largest irrigation dam ever built and the reservoir was the largest man-made lake on earth, according to New Mexico State Park officials who operate a visitors’ center near the site.

Even before the spring season began, the muddy water was flowing in the mighty Rio Grande through El Paso County. The early water arrival is a

welcome sign for Borderland farms that didn’t receive river water until June last year and the year before that, periods that were declared as drought-stricken irrigation seasons.

The early release of water into the river comes as the Elephant Butte reservoir, which is 120 miles north of El Paso, is holding water levels at about 27 percent of capacity, nearly three times as full as it was last year. There’s currently more water in Elephant Butte than anytime since spring 2020, according to the Texas Water Development Board, the state agency that plans and finances water projects.

The early arrival of water and deeper reserves at the lake represent a welcome relief for El Paso County water planners and farmers, who grow mostly pecans, cotton, and alfalfa throughout the upper and lower valleys.

Jay Ornelas, general manager of the El Paso County Water Improvement District (EPCWID) No. 1, recently

stated that in the past few years the river water was not released until June because of the low level of water in the Elephant Butte reservoir. EPCWID #1 is the local agency that manages the area’s irrigation infrastructure.

The general manager pointed out that from the 1980s to around 2003, Elephant Butte was full most of the time, which allowed farmers to irrigate from March through October, which meant that most of the demand was met through river water.

But in the 2000s, water levels in Elephant Butte fell off from the prior decades and have remained low for the last 20 years, which has made it complicated for water planners to predict how much water the Rio Grande will supply year-to-year.

The early arrival of Rio Grande water to the Borderland this year is the result

of heavy wintertime snowfall in the mountains of southern Colorado near Pagosa Springs, which produced the thickest snowpack in five years.

Fortunately, the snow accumulated in the right place – around Wolf Creek in Colorado – where it melts and immediately enters the Rio Grande

“But then in September, October, we’re going to be in a situation where we’re going to need another big snowpack again next year.”

– Scott Reinert

See WATER, Page 2

No, illegal immigrants didn't build America



Joe Biden doesn't have a problem with illegal immigrants.

He's made that clear in his shame-faced retreat from his impromptu use of the term "illegal" during his State of the Union address. He regrets using the offending word, doesn't want to disrespect illegal immigrants and believes that they are absolutely essential to the success of the United States.

"Look, they built the country," Biden told Jonathan Capehart of MSNBC. He added that they are "the reason our economy is growing."

Yes, where would America be without the essential contribution made to its economic vigor by desperate people crossing the border in violation of our laws? This is all very revealing. Biden certainly sounds more like a president who has had a largely open border rather than one who, as he's

been insisting lately, wants to shut down the border if only Republicans would pass the legislation he wants. Why, if Biden's correct, would we deny ourselves the benefits of illegal labor?

It's true that illegal immigrants overwhelmingly work once they get here; it's why they come in the first place, after all. But the idea that a fraction of all immigrants, whose numbers have only drastically increased in the past couple of decades, "built the country" is a ridiculous fabrication and a profound insult to American workers, past and present.

Prior to today, the highest percentage of all the foreign-born in the U.S. population was 14.8%, around the turn of the 20th century. Roughly one out of seven people obviously weren't responsible for the construction of America.

As for illegal immigrants specifically, they didn't

constitute the majority of any job category in America as of 2018.

Even construction workers –involved in the literal building of the country's physical plant – were 65% native-born.

Biden is exaggerating, too, when he suggests that the economy is growing only because of illegal immigrants. But it is true that legal and illegal immigrants have made an outsized contribution to recent economic growth.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which aren't flawless but capture the big picture, the total number of employed people

See LOWRY, Page 7



– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

51 Years 1973-2024 WEST TEXAS COUNTY COURIER

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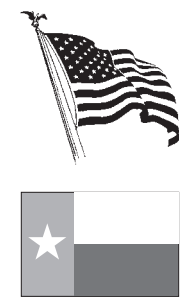
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SUPPLY SIDE – Elephant Butte Dam and Reservoir is 125 miles north of El Paso County. The reservoir can store 2,210,298 acre-feet of water to provide irrigation and year-round power generation. The concrete dam, above, is 301 feet high and 1,674 feet long. It contains 618,785 cubic yards of concrete.

Water

From Page 1

watershed, stated New Mexico state park officials. The melting snow in Colorado has been feeding the Rio Grande and boosting water levels at Elephant Butte, which last summer fell to under four percent of capacity.

"What we see flowing in the river here is very much influenced by what happens in terms of the snowfall in the headwaters area, and then how the snow melts," said Alex Mayer, director of the Center for Environmental Resource Management at the University of Texas at El Paso. "This is a very good year compared to what we've seen for about the last 20 years or so. Very welcome for the farmers and the irrigation districts."

Also, flows from the Rio Grande can supply El Paso with

as much as half of the city's water supply in a good year, or as little as ten percent in a bad drought year, commented Scott Reinert, a hydrogeologist and water resources manager for El Paso Water, in a recent news article.

Reinert explained that to make up the difference when the river is dry, the city-owned water utility company pumps more groundwater from the underground Hueco Bolson aquifer. He noted that relying only on groundwater in El Paso would unsustainably deplete the aquifer over time.

The Rio Grande supplies around 60 million gallons per day of water for El Paso customers, according to Reinert. However, he said that when the river is low, the water company and the

farmers have to pump up a lot of groundwater. "So when we have a healthy river supply, it allows us to back off of our wells quite a bit," he added.

... it is difficult to draw any long-term conclusions from the elevated water levels in Elephant Butte...

For cotton growers, an earlier release of water allows farmers to pre-wet their field before planting cotton. Pecan and alfalfa crops, meanwhile, need water periodically from March through October, especially as temperatures rise in the summer.

Ornelas stated that when there's not enough water from the river, it forces growers who have wells on their property to pump water from underground using electric-powered pumps, which creates a significant cost for a farmer, and groundwater can be salty

See WATER, Page 4

Groups combine for EPSO show

By Rosemary Flores
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – On Sunday, March 24, 2024 at 3:00pm in the Plaza Theatre, the El Paso



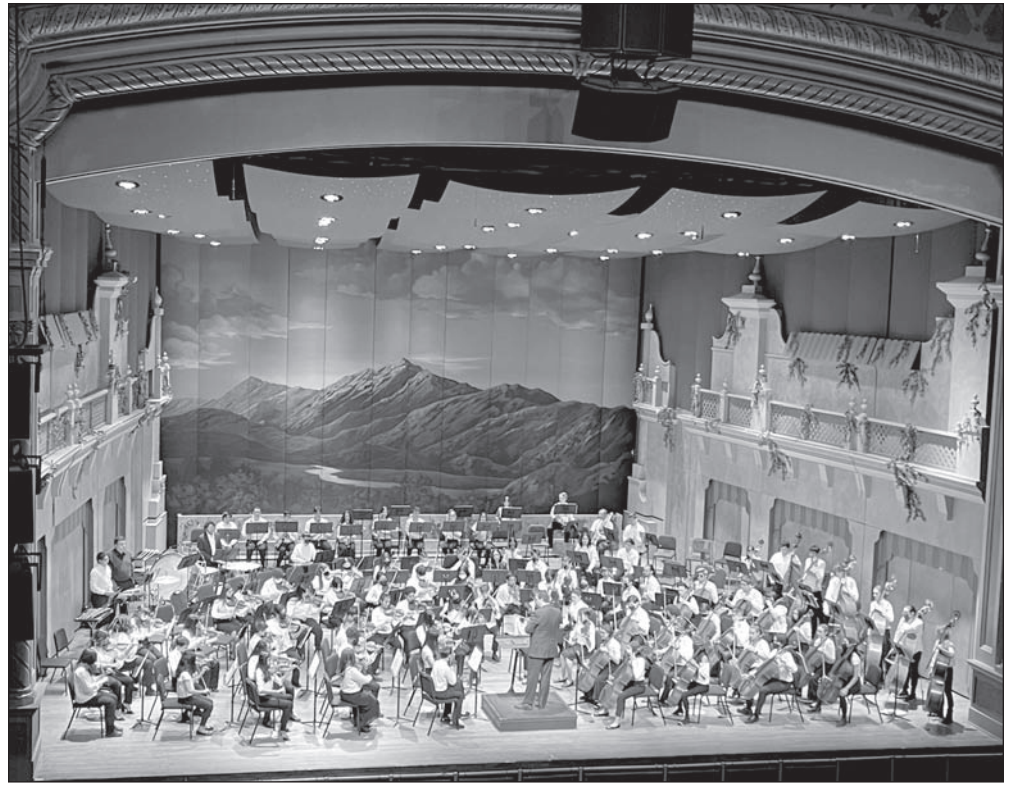
RISING MUSICIAN – Jarren Saenz will join the El Paso Symphony Orchestra as feature soloist.

Symphony Youth Orchestras (EPSYO) will present the 16th annual Side by Side Concert. Over 200 musicians from the El Paso Symphony (EPSO), El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras (EPSYO), and Tocando Music Project will perform on one stage.

This concert showcases all the components of EPSO's artistic and educational mission in one terrific event that celebrates and expands the idea of playing "side by side" to the larger culturally rich community. "The El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra's Side by Side concert is a wonderful example of how seriously El Paso takes its music education. What could be more meaningful to our students than having them perform onstage alongside our professional musicians from the El Paso Symphony Orchestra? It is a tradition we deeply cherish." Says Nathan Black, EPSYO General Manager.

Led by conductors Nathan Black, Jose Rios, Rodrigo Maldonado and Jennifer Martinez, the concert will feature music by classic composers Mozart, Dvorák, Tchaikovsky, J. Strauss, Bizet and contemporary composers John Caponegro, Chris Bernotas and Kieth Sharp.

In addition, the winner of the 2024 El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra Concerto Competition, Jarren Saenz will join the El Paso Symphony



– Photos courtesy El Paso Symphony Orchestra

A PRIOR PERFORMANCE – The Side by Side Concert will take place in the Plaza Theater.

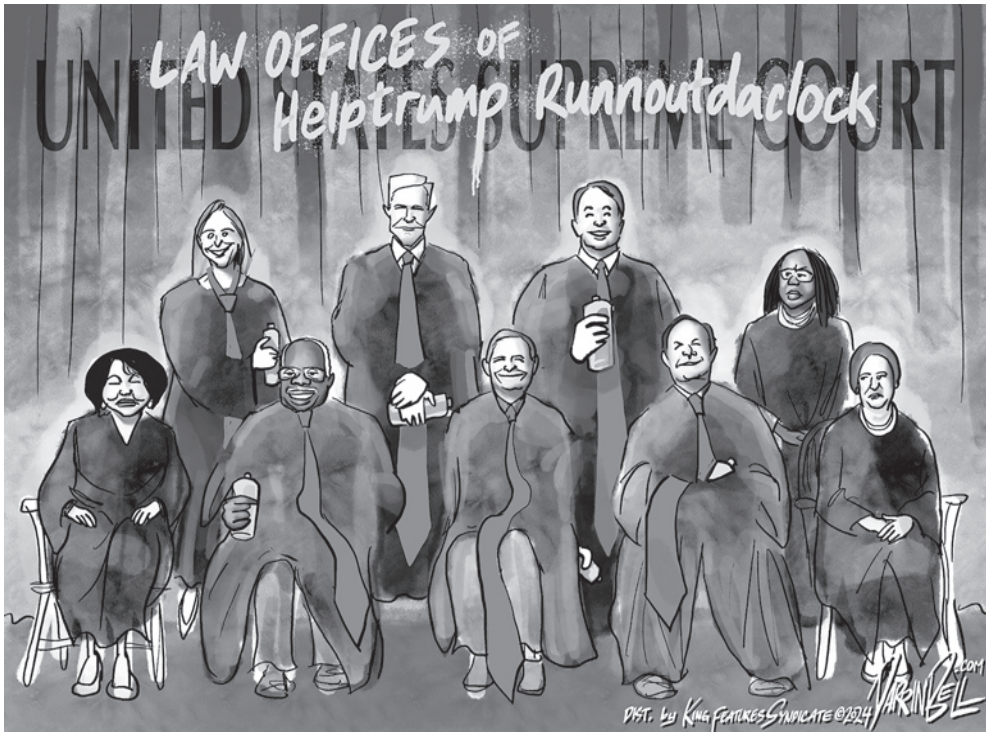
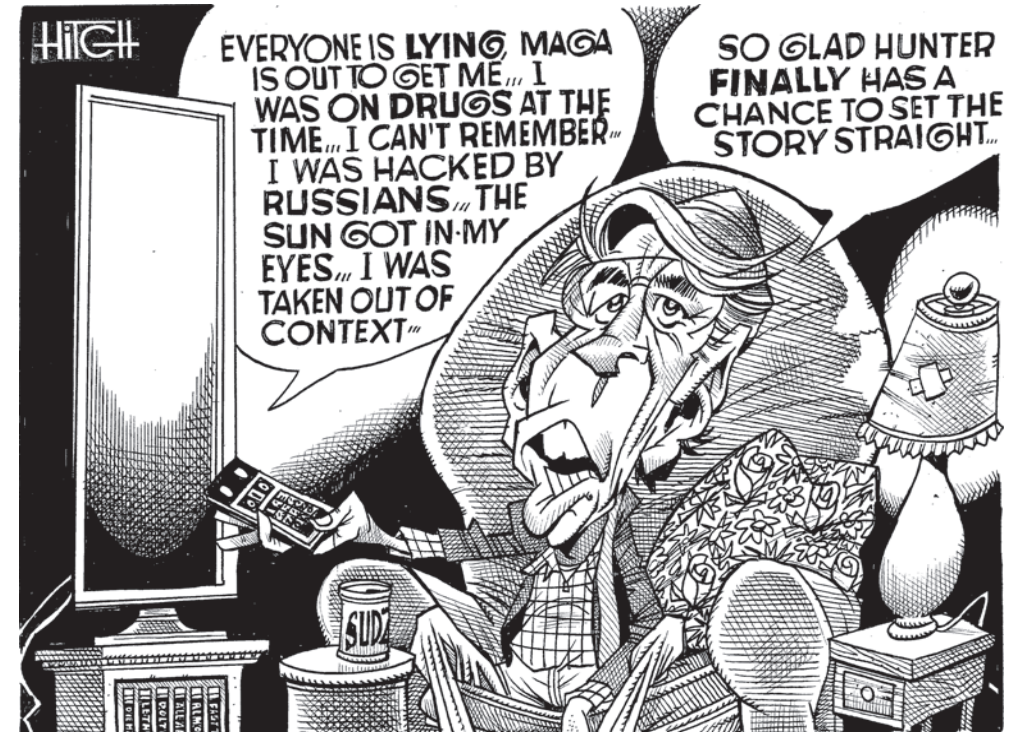
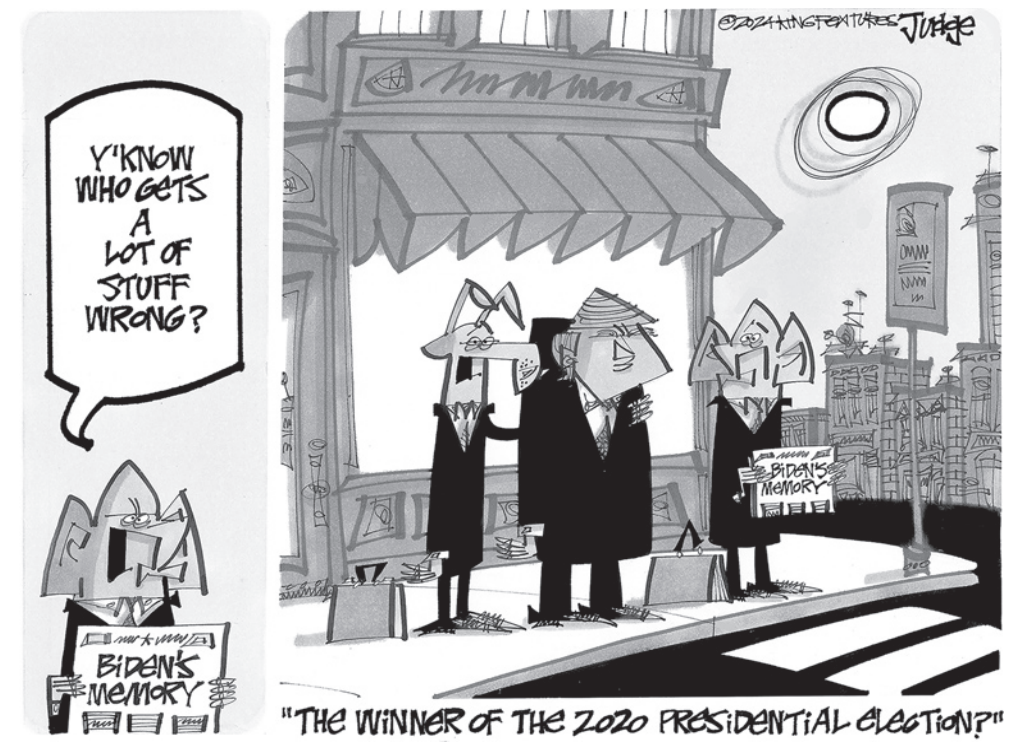
Orchestra as feature soloist performing Carl Maria von Weber's Clarinet Concerto No. 1, op. 73. Jarren is currently a senior at Coronado High School where he holds leadership positions in the Coronado Band, such as section leader and drill instructor. He is a three-time TMEA all-state musician.

Tickets are on sale now and may be purchased at epso.org, or by calling the EPSO office at (915) 532-3776. Prices are \$39, \$35, \$31, \$27 and \$20. Discounts for children ages 4-12 are available.

For further information, contact EPSO at (915) 532-3376 or email rosemary@epso.org. The El Paso Symphony Orchestra is presented with the support of the Museums and Cultural Affairs Department, the Texas Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



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email: kirk@theblade.com



Water

From Page 2

damaging the crops and soil over time.

For now, it is difficult to draw any long-term conclusions from the elevated water levels in Elephant Butte and the early arrival of water in the Rio Grande this year, related Ornelas, who hopes that it's the start of another 1980s-era water boom, when the irrigation district could release water as early as March each year.

Nonetheless, EPCWID #1 officials indicated that they are building storage facilities and ponds to capture any excess rainwater to store for the future as water from the Rio Grande is essential to sustain farmers in the area.

"The cautionary story of this is that it's an improvement. For now, it's a breath of fresh air," stated Reinert. "But then in September, October, we're going to be in a situation where we're going to need another big snowpack again next year. So we're a little better than last year because of the snowpack, but we're still what we consider to be in a drought situation."



– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

LAST RESORT – When the Rio Grande is low, it forces farmers who have wells on their property to pump water from underground using electric-powered pumps, like the one above. Underground water pumping creates significant costs for farmers. The groundwater can also be salty and that can damage crops and soil.

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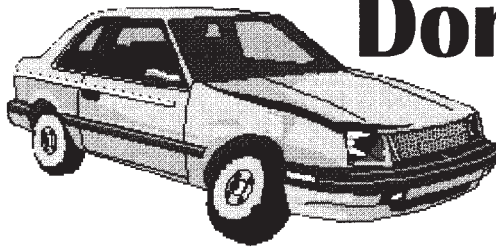
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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- Andrew Jackson's parrot was kicked out of his funeral for swearing.
- In 1947, The New York Times opined that "the pizza could be as popular a snack as the hamburger if Americans only knew more about it."
- Buzz Aldrin's mother's maiden name was Moon.
- When pirate Richard Worley, captain of the New York's Revenge, captured his second ship, he named it the New York Revenge's Revenge.
- Wisconsin is known as the Badger State because the area's lead miners used to spend winters in tunnels burrowed into hills – like badgers.
- The Palais Ideal in France was built entirely of stones that a postman named Ferdinand Cheval picked up on his mail route.

• Honey hunters in Mozambique use special calls to recruit the services of birds known as honeyguides. The birds lead the humans to bees' nests, and in return, they get the leftover beeswax.

• In 1964, a pre-fame 17-year-old David Bowie was interviewed on the BBC program "Tonight" as the founder of The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Long-Haired Men.

• Thomas Edison nicknamed two of his kids Dot and Dash after the Morse code signals.

• Army ants that misinterpret the scent trails left by other ants will sometimes break from the crowd and march in circles. If enough ants join them, they can form massive "death spirals."

• The U.S. Senate's Rule XIX states that U.S. senators cannot insult their colleagues.

Thought for the Day: "Leaders can let you fail and yet not let you be a failure."
– Stanley McChrystal

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CryptoQuip Answer

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6	+	8	-	9	=	5
-		×		+		
3	+	4	-	5	=	2
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4		60		16		



Moments in time
THE HISTORY CHANNEL

• On March 18, 1971, a 100-foot tsunami, caused by a massive rock avalanche that crashed into Lake Yanahuani from a height of 1,300 feet, destroyed a Peruvian mining camp and killed hundreds of people.

• On March 19, 1954, Willie Mosconi, aka Mr. Pocket Billiards, set a new world record for running the most consecutive pool balls without a miss – 526, in fact! – during an exhibition in Springfield, Ohio. A handwritten and notarized affidavit with the signatures of more than 35 eyewitnesses served as proof of his feat.

• On March 20, 1648, King Charles I of England attempted an initial escape from his captivity at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight by climbing out of a window, but the effort proved fruitless when he got stuck between its frame and an iron bar, and had to retreat to his room.

• On March 21, 1984, New York City's Central Park designated a section of its grounds as "Strawberry Fields" to commemorate former Beatle John Lennon, who was shot dead in front of his nearby residence by Mark David Chapman.

• On March 22, 1946, the United States Army made its first successful launch of an American-built rocket out of the atmosphere, using a combination of American and German scientists in adapting the German V-2 rockets seized after the Allied victory in World War II. The rocket reached an altitude of about 50 miles.

• On March 23, 2022, New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, announced the country would relax Covid mandates for some of its workforce, allowing restaurants and similar hospitality venues to increase their indoor capacity from 100 to 200 people. Vaccine passes were no longer required to get into shops, and visitors no longer needed to scan the venue's location using their Covid-19 tracer apps.

• On March 24, 2017, 560 people dressed as ghosts to set a world record for the largest such gathering. But these spooks at the Mercy School Mounthawk weren't trying to scare anyone – rather, their aim was to highlight the invisibility of arthritis.

Briefs

From Page 1

education are distributed according to the level of family economic disadvantage, recognizing that it is important to ensure that all children are healthy and well-educated. State resources may be prioritized for uses that yield benefits primarily within the state, such as economic development incentives.”

– Carolyn J. Heinrich
Professor
Vanderbilt University

“Rather than offer a list of programs here, it might be better to explain how these decisions are often made. The way that we generally approach this is to ask a set of questions about the problem a proposed program is intended to address: Does this problem span or cross state (or international) borders? Is the problem producing significant inequitable outcomes from one state to another? Is the problem something that we have collectively decided should be a national priority? Is the problem something that affects the ability of the federal government to successfully carry out its other responsibilities? This is not an exhaustive list of questions we might ask here, but if the answer to any of them is yes, then there is a strong case for federal or joint federal-state responsibility. It is also worth pointing out that there is at least as much overlap between federal and state/local responsibilities as there are separate or distinct spheres. It is rarely an either/or proposition. Most federal programs are administered by states and/or local governments.”

– Dr. Samuel B. Stone,
Ph.D.
Professor,
California State
University, Fullerton

What is the fairest way to redistribute federal resources back to the states?

“Here I would probably promote a ‘standard of service’ model. The federal government establishes a standard of service and then allocates resources to secure that. States or localities needing more resources to attain the standard (always assuming a proportional effort) would get them before

supporting a higher quality or standard somewhere else. This would not bar a place from making an extra effort on its own to secure a higher standard, simply ensuring the Constitutional injunction to ‘promote the general Welfare’ would be honored.”

– Jack Corbett
Professor
Portland State University

“The fairest way to redistribute federal resources back to the states would be based on need, targeting the states that are unable or unwilling to address regional and household disparities on their own, and based inversely on past investments. In other words, regions that have not been the target of large federal investments in the past should receive the highest priority for future investments. The United States needs to return to policies of even growth and development abandoned since the 1980s and revamp an organization similar in purpose to the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) as a means of reducing political polarization. The ACIR was a bipartisan independent agency that helped the country answer these questions until its elimination in 1996. Since the time of its demise, there has been no equal think tank or forum for considering how the distribution of responsibilities under federalism can help bridge the political divides plaguing the country.”

– Rick Funderburg
Associate Professor
University of Illinois
Springfield

What more can the current administration do to help reduce the impact of revenue shortfalls in state budgets during the current economic climate?

“Some would argue that the problem of state tax revenue shortfalls is one that the relevant states must grapple with on their own. It is my own personal view that what the Biden administration can do best is mostly what it is already doing: striving for full employment, reducing inflation to get interest rates and borrowing costs down, and using its policy authorities to help specific groups of individuals be more economically productive, such as reducing or eliminating

student debt, getting more folks on Obamacare, and directing available resources to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in the least burdensome ways. Maybe there is even a way that the IRS can assist states in going after tax cheats, the existence of which is a terrible burden on honest taxpayers.”

– Brian J. Cook, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
Virginia Tech

“Outside of major shocks like recessions, pandemics, and natural disasters, we generally do not think of it as being the federal government’s responsibility

to sort out state-level revenue shortfalls and state budgets. The federal government does have a responsibility to provide adequate funds to federal programs that are administered by states (and often require state matching funds). Fluctuations and uncertainty in these funds translate to burdens that states and their local governments have to bear.”

– Dr. Samuel B. Stone,
Ph.D.

Visit <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-most-least-dependent-on-the-federal-government/2700> For the full report

– Diana Polk

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VILLAGE OF VINTON, TX

PUBLIC NOTICE

Request for Proposals Environmental Cleanup #2024-001-475

Competitive Sealed Proposal Village of Vinton 2024-001-475 Vinton Rd. Environmental Cleanup

The Village of Vinton is seeking to secure the services of a qualified environmental professional (QEP) to oversee the environmental remediation of 11.3 acres of undeveloped land located at 475 East Vinton Road, Vinton, Texas. The QEP will be responsible for implementation of technical activities and compliance reporting to the TCEQ and USEPA at the direction of the Village's project management. Please go to:

https://vintontx.gov/office2.com/vertical/sites/%7B9571B011-F39E-4B6F-A49E-0B16AB6056A3%7D/uploads/Village_of_Vinton--RFP_for_Environmental_Services_-3.4.2024.pdf

to access the Competitive Sealed Proposal package which sets forth the scope of services, requirements, and selection criteria. It is anticipated that the Village of Vinton will enter a contract with the selected QEP for an initial term ending four (4) years from the date of its execution, with four (4) one-year renewals available at the option of the Village.

Proposals must be delivered sealed to: Village Administrator, Village of Vinton, 436 E. Vinton Rd., Vinton, TX 79821. Proposals must be received by April 2, 2024 at 5:00 pm MDT. Proposals must be sealed in an envelope or box clearly labeled “2024-001-475 Vinton Rd. Environmental Cleanup.” Proposals arriving late will be returned unopened.

All interested respondents are required to register with the Project Manager, Daniel Bueno Jr., to receive updates, addenda or any additional information required. The Village is not responsible for any failure to register.

Attending the pre-proposal meeting is required for a response to be considered for award. The meeting will be held at the Council Chambers at 436 E. Vinton Rd. TX 79821. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2024 at 3:00 pm MDT.

Inquiries to the Village requesting clarification regarding this Competitive Sealed Proposal request must be made via e-mail to Daniel Bueno, Jr. Project Manager at dbueno@vintontx.us. and must be received prior to the end of the business day on March 27, 2024.

Respondents shall designate a contact person to address any questions concerning a proposal. Respondents shall also state the name and title of individuals who will make final

decisions regarding contractual commitments.

Proposals will be opened at the Competitive Sealed Proposal Committee Meeting to be held on April 3, 2024 at 8:30 am MDT, in the City Council Chamber, 436 E. Vinton Rd. Vinton, TX 79821.

The Village of Vinton, Texas is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employer.

Andrea N. Carrillo
Village Administrator

WTCC: 03-14-24
03-21-24

VILLAGE OF VINTON, TX

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 9th, 2024, during the Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting at the Vinton Village Hall, 436 E. Vinton Rd., Vinton, Texas.

A second public hearing will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 16th, 2024, during the City Council Meeting at the Vinton Village Hall, 436 E. Vinton Rd. Vinton, Texas.

The purpose of the public hearings are to allow any interested persons to appear and testify regarding the following proposed item: Consider and take action on request for a Special Use Permit to allow the installation of a mobile home on 7852 Kiely Rd., Vinton, TX, 79821.

Andrea N. Carrillo
Village Administrator

WTCC: 03-21-24

submit their views and proposals to Andrea Nichole Carrillo, Village Administrator at the City Hall. Persons with disabilities that wish to attend this meeting should contact City Hall at (915)886-5104 to arrange for assistance. Individuals who require auxiliary aids or services for this meeting should contact City Hall at least two days before the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

MEETING WILL BE HELD IN PERSON, BUT THE PUBLIC CAN ACCESS THE MEETING THROUGH THE ZOOM.US PLATFORM AT THE FOLLOWING URL:

LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2520023141?pwd=WVVRDZDIFR3ZHR3FJVuL3ZLWTB6dz09>

THE VILLAGE PROVIDES TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE COMMISSION DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING BY CALLING THE FOLLOWING NUMBER: +1 346 248 7799 AND THEN DIAL IN THE MEETING ID 252 002 3141 AND PASSCODE: 12345 FOLLOWED BY THE POUND SIGN (#). THE MEETING WILL OPEN AT 6:25 PM ON EACH OF THE MEETING DATES SO THAT PEOPLE MAY START JOINING. THE MEETING WILL MEET AT 6:30 PM.

Andrea N. Carrillo
Village Administrator

WTCC: 03-21-24

Local stories ranging from disappointment to disrespect to delusion

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

It's been quite a busy last couple of weeks of interesting stories for El Paso sports fans. Let's touch on three things that have had local sports fans buzzing.

Miners finish like champs

The first is the transition of the UTEP basketball team from an up-and-down mediocre squad to Conference USA championship contender.

A few short weeks ago nobody would have thought that the Miners would come anywhere close to advancing to the NCAA Tournament finale.

But last Saturday, there they were in the title game against Western Kentucky after knocking off top-ranked Sam Houston State the day before.

And though the Miners lost the game 78-71, it was still a promising showing for coach Joe Golding and the program. They came back from 12 down to beat Liberty in the opener, they came back from 14 down to beat top-ranked Sam Houston St., they came back from 13 down to lead Western Kentucky, but this time they couldn't hold the lead.

The fact that the Miners got so far is a testament to Golding and the attitude and toughness of the players. They may not be the most talented group in the world, but they fought tooth and nail to pull upset after upset.

Just imagine if the Miners can bring back players like Corey Camper, David Terrell, Derick Hamilton, Trey Horton, Otis Frazier and an improved Ejjiah Jones, to go along with the new talent he'll bring in.

The Miners should see vast improvement next season and content for the title again.

Disrespecting Aaron

A story that shocked everybody was the way the Green Bay Packers treated Aaron Jones. The former UTEP and Burges High running back was released by the team after seven years of faithful and productive service to the team and the community.

This move was especially surprising when you figure that after he missed a few games due to injury last season, he returned to rush for over 100 yards in his last five games in a row. And two of those were in playoff games.

I know that most El Pasoans were hoping that he's sign with the Dallas Cowboys, especially after their running back, Tony Pollard, left the team for the Tennessee Titans.

But in another shocking move, Jones signed with the Minnesota Vikings. I kind of figured that after all those years in cold Green Bay, he'd want to go to a warmer climate. But instead, he went from cold Wisconsin

to freezing Minnesota.

All I hope is that the Vikings take advantage of the talent they just received and use it. There were times that the Packers drove me crazy when they'd just give Jones 5-10 carries the whole game.

Minnesota won't be a contender this season, but let's hope Aaron Jones makes the Packers regret the way they treated him.

All in?

Speaking of the Dallas Cowboys, El Paso's team, I remember owner Jerry Jones saying he was "all in" during this free agent season. That the Cowboys were going to make some big splashes and positive moves. So, I sat down, grabbed my popcorn and waited... and waited... and...

Well, either Jerry is senile or a liar, because the Cowboys haven't done anything while other NFL teams have been improving their rosters left and right.

With the Cowboys so close to having a legit Super Bowl roster, you'd think he would add a few stars to take them to the next level. Now they look worse than the team that lost to Aaron Jones and the Packers in that playoff blowout.

In all, the Cowboys have lost starting running back Tony Pollard, linebacker Leighton Vander Esch, wide receiver Michael Gallup, center Tyler Biadasz, defensive lineman Dorance Armstrong and offensive tackle and future Hall of Famer Tyron Smith.

The only player of any note the Cowboys have signed is former Vikings and Chargers linebacker Eric Kendricks. Kendricks has been good, but he's 32-years old and about to enter his 10th NFL season.

Other than that, the Cowboys have a lot of holes to fill.

I'm still waiting for the Cowboys to do something, but I hope it isn't too much longer – my popcorn is starting to get stale.

Senior moment By Matilda Charles

It's the little expenses that add up

"But it's only..." is a phrase I've come to dislike. It always involves money and people who don't understand living on reduced income.

"But it's only twenty dollars a month," said the one who was signing up for the new program at the rec center and trying to convince others to do the same. "But it's only an extra fifty dollars a month," said the one who was purchasing a package of extra TV cable channels and encouraging the rest of us to do the same. "But it's only..." said the one who happily signed up for a year-long membership at a certain big box warehouse, until we stopped her in mid-phrase.

"But it's only" tends to add up when we calculate all the additional expenses that have come as a result of the increase in prices of, well, everything: rent, electricity, food, clothing, car insurance, movie tickets, prescription drugs, telephone service, pet food and veterinary care.

Seniors on limited income do the mental math each and

every time they hear that phrase and consider the extra expense. When they add the new number to the previous number, they come to the reality: They will not make it through the month if they add new X to the previous total Y, because the increased total Z doesn't exist.

Here are two ways I've managed to shave some dollars off the amount that goes out each month.

The car insurance company gave me a hefty discount when I inquired about combining auto and homeowners insurance under one umbrella. The savings really added up, even though it meant leaving a company I'd been with for decades that did not offer a seniors discount.

I contacted every company I deal with, and three of them offer seniors discounts, which I'd never suspected.

Sometimes all you have to do is ask.

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Super Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19					20				21					22				
23				24					25					26				
27				28			29					30	31					
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37	38	39		40			41				42							
43			44			45				46								
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	61				62	63	64	65			66					67		
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76				77				78						79	80		81	
82			83					84				85	86	87				
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94	95	96								97	98			99		100		
101								102				103			104			
105								106				107			108	109	110	111
112					113	114	115				116			117				
118					119						120			121				
122					123						124			125				

- ADDITIONAL ACROSS
- 1 Not suitable
- 6 "Sorry to intrude..."
- 10 Capricious ideas
- 15 Cartoonist
- 19 Payments to the IRS
- 20 Oscar winner
- Robert De _
- 21 Capital of Vietnam
- 22 Sword handle
- 23 Fifth Avenue skyscraper
- 26 Other, in Acapulco
- 27 Identity hider
- 28 Altitudes: Abbr.
- 29 _C (PC copy command)
- 30 What a groom may toss
- 32 "Uh-huh"
- 34 Pioneer Boone, informally
- 35 Orthodox Jewish movement
- 37 Rapper _ Rida
- 40 Technique for viewing a slow process quickly
- 43 Cattle farm
- 45 Prefix with nourished
- 46 In a daze
- 47 First first lady of the U.S.
- 51 Gets close to
- 55 Sesame seed paste
- 56 Pucksters' org. with the Calder Cup
- 57 Newspaper think piece
- 60 Born as
- 61 Toon sheet
- 62 Hedy of "Ecstasy"
- 66 Rome's _ Fountain
- 67 Dollar bill
- 68 Advance inquiry into a crime, e.g.
- 72 Israeli city close to Ben Gurion Airport
- 73 Big name in life insurance
- 74 Decrease
- 75 Doc for the neck up
- 76 D-H linkup
- 77 FDR or HST
- 78 Former "Idol" judge
- 79 Bob of play-by-play
- 82 Wolfed down
- 84 Launching of people into orbit
- 88 Insurance payment
- 92 "The Simpsons" shopkeeper
- 93 Was overlong
- 94 Dual-focus course about bodily structures
- 100 Some kitchen appliances, for short
- 101 From a northwest Italian port
- 102 Certain South African
- 103 Arena level
- 105 "Hallelujah Chorus" composer
- 106 Rough- wood
- 107 City vehicle
- 108 Gas brand
- 112 Water, in Acapulco
- 113 What love is, per a Four Aces #1 tune, with "a"
- 118 Crate piece
- 119 Capital of South Korea
- 120 Actress Best
- 121 Really mad
- 122 The "T" of 66-Down
- 123 Day divisions
- 124 Bargain
- 125 Restaurant notice that's applicable to this puzzle's seven longest answers?
- DOWN
- 1 Bit of news
- 2 Wine valley
- 3 Allies' rival
- 4 Sprightly
- 5 Mao _tung
- 6 Object of hate
- 7 Thwacks
- 8 Before
- 9 Woman's quaint headpiece
- 10 Jacuzzi, e.g.
- 11 Recital venue
- 12 Not Rep. or Dem.
- 13 Mimi's "me"
- 14 Celebrates with a tune
- 15 Animal with a backbone
- 16 Relative of a shout-out
- 17 Anew
- 18 Tempestuous
- 24 Spicy cuisine
- 25 _ Reader (magazine)
- 31 Carrier based in New Delhi
- 33 Hawke of film
- 34 Salvador of surreal art
- 35 Spicy
- 36 From _ Z
- 37 Sig Nu, e.g.
- 38 Video game tomb raider
- 39 Teetering
- 41 _di-dah
- 42 Attila follower
- 44 Refrigerate
- 48 More artful
- 49 _ a soul
- 50 "_ in Manila" (Ali-Frazier fight)
- 52 Consecrating
- 53 Nevada airport
- 54 In view
- 57 Mining finds
- 58 Sampras of the court
- 59 Show plainly
- 63 Poker cost
- 64 Supplies with personnel
- 65 Coach Parseghian
- 66 LG or RCA products
- 68 Petition
- 69 "Thumbs-up!"
- 70 Gas in signs
- 71 Gasless car
- 78 Tipoffs in hoops, e.g.
- 80 Christie's "A Pocket Full _"
- 81 Depots: Abbr.
- 83 Not old-fashioned
- 84 Cabinet dept. since 1965
- 85 Twosome
- 86 Abbr. on military mail
- 87 Societal
- 89 It might have mascara on it
- 90 Pas' mates
- 91 Opal ending
- 94 Horror-struck
- 95 All-Star pitcher
- Denny
- 96 Yearly
- 97 Gordie of hockey
- 98 Itched (for)
- 99 Seine feeder
- 104 Trendy again
- 106 Stimulate
- 107 _ fide
- 109 Phony
- 110 Creates a lap
- 111 Blood type, for short
- 114 Prefix with pagan
- 115 Part of TTYL
- 116 HST follower
- 117 Loud noise

Comix

OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



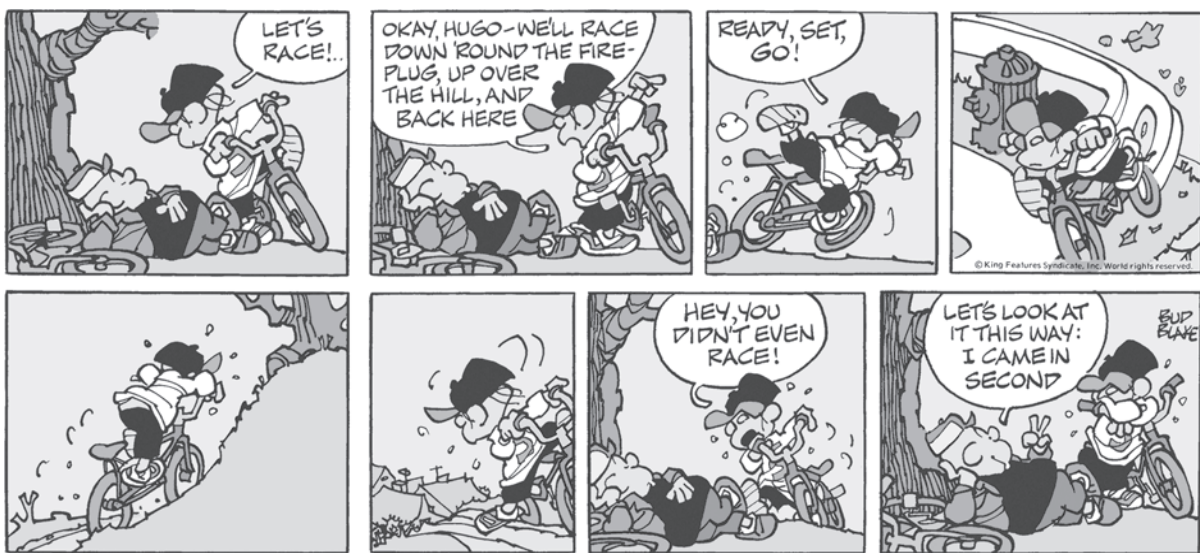
AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



TIGER By Bud Blake



Lowry

From Page 2

in the U.S. increased by 2.3 million between February 2020 and February 2024. Over those four years, the foreign-born employment level increased by 3.3 million, whereas the level of native-born employment is still down by a million.

Steve Camarota of the Center for Immigration Studies estimates that roughly half of those immigrant jobs are going to illegal immigrants.

Needless to say, this isn't the political bragging point that Biden might think. "Bidenomics - it's been great for immigrants regardless of legal status" is not a slogan the president should want to use in a campaign against Donald Trump.

To attribute our economic growth to immigrants is to ignore the contributions of the 85% of the country that is native-born, and all its work, investment and spending.

The deeper problem is how the surge in immigrant labor coincides with a decline in labor-force participation among low-skilled

Americans facing direct competition from the foreign-born. A report by Steven Camarota notes that the labor-force participation rate of native-born men without a bachelor's degree is 75.6%, still lower than the pre-pandemic level of 76.3% in the fourth quarter of 2019, and lower than in 2006 (80.5%) and 2000 (82.6%).

Constantly adding less-skilled immigrant workers to the labor force may increase overall GDP, but it doesn't make the U.S. wealthier on a per capita basis, the more important metric. According to a Congressional Budget Office analysis, greater levels of immigration will increase GDP "by an average of 0.2 percentage points a year from 2024 to 2034, leaving real GDP roughly 2% larger in 2034 than it would be otherwise." On the other hand, real GDP per person "would be 0.8% smaller."

Biden gives no indication that he sees such trade-offs. Who'd want fewer of the migrants "building our country" when we can have constantly more?

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. ©2024 by King Features Synd., Inc.

Chronic dry eyes still a problem months later

DEAR DR. ROACH: I developed chronic dry eyes after having cataract surgery on both eyes. I consulted an ophthalmologist who specialized in treating dry eyes. She prescribed Restasis, but my condition didn't improve after three months of use. She then switched me to Xiidra and instructed me to use it for two more refills, which lasted for nine months. At the end of my conversation with the dry eye specialist, she said that she had done everything she could for me. I inquired about the Miebo drug that was recently approved or the LipiFlow procedure. She mumbled something, then said "goodbye" and "good luck." Was she openly admitting her incompetence? - K.J.W.



It's hard for me to believe that a dry eye specialist wouldn't know about the new treatments available in their area of expertise, and I can only guess that there was some kind of miscommunication. As a generalist, I have to know at least a little bit about a whole lot of conditions, rather than a specialist who knows a whole lot about just a few conditions.

For most people with dry eyes, starting with artificial tears is usual and effective, but I certainly have had patients use artificial tears many times daily and still have unpleasant symptoms. I also recommend trying to avoid dry areas, especially with high airflow.

Most people with dry eyes have blockages in the meibomian glands, which secrete an oily substance that helps prevent the eye fluid from drying. It also forces the lacrimal glands to make more tears. (This leads to the paradox of people having red, watery eyes when they really have dry eye disease.) Trying to unblock the meibomian glands with baby shampoo and warm water is another treatment generalists like me often try. But when these therapies aren't working, an ophthalmologist is essential.

An ophthalmologist can do an exam to be sure if the meibomian glands are blocked. Among the treatments they have available are the ones you tried: cyclosporine (Restasis), which works well for a minority of people; lifitegrast (Xiidra), which decreases inflammation; varenicline (Tyrvaya), which increases tear production; and Miebo (perfluorohexyloctane), which works by reducing evaporation.

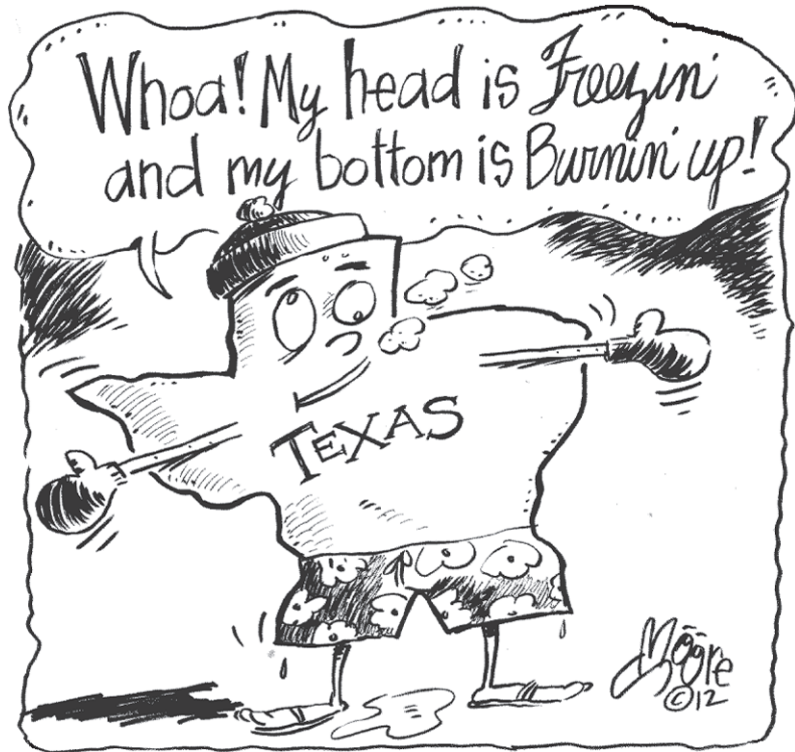
If the problem really is the blocked glands, doctors can also consider more powerful treatments to unblock them. One of these, Lipiflow, is a heat-based treatment. My colleagues in ophthalmology, to whom I refer, tell me that this is often successful, although the process may need to be repeated - sometimes every six months and sometimes longer. Ophthalmologists can also place plugs to reduce the loss of tears through drainage.

DEAR DR. ROACH: We're told to wash our hands with soap and water for 20 seconds to kill the COVID-19 virus. How long should we wash our hands to kill bacteria and other viruses? - C.C.

20 seconds is the right amount of time for bacteria and viruses. An alternative is an alcohol-based handrub, which is fast and effective. Of course, you should wash your hands before and after eating - and after using the restroom. Bacterial spores cannot be easily killed, but they are effectively washed off with soap and water. In cases where spores are a concern (Clostridioides difficile is a big one), then handwashing is essential, as alcohol is ineffective.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu. ©2024 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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Moore Texas by Roger Moore

March 27, 1984: Amarillo was 35° with snow and Brownsville was a sweltering 106° ... big place, huh?

CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: **D** equals **P**

NC Z DLKAGE RGAS Z VOGRL
 PIEYO GC VLNQOS, WG
 HGI AIDDGAL OL YGIRW
 QLS Z EG-PLRRH DKNFL?

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging

Answer Page 4

◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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VA puts a 'pause' on surgeries



by Freddy Groves

The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding an initiative designed to hold off rushing a veteran to surgery. The purpose of the Surgical Pause is to give a good going over with veterans destined for surgery to screen them for risk of frailty.

Already taking place at 50 of the VA facilities, the program seeks to identify veterans who would likely experience post-operative complications, loss of independence and even death. The stats are grim: Too many very frail patients die within six months of surgery, even when that surgery is considered low stress.

The test doesn't take long. The Risk Analysis Index (RAI) is a screening that only takes 30 seconds and gives the medical staff an opportunity to weigh the potential risks before they

move ahead.

Apparently, the pause in the rush to surgery is working. A recent study of 50,000 patients showed that a three-year mortality rate dropped significantly.

If you're scheduled for surgery at the VA, ask for this Surgical Pause assessment, even if you don't consider yourself to be frail. Ask about potential long-term recovery after surgery. Also to be considered: You might ask whether there is non-surgical treatment for your condition. If surgery is definitely in your future, ask, too, whether a three-six week exercise regimen before surgery would let your body beef up and give you some physical reserves.

To read more about the Surgical Pause, go to marketplace.va.gov/innovations/preoperative-frailty-screening-prehabilitation. When you read down to "Successful adoptions," view the list of innovations each hospital has started. Scroll to the "Surgical Pause" in each one to see if they were

successful. There is also an "In-progress adoptions" section for hospitals that are still working on their programs. Know in advance how your hospital rates.

Of course, you need to do what your doctor says. But if you ask good questions (Do I need a Risk Analysis Index?), you'll make a better health advocate for yourself.

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• If you can put a tension rod in the cabinet under your sink, you can use it to hang spray bottles for extra storage. It's amazing how much space clears up, and it's easy to find the bottle you need.

• Got popcorn? For a healthier (and much less expensive) version, go old-school: Put popping corn kernels in a regular brown paper bag, seal the bag, then microwave.

• "Bread tags (the little plastic clips that hold bread bags closed) make great cord organizers when you are using a multiple outlet power strip. Write the kind of device (e.g. TV, Xbox, cable box) on the tag, then clip it to the plug end of the cord. When you need to unplug, it'll be easy to see which is which." – C.C. in Ohio

• Travel a lot? Make use of those shower caps by pairing up shoes and using the shower cap to hold them together while simultaneously protecting your clothes from the shoe bottoms. Smart!

• "I make plenty of cupcakes for my children's various events, but I kept having unreturned cupcake carriers. Those things are expensive! I make my own now, using a box lid. The lids for paper cartons work really well. Cut a cross into the lid top with a razor or carpet knife, and press down. Make it the size of a cupcake. Insert cupcakes and go." – A.R. in Georgia

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. ©2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

GO FIGURE!

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	+		÷		=	4		
+		+		+				
	+		-		=	5		
-		×		+				
	+		-		=	2		
=		=		=				
4		60		16				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

DIFFICULTY: ★★

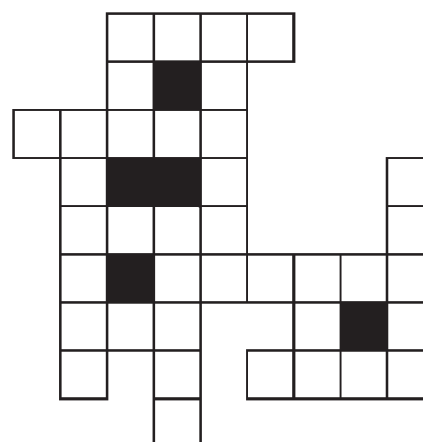
★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
 ★★★ GO FIGURE!

Answer Page 4

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- UDM
- ULIMIE
- OPLIS
- ♥ OTEM
- ♥ NUTOAM
- PCU
- EMKA
- ACIMN
- OTO
- IMPCUE
- OKPKE
- IDCO



Answer Page 4

Unscramble these twelve letter strings to form each into an ordinary word (ex. HAGNEC becomes CHANGE). Prepare to use only ONE word from any marked (♥) letter string as each unscrambles into more than one word (ex. ♥RATHE becomes HATER or EARTH or HEART). Fit each string's word either across or down to knot all twelve strings together.

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