



– Photo from Internet

CHANGES COMING – The Social Security Administration offices, like the one in El Paso shown above, will soon help provide guidance on how it will implement the new law that will provide significant Social Security raises for many government retirees, like teachers and police officers.

Social Security's WEP and GPO are repealed

New law increases Social Security benefits for more than 2 million retirees

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

NATION – Social Security Administration officials recently confirmed that the Social Security Fairness Act (SSFA) has been enacted and that they are now evaluating how to implement it.

The new law repeals the 1980s-era Windfall Elimination Penalty (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) which prevented nearly three million government retirees, nationwide, that earned pensions in those careers from collecting their full Social Security benefits that they earned while working outside of government.

In one of his final acts before leaving office in January, former President Joe Biden signed into law the legislation that did away with the two controversial tax provisions which were impacting the retirement benefits of some federal workers and other public servants, such as police officers and teachers.

Essentially, WEP reduced the Social Security benefits of retired federal workers and other public servants who spent a portion of their career in the private sector outside of a federal, state or local government job where Social Security was not intended as an

element of their retirement income, such as the Civil Service Retirement System. And GPO reduced spousal and survivor Social Security benefits in families with retired government workers.

When signing the bill Biden said, “The bill I’m signing today is about a simple proposition: Americans who have worked hard all their lives to earn an honest living should be able to retire with economic security and dignity. Social Security is the bedrock of financial security for retirees, survivors and for millions of Americans with disabilities... But the law that existed denied millions of Americans access to the full Social Security benefits they earned by thousands of dollars per year... Those benefits cuts cost them security, and a little bit of dignity as well.”

Government officials estimated that with SSFA’s enactment, more than 2 million retired public servants impacted by the WEP and 750,000 spouses and survivors affected by the GPO will see an increase on average of \$360 per month to their Social Security benefits. Many of them also will receive a lump sum payment for the money they missed out on due

See SOCIAL SECURITY, Page 5

The Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset

Since 1983, two Social Security policies have impacted a select number of earners who benefit from a public pension that is based on work that was not covered under Social Security: The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). WEP impacted benefits based on an individual’s own work record, while GPO impacted benefits based on the work and earnings of a spouse, ex-spouse, or deceased spouse.

Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)

WEP was enacted as a reform that was intended to even the Social Security playing field. The Social Security benefit computation formula was intended to favor lower-income workers. Prior to the enactment of the WEP, earners who had worked in both covered and non-covered positions within their careers could be considered lower earners. As a result, the individual received a high replacement rate, earning more benefits. In essence, an individual who may have received a high government salary also received the same benefits as a low-income worker.

WEP prevented career uncovered workers from taking advantage of such circumstances. In 2022, the maximum reduction of Social Security benefits from those who receive a public pension in addition to Social Security was \$512 a month (but couldn’t be more than 50 percent of one’s pension). An employee who worked for under 20 years at a substantial earnings level would see the maximum reduction in their monthly benefit, although the reduction decreased with additional years of work paying into the Social Security system.

Government Pension Offset (GPO)

GPO was another provision that significantly reduced Social Security benefits. GPO also applied to individuals who got a public pension, based on work not covered under the Social Security program, but was specifically for those collecting benefits such as a spouse, divorced spouse, widow or widower.

Under GPO, any spousal, divorced spousal or survivor benefit was reduced by two-thirds of the amount of the public pension. For example, a teacher who is a widow and receiving a survivor benefit but has not retired, he or she would usually receive full Social Security benefits. However, once the teacher retired and began to draw a public pension, the Social Security survivor benefit would be reduced by two-thirds of the amount of the pension.

Sorry, Canada – we don't want you

“54-40 or Fight” was the slogan of supporters James K. Polk in the 1844 presidential campaign, referring to their desire to take a substantial slice of what would eventually become Canadian territory.

For his part, Donald Trump isn't bothering to set out any latitude lines when he discusses his ambitions on Canada – he wants the whole thing, or so he says in his trolling of our friendly neighbor to the north and its embattled progressive prime minister Justin Trudeau.

In recent weeks, Trump has mused about Canada becoming the 51st state, posted an artificially generated image of himself beside a Canada flag atop a mountain staring heroically into the distance, and referred to Trudeau, amusingly, as “governor.”

By all accounts, most Canadians have taken this

in stride, but some have expressed consternation or indignation, to which we can reply, “Don't worry, Canada – we don't really want you.”

Even if Trump were inclined to dust off War Plan Red – the Department of War's strategy in the early 20th century for how to conduct a war against the British Empire, featuring Canada as a key battlefield – it wouldn't be worth the effort.

The United States doesn't need another huge, misgoverned Blue State. We already have California, where the climate and the surfing are better.

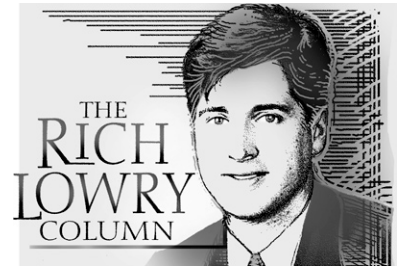
Over the past several years, Canada has managed to fall even further behind the United States economically. “The IMF forecasts that Canada's national income per head, equivalent to around 80% of America's in the decade before the pandemic,

will be just 70% of its neighbor's in 2025,” according to The Economist.

Writing on the same theme at the website The Hub, University of

Calgary economics professor Trevor Tombe notes that “the gap between the Canadian and American economies has now reached its widest point in nearly a century.” The U.S., he continues, “is on track to produce nearly 50% more per person than Canada will.”

Canada would be the fourth-poorest state in the Union, beneath Alabama. Tombe breaks it down province by province. Ontario, home to Toronto,



See LOWRY, Page 7

The staggering cost of ‘mining’ virtual currencies

Mining facilities must register with PUCT

By Ellie Breed
Special to the Courier

TEXAS – The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) is now accepting virtual currency mining facility registrations through an online portal hosted on the PUCT website.

Facilities with a total demand of more than 75 megawatts are required to register. Existing facilities must register by Feb. 1, 2025. Future facilities must register no later than one working day after the facility begins receiving retail electric service. Visit www.puc.texas.gov/industry/electric/business/vcm/ for information regarding the types of facilities that must register and registration requirements on the PUCT's website.

Facilities registering with

the PUCT must provide information annually about the facility's location, ownership, and demand for electricity.

On Nov. 21, 2024, the PUCT adopted a new rule requiring virtual currency mining facilities located within the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) region to register with the PUCT. The rule implements Public Utility Regulatory Act (PURA) §39.360, enacted by Senate Bill 1929, which was passed by the 88th Texas Legislature and signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott in 2023.

Virtual currency mining facilities are considered “flexible loads,” meaning they can quickly adjust their power consumption in response to certain factors, like changes in the wholesale price of electricity. These

How much?

Mining a single Bitcoin (BTC) as an individual miner requires a substantial amount of energy. On average, mining 1 BTC consumes around 6,400,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity. If attempted by a solo miner, this task could take nearly 12 years to finish, using approximately 44,444 kWh of power each month (calculations based on data in our methodology).

- Mining 1 Bitcoin in Ireland costs up to \$321,112, while in Iran, miners pay just \$1,324 – over 240 times cheaper.
- A miner in Iran could mine over 42 Bitcoins for the same energy cost required to mine just one Bitcoin in Ireland.
- The electricity used to mine a single Bitcoin in 2024 could power about 61 U.S. homes for a year.
- With the energy it takes to mine

just one Bitcoin, a Tesla Model 3 could go around the Earth more than 86 times.

- With the current Bitcoin price at \$57,909.16, U.S. miners face about a 50% loss per Bitcoin due to high energy costs.
- Asia leads in Bitcoin mining profit, with more than 20 countries where miners make money.
- Mining Bitcoin in some European countries like the UK or Germany costs 5 times more than the Bitcoin is worth.
- 8 out of 49 countries where Bitcoin mining is profitable have banned cryptocurrencies.

([https://nftvevening.com/bitcoin-mining-cost/#:~:text=Mining%20a%20single%20Bitcoin%20\(BTC\)%20as%20an,\(calculations%20based%20on%20data%20in%20our%20methodology\).](https://nftvevening.com/bitcoin-mining-cost/#:~:text=Mining%20a%20single%20Bitcoin%20(BTC)%20as%20an,(calculations%20based%20on%20data%20in%20our%20methodology).))

characteristics can impact the registration will help the wholesale electricity prices PUCT and ERCOT manage or the frequency of the grid. The information provided in virtual currency mining

facilities connect to the grid.

Qualifying facilities failing to register will face a Class A violation which, according to Chapter §25.8 of the PUCT's rules, could result in up to a \$25,000 penalty per violation per day.



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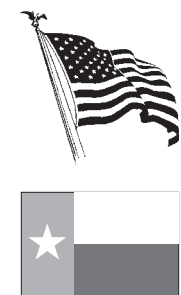
Phone: 852-3235

E-mail: wtxcc@wtxcc.com
Website: wtxcc.com

Publisher
Rick Shrum

Contributors
Alfredo Vasquez
Steve Escajeda

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San Elizario Independent School District Public Notice of Meeting

San Elizario Independent School District will hold a public hearing to discuss the District's 2023-2024 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR). The meeting will be held at 4:00 P.M. on Wednesday, February 12, 2025 in the San Elizario ISD Central Office Board Room, 1050 Chicken Ranch Rd., San Elizario, Texas, 79849.

The public is invited to attend. For more information, call (915) 872-3900.

Junta Pública

Distrito escolar independiente de San Elizario celebrará una audiencia pública para discutir el informe de rendimiento académico 2023-2024 Texas del distrito (TAPR). La reunión se celebrará a las 4:00 p.m. el miércoles, 12 de febrero de 2025 en la sala de juntas de San Elizario ISD, 1050 Chicken Ranch Rd., San Elizario, Texas, 79849.

El público está invitado a asistir. Para obtener más información, llame al (915) 872-3900.

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Video game by Arreola and Aguirre earns global recognition

By Adriana Candelaria
Special to the Courier

ANTHONY, TX – Two Anthony High School students have developed a video game that's being played by people around the world.

Cesar Arreola, a junior, and Gerardo Aguirre, a senior, won first place for their video game, *Me, My Fears, and I*, at the Counterspell 24-Hour Hackathon hosted by Fab Lab El Paso at the Microsoft El Paso Innovation Club on November 26.

Both students participate in various extracurricular activities at school—including robotics, esports, and band—that helped them develop the creative skills necessary to build their game in just 24 hours.

“We did all the programming, art, music, and sound effects ourselves. Jerry handled the art, and I worked on the programming,” Arreola explained. “The first step was setting up the controls so I could use the keyboard to play the game. After that, it was just a matter of adding enemies,

which follow the player using an algorithm.”

At the start of the hackathon, the duo was given the theme of “being one’s worst enemy.” Inspired by the prompt, they designed their game around a boy named William, who battles ghosts, clowns, and the boogeyman in his nightmares.

“It was my first time doing pixel art. I just looked up a bunch of videos to learn how to shrink the screen and create pixel designs,” Aguirre said. “The main character was based on what Cesar was wearing that day. I also used my guitar for the music and crushed a bag of potato chips to create the sound effects for footsteps.”

The contest was peer-judged, with other participants voting for *Me, My Fears, and I* as the first-place winner of the hackathon in El Paso.

“Having kids come up to us and say how cool the game was made me so happy,” Aguirre shared.

The game went on to compete against top entries

See GAME, Page 4



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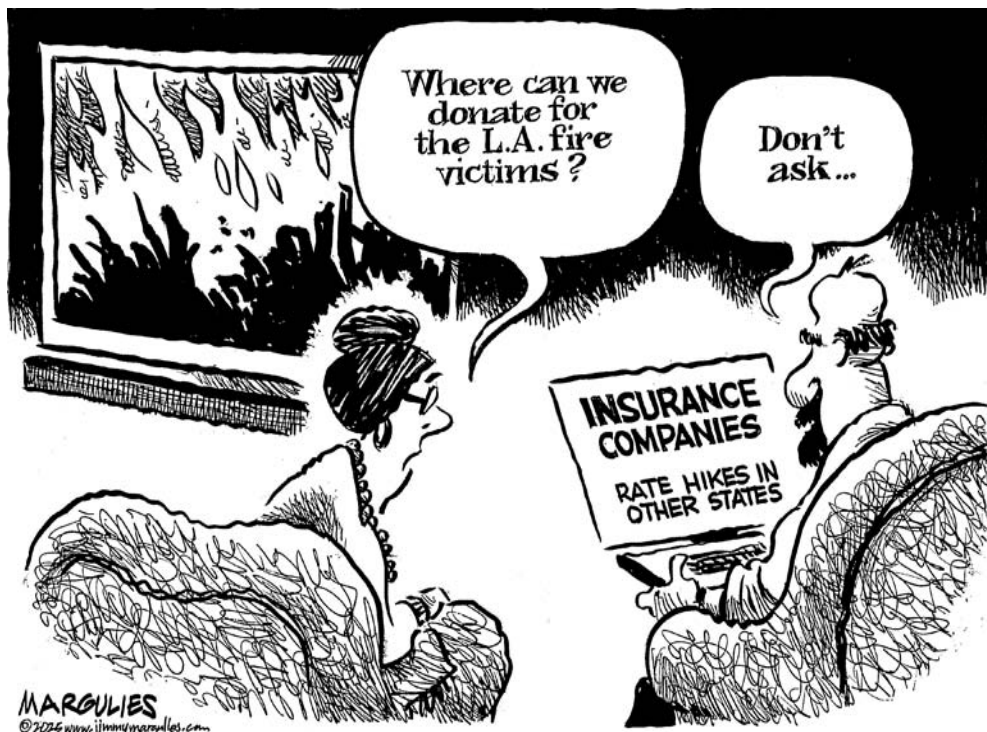


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- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Therapy and Grief Counseling

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Game

From Page 3

from other hackathons around the world. In January, *Me, My Fears, and I* ranked Hack Club's top 10 video games globally.

Hack Club is a global nonprofit network of high school hackers, makers, and coders. The organization hosts competitions worldwide to encourage teenagers to create STEM projects.

"It makes me so happy to know that kids around the world are enjoying a video game we created," Arreola said.

GAME MAKERS – Cesar Arreola, left, sits with Gerardo Aguirre.



– Photo courtesy Anthony ISD

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- In Switzerland, it is illegal to mow a front lawn while dressed as Elvis Presley.
- Have a yen for learning about things that go bump in the night? You can get a Ph.D in parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh.
- Red Bull energy drink was originally called Red Water Buffalo.
- There was a Russian game show that would have you steal a car, and if you didn't get caught by the police within 35 minutes, you'd win the car. Otherwise, you would be arrested.
- Benjamin Franklin invented a mechanical arm for reaching books on high shelves.
- Sulfhemoglobinemia is a condition that causes a person to develop green blood.
- Translated literally, the Japanese words for wrist and ankle are "hand neck" and "foot neck."

• In 2015, two brothers from Spain attempted to sell a fake portrait by Francisco de Goya to a sheikh for a cool 1.5 million euros, only to discover that he'd paid them in photocopied money. The pair were arrested when they tried to deposit their ill-gotten gains in a Geneva bank.

• A study done by the University of Glasgow found that dogs appear to prefer reggae and soft rock over other genres of music.

• The first mention of the word "pizza" was in a Latin text written in southern Italy in 997 CE.

• The eponymous character in Dolly Parton's hit song "Jolene" was based on a bank teller who flirted mercilessly with Dolly's husband.

Thought for the Day: "It ain't what they call you, it's what you answer to."

– W.C. Fields

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Clint Independent School District Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance Governmental Funds For the Year Ended August 31, 2024

Data Control Codes	10 General Fund	Other Funds	Total Governmental Funds
REVENUES:			
5700 Total Local and Intermediate Sources	\$ 18,890,961	\$ 7,845,104	\$ 26,736,065
5800 State Program Revenues	102,888,847	8,792,121	111,680,968
5900 Federal Program Revenues	13,833,149	17,065,607	30,898,756
5020 Total Revenues	135,612,957	33,702,832	169,315,789
EXPENDITURES:			
Current:			
0011 Instruction	68,823,343	12,286,590	81,109,933
0012 Instructional Resources and Media Services	1,329,282	8,124	1,337,406
0013 Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development	2,027,724	3,533,720	5,561,444
0021 Instructional Leadership	2,494,180	1,154,998	3,649,178
0023 School Leadership	7,397,161	460,080	7,857,241
0031 Guidance, Counseling and Evaluation Services	3,968,736	1,546,883	5,515,619
0032 Social Work Services	110,492	2,031	112,523
0033 Health Services	1,368,558	113,997	1,482,555
0034 Student (Pupil) Transportation	4,487,344	140,381	4,627,725
0035 Food Services	11,617,997	110,897	11,728,894
0036 Extracurricular Activities	4,080,317	7,108	4,087,425
0041 General Administration	4,003,972	86,373	4,090,345
0051 Facilities Maintenance and Operations	15,194,860	481,582	15,676,442
0052 Security and Monitoring Services	3,086,564	64,992	3,151,556
0053 Data Processing Services	2,653,978	127,651	2,781,629
0061 Community Services	113,726	289,632	403,358
Debt Service:			
0071 Principal on Long-Term Liabilities	146,458	6,787,649	6,934,107
0072 Interest on Long-Term Liabilities	6,349	5,653,175	5,659,524
0073 Bond Issuance Cost and Fees	–	6,498	6,498
Capital Outlay:			
0081 Facilities Acquisition and Construction	9,048,375	124,434	9,172,809
Intergovernmental:			
0099 Other Intergovernmental Charges	376,176	–	376,176
6030 Total Expenditures	142,335,592	32,986,795	175,322,387
1200 Net Change in Fund Balances	(6,722,635)	716,037	(6,006,598)
0100 Fund Balance – September 1 (Beginning)	81,083,805	5,400,585	86,484,390
3000 Fund Balance – August 31 (Ending)	\$ 74,361,170	\$ 6,116,622	\$ 80,477,792

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

M I L L E T
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GENIES OMEGA DATABASE
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STUDENTUNION BEETROOT
OER OLIN AMO ELMO
FRATERNALORGANIZATION
TOLUCA RARE LADEN
TOIL ACTIONGROUP
AWE SMAUG EER LOOSE
MERCHANTGUILD FREEZER
IDAHO AGAR VIA FSP
ETHICSCOMMITTEE
TUB INK AEON SLYER
BROWSES HUMANESOCIETY
ADREP MER LASIK ACE
RUGBYLEAGUE PAIN
REIKT DIEM PRAVDA
HOMEOWNERSASSOCIATION
ELON SAT ITTO SUI
EDITMENU EIGHTOFFCLUBS
DIRECTOR ETHEL RESALE
SEARCHME NOTRE OODLES

CryptoQuip Answer

The young child's loose incisor made his gums pretty sore. I told him "This tooth shall pass."

5	+	6	+	7	=	18
+		+		+		
2	+	1	×	4	=	12
-		+		×		
3	+	9	-	8	=	4
=		=		=		
4		16		88		



Moments in time
THE HISTORY CHANNEL

• On Jan. 27, 1906, Norwegian speed skater Rudolf Gundersen set an impressive world record in a 500-meter speed skating event in Davos, Switzerland, completing the distance in just 44.8 seconds.

• On Jan. 28, 1917, a maid named Carmelita Torres objected to the chemical delousing frequently given to Mexicans crossing into the U.S. by initially refusing to leave the trolley carrying her and other immigrant workers, then hurling whatever she and her fellow riders could find at American authorities in what became known as the Bath Riots, which lasted through the following day.

• On Jan. 29, 1958, one of Hollywood's most enduring marriages began in Las Vegas, Nevada, when actors Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward tied the knot. The union lasted until Newman's death from lung cancer in 2008, at the age of 83.

• On Jan. 30, 1835, Andrew Jackson experienced the dubious distinction of being the first American president to be the victim of an assassination attempt. He clubbed the attacker, Richard Lawrence, several times with his cane and escaped angry but unscathed, thanks to both of Lawrence's guns misfiring, and Lawrence spent the rest of his days in a mental institution.

• On Jan. 31, 1945, Private Eddie Slovik was shot and killed by a 12-man firing squad in eastern France, making him the first American soldier since the Civil War to be executed for desertion.

• On Feb. 1, 2003, the Space Shuttle Columbia broke up while entering Earth's atmosphere over Texas, killing all seven crew members. Strangely, worms used in a study by the crew, that were stored in a canister aboard the shuttle, did survive.

• On Feb. 2, 1897, inventor and businessman Alfred Cralle, a porter at the Markell Brothers drugstore in Pittsburgh, patented the first ice cream scoop, which he called the "ice-cream mold and disher." The Pittsburgh Press reported that the scoop could serve up "40 to 50 dishes of ice cream in a minute," while avoiding "the soiling of the hands." Cralle was the first Black man in Pittsburgh to receive his own patent.

Social Security

From Page 1

to the two provisions over the entirety of 2024.

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) President Bill Shackelford commended the president for finally signing the bill that took years for Congress to pass, despite bipartisan support.

"Since their inception, NARFE has opposed the windfall elimination provision and government pension offset as unfair penalties that punished hardworking public servants by reducing their Social Security benefits," Shackelford said. "... History was made when President Biden signed the Social Security Fairness Act into law. This

milestone represents the culmination of years of tireless advocacy by NARFE and its members, who time and again made the case for fairness and equality in Social Security benefits."

With the full repeal of the WEP and GPO provisions, the Social Security Administration (SSA) must now provide Congress and the public with clear guidance on how it will deliver immediate relief to those who have been impacted by the flawed stipulations. Government officials stated that they want to know as soon as possible about SSA's plans to implement the law and what action, if any, those who will benefit must take and how the agency will alert those who will benefit.

Meanwhile, the Social Security Administration has provided a link at the top of its website to a page concerning

the new law that says the agency is "evaluating how to implement the act" and that it will provide updates.

"We will provide more information as soon as available," the agency stated. SSA officials said that only those who previously filed for benefits need only to verify their current mailing address and direct deposit information if it has recently changed. To do this, individuals are advised to go online, at www.ssa.gov/myaccount, to sign in or create an account. Those government retirees who haven't previously filed for benefits can do so at ssa.gov/apply or call their nearest office to schedule an appointment.

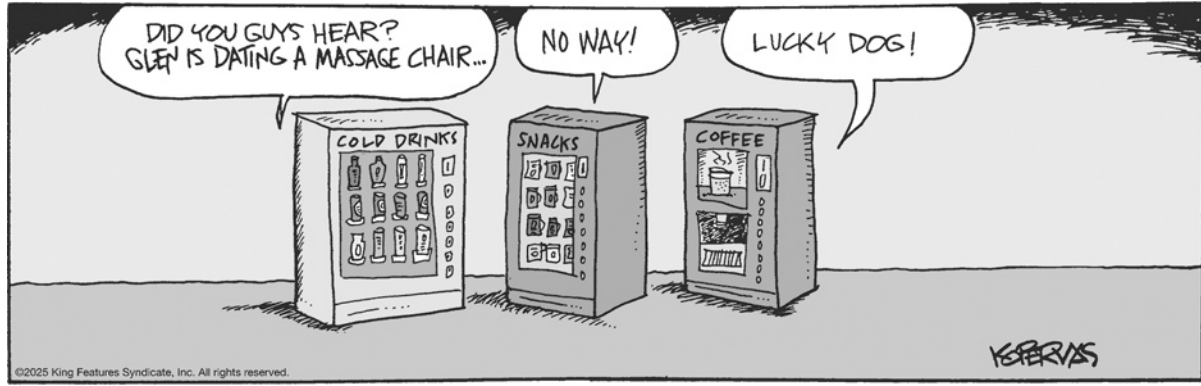
Though the implementation could take months, the Social Security Fairness Act is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2024, and recipients will receive back pay from that date, SSA officials explained.

**Fabens Independent School District
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance
Governmental Funds
For the Year Ended August 31, 2024**

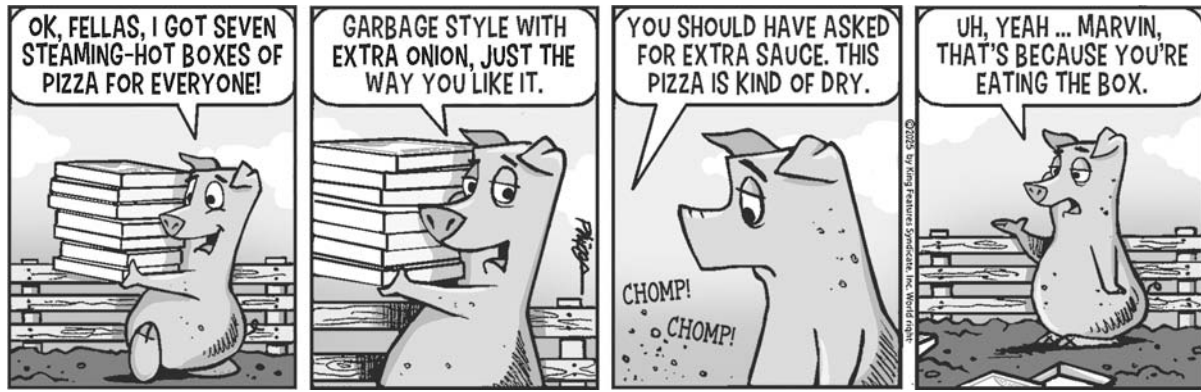
Data Control Codes	10			98
	General Fund	ESSER III Fund	Other Funds	Total Governmental Funds
REVENUES				
5700 Local and Intermediate Sources	\$ 2,617,530	\$ -	\$ 881,148	\$ 3,498,678
5800 State Program Revenues	21,073,191	-	2,507,330	23,580,521
5900 Federal Program Revenues	2,794,571	5,066,325	3,702,835	11,563,731
5020 Total Revenues	<u>26,485,292</u>	<u>5,066,325</u>	<u>7,091,313</u>	<u>38,642,930</u>
EXPENDITURES				
0011 Instruction	13,193,858	2,311,159	2,990,057	18,495,074
0012 Instructional Resources & Media Services	252,235	72,406	-	324,641
0013 Curriculum & Instructional Staff Development	155,306	57,310	5,778	218,394
0021 Instructional Leadership	588,834	324,022	159,456	1,072,312
0023 School Leadership	1,438,633	74,059	54,065	1,566,757
0031 Guidance, Counseling & Evaluation Services	965,519	46,291	169,093	1,180,903
0032 Social Work Services	8,424	106,129	50,621	165,174
0033 Health Services	302,187	98,164	759	401,110
0034 Student Transportation	566,087	31,957	-	598,044
0035 Food Services	1,742,864	79,638	-	1,822,502
0036 Extracurricular Activities	873,628	6,594	10,480	890,702
0041 General Administration	1,102,406	32,464	-	1,134,870
0051 Facilities Maintenance and Operations	3,289,506	830,510	458,447	4,578,463
0052 Security and Monitoring Services	429,130	976,869	7,800	1,413,799
0053 Data Processing Services	510,498	12,174	-	522,672
0061 Community Services	32,794	6,579	41,272	80,645
0071 Debt Service - Principal	46,121	-	1,515,000	1,561,121
0072 Debt Service - Interest	3,915	-	680,959	684,874
0073 Debt Service - Bond Issuance Costs	-	-	2,750	2,750
0081 Facilities Acquisition and Construction	319,689	-	983,464	1,303,153
0099 Other Intergovernmental Charges	40,353	-	-	40,353
6030 Total Expenditures	<u>25,861,987</u>	<u>5,066,325</u>	<u>7,130,001</u>	<u>38,058,313</u>
1100 Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	623,305	-	(38,688)	584,617
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES)				
7915 Transfers In	-	-	50,295	50,295
8911 Transfers Out	(50,295)	-	-	(50,295)
7080 Total Other Financing Sources (Uses)	<u>(50,295)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>50,295</u>	<u>-</u>
1200 Net Change in Fund Balance	573,010	-	11,607	584,617
0100 Fund Balance - Beginning	14,261,478	-	86,670	14,348,148
3000 Fund Balance - Ending	<u>\$ 14,834,488</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 98,277</u>	<u>\$ 14,932,765</u>

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

the biggest city in Canada, would be the fifth poorest state. Quebec would be the second poorest, falling between West Virginia and Mississippi. Why would we make Canada's scuffling economic performance our problem? Then, there's the matter of politics. Canada would be a Blue State behemoth, matching California in population (roughly 40 million) and, presumably, in reliably Democratic politics. There are red areas of Canada, which have the same urban versus rural divide as the U.S., yet the Great White North is overall less conservative. Polling in Canada prior to the U.S. presidential election showed Kamala Harris with a three-to-one lead over Trump, and an advantage even in the more Trump-friendly prairies. The U.S. and Canada are friendly neighbors with intertwined histories, but have distinct political and economic cultures. We might think we'd annex Canada and make it more like us, but – with two Democratic senators and a huge tranche of electoral votes for a

Democratic presidential candidate – Canada would surely make us more like it. In that sense, the joke would definitely be on us. We'd also be buying ourselves an instant separatist problem by incorporating Quebec, the French-speaking province that has had a notoriously troubled relationship with the rest of Canada. If we want to add French, along with English and Spanish, as yet another obligatory language option, this would be a great move. Then, there's the matter of Justin Trudeau. After his irksome, grievous misrule of Canada, it would be even more annoying if the story ended with him becoming a U.S. citizen. Who knows? Still young, he might become a strong contender for the 2028 Democratic nomination, depending on the timing of the Ontario caucuses. All that said, national modesty compels us to admit that all our prior efforts to take Canada have failed, and our pleasant northerly neighbor deserves respect, amid the ribbing. Let Canada be Canada.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. ©2025 by King Features Synd., Inc.

Doctor doesn't recommend OTC sleeping aids or 3 beers for sleep

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 81-year-old man in reasonably good health. When I had trouble falling asleep, I would take a swig of Zzzquil, which worked perfectly every time. However, since then, my cardiologist told me to stop taking such products, so I turned to 5-mg tablets of melatonin in the evening to help induce drowsiness. Sometimes it worked, and sometimes it didn't. One night, after I had three beers, I also took two gelscaps of Gas-X to alleviate the bloated feeling just before bed. It was about an hour or so after the melatonin, and I quickly dozed off to sleep. Since then, I noticed that if I awaken in the night and take another Gas-X, I shortly doze off again and have remarkable, complex dreams. Is this self-protocol of mine medically unsound in any way? – W.G.



There's a lot going on here. First off, I completely agree with your cardiologist that the sleep aid you were taking, like most over-the-counter sleep aids, contains diphenhydramine, an antihistamine that sedates some people. The problem with this medicine is that the quality of sleep isn't good for many people. It also increases the risk of falls in older people and the risk of motor vehicle accidents in people who drive. It's not a good choice for older adults.

Melatonin is safer and has fewer side effect, one of them being vivid dreams. However, 5 mg is a big dose. I usually recommend 0.5-1 mg in my older patients. Gas-X (simethicone) isn't absorbed into the body and shouldn't cause vivid dreams. A search found no reports of abnormal dreams with simethicone, so it was almost certainly the melatonin that caused the dreams. Maybe Gas-X allowed you to sleep while the melatonin was still around enough to give you vivid dreams.

In addition, three beers on a regular basis are more than what is considered healthy for anyone, and a man in his 80s will be affected by three beers much more than a younger man of the same size.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Seven years ago, I went to the emergency room and was told I had blood clots in my arms that traveled to my lungs. I started Eliquis. The doctor said I had a problem with factor V, but I don't have my blood results. Do I need to stay on this blood thinner? I know it has severe side effects. – M.T.

Factor V is a protein that is critical in making clots, and an abnormality in this protein can make a person bleed (although this is very rare).

What's more common is a condition called factor V Leiden (FVL), which makes the body resistant to the activated protein C, a natural anticoagulant. (Anticoagulants decrease blood-clotting and are sometimes referred to as "blood thinners.") So, the net effect of FVL is that it makes blood clots a little more likely. Many people have FVL, but most will not develop a blood clot.

However, you apparently developed blood clots in both arms that caused the clots to move to the lungs, which are called pulmonary emboli. Determining the duration of therapy takes clinical judgment. Because you had clots in your arms rather than your legs, had a pulmonary embolus, and have FVL, some experts would treat you for the rest of your lifetime.

I wouldn't say that Eliquis has severe side effects. Because it reduces blood-clotting, there is a chance of bleeding. For most people with a low to average risk of bleeding, the likelihood is on the order of 1% to 2% per year. If the risk of a life-threatening clot is higher than the risk of bleeding, then continued anticoagulation is preferred.

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. ©2025 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Moore Texas by Roger MOORE

January 24, 1845: The Texas Senate ratifies a peace treaty with 11 Indian tribes. Sam Houston brokered the deal.

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: F equals N

UQS ZLVFA EQCBW'G BLLGS
CFECGLN HXWS QCG AVHG
JNSUUZ GLNS. C ULBW QCH
"UQCG ULLUQ GQXBB JXGG."

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

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

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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When the punishment does not fit the crime



by Freddy Groves

I had to read the sentence three times before I understood that it really did say what I thought it did: A Department of Veterans Affairs nurse stole pain drugs from dying patients and got a slap on the wrist.

The name was familiar, and I realized that yes, I'd written about this nurse earlier this year when she pleaded guilty to diverting the drugs. I said at the time that the maximum possible sentence of four years was way too short for the crimes.

Specifically, this nurse would take the pain drugs intended for patients in intensive care and only give a partial dose. She would take the rest of the dose herself and falsify the medical records. She did this to one patient alone 19 times in nine days. She

even volunteered to care for a certain patient so she could steal his drugs.

The three drugs in question were hydromorphone (which is two to eight times stronger than morphine), fentanyl (which is 50-100 times more potent than morphine and heroin) and oxycodone – all high-power medications for serious pain. Can you imagine being the patient who needed the pain relief and didn't get it?

As someone who once had surgery that required morphine afterward for pain control, I can't imagine the horror of experiencing pain and not getting relief from medication that your doctor has ordered... because the nurse is stealing it.

And I said at the time, four possible years in prison for these crimes would not be enough.

But now she's finally been sentenced, and what did she get for punishment? Two years of probation. And that's what I had to read three times, because surely

it didn't really say that – except it did. And of that two years, the first six months will be home confinement.

I wish someone would explain to me how hanging out at home for a few months and then being on probation is anywhere near the right punishment for these crimes.

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• If you're expecting your first child, heed this bit of advice: Assemble and otherwise try out complicated items right away, while you have the time to learn how to work them. New dad Dan had a heck of a time trying to load bags into his brand-new Diaper Genie in the middle of the night.

• Bloodstains on clothing can be really tough to treat. The best way to get a bloodstain out of clothing is by dousing the stain with hydrogen peroxide and washing immediately as usual.

• "I love to refinish and paint furniture pieces and woodcrafts. I always check my local recycling center for small amounts of "recycled" paint. Usually, someone has gotten rid of good paint, and the people at the recycling center are happy to have it used." – B.B. in Virginia

• Toothpaste works well as a silver polish. Wet your silver, plop a little non-gel toothpaste on it and rub gently with a damp, clean rag. Rinse well with a separate rag, and buff dry. Then just step back and let it shine.

• If you've ever oversalted soup, don't worry; here's a great tip to recover your meal. Just cut a single potato into several large slices. Add them to the soup, and they will soak up the extra salt. Remove before serving.

• S.W. of South Carolina has this tip to share: "If you can't seem to keep track of your keys, make an extra set for those mornings when you are running late and can't spare the time to look for them. It has saved me a lot of stress, for sure."

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. ©2025 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.

DIFFICULTY: ★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult

★★★ GO FIGURE!

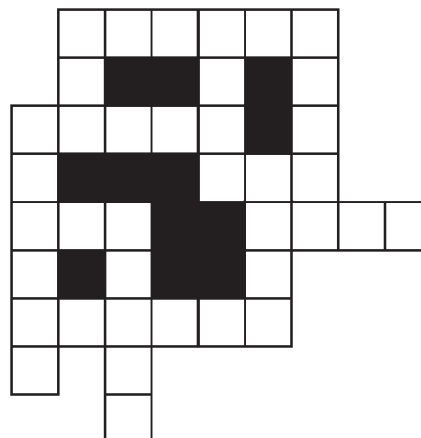
Answer Page 4

	+		+		=	18		
+		+		+				
	+		×		=	12		
-		+		×				
	+		-		=	4		
=		=		=				
4		16		88				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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- ♥ LPA
- LITMLE
- TMROS
- EMNO
- MANPLA
- ♥ EEW
- ♥ ELMA
- ETMOT
- ♥ OMT
- EPUNIS
- ♥ ASPEL
- RWMO



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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