



School vouchers bill passes Texas senate, moves to house

By **Alfredo Vasquez**
Special to the Courier

TEXAS – The debate over the controversial school voucher program is intensifying as the Texas Senate recently passed its version of the voucher legislation. Titled Senate Bill 2 (SB 2), the proposed legislation would make up to \$11,500 in public money available to students annually for private tuition costs.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has made the issue his number one priority of the session, saying it's a legislative "emergency" that lawmakers must fast-track during the legislative session that ends June 2nd. According to the governor, two-thirds of Texans support the idea and the school voucher proposal "doesn't take a penny from public schools".

In previous sessions, Senate-passed voucher measures have died in the House, but this session new Republican Speaker Dustin Burrows has said his chamber will pass it. Republicans have an 88-62 majority in the House, and several GOP members who blocked similar legislation in the past were either defeated by their primary challengers last year or decided against seeking reelection.

The Senate-passed bill for a \$1 billion school voucher program means public funds would

be used to help families cover private school costs. SB 2, which was sponsored by Sen. Brandon Creighton, proposes giving Texas parents \$10,000 per student, and an additional \$1,500 would be made available for students with disabilities.

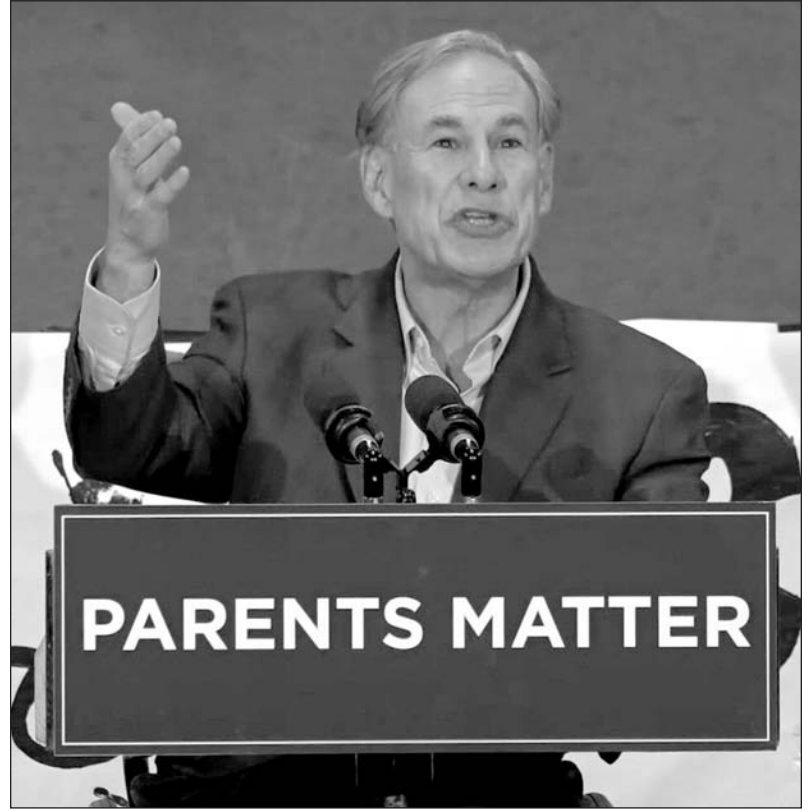
However, there's significant pushback. Critics, including some lawmakers, worry that these vouchers could divert essential funds from public education, weakening the school systems overall.

One state senator from Houston who opposes SB 2 raised concerns that such programs have historically prioritized white students, referencing past voucher systems that circumvented desegregation orders. He emphasized the need for a fair approach that prioritizes kids in low-performing schools.

Supporters of the bill, however, insist that the funding comes from state surplus, not from public education dollars, and argue it's about giving families more options. Advocates contend that it will give parents the "best options" to educate their children.

Most Texas educators remain unconvinced. Little Cypress-Mauriceville Superintendent Stacey Brister, who traveled to Austin to represent educators opposing the bill,

See **VOUCHERS**, Page 3



– Photo courtesy Governor's Office

ON THE STUMP – The debate over school vouchers in the current Texas legislative session has been a hot topic for a long time, but the initiative gained momentum this year as Gov. Greg Abbott, above, has taken on a statewide tour promoting the plan at private and rural schools throughout the state. Opponents insist that local school districts would lose money if the legislation called "school choice" is enacted this year.

Anthony ISD students head to UIL State competition

By **Adriana Candelaria**
Special to the Courier

ANTHONY, TX – Eleven Anthony ISD students are seeing their hard work, dedication, and talent pay off as they advance to the state competition for the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Solo and Ensemble Contest.

Eighteen students competed in the UIL Solo and Ensemble Competition on Feb. 8 at Hanks High School. When the results were announced, the students and their sponsors were thrilled to learn that more than half of the competitors had qualified for state.

"The students were absolutely thrilled when we told them their score," said Janella Saad, Anthony ISD Band Director. "They found out at different times throughout the day, so it was great to have that kind of energy all day long. Knowing how much effort they put into practicing,



– Photo courtesy Anthony ISD

STATE BOUND – From left, Andrea Salazar-Renteria, Jaqueline Levario, Jerry Aguirre and Monty Salas along with seven others Anthony ISD students will be competing at the State UIL in Solo and Ensemble contests in Austin, TX.

I was already proud of all the feeling for them to see what they can accomplish when they work hard," said Saad.

extracurricular activities while preparing for the competition.

"Preparing for this contest takes a lot of individual work, with hours of practice for each student, as well as teamwork to bring the ensembles together," said Janella Saad, Anthony ISD Band Director.

District leaders believe this is one of

Since December, students have been diligently practicing their music pieces before, during, and after school to fine-tune their performances. Many have also balanced other

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Anthony ISD students going to State UIL

- Miguel Kroll – Bb Clarinet Solo
- Jose Hernandez – Horn Solo
- Cesar Arreola – Snare Solo
- Giselle Castillo – Saxophone Quartet
- Emily Lara – Saxophone Quartet
- Fernanda Sanchez – Saxophone Quartet
- JD Garcia – Saxophone Quartet
- Jerry Aguirre – Percussion Ensemble
- Jacqueline Levario – Marimba Solo and Percussion Ensemble
- Monty Salas – Percussion Ensemble
- Andrea Salazar-Renteria – Percussion Ensemble

Trump's power play

Judging from the first week or so, the Trump doctrine is going to be, We can do it the easy way or the hard way.

Those are the words the president used in a post on Truth Social last week threatening tariffs on Russia if it didn't cut a peace deal with Ukraine.

Trump is a president who understands and has no hesitation in using, the leverage the U.S. has abroad as the world's preeminent economic and military power, and the leverage he has at home as a newly elected president with a mandate and the strong backing of a fervent political movement.

He's going to talk loudly and swing whatever stick he has at hand.

His brief diplomatic tussle with the president of Colombia was instructive. It started with an exchange of words, and ended with Trump putting his counterpart in what in the WWE they call a Scorpion Death Lock.

President Gustavo Petro didn't want to accept U.S. flights returning Colombian nationals who had come here illegally. Trump threatened punishing tariffs on Colombian goods, to which Petro responded with his own threat before realizing that he'd be deploying a peashooter against a mechanized infantry division.

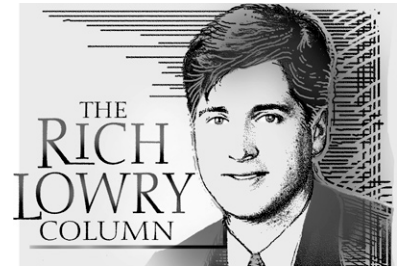
Colombia sends a quarter of its exports to the United States, so Trump's threat of 25% tariffs escalating to 50% within a week was an intolerable risk.

This is likely to be a model for Trump getting other countries to accept our deportation flights, and getting Latin American nations to restore

the immigration arrangements that worked so well at the end of Trump's first term.

Everyone knows the United States is the most powerful nation on Earth. Whereas the conventional thinking has been that this overwhelming might imposes on us an obligation to treat allies with a certain respect, Trump's belief is that it lends us a crushing disparity in negotiating power that we should use to our advantage.

Traditionally in diplomacy, there's a tendency to



See LOWRY, Page 7



Armendariz, Colmenero, win BPA state design contest

By Christy Flores-Jones
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Two pin designs created by students from Mission Early College High School have won the Texas Association of Business Professionals of America (BPA) pin design contest. These pins will be traded with students from other states and countries at the BPA National Leadership Conference (NLC).

Junior Aileene Armendariz and sophomore Shalom Colmenero are among four Texas students who will be recognized for their winning entries at the State Leadership Conference on Feb. 27 in Dallas, Texas. The pins will be distributed to BPA members at the conference who will then exchange them with members from other BPA chapters during the NLC in May in Orlando, Florida.

Armendariz, who is an officer in her school's BPA chapter, said winning the contest reaffirmed her decision to pursue a career in graphic design. Her design featured a cowboy

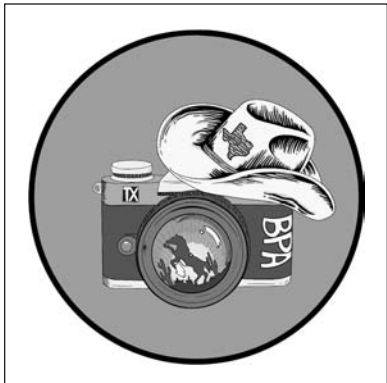
hat on top of a camera, with an image of a horse standing on its hind legs reflected in the camera lens.

"Winning this contest gave me the validation I needed to continue my dream of having a career involved with graphic design," Armendariz said. "Being able to share and teach graphic design would mean the world to me. I am very grateful for this opportunity. Thank you SISD and BPA."

Colmenero, who was recently elected BPA Regional President, designed a pin depicting an armadillo holding a camera with the Texas flag in the background.

"Creating and sharing my artwork has always been a passion of mine," Colmenero said. "Winning this design contest is an incredible honor, knowing my work was selected. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to represent Texas BPA through my art."

Each winner will receive a pin at the NLC, a certificate and \$50. Their designs will be spotlighted on the BPA website and in the national app.



– Photo courtesy Socorro ISD

READY TO TRADE – Aileene Armendariz, left, and Shalom Colmenero designed award winning pins – under their photos. They will be recognized on February 27 for their work.



– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

KEEPING MOM IN SCHOOL – Ivy Santana, left, gets information about children's college from Alex Hinojosa-Furr, top, and Crysol Escobedo.

EPCC conference spotlights student parents

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) held its first Family Friendly Conference on Friday, February 14, 2025, at the Northwest Campus, with various free activities for students and

the community to celebrate parents make every day to reach their college degree goals," Lucia Rodriguez, EPCC Director of Student Success and the Student Parent Resource Centers (SPRC), said. "The well-being of families leads to a strong community. We are here to provide support to

parents make every day to reach their college degree goals," Lucia Rodriguez, EPCC Director of Student Success and the Student Parent Resource Centers (SPRC), said. "The well-being of families leads to a strong community. We are here to provide support to

"To bring to light the dedication and effort student See CONFERENCE, Page 4



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Vouchers

From Page 1

argued that the program will create chaos in Texas classrooms. She asserted that the bill is not equitable to all students. She pointed out that SB 2 lacks transparency and equity.

Nonetheless, Abbott and other Republican lawmakers insist it will benefit all Texas students. "We want every student at every level to have that same opportunity, that is why we must pass school choice this session," Abbott said.

But most educators know that private schools are not held to the same standard as public schools. They realize that private schools, because they are private, have the ability to say to a student that he or she does not qualify to attend a particular private school. As Superintendent Brister pointed out, "If you're special ed, they don't have to accept you. If you have some type of emotional issues, they don't have to accept you. If you are just bad they don't have to accept you."

The superintendent also argued that private schools will not be held to the same level of academic accountability as public schools. "There are no strings attached. So that means they will not see a STAAR test, they will not have an A to F rating. They don't have a school board that's voted upon that is accountable to the people of their community, because their students come from all communities," she said.

Abbott and his supporters maintain that the model has worked elsewhere and believe it will strengthen the education system across the board. "I've talked to thousands of parents who are angry about woke agendas being pushed on students in public schools. Our schools are for education, not indoctrination, and we will not allow woke agendas in our schools, period," the governor said.

Another Superintendent, Dr. Shannon Allen of Beaumont Independent School District, highlighted her concerns about vouchers in a recent news report.



- Internet

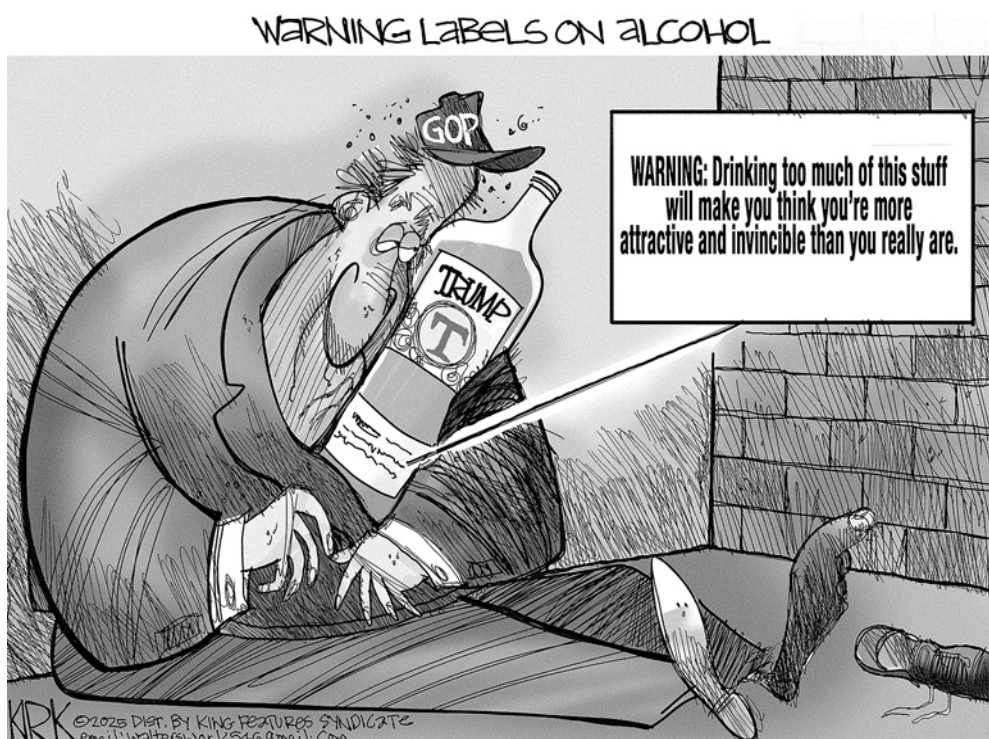
A QUESTION OF FAIRNESS – Most classroom teachers oppose school vouchers bill. They argued that the program will create chaos in Texas classrooms. Many asserted that the bill is not equitable to all students and claim that SB 2 lacks transparency and equity.

Allen stated that she strongly opposes the school voucher bill recently passed by the state Senate because it would divert critical resources from public education. "We oppose any system that's going to divert taxpayer dollars away from public institutions like public schools," she stated.

Allen emphasized that 90 percent of Texas students are educated in the public school system and warned that vouchers could leave public schools with fewer resources and more challenging student populations. "When public education is strong, guess what? You have strong communities," she stated as she urged lawmakers to prioritize funding for public schools.

Public school leaders and advocates across El Paso County are also taking a stance against the proposed legislation that would allow private schools to receive state funds through voucher-like programs. Many expressed concern that the efforts would siphon funds from already struggling school districts and are worried that those in low-income and rural areas would be hit the hardest.

"My first thought is before they send public funds to a private institution, the state should be able to fund the current public school system appropriately, which it's not," Clint Independent School District Superintendent Juan Martinez stated in a recent news interview.



Conference

From Page 2

student parents on their path to graduation!"

The Family Friendly Conference, sponsored by the EPCC Family Friendly Campus project, is designed to teach students about achieving success in college while having fun through various activities, workshops, and information tables. Success seminars and classes took place, while students and their children enjoyed pizza and were given t-shirts. Many of the children were allowed to choose items in the Student Parent Resource Center's free children's closet.

Many of the students and their children enjoyed Valentine's Day card making, story time and crafts, and chalk drawing. The SPRC also had quick tutorials on navigating college costs as a student parent, vision board creation, balancing stress and time management.

Saturday's Family Friendly Conference will feature kids' yoga, workshops, EPCC Cares workshop, student parent panels, dance for kids and much more.

The Family Friendly Conference will also take place Saturday, February 15, 2025, at the Mission del Paso Campus, Building R Flexitorium from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.: 2 special days to celebrate students & their children!

EPCC Student Parent Resource Centers (SPRC) provide a welcoming study space for EPCC student parents and their families. EPCC Parenting Students or Students helping with parenting responsibilities (Caregivers) are welcome to bring their children with them while they study or do homework at the Centers. Parent/Caregiver must supervise their child(ren) at all times while they are in these spaces.

Visit: www.epcc.edu/Services/family-friendly-campus-services for more information.



Moments in time

THE HISTORY CHANNEL

- On Feb. 17, 1998, the United States defeated Canada by 3-1 to take home the gold medal in the first women's hockey tournament held at the Winter Olympics, in Nagano, Japan.

- On Feb. 18, 2003, Kim Daehan ignited a gasoline-filled container inside a subway train in Daegu, South Korea. The resulting blaze engulfed the six-car train and spread to another that pulled into the station minutes later, killing 198 people and injuring nearly 150 more. Daehan later confessed to police that he'd wanted to commit suicide and chose a crowded place to do so because he didn't wish to die alone.

- On Feb. 19, 1777, the Continental Congress voted to promote Thomas Mifflin; Arthur St. Clair; William Alexander, Lord Stirling; Adam Stephen; and Benjamin Lincoln to the rank of major general, leaving Brigadier General Benedict Arnold feeling slighted that five junior officers received advancement ahead of him and, in response, threatening to resign from the Patriot army.

- On Feb. 20, 1939, New York City's Madison Square Garden

hosted a rally celebrating the rise of Nazism in Germany. Inside, more than 20,000 attendees raised Nazi salutes toward a 30-foot-tall portrait of George Washington flanked by swastikas, while police and some 100,000 protesters gathered outside.

- On Feb. 21, 1862, at the Battle of Valverde, Confederate troops attacked Union troops near Fort Craig in New Mexico Territory in the first major engagement of the Civil War in the far West. The fighting yielded heavy casualties but no decisive result.

- On Feb. 22, 2006, a gang of at least six men, some armed, made off with 53 million pounds from the Securitas bank depot in Kent, Great Britain – the largest such theft in British history.

- On Feb. 23, 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, was shot to death by a white father and son while jogging in Georgia. William Bryan, who filmed the shooting on his phone, was arrested and charged with felony murder and criminal attempt to commit false imprisonment, while Gregory and Travis McMichael were arrested on charges of murder and aggravated assault, after Bryan's video of the killing was released.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- It is illegal to publish photographs of handcuffed suspects in France, as they're not to appear guilty until actually proved so.

- The word "king" in a snake's name indicates that it preys on other snakes.

- St. Lucia is the only country in the world named after a woman. Originally called the Island of the Iguanas by early Carib settlers, the name was later changed after French seamen were shipwrecked there on Dec. 13, the feast day of St. Lucy.

- Studies have shown that spending only a few minutes every day in the New York City subway system can ultimately result in hearing loss.

- Pope Gregory I decreed that rabbit fetuses were marine mammals and they could therefore be eaten during Lent.

- A bobsled is so named because early racers bobbed their heads back and forth in an attempt to gain speed. (It didn't work.)

- The annual World's Biggest Liar competition in Cumbria, England invites entrants from around the world to tell the biggest and most convincing lie they can muster in five minutes. No props or scripts are allowed, nor are politicians or lawyers permitted to compete, as "they are judged to be too skilled at telling porkies."

- Cockroaches are so repulsed by humans that if they're touched by a human, not only do they run away, but they wash themselves. (Personal to cockroaches: The feeling is mutual!)

- Bananas are curved because they grow towards the sun, in a process called "negative geotropism."

Thought for the Day: "Let us be grateful to people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom."

– Marcel Proust

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AISSD

From Page 1

the largest – if not the largest – groups from Anthony ISD to qualify for state. Among these talented musicians, two eighth graders are making a strong impression since most competitors are typically high school students.

"This is an incredible accomplishment for our students and a testament to their dedication, talent, and hard work," said Superintendent Dr. Oscar A. Troncoso. "Seeing such a large group from Anthony ISD qualify for the state competition makes us extremely proud. We can't wait to see them represent our district in the state's capital."



– Photo courtesy Anthony ISD

Dr. Oscar A. Troncoso

The state competition will take place in Austin, Texas, this May.

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EPCC Cares offers students therapy at three campuses

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) is committed to serving students, and on Thursday, February 13, 2025, EPCC celebrated the Grand Opening of EPCC Cares at the Valle Verde campus. EPCC Cares also has offices at Northwest and Mission del Paso.

EPCC Cares is a mental health support program exclusively for active EPCC students and co-habitants. Services include individual, group, family, and couples counseling, available in-person or virtually. Therapy sessions run for 8 weeks and are free of charge. EPCC Cares also connects students with referrals to community agencies.

“Ensuring students have mental health and social services support is just one example of our commitment to ensuring that every student has access to the resources they need to thrive,” EPCC President Dr. William Serrata said. “This marks another significant milestone in our commitment to fostering an enriching and supportive environment for all students.”

EPCC Cares is not just a physical space – it symbolizes EPCC’s commitment to ensuring that every student on our campuses knows they are not alone. It is a space where they can receive professional care, guidance, and understanding, regardless of what they may be experiencing. By supporting students with mental health and social service support, EPCC will help students manage stress, encourage self-care, and provide students with the tools they need to succeed both academically and personally.

EPCC understands balancing work, school



– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

SNIP – Dr. Carmen Castillo-Attar center, EPCC Cares Coordinator, is joined by staff, students and administrators as she cuts the ribbon on the center’s new location on the 4th floor of Building C at the Valle Verde campus.

and other responsibilities can be demanding and sometimes require some extra support which EPCC Cares will provide.

“I want to emphasize how important mental health is for students,” Dr. Carmen Castillo-Attar, EPCC Cares Coordinator, said. “It impacts how they deal with everyday stresses, build, and manage relationships, but it also helps them to realize their full potential, contribute to their communities and to maintain an overall good quality of life. Being a college student

is not easy, especially for those who have many other roles to fulfill while attending college. EPCC Cares will assist in fulfilling this key component of the student overall college experience.”

EPCC Cares will be free to students and their co-habitants. Sessions can be in-person or virtual. EPCC Cares is located at Valle Verde in Building C, Room 433; Northwest in M23, and Mission del Paso in Building C, Room 141. Visit www.epcc.edu/Services/EPCC-Cares for more information.

SISD students to provide free income tax preparation

GECU Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program runs through April 15

By Christy Flores-Jones
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – High school students enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in the Socorro Independent School District are partnering with GECU Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) to provide tax preparation services for households with an income of under \$85,000. This service will be available from Feb. 17 to April 15 at Americas, Socorro, Pebble Hills, Montwood, El Dorado, and Eastlake high schools.

The students, along with their instructors, have obtained advanced certification to help community members file their taxes for free. Taxpayers can visit any of the sites between 5 and 7 p.m. to file their 1040EZ, 1040A, and 1040 forms.

Tax preparers will ensure the confidentiality and security of all documents.

Individuals must take with them:

- Original and current proof of identification (photo ID) for individual and spouse (VITA

cannot file taxes for married couples filing separately);

- Original social security card for everyone listed in the income tax return or a social security number verification letter issued by Social Security Administration;

- All W-2 wage and earnings statements;
- 1099-SSA, 1099-R and 1099-G;
- Work expenses;
- Direct deposit information (account number and routing number);

- Form 1098 for any student loans;
- Both spouses must be present to sign required forms to file taxes electronically on a married filing jointly tax return;

- Proof of child or dependent care expenses;
- Property tax statements;
- Forms 1095-A, B or C, Affordable Health Care statements;

- Current IRS PIN letter if individual is an identity-theft victim;

- Notice 1444-C, Economic Impact Payment for 2022; and

- Advance Child Tax Credit letter 6416 or 6416-A.

Locations and dates:

Americas High School, Frontier Room, 12101 Pellicano Dr.
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 5-7 p.m.

Feb. 18 – April 15
(Closed March 11 – 25 and April 1)

Eastlake High School, Room F107, 13000 Emerald Pass
Tuesdays and Wednesdays: 5-7 p.m.

Feb. 18 – April 15
(Closed March 11 – 25 and April 2)

El Dorado High School Library, 12401 Edgemere Blvd.
Mondays and Wednesdays: 5-7 p.m.

Feb. 17 – April 14
(Closed March 10 – 24 and April 2)

Montwood High School Library, 12000 Montwood Dr.
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 5-7 p.m.

Feb. 18 – April 15
(Closed March 11 – 25 and April 1)

Pebble Hills High School, Room L102, 14400 Pebble Hills Blvd.
Mondays and Thursdays: 5-7 p.m.

Feb. 17 – April 14
(Closed Feb. 27 and March 10 – 24)

Socorro High School, Room 1600, 10150 Alameda Ave.
Mondays and Wednesdays: 5-7 p.m.

Feb. 17 – April 14
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State law now requires both adults and children to be buckled up in the front or back seat. A child less than 8 years old, unless taller than 4 feet 9 inches, must ride in a child safety seat. Most children between 4 and 8 years old will need a booster seat to be safe and comply with the law. Fines range from \$25 to \$250, plus court costs. TexasClickItorTicket.com



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

want to let the other side save face; Trump's reflex, apparent in the Colombia episode, is to embarrass the other side to create a cautionary example.

Trump is practicing realpolitik if Otto von Bismarck had an active social-media account and the flair of a former reality TV star.

His hope is clearly that enforcing a small red line at the beginning will make it easier to enforce bigger red lines later on.

We hear a lot in international affairs of deterrence, or making a threat to keep foreign actors from doing something you oppose. Trump is now practicing compellence, or making a threat to coerce foreign actors into doing things we want.

That Trump is a strong believer in tariffs gives him a tool in pursuit of this approach not available to free-trade-oriented presidents.

At home, Trump has always been willing to target dissenters within his party more harshly and personally than any of his predecessors. His record of ending political careers ensures

that those Republicans who don't genuinely love him have to fear him, increasing his political power.

In his second term, he also seems determined to use every lever at his disposal to advance his agenda, including things he might have been talked out of, or not considered, the first time around. If there is an authority hiding somewhere in the federal code that might be of use, his team is surely ferreting it out.

All this adds up to a forceful presidency abroad and at home, bumptious and assertive in a way we haven't seen perhaps since Teddy Roosevelt.

This is not to suggest that Trump has found the magic key to guaranteed success. Bogota is obviously easier to manhandle into submission than, say, Moscow, while presidencies always look best in the first couple of weeks before unanticipated events take a hand.

Whatever happens, though, it's almost certain that Trump is going to squeeze every ounce of power and influence out of his presidency.

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

Stress testing may be done for several reasons

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 87-year-old person who has experienced atrial fibrillation and a mild stroke, I have had two nuclear stress tests done. In both cases, I told the supervising nurse I wanted to go to the max limits that they would allow. Even though I attempted to prepare by briskly walking up the hill close to my home and thought I was doing well on the treadmill, I failed to reach the final parameters that they were seeking. To get me there, I was injected with something (the name escapes me) that is supposed to achieve the same result as the final stage of a nuclear stress test. As I recall the discussion, the nurse stated that many couldn't get as far as I did. Medications were a way for them to obtain the needed results. — J.M.



Stress testing may be done for several reasons, but the most common is to determine whether there are blockages in the arteries in the heart that are severe enough to limit blood flow. When ordering a stress test, the clinician has to decide how to stress the heart and get information from it.

In people who can exercise (meaning they don't have an orthopedic or neurological condition that keeps them from being able to move), then using exercise is the best approach in almost all cases. Exercise is safer since you can stop doing it at any time, and it also provides useful information. People who can exercise for a longer time (9 minutes on a standard protocol called a Bruce) have a very good prognosis; whereas if you can't make it to 3 minutes, this is a poor prognosis.

The treadmill gets steeper and faster every 3 minutes on a Bruce protocol so that eventually even an Olympic athlete has to give up. The goal is to get to maximum exercise where a person simply can't go any further. The person who runs the stress test looks for any sign of incipient heart damage through an electrocardiogram (EKG), a blood pressure monitor, or symptoms so that the test can be stopped if it seems dangerous.

Despite trying really hard, some people cannot get their heart rate and blood pressure high enough where the stress test can diagnose heart disease. In this case, the exercise stress test is converted to a pharmacologic stress test. A medication, such as dobutamine, is given to make the heart beat faster and stronger until the adequate workload is achieved.

Many of my patients tell me that this is uncomfortable, and more than once, I have heard someone say, "My heart was going to jump out of my chest." If there are signs of danger, the medication can be stopped, and in some cases, a reversal agent is given.

Once the heart is at an adequate level of exertion, abnormalities in the blood flow can be detected by the EKG. However, the test's sensitivity can be improved by looking at blood flow through a radioactive chemical injected in the blood, which can measure blood flow to various regions of the heart more precisely. The sensitivity can also be improved by examining the heart's wall movement through echocardiography.

In other cases, a more limited stress test is done to determine the safety of exercise. This is often done after a heart attack to determine which exercises a person can do as part of their cardiac rehab.

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.

Send Your News To:
wtxcc@wtxcc.com



Moore Texas by Roger Moore

February 18, 1973: Texas' first team in the National Women's Football League - Dallas Bluebonnets - lost their first game.

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: **G** equals **U**

BFWZT FWTF NP COT G.M.
 QOTWT LTNLBT FBQFDM LGC
 PNWCO CNXM NP TPPNWC:
 COT ZWTFC LFYXM WTZYNX.

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

9	6			4		2	5	
7		8	3	2	6	1		4
	4			1			7	
6		5	4				1	7
2				8				5
	7	4			5	3		2
		6				7	3	1
8			6					
			1			8	4	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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New benefits guide for 2025



by Freddy Groves

The Department of Veterans Affairs has released a new publication that you'll want to see. The "2025 VA Federal Benefits Guide for Veterans, Dependents, Survivors, and Caregivers" is now available.

Go online to va.gov and search for "pamphlet 80-25-1" for a link to the handbook.

This 120-page handbook is full of info you may need, if not now then later. Whether it's education benefits, life insurance, home loans or mental health resources and more, it's there.

Just seeing it all in one publication is an eye-opener. We really do have a lot of benefits. The guide is well done; somebody was thinking about it when they included all the eligibility requirements for each benefit, including the periods of service.

Right in the front is a list of

help phone numbers, ranging from Camp Lejeune Family Member Program, to National Cemetery Scheduling Office, to 72-Hour Emergency Care Notification Line and many more. This is followed by pages of department websites, complete with click links right in the online document.

Save the link as a bookmark on your computer so you can find it again.

Getting a printed copy, however, might be a bit difficult. A recent VA news release says that "a limited number" of copies might be available at your closest VA facility. (See www.va.gov/find-locations for the ones near you.) Which means that by the time you read this, they'll be gone. I would hope that veteran service organizations will print out a few copies of the handbook to have for members to use.

If you don't have a computer to access the handbook and your local VA facility doesn't have copies, you can call the VA with your questions at 800-827-1000 from 8 a.m. to 9

p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. They'll get you to the right department.

For another collection of resources, see www.va.gov/welcome-kit for a Welcome Kit, even if you're not new to the VA. It's 53 pages and includes a mobile app for download.

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- "For a small splinter that is buried, try this trick before you go digging around with a tweezer or a sterilized needle. Use a piece of banana peel laid pulp-side-down over the splinter and cover it with a bandage. Leave it on overnight if possible. It has something to do with the enzymes in the peel as it ripens, but it will help draw out the splinter. The peel needs to be nice and ripe, and it might take a couple of tries." - D.M.

- Need a substitution for buttermilk? You can use an equal amount of plain, unflavored yogurt, or for each cup, add a teaspoon of vinegar or lemon juice to a cup of milk.

- "On chore days, I write each chore or step of a chore on a sticky note and attach them to the kitchen counter. Then we all get together and decide who will do what. We end up with our stack of sticky notes and can complete the chores in an organized fashion." - R.E. in Alabama

- Keep a lint roller by the sewing machine to quickly swipe up those tiny bits of thread. It'll keep your sewing area from getting messy.

- Sharpen scissors by cutting through a piece of aluminum foil that has been folded over several times. It really does work!

- Parents of twins (or other multiples): It really does make a difference when you join a multiples club or keep in touch with an organization for that purpose. Most do clothing swaps or sales fairly often, and the money you'll save in the clothing the first year is worthwhile.

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!

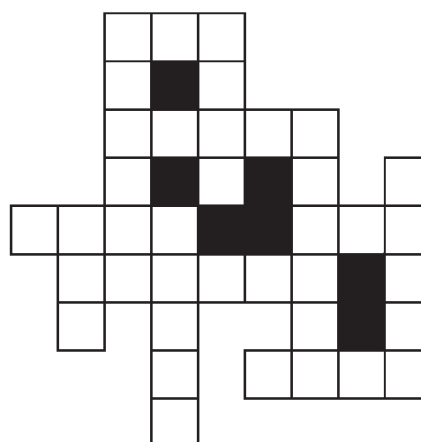
Answer Page 4

	+		-		=	4		
+		+		+				
	-		×		=	24		
÷		÷		×				
	+		+		=	13		
=		=		=				
15		2		99				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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- ORN
- BITONA
- TEWDL
- ♥ KEWA
- WODNAR
- DLO
- ♥ ADRI
- AWKET
- WRO
- ♥ ILKDEN
- ♥ EKRAB
- ♥ EDRO



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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