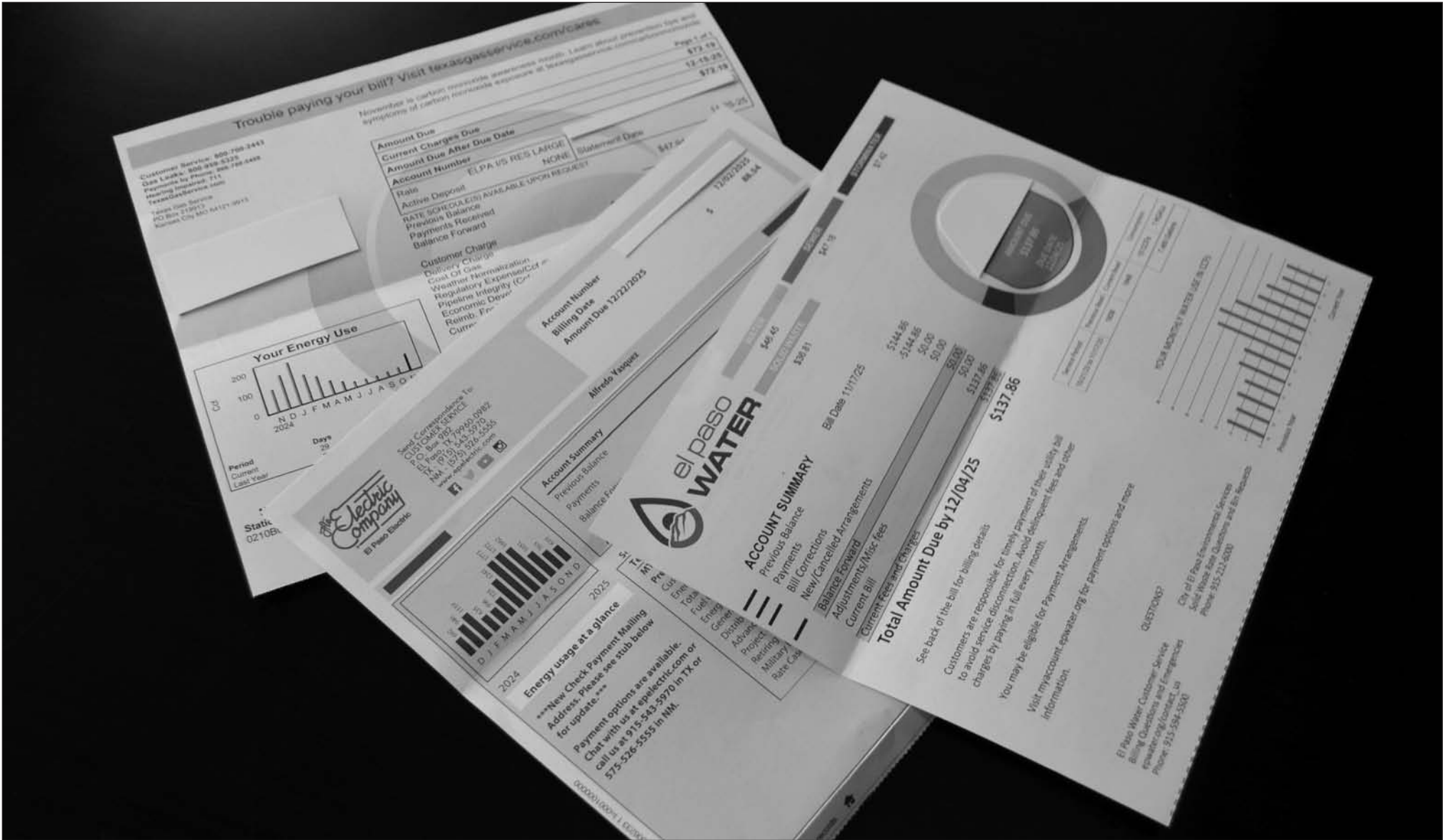


Major utilities seek rate hikes in El Paso County



— Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

TOO MUCH – Amid a broader slowdown in the U.S. economy, El Paso County residents’ utility bills, like the ones in photo above, are outpacing wages. “Overall, you’re seeing a growing concern about affordability for ratepayers, particularly residential ratepayers... as everyone is getting squeezed to death with rising prices, whether that’s food, whether that’s cost of living,” said Krysti Shallenberger, a research and communications manager for the Energy and Policy Institute, a national nonprofit organization.

El Paso Electric, El Paso Water and Texas Gas Service could combine to raise monthly bills up to 18%

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso County residents could see increases in their gas, water, and electric bills in the coming year if the local utility companies’ rate proposals are approved. Monthly utility bills for the average household could go up by more than \$45 a month, about 18 percent, in 2026; that’s at least \$540 a year more over this year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Texas Gas Service

Texas Gas Service (TGS) officials hosted a series of community meetings in November to discuss its proposal to consolidate service areas that could raise El Paso County residential gas rates by at least 27 percent. The local gas company is requesting a revenue increase of about \$41.1 million. Its rate increase proposal is currently under review by the Texas Railroad Commission (TRC), which regulates the utility company.

According to gas company officials, they want to merge into a single statewide rate structure with several of its service areas including West Texas, Central Gulf, and the Rio Grande Valley.

After a recent preliminary hearing held by TRC, indications were that the three elected commissioners might support the consolidation. If approved,

household gas rates would decline significantly for customers in other parts of south Texas while increasing for El Paso households, according to El Paso city officials.

“El Paso customers face a 27 percent gas rate increase to subsidize rate reductions elsewhere,” the city’s lawyers wrote in a brief submitted to TRC. Meanwhile, TGS officials contend that having a single statewide service area would make it cheaper to file for rate increases instead of having to seek three separate rate hikes.

El Paso officials along with other municipalities and TRC staff were asked to submit briefs arguing for or against the rate increase as TRC is expected to issue a decision in January.

El Paso Water

The El Paso Water utility company is requesting a rate hike from the seven-member Public Service Board (PSB), which governs El Paso Water. The new rate would increase average household bills to \$92.07 next year, up from its current average of \$82.08.

El Paso Water is requesting a \$1.2 billion budget for the upcoming year. Officials with the city-owned utility stated that it needs the rate increase because they are in the midst of a multi-year, multi-billion-dollar plan that includes renovation of the Bustamante Wastewater Treatment facility, construction of the Pure Water Center, and the

expansion of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant. Plans are to spend at least \$3.3 billion on capital projects over the next five years, according to the local water utility reports.

If the PSB approves the proposed budget, the average bill would include a \$45 sewer charge – \$39.66 for water, plus the \$7.42 stormwater fee to fund flood prevention projects. Additional charges would consist of the \$6 franchise fee, \$21.50 for a gray curbside trash bin, and a \$6.50 environmental payment, plus sales tax. PSB is expected to take a final vote on the utility’s budget and proposed rate increase in January.

El Paso Electric

The rate increase El Paso Electric is proposing would increase average electric bills to about \$118 monthly compared with average bills of \$96 currently. Bills for electricity fluctuate throughout the year.

El Paso Electric officials stated that they needed to collect an additional \$85 million from customers annually to pay off \$1.55 billion in capital investments they made since its last rate hike in 2021. The electric company’s officials explained that the main capital investments include its \$217 million Newman 6 natural gas power plant in Northeast El Paso, the \$560 million in improvements to its

See UTILITIES, Page 5

Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.

– Quips & Quotes (attributed to Mike Tyson)

Europe has made itself an afterthought

In the contention over the U.S. peace plan for Ukraine, the Europeans are in their accustomed role – carping from the sidelines.

Not only can the once-great European powers no longer dictate the fate of far-flung parts of the world, they can’t even dictate the end of a war involving a European country whose fate they deem crucial to their own future.

We’re a long way from the British controlling about a quarter of the globe’s territory in the early 20th century; a long way from British and French diplomats, Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot respectively, drawing the lines in 1916 to divide up the Ottoman Empire; a long way from Napoleon sitting with Tsar Alexander in Tilsit in 1807 and rearranging the map of Europe.

France was once so diplomatically central that there are dozens of Treaties of Paris, whether in 1259 (between King Louis IX of France and King Henry III of England) or in 1951 (setting up the European Coal and Steel Community). Now, France scurries around with its European counterparts to react to whatever the American president is doing.

It’s gotten so bad that some European analysts speak of a potential “scramble for Europe,” or attempts by richer, more powerful outside countries to influence the course of Europe.

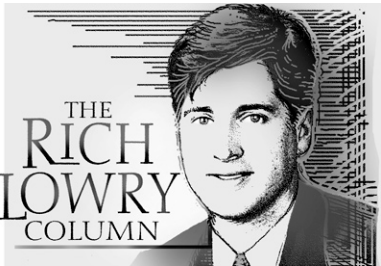
The late conservative commentator Charles Krauthammer maintained of the U.S., “decline is a choice.”

This isn’t quite right with regard to Europe, whose great powers were kneecapped by the cataclysms

of the early 20th century. France bore the brunt of World War I, suffering 1.4 million dead and 4.3 million wounded and a ruinous economic cost.

As for Britain, stretched to the max, it got steadily eclipsed in power and influence by the United States as World War II progressed. The less said about Germany’s role in all this, of course, the better. And then the European colonial empires inevitably dissolved. So, Europe was going to be diminished compared to its glory days. Its current fecklessness, though, has indeed been a choice, borne of strategic

See LOWRY, Page 7



Pinning ceremony caps ADNs, VNs, journey at EPCC

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) Nursing Program celebrated both Associate Degree of Nursing (ADN) and Vocational Nursing (VN) graduates with pinning ceremonies on Thursday, December 11th at the EPCC Administrative Services Center.

61 ADN’s were pinned in a morning ceremony and 18 VN’s were pinned in an afternoon ceremony. Both groups graduated and walked during Commencement on Friday the 12th.

The ADN Master of Ceremonies were Gloria Domina and Malena Mendoza, ADN Nursing graduates, members of the Student Nursing Association, and pinning committee members. The Daisy (Diseases

The keynote speaker was Nursing Associate Professor Anna Favela, while Student Nurses Association President and ADN Nursing graduate Aimee Montes was the featured student speaker.

“Here’s the truth. No one ever goes through Nursing school saying it was easy,” Montes said to her fellow graduates. “It pushes you to your limits, forces you to get out of your comfort zone, with skills and procedures you were nervous about, and today is proof that you always belonged in this place.”

“All the studying and clinicals has led to today. To think critically, act safely, and care for people with dignity and humanity,” EPCC Dean of Nursing Dr. Hafid Guerrero said. “You are not entering the next phase unprepared. These skills will carry you through every shift.”

The Daisy (Diseases

Attacking the Immune System) Award winners were student Patricia Matunis and educator Graciela Navarette. The Daisy Award honors nurses for compassionate care.

“It is such a huge honor, and to win the Daisy Award, this is a very powerful moment,” Matunis said. “I am a midwife and have been to 2,000 births, so I feel like I really wanted to broaden the span of time that I get to be with people, and I can’t wait to care for the entire family, not just women and children.”

Both ceremonies feature the Lighting of the Lamps, led by the El Paso Nurses Honor Guard, which symbolizes Florence Nightingale’s legacy, representing the passing of knowledge, hope, and compassionate care from experienced nurses to new graduates, signifying their commitment to lifelong learning and service, and marking their official entry into the profession.

Ms. Patricia Cruz, the Student Nurses Association



– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

RECOGNITION – Faculty member Kenya Singleton, left, with student Patricia Cruz hold the Daisy Award after they were presented with them during the Pinning Ceremony for the EPCC Vocational Nursing Program.

See EPCC, Page 5

1973
52
Years
2025

WEST TEXAS COUNTY
COURIER

SERVING ANTHONY, VINTON, CANUTILLO, EAST MONTANA, HORIZON, SOCORRO, CLINE, FARENS, SAN ELIZABAR AND TORNILLO

PUBLISHED:
Published each Thursday (minimum 50 issues) by Homesteader News, Inc. Office open Monday through Thursday.

COPYRIGHT:
Entire contents © 2025 Homesteader News, Inc. Individual authors retain all rights. Pictures, drawings and written material appearing in the West Texas County Courier may not be used or reproduced without written permission of Homesteader News, Inc.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:
Letters must not be more than 250 words in length. They should be dated, must be signed and have an address and daytime phone number. Only the name and city will be printed with the letter. The West Texas County Courier reserves the right to edit or reject letters to the editor or other submitted material it considers inappropriate.



AD DEADLINE:
Friday 4 p.m. for the next Thursday.

PERSONAL CLASSIFIED RATES
\$15 for 25 words, \$20 for 40 words. Ad must be in writing and pre-paid. The West Texas County Courier reserves the right not to publish advertising it considers inappropriate.

DISPLAY RATES:
Open rate — \$40 per column inch. Call for more information or to set an appointment. The West Texas County Courier reserves the right not to publish advertising it considers inappropriate.

MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS:
Minimum 50 issues for \$50. Delivery via 1st class mail.

MAIL:
15344 Werling Ct.
Horizon City, TX 79928




Phone: 852-3235

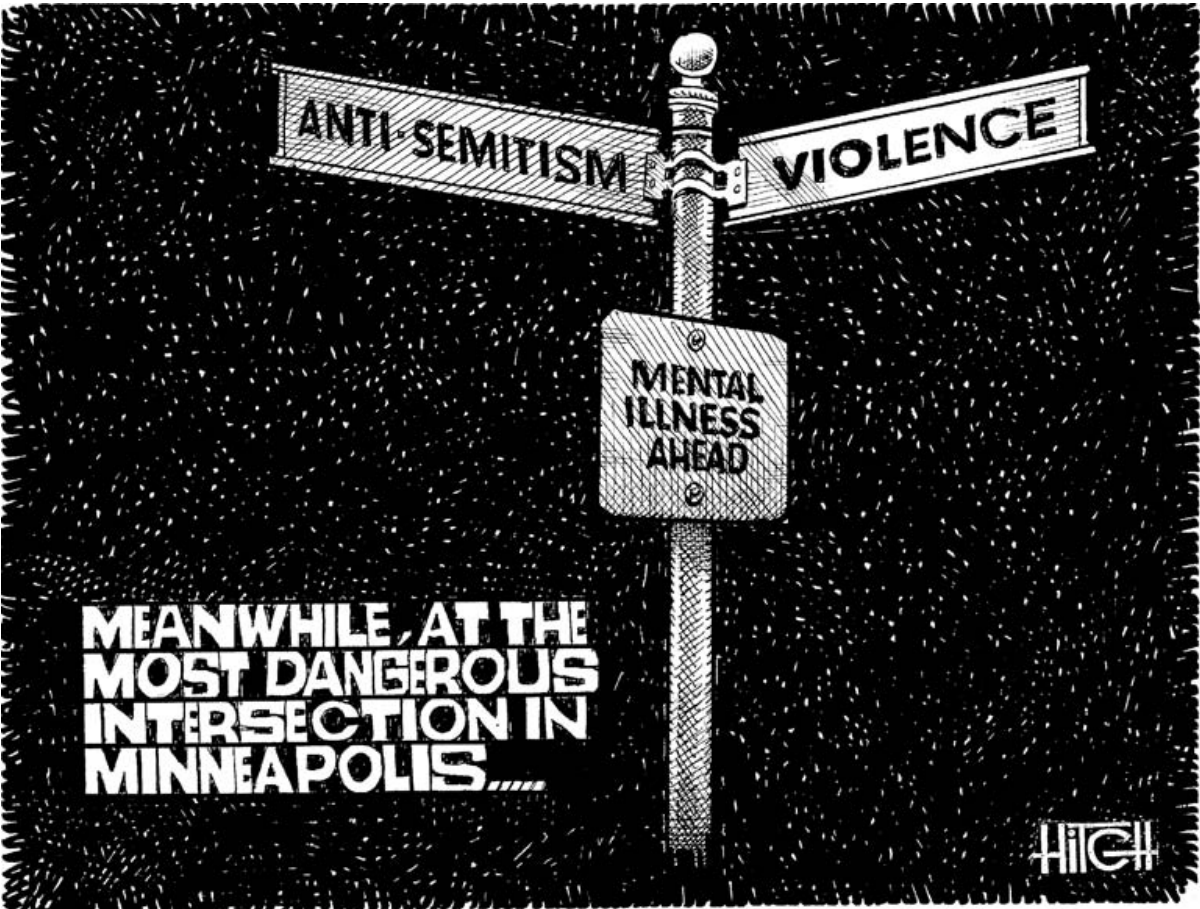
E-mail: wtxcc@wtxcc.com
Website: wtxcc.com

Publisher
Rick Shrum

Contributors
Alfredo Vasquez
Steve Escajeda



Homesteader
Est. 1973
News, Inc.



TABC agents, staff, working through holidays

By Chris Porter
Special to the Courier

TEXAS – As Texas heads into the 2025 holiday season, agents with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) will be active in communities across the state to promote safe, responsible alcohol sales and prevent underage access to alcohol during one of the busiest times of year for retailers.

TABC agents and auditors will be in liquor stores, bars, restaurants, and other businesses that sell alcohol, focusing on education, compliance checks, and cooperative efforts with retailers to ensure proper ID verification and prevent sales to minors.

TABC’s commissioned peace officers will take part in compliance operations, including minor sales investigations and increased patrols in high-traffic areas. The goal is two-fold: protecting the public and helping businesses maintain compliance during the surge in alcohol sales that occurs during the holidays.

“Education is our first line of defense,” said Thomas W. Graham, Executive Director of TABC. “We would much rather help retailers get it right than take enforcement action. Our goal is compliance, not punishment – and the best outcomes come when we work together.”

Agents will also work directly with businesses to help identify fraudulent IDs and share real-world examples of the most common methods used by minors attempting to purchase alcohol, Graham added.

Businesses that sell alcohol to individuals under the age of 21 may face a civil fine, suspension or cancellation of their liquor license. Employees who make an illegal sale

may also face criminal charges, including a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$4,000.

Visit www.tabc.texas.gov for information on responsible alcohol sales, training resources, or TABC enforcement programs

PUBLISHER’S NOTE

From the best laid plans file

Government shutdown gets to the West Texas County Courier

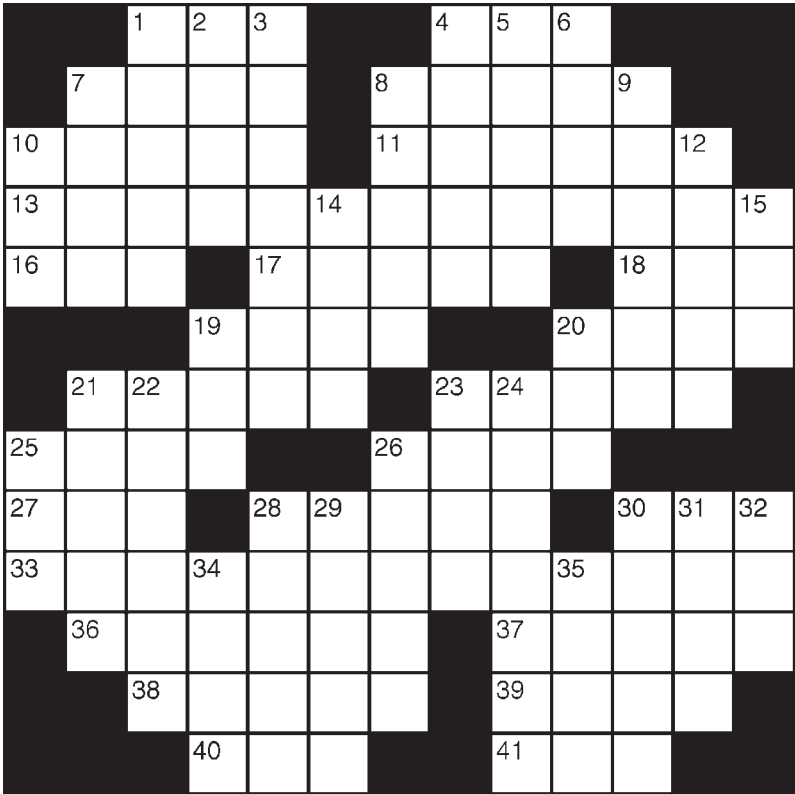
Though the *West Texas County Courier* had published that last week, January 11th, would be our last issue of 2025, obviously it was not. The government shutdown delayed federal numbers needed for a notice that Texas school districts run annually.

One district wanted to publish that notice this week, so this is a bonus issue, if you will. There’s an extra puzzle to tide regular readers and solvers over until the first issue of 2026 on January 8th.

The office will now be closed through January 1st and will be open on the 2nd. Enjoy your time with friends and family in your homes, not hospitals. If you cannot safely drive call for a ride. Be careful with things that may cause a fire or create other hazards. Watch out for one another – all others. We can all be careless sometimes, so stay alert and be safe out there.

– Rick Shrum

King Crossword



Average
Solve Time
24 Minutes

ACROSS

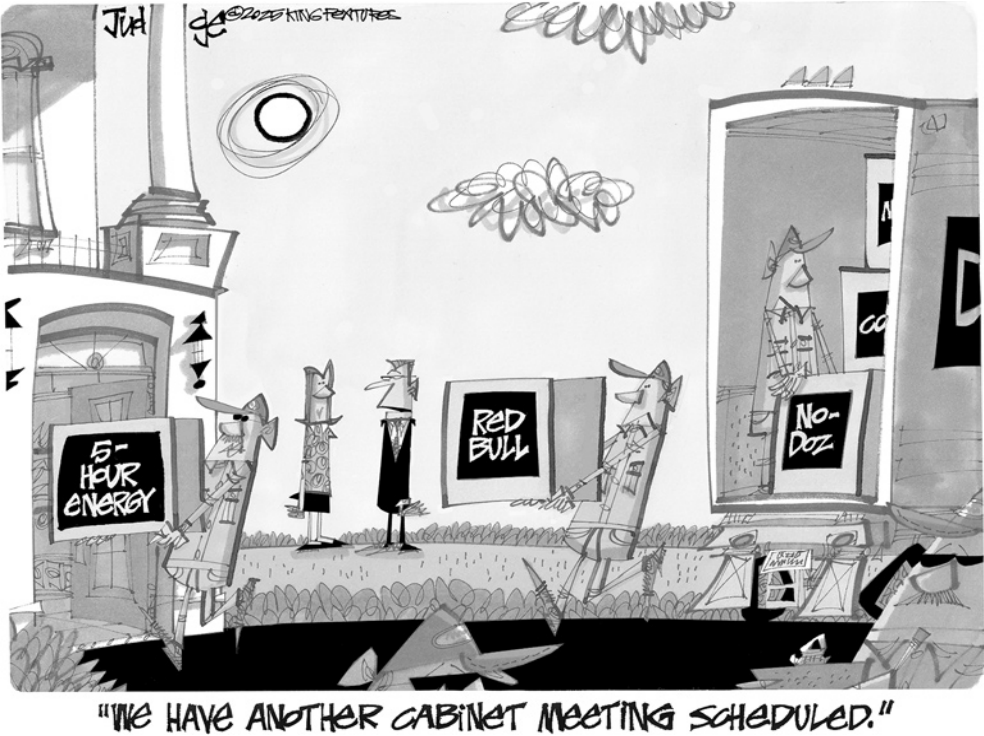
- 1 Train alternative
- 4 Tease
- 7 Former frosh
- 8 Wyoming’s _ Range
- 10 Valerie Harper sitcom
- 11 Eventually
- 13 Play dough?
- 16 Observe
- 17 Concepts
- 18 Sailor
- 19 Peevish fit
- 20 Hardy lass
- 21 Winner’s gesture
- 23 Seaboard

- 25 Sneaky laughs
- 26 Mediocre
- 27 Actress Gasteyer
- 28 Flinch, say
- 30 Gratuity
- 33 Work week start, for many
- 36 Some Algonquians
- 37 Smidgens
- 38 Where the action is
- 39 Family
- 40 Chang’s brother
- 41 Solo in space

DOWN

- 1 Trailblazer Daniel
- 2 High hairstyle
- 3 Giving form to
- 4 Uganda neighbor
- 5 Things
- 6 Nitwit
- 7 Loafer, for one
- 8 Apartment sign
- 9 City on the Loire
- 10 Apt. divisions
- 12 Breadmaking need
- 14 Norse god
- 15 Decade parts (Abbr.)
- 19 Serena, to Venus
- 20 Eastern “way”
- 21 Snake poison
- 22 “The Woman in Me” singer Twain
- 23 Couturier Chanel
- 24 African bird
- 25 Scene stealer
- 26 “The Metamorphosis” protagonist
- 28 Asian noodles
- 29 Gawking at
- 30 Giant
- 31 _ uproar
- 32 Film ratings
- 34 Challenge
- 35 The Big Easy acronym

Answer Page 5



From Page 2

National Nurses Week is



founder of modern nursing. This week is celebrated in healthcare facilities, nursing schools, and anywhere where nurses work.

By Lucie Winborne

- England's Queen Victoria defied both the clergy and her personal physician to become the first monarch to

- Benedict Cumberbatch is the second cousin, 16 times removed, of King Richard III, whom he portrayed in the 2016 BBC miniseries “The Hollow Crown.”

– Dave Barry

©2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

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	32		
33				34				35	36				37			
			38					39					40			
41	42	43				44		45				46	47		48	49
50					51		52			53	54		55			
56				57	58		59					60			61	
62				63		64				65				66		
			67	68								69			70	
				71			72	73	74		75	76	77		78	79
81	82	83			84				85				86		87	
88				89			90					91		92		
93						94		95			96		97	98		
			99			100	101	102				103				
104	105				106					107		108			109	110
112				113					114		115				116	
117				118		119			120					122		
123					124					125				126		
127						128				129				130		

If you believe everybody
who says they've found a
water-worn ravine, I
guess you're gully-ble.

6	+	7	×	3	= 39
-		+		+	
1	+	8	÷	9	= 1
-		÷		÷	
4	+	5	+	2	= 11
=		=		=	
1		3		6	

BREEDS ON THE DECLINE ACROSS	hoops shot
1 Lagoons	59 Met or La Scala frequenter
6 Jaunty greeting	61 "That didn't escape my notice"
10 Basics	62 Prior to, to bards
14 Aid in crime	63 Pooch's cry
18 Full of vitality	65 Country singer Blake
19 Purim's month	67 Andrea _ (ill-fated ship)
20 Patio cooker	69 Swimming
22 Sage guide	sensation at the 1972 Olympics
23 Pope after Sergius II	71 Nine-sided shape
24 Acting Ward	75 Comic buffoon
25 "Same here"	78 Entertainer Zadora
26 Arab country	81 Deli salad
27 Player hitting to prepare for a spike	84 Injury rehab professional
30 Energetic journalist	86 Scattering in the field
32 Chicago-to-Tampa dir.	88 Baja blanket
33 Suffix with leopard	90 Vandals, e.g.
34 Caroling song	92 Gillette brand
35 Journalist covering a particular sector	93 Genghis Khan followers
38 To be, to Bardot	95 Silvery gray
39 Lock of hair	96 Deliverer of a fine spray
40 Dubai's country, for short	99 Text-scanning device, briefly
41 "Kung Fu Hustle" director and star	100 Revises text
45 Canonized Mlle.	103 First letter of the Arabic alphabet
46 Campers under canvas	104 130-to-135-pound bout competitor
50 Field unit	108 " _ Well That Ends Well"
51 Jarred	109 Cavity fillers' org.
55 Having no commercials	
56 High-scoring	

112 According to	12 Apple quaffs
113 Sheriff's star	13 Most sluggish
114 Popular yoga	14 Past time
pose... or something	15 Lousy pieces of
found seven times in	advice
this puzzle	16 Rub out
117 Color shade	17 Piano fixer
119 Research facility	21 Talk like Daffy
121 TV "Warrior	Duck
Princess"	28 Past time
122 Duck with soft	29 See 27-Across
feathers	31 See 30-Across
123 Tortilla treat	36 Sports sites
124 One of the singing	37 Snitching sort
Braxton sisters	38 Sort of sword
125 Eternally	41 Fill totally
126 Love, to Lucia	42 Sch. worker
127 Place of bliss	43 Went wrong
128 Stuck-up type	44 See 41-Across
129 Relaxation	45 Give a bias to
130 Crowded	47 Wildlife-tracking
	aids
DOWN	48 Lulu Hogg player
1 Give birth, as a	Peggy
whale	49 Stitch up
2 Margarine's	52 GI address
3 Forerunners of	53 "Blech!"
cellos	54 "The Raven" poet
4 Pernicious	57 Spanish river
5 Like July, order-	58 See 56-Across
wise	60 Red Muppet
6 Dinosaurs, so to	64 Infant's cry
speak	66 Nabisco treat
7 Exemplar	68 Doing sentry duty
8 Passageway	70 See 69-Across
9 Brand of	72 H.S.-level exam
toothbrushes	73 "... bug _feature?"
10 DOJ heads	74 Quarterback great
11 She wrote "Jane	Joe
Eyre"	75 Relief sound

Answer Page 5

	H	O	T										
	O		E										
	R		R				P	O	W				
	D	A	M	S	E	L			E				
P	E	R					U			A			
		O											
				D	O	N	O	R					
		U		R		G							
		N	O	O	S	E							
		D		P									

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

Utilities

From Page 1

distribution system, and the \$180 million in enhancements to its transmission system.

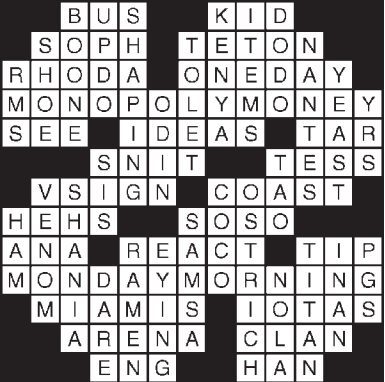
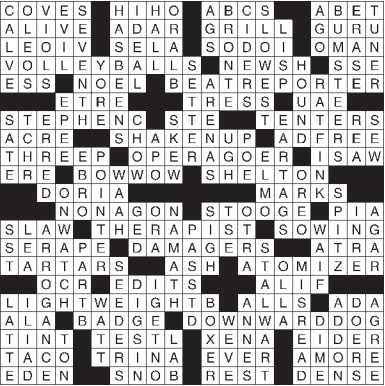
The rate increase request that El Paso Electric presented to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) of Texas could raise the average household electric bill by as much as \$22 per month. Before PUC issues a final decision, the commissioners must first decide how much profit El Paso Electric is allowed to earn.

El Paso Electric officials stated that they needed to boost its authorized rate of return so that its shareholders have enough incentive to put up money to fund the utility’s construction projects instead of piling cash into the stock market or any other investment option.

If El Paso Electric’s rate request is approved, the average residential customer’s annual bill will rise to \$1,423 from \$1,157; that translates to about \$118 per month compared with an average bill of \$96 currently. The new rates would take effect in early 2026.

According to company officials, approving the request would mean that its investors would see millions of dollars of additional profits in the form of dividends and would more likely allow its owner, Infrastructure Investments Fund, to re-invest future profits into El Paso Electric’s infrastructure instead of taking dividends from the utility.

“At a time when the cost of living is going up, such as food prices, home mortgages, rentals, and medical insurance, one would think that these utility companies would be working more diligently to help consumers defray expenses instead of adding to their burden,” said one El Paso County resident, wishing to remain anonymous.



Moments in time

THE HISTORY CHANNEL

- On Dec. 29, 1609 or 1610, Count Gyorgy Thurzo made an investigative visit ordered by King Matthias to Csejthe Castle in Hungary and made a horrifying discovery: Countess Elizabeth Bathory overseeing the torture of young girls. Already known for her abuse and murder of servants and peasants, her title and high-ranking relatives had previously given her impunity, but her atrocities eventually led to her being cited as one of history’s first vampires.

- On Dec. 30, 1936, autoworkers occupied the General Motors Fisher Body Plant Number One in Flint, Michigan, in one of America’s first sit-down strikes, which lasted 44 days. Their aim: to win recognition of the United Auto Workers as the only bargaining agent for GM’s employees. An additional goal was for the company to stop outsourcing work to nonunion plants and to establish a fair minimum wage scale, a grievance system and a set of procedures to help protect assembly-line workers from injury.
- On Dec. 31, 1879, inventor Thomas Edison delighted onlookers with the first

- public demonstration of his incandescent lightbulb in Menlo Park, New Jersey. The Pennsylvania Railroad Company even ran special trains to the city for the event.
- On Jan. 1, 1995, the tales of giant rogue waves recounted by sailors for centuries were finally proved when a freak 85-foot-high wave was measured hitting the Draupner oil platform off the coast of Norway.
- On Jan. 2, 2006, an explosion in the Sago Mine in Sago, West Virginia, trapped 13 coal miners. Tragically, all but one eventually succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning. The cave-in launched scrutiny

- and criticism of the media, the company that owned the mine and then-president George W. Bush’s administration.
- On Jan. 3, 1993, backup quarterback Frank Reich led the Buffalo Bills to a 41-38 overtime victory over the Houston Oilers in an American Football Conference playoff game immortalized to football fans as “The Comeback.”
- On Jan. 4, 2007, Nancy Pelosi, a Democratic representative from California, became the first woman to hold the Speaker of the House position. She would become Speaker again in 2018.

©2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

www.wtxcc.com • www.wtxcc.com • www.wtxcc.com • www.wtxcc.com • www.wtxcc.com • www.wtxcc.com • www.wtxcc.com

Socorro Independent School District
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance
Governmental Funds
For the Year Ended June 30, 2025

Data Control Codes	10 General Fund	50 Debt Service Fund	Other Funds	Total Governmental Funds
REVENUES:				
5700 Total Local and Intermediate Sources	\$ 106,422,961	\$ 63,501,238	\$ 2,555,161	\$ 172,479,360
5800 State Program Revenues	342,791,215	13,007,807	13,714,568	369,513,590
5900 Federal Program Revenues	4,945,813	–	66,825,414	71,771,227
5020 Total Revenues	454,159,989	76,509,045	83,095,143	613,764,177
EXPENDITURES:				
Current:				
0011 Instruction	277,843,725	–	25,720,488	303,564,213
0012 Instructional Resources and Media Services	5,803,521	–	323,762	6,127,283
0013 Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development	3,340,739	–	3,671,601	7,012,340
0021 Instructional Leadership	5,253,249	–	787,263	6,040,512
0023 School Leadership	28,818,008	–	1,035	28,819,043
0031 Guidance, Counseling, and Evaluation Services	14,830,767	–	4,899,427	19,730,194
0032 Social Work Services	743,279	–	1,053,270	1,796,549
0033 Health Services	4,378,671	–	1,399,205	5,777,876
0034 Student (Pupil) Transportation	17,755,087	–	–	17,755,087
0035 Food Services	–	–	31,462,877	31,462,877
0036 Extracurricular Activities	13,182,297	–	903,030	14,085,327
0041 General Administration	11,243,966	–	186,903	11,430,869
0051 Facilities Maintenance and Operations	45,748,296	–	646,625	46,394,921
0052 Security and Monitoring Services	13,236,210	–	2,588,952	15,825,162
0053 Data Processing Services	7,747,150	–	30,311	7,777,461
0061 Community Services	995,284	–	1,310,212	2,305,496
Debt Service:				
0071 Principal on Long-Term Liabilities	6,770,279	30,457,768	67,516	37,295,563
0072 Interest on Long-Term Liabilities	1,049,768	34,127,768	406,732	35,584,268
0073 Bond Issuance Cost and Fees	258,827	48,793	–	307,620
Capital Outlay:				
0081 Facilities Acquisition and Construction	103,212	–	6,077,091	6,180,303
Intergovernmental:				
0093 Payments to Fiscal Agent/Member Districts of SSA	–	–	2,427,962	2,427,962
0099 Other Intergovernmental Charges	2,858,688	–	–	2,858,688
6030 Total Expenditures	461,961,023	64,634,329	83,964,262	610,559,614
1100 Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	(7,801,034)	11,874,716	(869,119)	3,204,563
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES):				
7912 Sale of Real and Personal Property	9,299,446	–	–	9,299,446
7913 Right-to-Use Lease Proceeds	712,596	–	26,926	739,522
7915 Transfers In	–	–	87,746	87,746
8911 Transfers Out (Use)	(11,590,179)	–	–	(11,590,179)
7080 Total Other Financing Sources (Uses)	(1,578,137)	–	114,672	(1,463,465)
1200 Net Change in Fund Balances	(9,379,171)	11,874,716	(754,447)	1,741,098
0100 Fund Balance – July 1 (Beginning)	50,431,754	85,513,079	12,069,064	148,013,897
3000 Fund Balance – June 30 (Ending)	\$ 41,052,583	\$ 97,387,795	\$ 11,314,617	\$ 149,754,995

OKC Thunder enjoying what could be a historic season

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

When I was a kid I saw Wilt Chamberlin, Jerry West, Gail Goodrich, Pat Riley, Elgin Baylor and the rest of the 1972 Los Angeles Lakers win an NBA-record 33 games in a row. Then in the mid-1990’s, I saw Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen and the Chicago Bulls set the NBA season record of 72 wins, finishing 72-10. After that, just 10 years ago, I saw Steph Curry, Klay Thompson and Draymond Green break the Bulls record by finishing the season 73-9. For a while, it seemed like the Lakers 33 wins in a row and the Warriors 73 total wins would probably never be broken. Well, that was until this season started.

The talk of the first part of the 2025 NBA season has been the amazing start by the Oklahoma City Thunder. You remember the Thunder; they came out of nowhere to win the NBA title last year. But, unlike many teams that win their first title in years and are just happy for winning it one time, the Thunder look like they’re busy trying to establish a dynasty. As of last Saturday, OKC had an eye-opening-record of 24-1. That start tied the Warriors start when they set the record. With a 24-1 record, the obvious question is, who did they lose to? Well, the Thunder are just two points away from being 25-0. They lost to the Portland Trailblazers 121-119 after starting the season 8-0. But don’t be fooled, the season didn’t exactly start with any OKC dominance. The Thunder looked like a normal team, winning their first two games of the season in double overtime. They outlasted the Houston Rockets 125-124 in double OT and then followed that with a narrow 141-135 double OT win over the Indiana Pacers.

Yes, OKC was 2-0, but nobody could tell what was coming. Not only are the Thunder tied with the Warriors at the same time of the season they set their record, but Oklahoma City has also won 16 games in a row, almost halfway to the Lakers’ 33. Of course, they could lose this weekend and the winning streak is over, or they could lose four games in a row putting the season wins record in jeopardy. But that wouldn’t take away how much they’ve distanced themselves from the rest of the league. Oklahoma City is the second-highest scoring team in the NBA. They are by far the best defensive team in the league. They’re winning their games by an average of 17 points a game. The closest to that is the Rockets at 10 per game. What really sets the Thunder apart is their defense and unselfishness.

OKC is first in shooting defense, they are first in steals, they are first in blocks, and they are first in causing turnovers. The Thunder are also second in the NBA in free throw shooting and are in the top 10 in assists. They are a complete team that also happen to have the reigning MVP, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. I know, Gilgeous-Alexander is a mouthful and not exactly a household name yet, but he’ll get there. Heck, Giannis Antetokounmpo wasn’t a household name once either. Joining Gilgeous-Alexander, or SGA for short, in the lineup are a bunch of little known stars that won’t stay little for long. Guys like Chet Holmgren, Jalen Williams, Ajay Mitchell, Alex Caruso, Isaiah Hartenstein, Luguentz Dort, Isaiah Joe, Aaron Wiggins and Carson Wallace. The reason I named so many others is because they all play and that all

contribute. They all play within a system, and you never hear any of these players crying because they didn’t get the ball. The biggest no-name on the team is their coach, Mark Daigneault. I know, who is that? He’s coached the Thunder for five years and has steadily improved the team every year, starting with a 22-50 record, then 24-58, 40-42, 57-25 and 68-14 last year. It’s such a delight to watch the way he has the Thunder playing, mainly because in this age of absolutely no defense in the NBA, they actually play defense. And they look happy playing the game, causing turnovers, passing to the open man. I’ve always been a Celtics and Spurs fan. I’ve added this OKC Thunder team to my list, because I like watching team basketball.

Senior moment By Matilda Charles

Do we need vitamin supplements?

Many of us have made our list of resolutions for the New Year, and some of those resolutions involve health and fitness. We’ve decided to get healthy and believe that the answers lie in exercise, diet, social interaction for mental health – and vitamin supplements. Of those, the one that puts up red flags is the vitamin supplements. If we don’t know what we’re doing, however, we can cause problems because what we take might be unsafe. National Institutes of Health (NIH) has explored the topic of supplements for seniors (www.nia.nih.gov/health/vitamins-and-supplements/dietary-supplements-older-adults) and the site is full of caveats and warnings. To be considered:

- If you’re hunting for supplement information on the internet or by watching TV ads, be wary about who is behind it. Do they have a reason (such as profit) for promoting a certain supplement?
- Remember that more is not necessarily better. Too much “more” of any supplement might be harmful to you.

Check the NIH dietary supplement database at dssl.od.nih.gov. They have over 200,000 supplements listed,

and you can search by product, brand or ingredient. Before you start taking supplements, talk to your doctor. You might be advised to make some adjustments to your diet instead, or they might know of a reason in your medical profile that indicates a certain supplement could cause problems for you. TheNIHalsorecommendslookingattheDietaryGuidelines for Americans, 2020-2025, a free publication online at www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans-2020-2025.pdf. There is a whole section for older adults. When it comes to our prescription drugs, we need to be aware there as well. To check for any interactions with drugs you are taking, go to drugs.com, click “Drugs Interaction Checker” and enter the drug name. You’ll get a result that shows any interactions as well as warnings, side effects and uses of the drug. Here’s to a healthy 2026 – with or without vitamin supplements!

©2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

UNIVERSITY SUBSTITUTES ACROSS

1 Small, sticky sheets

8 Sentimental souvenir

16 Bit of aquatic flora

20 In hitting position, in baseball

21 Haphazardly

22 Ringing thing

23 Providence

university founded to educate Dracula?

25 Not phony

26 Auld lang _

27 Wed. preceder

28 Stale

29 Passover bread

30 Pixieish type

32 Nicer than a Madison university?

38 Actress Anderson

41 Jeans, e.g.

42 Ridden horse

43 Located on a Somerville university's campus?

46 Pooh or Yogi

48 Encyclopedia unit: Abbr.

50 Clueless

51 Cruise of film

52 Mine metals

54 Baseball Hall of Famer Tony

56 Some Siouan people

58 Shakur of hip-hop

62 LAX stats

64 Little _ ("Hairspray" girl)

65 Certain till bill

66 Title of a picture album featuring an Atlanta university?

70 Paella veggie

71 Singer Abdul

72 Org. offering tows

73 Inadequate

leader of a Durham university?

80 Easter meat

83 Santa _ (desert winds)

84 Tart garnish

85 Italian actress

Sophia

86 NFL coach Don or Mike

88 Fort Knox bar

90 _ deck (cruise ship part)

92 Cup edge

94 Actress Lena

95 Loud noise

96 Mega melee

98 Unable to escape from a New York university?

103 Routine

105 Animals of a region

106 Pretenses

107 Houston university attended for four complete years?

112 Tattoo fluid

113 Make ecstatic

114 "Way cool!"

115 Tazo drink

117 "Intolerance" star Lillian

120 TV imp Simpson

121 Leave a New Haven university with no exit fee?

127 Kin of -trix

128 Able to do no wrong

129 Swiveled

130 Big name in private jets

131 Used a sieve on

132 Partner of Hutch

DOWN

1 Alehouses

2 Nashville's Grand Ole _

3 Wall builder, e.g.

4 Moist wipe

5 "Son of," in Arabic names

6 Successor of Roosevelt

7 Malty brew

8 Kit _ bar

9 Biblical verb ending

10 Sooner than, in verse

11 _Man (arcade game)

12 Hair nets

13 Past puberty

14 Organizing expert

Marie

15 First-aid pro

16 Chafe

17 Golf great called "The Merry Mex"

18 Like many a bored person's eyes

19 Permit

24 Early car inits.

29 Subway system

31 Winter woe

33 Mil. missions

34 Fissure

35 The Yoko of "Dear Yoko"

36 "Beetle Bailey" dog

37 Troop gp.

38 Plane flier

39 "La, _ to follow so"

40 Sternward

44 Dog in Oz

45 X-rated stuff

46 Actress Mary _ Hurt

47 Actor Morales

49 Like loafers

53 Fix

55 Peru's capital

57 Went swiftly

59 Burst open, as corn

60 Lab gel

61 Very mean

63 Eye carefully

67 Lug

68 In addition

69 Gobbles up

70 Cali currency

73 Installed, as carpet

74 Totally wipe out

75 Document of English liberties

76 Metric mass, in brief

77 Give forth

78 Nixing mark

79 City in Oklahoma

80 Hawaiian dancers' garments

81 Wonderland girl

82 Long, thick heads of hair

87 Wishing to receive

89 Stale

91 Royal name of Norway

93 Sow or boar

97 Figure skater

Midori

99 Arles assent

100 Wolf Blitzler's channel

101 Chiang _-shek

102 Rapa _ (Easter Island)

104 No longer ill

105 Hat for Frank Sinatra

107 Mutinous sort

108 Former senator

Lott

109 Spiteful sort

110 Home for a 93-Down

111 Messy stacks

116 Dismounted

118 Search for

119 Lamarr of "Algiers"

121 Mil. enlists

122 Mentalist Geller

123 Khaki cousin

124 Certain till bill

125 Bouquets-to-order co.

126 Mendes of "Hitch"

Answer Page 4

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		32		33	34	35	36			37					
38	39				40			41						42						
43						44	45						46	47			48		49	
50						51					52	53				54	55			
56					57		58		59	60	61		62			63		64		
65					66	67						68				69				
			70					71							72					
73	74	75				76	77						78	79				80	81	82
83						84					85					86	87			
88						89		90		91			92		93		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			126			
127						128									129					
130						131									132					

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

fantasy and economic incompetence.

Strong militaries were deemed as a thing of the past, or something unnecessary as long as Uncle Sam was around. The Brits, for instance, are hard-pressed to maintain a 73,000-strong army, and the size of their once-storied surface fleet is at a historic low.

Europe imagined itself “a diplomatic superpower,” but has learned to regret that “soft power” not backed up by hard power is of limited utility. Both the Nobel Committee and Amnesty International have considerable soft power, too, but no one pays attention to them regarding high-level geopolitical questions.

Economically, the EU “regulatory superpower” has hobbled growth – over the last 30 years, Western European labor productivity declined from 95% of the U.S. level to 80% – while Europe’s commitment to “net zero” greenhouse emissions has driven insane energy priorities. Years into the Ukraine war, Europe is still dependent on gas imports from Russia.

None of this means that the U.S. should go

out of its way to give Europe the back of its hand. Whatever its other failings, Europe has collectively given Ukraine more aid than the United States, and was justifiably furious at the initial 28-point Ukraine proposal. That plan had the embattled country handing over to Moscow strategically important territory that is still in Ukrainian hands; agreeing to a limit on the size of its military; and the U.S. taking currently frozen Russian assets in Europe to rebuild Ukraine (getting 50% of any profits) and to pursue joint investment projects with Russia.

Negotiations with the Ukrainians have reportedly produced a more reasonable version, but it is Washington and Moscow that matter most here.

The analyst Robert Kagan famously wrote years ago that, in their divergent approaches to the world, “Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.” Having long outsourced power politics to Mars, it turns out that Venus has limited influence even in her own backyard.

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

Sinus node has nothing to do with the nose

DEAR DR. ROACH: Last year at age 76, I was diagnosed with sinus node dysfunction after several episodes of what I’d call being “spaced out” (for lack of a better term). I couldn’t explain these instances to myself, much less anyone else lest they think I was crazy, until I had one where I passed out. This scared me, and I told my husband, who immediately made a doctor’s appointment. The wise physician assistant sent me to a cardiologist who had me wear a heart monitor for two weeks. During this time, I had another episode that lasted for seven seconds, according to the very alarmed cardiologist. I was immediately scheduled for pacemaker surgery. Could you please discuss sinus node dysfunction and enlighten me as to what caused it? – G.W.T.



The sinus of your heart has nothing to do with your nose as you might guess; it’s a structure in the right atrium where blood flows into the heart from the venae cavae. It contains a structure called the “sinus node” or “sinoatrial node” that serves as the natural pacemaker for the heart.

If the SA node makes an electrical impulse, but it is poorly conducted, this results in an SA block. The sinus node may be too slow (sinus bradycardia), or it may fail to make an impulse for a period of time or even permanently (sinus pauses and sinus arrest). All of these are included in the umbrella term of “sinus node dysfunction” (which used to be called “sick sinus syndrome” since it’s accompanied by periods of a too-fast heart rate).

When the sinus node fails to provide an impulse, other pacemakers in the heart will usually provide an “escape” beat, which prevents the symptom of being “spaced out.” Some people describe this as fatigue or lightheadedness. If there is no escape beat, then you will get a sinus pause as you did. When the sinus pause is very long, the person will often faint (which we term “syncope”).

One of my fellow residents got a call from the attending cardiologist who was reading the heart monitor of a patient on the inpatient service and had found a sinus pause that lasted for 17 seconds. (I can still recall the cardiologist saying, “Good god, man! Is this patient still alive?” to the utter horror of my fellow resident, who literally ran to the patient’s bedside. The patient was alive, fortunately.)

The placement of a permanent pacemaker is the definitive treatment for sinus node dysfunction, but not everyone needs this. It’s also important to look for exacerbating factors (especially medicines but also thyroid disease, blockages of the heart arteries, liver disease, and low oxygen, among others) that can affect the sinus node.

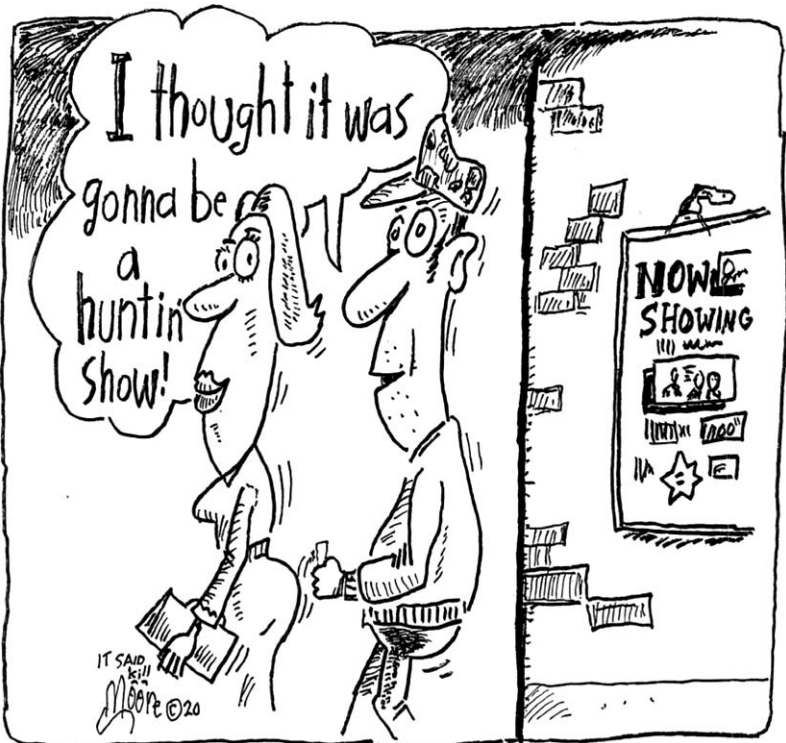
These factors can make the disease of the sinus node become symptomatic due to fibrosis of the area around the SA node and its accompanying conduction tissue. Most of the time, no specific cause for sinus node dysfunction can be found, but systemic diseases like amyloidosis, sarcoidosis and hemochromatosis are rare causes of sinus node dysfunction.

DEAR DR. ROACH: When is a cough considered chronic? – B.B.A.

We do have formal definitions. An acute cough is present for less than three weeks, and infections – both viral (cold, flu, bronchitis) and bacterial (bronchitis, pneumonia) – are the most common causes. A subacute cough is present for three to six weeks. Postinfectious irritability is a common cause, but asthma and chronic rhinitis are also common.

A chronic cough is present for longer than six weeks. There are many causes, but asthma, reflux disease (GERD), and postnasal drip are the most common. Medications (ACE inhibitors), eosinophilic bronchitis, and certain chronic infections (like pertussis or tuberculosis) should be considered as well.

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
In 1962 Texan Horton Foote won an Academy Award for his screenplay of *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

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

GH LPO FWXGWTW WTWELFPZL
QYP RNL R JYWL'TW HPOVZ N
QNJWE-QPEV ENTGVW, G
UOWRR LPO'EW UOXXL-FXW.

Answer Page 4

©2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

Weekly SUDOKU

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

© 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

Saving lives with Buddy Check



by Freddy Groves

One of the most valuable things you can do in the new year will be to check on your buddies, those you've served with and those in your area, and make a regular routine of it. It's called Buddy Check, and you could be saving a life.

A few stats:

- Depending on the source you read, there are 17 to 22 veteran suicides per day. Yes, the numbers have decreased slightly over the years, but even one is too many.
- The rate of male veteran suicides is 60% higher than for nonveterans. For women veterans, the numbers are even higher.
- The reasons vary. Between needing to adjust to civilian life, homelessness, isolation, not wanting to ask for help and PTSD, many of our buddies are in trouble, especially if brain injury (even mild TBI) is part of the equation.

This is where you come in, with Buddy Check.

Go online to va.gov and search for "Veteran Buddy Checks." Click on the fact-packed 20-minute training video and learn how you can help. Become familiar with the S.A.V.E. acronym – know the Signs, Ask the right questions, Value their life and Enlist help. Then take the pledge to check on 10 veteran buddies.

Your best source to locate other veterans is the Together We Served website (www.TogetherWeServed.com). To access the data base you'll need to enter your name, email address and branch of service. If you want, you can add a few details about yourself. Once on the site, you'll find a unit directory and over 2 million veterans who've signed up. You can start with their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/TogetherWeServed.

Look at the American Legion Buddy Check. Go to www.legion.org and search for "Buddy Check." Learn about their program and download the tool kit.

If you are the one who

needs help, don't wait, don't hesitate. Help is only a phone call away, day or night, at the Veterans Crisis Line. Dial 988 and press 1. Or text to 838255. For confidential support for a family member or friend, see VeteransCrisisLine.net.

©2025 King Features Synd., Inc.



by Jo Ann Derson

• One of the best ways to eat less at a holiday party is to eat something small that is healthy and minorly filling before you head out. You'll make better decisions when you aren't starving, and save yourself a ton of calories. Here are more ways to keep holiday parties from blowing your calorie budget.

• "Going potluck? Bring your own healthy appetizer to the party. This way, you'll be certain to have at least one dish you can pig out on. Go with cut vegetables and dip rather than bringing chips or bread. You can use the veggies to pair with other dips to save more calories." – A.R. in Texas

• Drinks are full of empty calories, whether they are cocktails or sugary sodas, so slow down and have water every other drink. When at the bar, ask for low-calorie mixers like soda water, not sugary juices, to whip up your cocktail.

• "How much wine is in your pour? Extra-large cups and free-flowing bottles can mean super-sized servings of vino. A serving of wine is 5 ounces. Here's a tip: Set your wine glass on the table. It will be easier to see how much is in your glass." – Y.O. in New York

• You might be packing it on, but you can also burn it off. Commit to dancing every other song. Get your workout out of the way early so you feel great in the evening.

• "Walk away from the food table so you don't graze. Never sit at a table with bowls of anything parked in front of you. Work the room instead." – A.A. in Florida

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.

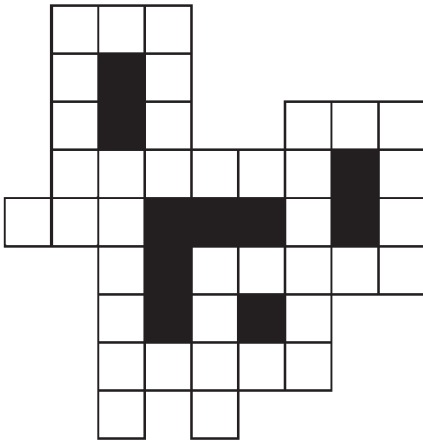
Answer Page 4

©2025 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

	+		×		= 39			
-		+		+				
	+		÷		= 1			
-		÷		÷				
	+		+		= 11			
=		=		=				
1		3		6				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9



OTH
NORDUA
♥ODORN
♥REWA
♥DELASM
♥EPR
♥RPDO
ODHER
WPO
GULPEN
SONEO
RTME



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.

©2025 King Features Syndicate. All rights reserved.