



– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

LOOKING FOR TURNOUT – This year’s primary election is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, with early voting starting on Tuesday, Feb. 17, ending on Friday, Feb. 27. El Paso County voters may cast their ballot at any of the designated polling locations in the county. A list of primary candidates and polling locations may be viewed at epcountyvotes.com, the El Paso County Elections Department website.

Primary election sets stage for possible midterm surprises

By **Alfredo Vasquez**
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Texas Democrats sense a weakening in the Republicans’ decades-long stronghold on elected offices at the state level. Voters concerned by the increasing cost of living including food, housing, utilities, and medical care as well as current immigration enforcement policies may vote for change. The election will also be impacted by an increasing Hispanic population that is showing up to vote. A UnidosUSA poll puts a 44% Hispanic

increase of voter eligibility (party affiliation unknown) since 2020/2022 election cycle.

For over 30 years no Democrat has won a race at the state level – not governor, not lieutenant governor, attorney general, nor comptroller. To win these offices Democrats need help from independents and a strong field of candidates coming out of the primary election.

This year’s primary election is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, with early voting slated from Tuesday, Feb. 17, through Friday, Feb. 27. El Paso County voters may cast their ballot at any of the designated polling places throughout the county.

In the primary election, registered voters – Republicans and Democrats – will have an opportunity to decide the candidates whom they prefer on the November ballots for federal, state, and local offices.

Although various state and federal races will be in the spotlight, like the Texas governor and U.S. Senate races, some local offices should also attract interest including county judge, two county commissioners court seats, and a few judgeships.

However, there are several offices that will not be

See **PRIMARY**, Page 4

Vasquez named NSPRA 2025-26 Superintendent to Watch

By **Christy Flores-Jones**
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Socorro Independent School District Superintendent James P. Vasquez has been named in the National School Public Relations Association annual list of Superintendents to Watch. This year, NSPRA selected 30 leaders from school systems across 16 states for the 2025-26 honor, which recognizes innovative superintendents in their first five years for outstanding leadership in fostering meaningful, two-way communication and strengthening community engagement.

“I am honored to earn this notable recognition and feel extremely fortunate to have the privilege of leading Socorro ISD, a school district that I hold close to my heart,” Vasquez said. “This community is filled with incredible students, educators and families that contribute to our overall achievement. We have been through a lot over the last couple of years and I am so proud to be writing our next chapter of success together with this amazing community.”

Vasquez led Socorro ISD through unprecedented financial and operational challenges, guiding the district from a \$42 million deficit to a balanced budget by June 2025 through transparent and decisive leadership. Under his direction, SISD achieved its highest number of A-rated campuses, was the largest district in Texas to earn the TEA postsecondary distinction designation and earned national recognition as the first district in West Texas to receive the National Certificate for STEM Excellence.

“These leaders understand that communication is not just about sharing information. It is about building relationships,” said NSPRA Executive Director Barbara M. Hunter, APR. “Through meaningful engagement with families, staff and community members, they are advancing their districts with clarity and purpose.”

NSPRA received 66 nominations this year, reflecting a highly competitive selection process with a deep field of outstanding nominees. Since the 2015–16 school year, NSPRA has recognized more than 200 school district leaders as Superintendents to Watch, a number of whom later went on to be named their state’s Superintendent of the Year.



– Photo courtesy Socorro ISD

James Vasquez

The not so fine line between protestor and agitator

Alex Pretti wasn't killed while "protesting." This is a common description of what he was doing on a Minneapolis street the fateful morning when a confrontation with federal immigration agents ended in his tragic shooting. But if Pretti had been

a mere protester, he'd very likely be alive today. Now that we've seen videos of an earlier struggle with federal agents and learned more about the organized nature of the anti-ICE resistance, it's become clear that the better word for Pretti was agitator, or perhaps even operative.

This kind of activity is not to everyone's taste – personally, I hate the drums and the chants – but there is no doubt that it is a legitimate form of political advocacy. Depending on the cause, it can even be admirable.

What we've seen in Minneapolis, though, is often quite different. Run-of-the-mill protesters don't seek out federal agents and harass and obstruct them. They don't follow and block their vehicles or establish a robust communications network to deploy resources to create maximum disruption of their operations.

Pretti was part of this effort, which is more a form of low-level and (by and large) nonviolent insurgency than conventional protest. In his first confrontation, 11 days before his death, Pretti was every bit an anti-ICE street brawler. He challenged, at close quarters, an agent to assault him, while screaming insults at him. He spat on a federal vehicle and kicked out its taillight.

If Pretti was an "observer," in the euphemism preferred by anti-ICE politicians and activists, he was observing how much unhinged behavior he

See LOWRY, Page 7



EPCC Budget & Finance Department earns 29th straight Excellence Award

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada recently awarded El Paso Community College (EPCC) with the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 2024 fiscal year. This is the 29th consecutive year that EPCC has received this award. It is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting

and financial reporting. Mr. Fernando Flores, EPCC Vice President, Finance & Administration/CFO, and Ms. Ana Zúñiga, Associate Vice President, Budget & Financial Services, were recognized during the January 2026 Board of Trustees meeting.

"An extraordinary achievement that reflects the consistency, integrity, and an eye level care and accountability in managing the college's finances," EPCC President, Dr. William Serrata, said. "This recognition is a testament to the outstanding leadership

and dedication of our finance team, whose work ensures transparency, accountability, and trust in how we manage public resources."

This certificate recognizes EPCC's efforts to go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports that evidence the spirit



– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

MONEY MATTERS – From left are Fernando Flores, Ana Zúñiga (holding the award) and Dr. William Serrata after a January meeting announcing the financial stewardship award.

of transparency and full financial statements have audit results and receiving recognition from GFOA in reporting excellence," said Vice President of Finance & Administration/CFO Fernando Flores. "Nothing earns and maintains the public's trust more than good financial stewardship."

Report cards for Socorro ISD and schools available

By Christy Flores-Jones
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – The 2024-2025 Federal Report Cards for the State of Texas, the Socorro Independent School District, and SISD schools are available on the district website and the Texas Education Agency website.

The reports for the state, district, and schools can be found on the district website at: www.sisd.net/federalreportcards.

The report cards are available on the

TEA site at: tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/federal-report-cards

The report gives information such as student achievement, graduation rate, school quality, student success, civil rights data, and teacher quality data.

Hard copies of the report may be made available upon request at SISD schools or the District Service Center. Please contact your child's school or the District Service Center if you have any questions concerning federal report cards.

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News, Inc.

\$10.2M earmarked for El Paso and Hudspeth County projects

Courier Staff Writer

EL PASO COUNTY – On January 22 the U.S. House of Representatives passed all remaining annual funding bills, keeping the federal government fully operational through the remainder of Fiscal Year 2026. Tony Gonzales, Republican Congressman for Texas’ 23rd District has released dollar figures heading for El Paso and Hudspeth County projects. Gonzales sits on the House Appropriations Committee. The money breaks down as follows:

- UTEP’s UAS Drone Workforce Development Center will receive \$2 million to modernize its operations in El Paso County, strengthening drone and Counter-UAS programs with hands-on instruction and workforce training. As a Carnegie R1 research university and Hispanic-Serving Institution, UTEP is poised to drive regional innovation, job creation, and national security advancements in emerging technologies.
- San Elizario Community Center will receive \$2 million to offer a modern space for education, workforce training, and small business development while addressing infrastructure needs in San Elizario. Through partnerships with universities, nonprofits, and Workforce Solutions Borderplex, the center would drive economic growth, foster upward mobility, and support regional recovery.
- Lower Valley Law Enforcement Equipment will receive \$4.2 million to will

promote interoperability with neighboring agencies and surveillance technologies for effective crisis management. This project will upgrade critical radio infrastructure and equipment to enhance law enforcement communications, public safety, and accountability.

• Hudspeth County Community Center will receive \$2 million. The Hudspeth County Community Center would be the first of its kind in this rural Texas region, providing youth development, workforce training, and essential public services. By equipping residents with valuable skills and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, the center would drive economic growth, support local businesses, and strengthen community resources.

“As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I take seriously my responsibility to use taxpayer dollars wisely while delivering results for the communities I represent. This year’s funding bills include more than \$42 million to service critical needs across our district,” said Congressman Tony Gonzales. “The projects I secured in these bills will help our veterans have better access to services, provide law enforcement officers in Texas with more resources, make important school safety upgrades, improve emergency response efforts, and support water infrastructure across Texas’ 23rd Congressional District. These resources will soon be on the way to our communities, and I look forward to seeing these important projects break ground across our district.”

King Crossword

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Answer Page 4





– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

HELPING HAND – EPCC student Eddie Arroyo, center, serves up canned goods at the Transmountain campus. Groceries will be available for pick up through April dates as supplies allow.

EPCC campuses distribute groceries

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) is once again teaming up with El Pasoans Fighting Hunger to provide Mobile Food Pantries at EPCC campuses around the city of El Paso.

The Mobile Pantry, previously known as the Grocery Pickup, will be on selected days from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at the campuses and dates below until the end of April. EPCC Student Government Association (SGA) and Campus Life please ask that Texas residents bring your own bag. Groceries are available at each location while supplies last.

Visit tejanomercado@epcc.edu or call (915) 831-2077 for more information.

Distribution Schedule

Mission del Paso campus, Horseshoe
March 4, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
April 1, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Valle Verde campus, Parking Lot L
March 11, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
April 8, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Transmountain campus, Parking Lot B
February 18, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
April 15, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Rio Grande campus, Parking Lot D
February 25, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
March 25, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
April 22, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

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CryptoQuip Answer

People should be very prudent when selecting beverage containers. Choose your bottles wisely.

Primary

From Page 1

contested on the primary ballot, as those candidates – whether a Democrat or Republican – will not face a challenge from a member of their own party and will move directly to the November ballot.

In the governor’s race, several Democrats are vying for the nomination including Angela “TiaAngie” Villescaz, Andrew White, Carlton W. Hart, Jose Navarro Balbuena, Zach Vance, Gina Hinojosa, Chris Bell, Bobby Cole, and Patricia Abrego.

Republican candidates for governor are headed by the incumbent Greg Abbott, who is being challenged by Evelyn Brooks, Nathaniel Welch, Kenneth Hyde, Charles Andrew Crouch, Ronnie Tullos, Pete “Doc” Chambers, Arturo Espinosa, Stephen Samuelson, R.F. “Bob” Achgill, and Mark V. Goloby.

In the lieutenant governor’s contest, the Democrat candidates are Courtney Head, Vikki Goodwin, and Marcos Isaías Velez. Republican candidates are Dan Patrick, the incumbent, Esala Wueschner, Perla Muñoz Hopkins, and Timothy Mabry.

Democrats running for the attorney general nomination are Nathan Johnson, Anthony “Tony” Box, and Joe Jaworski. Republican candidates are Chip Roy, Joan Huffman, Aaron Reitz, and Mayes Middleton.

Democrats seeking the comptroller of public accounts office are Savant Moore, Sarah Eckhardt, and Michael Lange. Republicans are Christi Craddick, Don Huffines, Michael Berlanga, and Kelly Hancock.

The U.S. Senate contest has Democrats James Talarico, Jasmine Crockett, and Ahmad R. Hassan trying to unseat the Republican incumbent John Cornyn, who has seven primary election challengers including Gulrez “Gus” Khan, Ken Paxton, Sara Canady, Anna Bender, Virgil John Bierschwale, John O. Adefope, and Wesley Hunt.

The U.S. Representative District 16 race has Democrat and incumbent Veronica Escobar unopposed in the primary and will face one of the following Republican

See PRIMARY, Page 5



Moments in time

THE HISTORY CHANNEL

- On Feb. 9, 2022, snowboard marvel Chloe Kim made history as the first athlete to earn a gold medal in the women’s snowboard halfpipe event in two consecutive Winter Olympics. Four years earlier, she had also become the youngest winner of that event at age 17.
- On Feb. 10, 1943, duct tape was born when factory worker Vesta Stoudt, who packed WWII munitions, sent a letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt outlining, with drawings, her idea to replace weak paper packing tape with a tougher and waterproof cloth version. The president was impressed enough to launch the suggestion into production.
- On Feb. 11, 2012, singer Whitney Houston was found dead in the bathtub of her suite at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. The cause of death was determined to be accidental drowning, with contributing factors of heart disease and cocaine.
- On Feb. 12, 1970, Joseph Searles III became the first Black member of the New York Stock Exchange,

following in the footsteps of Clarence B. Jones, who three years previously was the first African American to become an allied NYSE member, but without trading floor access.

- On Feb. 13, 1861, Col. Bernard J.D. Irwin, an assistant army surgeon serving in the first major U.S.-Apache conflict, volunteered to go to the rescue of 2nd Lt. George N. Bascom, who was trapped with 60 men of the U.S. Seventh Infantry by the Chiricahua Apaches in southeastern Arizona, in what became the earliest military action to be awarded a Medal of Honor.
- On Feb. 14, 1980, playwright Lillian Hellman sued novelist and critic Mary McCarthy for libel, demanding \$2.25 million in damages. The case posed the tricky question of where the legal line stands between a critic’s free speech and malicious libel.
- On Feb. 15, 1961, the entire 18 member U.S. figure skating team was killed in a plane crash in Berg-Kamphenhout, Belgium, while on their way to the 1961 World Figure Skating Championships in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Investigators were unable to determine the exact cause of the crash, though mechanical difficulties were suspected.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- The living room set of “The Addams Family” TV series was actually pink.
- About 1,350 potentially active volcanoes presently exist on Earth, with the majority of them found along a 25,000-mile-long, horseshoe-shaped ribbon bordering the Pacific Ocean that’s commonly known as the “Ring of Fire.”
- Chopsticks in Asia are about 2,000 years older than forks in Europe.
- The color red appears in nearly every shot of Stanley Kubrick’s 1980 horror classic “The Shining.”
- Michelangelo only signed one piece of art, the “Madonna della Pietà,” and that was supposedly because he overheard his work credited to a rival and sneaked back to include his name on the sash across the Virgin Mary’s chest.
- Philadelphia cream cheese doesn’t hail from Philadelphia. It originated in New York.
- People spend roughly 10% of their waking hours with their eyes closed. That’s OK, we know you’re just thinking.
- In 1954, the mayor of the wine-growing town Chateaufort-du-Pape in France issued a memorable decree that banned the “flying over, landing or taking off of flying saucers.” It’s unclear whether anyone ever considered how such an event should be handled should it defiantly occur.

• Shaquille O’Neal missed 5,317 free throws over the course of his career.

• Only three music companies are responsible for more than 80% of the music we listen to: Sony BMG, Warner Music Group and Universal Music Group.

• Spiders, like humans, can have arachnophobia. Small wonder, since certain species regularly eat each other: for food, after mating and for other reasons scientists don’t yet fully understand.

Thought for the Day: “You can make positive deposits in your own economy every day by reading and listening to powerful, positive, life-changing content and by associating with encouraging and hope-building people.”

– Zig Ziglar

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Questionable Socorro bar shut down

By Elhiu Dominguez
Special to the Courier

SOCORRO – The El Paso County Attorney’s Office has successfully obtained a legal order to permanently close the Boss Lady Pub, ending a months-long effort to remove the establishment from the Socorro community.

448th District Judge Sergio Enriquez signed the permanent injunction following a lawsuit brought by County Attorney Christina Sanchez. This final court order legally declares the bar located at 11400 East Gateway Boulevard a common nuisance. Under the order, the business must remain closed for one year – the maximum closure period allowed by law. The court also requires the defendants to post a \$9,000 bond and pay more than \$400 in court costs within 20 days.

Last year, the County Attorney’s Office filed legal action against business owner Maria Elena Olvera following undercover operations by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC). The operation began as a criminal investigation into possible human trafficking, when agents reported that dancers were not allowed to leave the building during work hours – a restriction often viewed as a warning sign of trafficking. The criminal investigation remains ongoing, and no human trafficking charges have been filed at this time.

Agents did, however, document several other violations, including five cases of prostitution, four incidents of employees illegally soliciting drinks



– Photo courtesy El Paso County Attorney’s Office

NO MAS – The El Paso County Attorney’s Office has closed the Boss Lady Pub in Socorro. A criminal investigation that was looking into possible human trafficking uncovered other violations including preventing worker’s from leaving the location during working hours and prostitution.

from customers, and the bar operating as a sexually oriented business without the required City of Socorro permit.

County Attorney Christina Sanchez credited the successful closure to strong inter-agency cooperation.

“We want to express our deepest gratitude to the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission’s Special Investigations Unit, the El Paso Sheriff’s Office, and the Paso del Norte Center of Hope for their tireless work on this complex case,” Sanchez said. “Their commitment to uncovering these violations and protect vulnerable individuals sends a clear message that this behavior will not be tolerated in El Paso County.”

As part of the CAO’s strategy to ensure the bar never returns, the office secured a settlement agreement with the property

owner, Carolina Gonzalez, in December 2025. Gonzalez cooperated with authorities and agreed to begin the formal eviction process to remove the business owners. While legal evictions can take several months to finalize, Gonzalez has indicated to the County Attorney that she will never allow the bar to reopen on her premises. The combined impact of the permanent injunction and the landlord’s settlement ensures the Boss Lady Pub is closed for good.

Prior to the County Attorney’s intervention, the location was a frequent site of criminal activity. Records show at least 13 emergency calls for service over the last year, including a report of an aggravated assault that left an elderly victim incoherent.

The case was spearheaded by the office’s Nuisance Abatement Team (NAT), a specialized unit that uses civil

laws to stop habitual criminal activity at specific properties.

“Our Nuisance Abatement Team works with residents to identify and address properties linked to crime and repeated violence,” Sanchez said. “We strongly encourage citizens to contact our office with complaints or concerns about suspicious businesses, as community input is vital to improving quality of life for everyone”.

Residents can report problematic properties to the Nuisance Abatement Team by visiting www.epcounty.com/ca or calling (915) 273-3247.

Primary

From Page 4

candidates – Manuel J. Barraza, Deliris ‘DMB’ Montanez, Marcy Chavez, Hector Cabildo, Ruben Rios, Adam Bauman, or Raul ‘Bullet’ Castaneda.

The U.S. Representative District 23 seat is being sought by Democrats Bruce Richardson, Santos Limon, Gretel Enck, and Katy Padilla Stout. The Republican candidates are the incumbent Tony Gonzales, Keith Barton, Francisco “Quico” Canseco, and Brandon Herrera.

In El Paso County, local office holders traditionally go counter to statewide preferences and skew heavily towards the Democrats. So, among the border city’s key races Republicans will face a daunting task.

In the county judge primary race Democrat and incumbent Ricardo Samaniego, who is running unopposed, will face either Republican Minerva Torres-Shelton or Guadalupe Giner.

The County Commissioner, Precinct 2 race pits Democrats David Stout, the incumbent,

against Miguel (Mike) Teran; the winner will be challenged by Republican Thomas Sistrunk, who is running unopposed in the primary election.

The County Commissioner, Precinct 4, race has Democrat Sergio Coronado, the incumbent, being challenged by Annette Griego. The top vote getter will face Republican Leonard Arcos, who is running unopposed in the primary.

A whole slew of Democrat and Republican candidates are running in several judgeship contests. For example, Democrats Chris Anchondo and Leonard “Lenny” Morales are seeking

120th District Court Judge nomination, with the winner facing Republican Ben Ivey who is unopposed in the primary.

The 168th District Court judge race has three Democrats seeking the office – Bernardo Cruz, Robert J. Perez, and Enrique A. Holguin. The winner will go against the Republican Robert Pritchard who is unopposed in the primary.

To view a full list of primary race candidates, interested voters should visit epcountyvotes.com, the El Paso County Elections Department’s website.



Public Notice Salvage Sale

A sealed bid auction will be held for items to be sold consisting of used washers, dryers, and vehicles. All payments must be made in the form of money order or cashier’s check. All items will be sold “as is”. Rules, procedures and terms of the sale will be provided upon arrival. The El Paso County Housing Authority (EPCHA) makes no written or implied warranties of the items.

Date, Time and Location:

Friday, March 6, 2026
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New MWC TV deal means more money for Miners

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

It may seem like it’s taken forever, but the UTEP Miners are less than four months away from becoming official members of the Mountain West Conference (MWC). The orange and blue will join the New Mexico Lobos, UNLV Rebels, Wyoming Cowboys, Nevada Wolfpack, Air Force Falcons, Hawaii Rainbow Warriors, Northern Illinois Huskies, San Jose State Spartans, Grand Canyon Antelopes (non-football) and the UC Davis Aggies (non-football), this July 1. It is a move that El Pasoans have been shouting for ever since they left the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) back in 2005. If you’ll remember, the other WAC members left to establish the MWC but didn’t invite UTEP, leaving the university essentially homeless for a while.

Like a child wandering around asking other kids if they’d please be his friend, UTEP was forced to go out and plead with other conferences to take them. Conference USA said, “Okay, I guess you can play with us.” Although it has to be tough for UTEP to return to the league that left them out in the cold, it has to be a little demoralizing for the MWC as well. They are losing upper-tier teams like San Diego State and Boise State and Fresno State and Utah State and Colorado State. So, they were forced to go out and find teams willing to fill those gaps. And though each side had to swallow

its pride a bit, it’s actually a win-win for both UTEP and the MWC. There’s no doubt that UTEP fans will be more interested in playing natural rivals like New Mexico and UNLV and Wyoming and Nevada and Hawaii and Air Force. These are schools that El Pasoans can relate to, as opposed to Missouri St., Delaware St., Florida International, Kennesaw St., Jacksonville St., Middle Tennessee St. and others in Conference USA. This move will definitely give UTEP a bigger national audience right away. Speaking of national audience, the Miners will also benefit from the recent TV package the MWC just signed with CBS, Fox sports, CW Network and streaming network Kiswe. In CUSA, it’s been reported that UTEP was receiving \$400,000 to \$800,000 a year in TV revenue. And though UTEP Athletics Director Jim Senter hasn’t provided an actual MWC amount yet, the league’s commissioner has said that its members will not receive less money

than they made during the last deal, which was about \$3.5 million a year. That’s a considerable upgrade and it’s fair to say that this is a huge victory for the Miners. But the Miners are going to have to do something they failed to do consistently in CUSA – win games. Especially over the last decade, for the most part UTEP football and basketball teams haven’t been battling for championships, they’ve been too busy fighting to stay out of last place. Take the (9-15) UTEP basketball team, they took on the NMSU Aggies last week and escaped with an 91-88 overtime win in front of almost 8,000 fans. That goes to show El Paso will show up if the Miners are competitive. And they are going to have to show up in this more prestigious conference. But there’s still the pretty simple question, if UTEP wasn’t able to compete with teams from little CUSA, how in the heck are they not going to embarrass themselves in the MWC?

It’s easy – money. Somehow, someday, UTEP is going to have to come up with more NIL money to pay for better players. Raising money has become so important that football coach Scotty Walden is donating 10% of his \$800,000 salary (\$80,000) to the Miners’ NIL fund. If last Saturday’s atmosphere at the Don Haskins Center against the Aggies was any indication of things to come, times are looking brighter for UTEP athletics. The game went to overtime, the fans were explosively loud, the two teams had to be separated at one point during the game and El Paso went home happy. The new TV deal, the rise in UTEP donations, the rise in NCAA revenue sharing, all will put more money in UTEP’s pockets to bring in better players and better facilities. It’s time for UTEP, and El Paso, to put away that “little brother” attitude and take a seat at the grown-up’s table.

Senior moment By Matilda Charles

Reading and writing for relaxation

If ever there was a time to turn off the television – especially during the evening news hour – this is it. Between the stress and anxiety of current events that we can do nothing about and the shocking mistakes we see being made (not to mention the resulting disrupted sleep and rising blood pressure), we can easily just press the off button on the remote. But what shall we do with our free time, once we have silenced the noise? We can read. “Homework for Grown-Ups: Everything You Learned at School and Promptly Forgot,” by Elizabeth Foley and Beth Coates, is a trip down memory lane of all the facts and tidbits you used to know. The topics are covered in bite-size sections and include English language and literature, math, home economics, history, science and much more. Still wonder if you should use “that” or “which” in a sentence? Or you don’t remember the answer when your grandchild asks, “What’s the

difference between a parallelogram and a rhombus?” Or if you need a refresher about rock, paper, scissors, the book will remind you. At the end of each section is a quiz with answers in the back of the book. If you read a few pages every day, you’ll find it addicting! And we can write. When is the last time you wrote someone a letter? Not an email, not a text message, not a letter typed on the computer and printed out, but a handwritten letter on nice stationery with a matching envelope. And yes, they still make such things, sold in sets. While you’re shopping for stationery, consider buying a journal. If you make a habit of writing, without a daily dose of bad news, you’ll likely find yourself much more relaxed – and happy!

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Super Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12	13		14	15	16	17	18	19
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23							24								25					
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126								127						128						
129								130						131						

U.K. PLAY ACROSS	65 Riddle	126 “Little Women” author	31 Cushy class	81 Operated
1 Give a right to	68 Strep-treating doc	127 Wanness	32 Mel the Giant	83 In flames
8 Eye narrowly	69 Person giving out prizes	128 Cry upon getting there	34 Jokester	84 Courteous
14 Choir songs	71 Eight of their last names are featured in this puzzle	129 Joined (up)	36 Solo	85 Midleg joints
20 Dog collar attachments	76 Egg-hiding holidays	130 Baby hooters	37 Mosque officiant	87 Sheriff Taylor’s tyke
21 Ends of bridal paths	77 Gridiron stats	131 Vain person’s lack	38 Streaming set-top box	88 Mess-free
22 See 1-Down	78 Punctual	DOWN	40 Viral misery	89 Take to court
23 Refrigerator, stove or dryer	79 Sominex or Unisom rival	1 With 22-Across, film “nightmare” locale	41 Soft throws	91 Jug handle
25 Warship fleet	80 Passing vote	2 Teachers’ gp.	42 “_ out!” (ump’s call)	92 Pa’s pa
26 Over yonder	81 As many as	3 _ Mahal	46 “Death Be Not Proud” poet	97 Last letter
27 Designer Gucci	82 Big lamb cut	4 Equal: Prefix	48 Avant_	99 ‘16 Olympics site
28 Lhasa _ (little dogs)	86 Common weed of North America	5 Walloped	49 Mandate	100 Flowering
29 Mega Stuf cookies	90 Universal donor blood type, in brief	6 Foliage bit	50 Smells	101 Small dress size
33 This second	93 Shark feature	7 Barcelona’s land, to natives	53 Exhales wistfully	102 Cowboy’s whoop
35 Legendary figure in a 1999 horror film	94 Ending for alp or salt	8 Bud	54 Pack firmly	104 _ pot (sinus cleaner)
39 Azaleas are members of it	95 Architect I.M. _	9 Director Kazan	56 Cleaning tool in a bucket	105 Early toumey round
43 Not quite	96 Red Sea canal	10 Plus others: Abbr.	57 Muscle jerk	106 Safin who won tennis’ 2000 U.S. Open
44 Dutch beer	98 Get there	11 Music genre for TLC	58 More citrusy, say	107 She sang the hit “Hello”
45 _ the line (obeyed)	100 Hive house	12 Chachi’s last name on “Happy Days”	60 Mary Lou of gymnastics	108 New Mexico’s state flower
47 Sturdy tree	103 Suburb of Minneapolis	13 Mao _-tung	62 One suffering for a belief	109 Brain protector
48 Slimy gunk	106 June bugs, by another name	14 Free TV ad, for short	66 Atom studier Bohr	114 _ Stanley Gardner
51 Shaft of light	110 Poetic “always”	15 Drink inserts	67 Leb. neighbor	115 “Nae” sayer
52 Common allergy trigger	111 Yule songs	16 Target of antiperspirant	68 911 gp.	117 Red Muppet
55 Condiment spicier than its yellow cousin	112 Post-teen	17 Minimal	69 Susan of “Spring Fever”	119 Inc., abroad
59 On _ with (similar to)	113 Squeaks (out)	18 Bordeaux wine	70 Nintendo console	120 U.S. Navy noncom
61 Big name in dog food	116 Ticked (off)	19 Secret store	71 1974 dog film	121 Divs. of days
63 Born	118 Spring back	24 Grads’ event	72 Artificial silk	122 Lyric verse
64 TV announcer Don	120 Kentucky Derby venue	29 Fictional Scarlett	73 “Orange _ New Black”	123 Film director Craven
		30 Plan a new route for	74 Thoughts	124 Little peeve
			75 Taken with	125 Hog hangout
			80 “Two Guys and _	

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

could get away with. There's no doubt that at this event, he was the violent instigator.

After Pretti damaged the vehicle, agents got out and pushed him to the ground. For all the talk of ICE being the equivalent of the Gestapo, they didn't even bother to arrest him, despite his having committed a crime. If he'd been arrested and charged, Pretti might never have shown up at the other ICE operation and would still be with us today.

That Pretti, we now know, made it a practice to court violent encounters with federal agents while armed was incredibly irresponsible. He was fortunate that the first struggle didn't escalate into something much more hazardous to him and to others if an agent had noticed his gun.

The firearm wouldn't have been an issue in the second incident, meanwhile, if he'd really been protesting. If that were the case, he would have stayed on the sidewalk and held up a sign, or chanted, "ICE go home," and the officers might have been annoyed, but

there never would have been an interaction to potentially go catastrophically wrong.

The calculation in Minneapolis, though, has been that this kind of benign activity is less effective than direct action, and unfortunately – with public opinion swinging against Operation Metro Surge – this assessment looks to be accurate.

Why simply express a point of view when you can act to stop arrests and to create a hostile, threatening environment for agents?

This doesn't mean that Pretti got what he deserved, or that the officers acted appropriately. It does mean that the state and city officials should have been telling people not to "monitor" DHS activity, but to stay well clear of legitimate law-enforcement activities.

Reasonable people can disagree about the desirability of the goal that Pretti was pursuing, but there's no doubt about how he was going about it, and it didn't involve conventional protest.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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Plant-based milks all have pros and cons

DEAR DR. ROACH: Everyone in my family, except for me, has converted to using almond milk instead of cow's milk. I just saw something on the internet stating that almond milk is possibly the worst plant-based milk substitute. I trust your opinion and research. Can you please educate me on what is best? Are plant-based milks really better than cow's milk, and which plant-based milk is best? – D.G.



When trying to compare plant-based milk substitutes with each other and with animal milks in their health impact, it's important to look at what each of them have in terms of macronutrients and micronutrients.

Cow's milk, like other animal milks, contains macronutrients like protein, sugars and fats, as well as micronutrients like calcium. (Most cow's milk is fortified with vitamin D.) While most North Americans consume adequate protein, many people try to increase their protein intake through cow's milk.

Similarly, although the data are mixed, most experts agree that saturated fat, which is found in cow's milk, increases heart disease risk. (Cow's milk can be whole, low-fat, reduced fat or skim, varying in their percentages of overall fat.) However, cow's milk contains beneficial fats like conjugated linoleic acid and methyl-branched-chain fatty acids. Most North Americans consume much more simple sugar than what is optimal with cow's milk.

Almond milk has much less protein than cow's milk (1 gram versus 8 grams), and the quality of the protein based on the amount of essential amino acids is less. Soy milk is much higher in protein than almond milk – almost as much as cow's milk, about 7 grams. Coconut milk has almost none.

However, almond and soy milk have no saturated fat (or almost none) and more monounsaturated fats. Coconut milk has about the same amount of saturated fat as cow's milk. Almond, soy and coconut milks are typically fortified with calcium to match what is found in cow's milk, but the calcium in plant milks is not absorbed as well.

Almond milk can be bought unsweetened or sweetened with typically 7-8 grams of sugar per cup, compared to 12 grams per cup in cow's milk. Cow's milk has multiple other micronutrients naturally, while plant-based milk is fortified with vitamin A and D.

So, is your family right that almond milk is the worst? No, I don't think so. In my opinion, the nonexistent protein and high saturated fat content of coconut milk makes it the least acceptable from a health perspective. Soy and almond milk seem like the better alternatives, but neither of them is really comparable to cow's milk in terms of other micronutrients.

The choice of almond versus soy milk is not clear from a health perspective, so your taste preference should be your guide. In all cases of plant-based milks, I recommend unsweetened and unflavored products.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I get regular pedicures. I never go for gel, but I often use a bright color. When the polish comes off, almost every single one of my nails is quite mottled with brown and white spots. Of course, I thought about not wearing polish and allowing the new nails to slowly grow out, but I can't stand the look of my toes. I know this is just a cosmetic problem. My pedicurist seems to know nothing about it. The real question is, what causes such gross discoloration in some people but not in other others? – N.W.

I'll bet you have keratin granules, which represent damage to the nail. They are often described to be chalky white and happen in many people if nail polish is left on for too long (more than 7-10 days). Experts recommend an acetone-free remover when it's time to remove them. You can also use a base coat to protect the nail. Let the nails go without polish periodically.

Fortunately, keratin granules are not dangerous and will grow out. They can be mistaken for toenail fungus, so your regular doctor or a dermatologist can help if these tips don't stop them from developing.

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. ©2026 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Moore Texas by Roger Moore
February 8, 1836: The famous Davy Crockett arrives to entertain and defend at the Alamo.

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 P

FHEFRH JTEQRV GH LHYS
FYQVHAU DTHA JHRHIUOAC
GHLHYXCH IEAUXOAHYJ. ITEEJH
SEQY GEURHJ DOJHRS!

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

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

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
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

Answer Page 4

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Incomplete training for audiologists



by Freddy Groves

You wouldn't think you would need to wonder about a risk of suicide related to the audiology department of a clinic or the kind of work they do there or in having a hearing checkup. But you'd be wrong.

Tinnitus (ringing, buzzing, clicking or other sounds in the ears) is the number one service-connected disability, and those who have it often also have PTSD, behavior disorders, substance abuse, mental health problems and anxiety. It seems that looking for those concerns when there is a diagnosis of tinnitus would be standard care when being seen by an audiologist.

Again, you'd be wrong.

What doesn't always happen is training of audiology staff in suicide risk identification and intervention.

Clinical staff are trained to do a yearly suicide

risk screening on patients. However, audiologists are not always recognized as clinical staff. Therefore, audiologists are only partially trained – they only receive Signs, Ask, Validate, Encourage and Expedite training. Clinical staff, on the other hand, receive the full Skills Training for Evaluation and Management of Suicide and need to complete it within 90 days of starting their job.

What the VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) found in 132 facilities was that nonclinical staff got the training, but most clinical staff did not.

Are audiologists considered health care providers, or not? That question was battled back and forth, with policymakers seeming unsure. And it left the OIG with a concern: If audiologists are not considered health care providers, are they or are they not getting the correct suicide risk training? And are they actually doing the suicide screenings?

The OIG investigation results from two years

indicate that no, they're not doing all the screenings. For those two years, only 22 and 39% of screenings were done. And at 15 facilities, no screenings were done at all.

For 29,000 VA patients who only get audiology care, that means nobody was doing any suicide risk assessments on them for those two years.

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• This tip will change your life when peeling eggs: After you have hard-boiled your eggs, drain them and leave them in the pot. Put the lid on the pot and shake. Shake in all directions for up to a minute. The eggs practically slip right out of their shells. Just rinse and prep.

• "I feed my kitty cat outside on the back porch, but she eats a little at a time, and whenever she took a break, the ants would be all over her food. Now I serve my little princess in a teacup and saucer I found at a thrift store. I put the food in the cup and then put a little water in the saucer. The teacup sits in the water on the saucer. The ants won't get the food ever, because they can't cross the water to get to it. Kitty is very happy now that she can take her time." – O.W. in Arkansas

• Glass and chrome will shine if you clean them with newspaper. You can mist the paper with water first, but not too much. Rub, and the shine comes right out – plus no streaks or lint!

• Use a flat iron to iron your collar if it's rumpled. This also works to straighten out button holes that have crimped.

• "To mark the end on a roll of tape, save your bread tabs. Stick it on the end and it will be ready and easy to start the next time you need tape. If it's a thick tape, you can use two clips – one at either side of the tape. This way, it won't split on you." – M.E. in Maryland

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. ©2026 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.

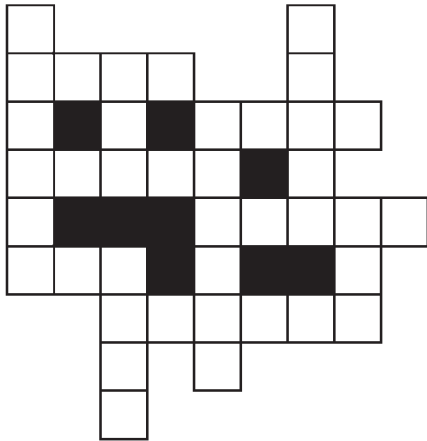
Answer Page 4

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	+		×		= 70			
+		+		-				
	-		×		= 6			
÷		+		+				
	+		+		= 15			
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9



ANC
♥ DACERG
ERMEC
♥ ERDI
♥ RIDONA
GDU
ONAR
NEMIC
♥ REA
♥ EMREDA
DANLE
♥ OSGE



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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