



– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

CHANGES – Christian Rodriguez, above, co-owner of Westway Food Store, said that at least 40 percent of his customers rely on SNAP benefits to provide food for their families. He said that both the store and SNAP customers will have no choice but to adapt to the new SNAP guidelines.

SNAP guidelines change for products containing sugar

Many El Pasoans rely on benefits for food

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – For over 60 years Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients could buy anything except alcohol, tobacco, hot or prepared foods, and personal care products; beginning April 1, candy and sweetened drinks will be added to the list of ineligible purchases in Texas.

To meet this requirement, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is using Senate Bill (SB) 379 definitions of sweetened drinks and candy, which are outlined in the state's approved waiver that was signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott last summer.

SB 379 follows the federal government's new requirements for SNAP, also referred to as food stamps. Low-income individuals qualify for food assistance if he or she makes \$2,152 a month or less, and a family of four qualifies if they make \$4,421 a month or less. Currently, approximately 3.5 million Texans, including 1.7 million children, receive SNAP benefits every month.

In El Paso County, about 62,514 households are enrolled in SNAP, which accounts for more than 21 percent of households in the area and translates into about 143,000 SNAP-eligible residents and more than \$23.6 million in benefits, according to Texas HHSC.

Texas' upcoming SNAP changes are in accordance

with the changes the Trump administration made last year to the program including reducing funding by approximately \$186 billion over 10 years, as well as implementing stricter work requirements, as well as new restrictions on what enrollees can purchase with benefits. More than 40 million individuals use SNAP in the United States, according to government data.

Under the federal government's new SNAP guidelines, able-bodied individuals ages 18 through 65 without dependents must work or attend a work program to receive benefits. Also, parents and household members of a dependent child age 14 or older must meet the additional work requirements. Previously, those with a child under 18 were exempt from the requirements. Additionally, veterans, people 24 and younger who recently aged out of foster care, and unhoused people are also not exempt from work requirements.

Furthermore, the new bill restricts benefits to apply only to certain lawful permanent residents and U.S. citizens and eliminates eligibility for others legally present in the U.S. including those who have qualified for conditional entry under the asylum and refugee laws or based on urgent humanitarian reasons, such as survivors of domestic violence or human trafficking.

To help store owners and suppliers comply with SB 379, HHSC released a guidance document that lays out updated retailer responsibilities, such as confirming which products are restricted by the waiver definitions, updating store purchase systems

SNAP FOOD RESTRICTIONS

Products that are no longer allowed to be purchased with SNAP benefits

Sweetened drinks – defined as nonalcoholic beverages made with water that contain five grams or more of added sugar or any amount of artificial sweetener.

Excluded are beverages:

- Containing milk or milk products;
- Containing soy, rice, or similar milk substitutes;
- Containing more than 50 percent of vegetable or fruit juice by volume;
- Containing natural sweeteners derived from plants (such as Stevia, Stevia Leaf Extract, and Monk Fruit) with less than five grams of added sugar; and
- Considered medical grade electrolyte drinks. (Medical grade electrolyte drinks are beverages used for illness related to dehydration; this does not include beverages marketed primarily as a sports drink.)

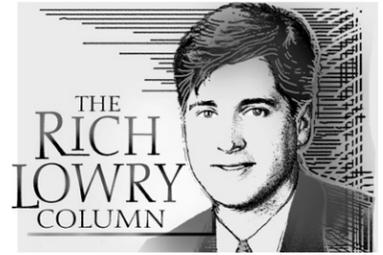
Excluded sweets:

Candy – defined as a confection made with natural or artificial sweeteners. Examples include candy bars; gum; drops; taffy; nuts, raisins, and fruits that have been candied, crystalized, glazed, or coated with chocolate, yogurt, or caramel; and nuts roasted with a sweetener. (This does not include products used exclusively for cooking, such as chocolate bits and cake sprinkles and snack items.)

and processes to stop SNAP transactions of restricted items, double-checking product packaging and labels to ensure items are categorized correctly, and training staff to understand that sweetened

See SNAP, Page 4

Challenging the bedrock of American geopolitical power



The reason why we have the Fifth Fleet, one of the most awesome naval forces ever assembled in the history of mankind, is to protect the sea lanes in the Middle East.

That the Strait of Hormuz is now effectively closed is not just a blow to the global economy and a key point of leverage for the Iranian regime, it is an assault against one of the foundations of American power.

involved in international trade – the U.K. and the U.S. benefited mightily from the arrangements guaranteed by their warships. But so did everyone else.

Guarding the safe passage of commerce has been a core Anglo-American commitment for a couple of centuries, with the baton of naval leadership passing from the British to the United States around the time of World War II.

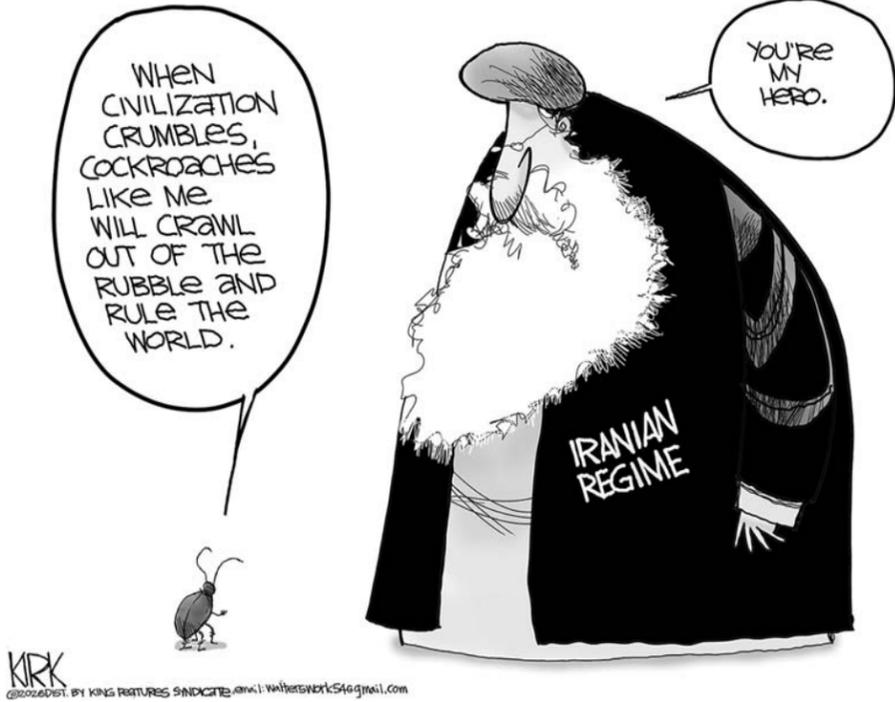
British naval preeminence in the 19th century contributed to the creation of the modern world by enabling relatively safe and inexpensive global commerce. We have done the same in the post-World War II era.

This has never been an entirely altruistic endeavor, since – as two commercially oriented nations heavily

Just consider the global pain from the current effective closure of the strait, which is being felt at the pump in the U.S. and threatens to hammer Europe and countries throughout Asia. Not just oil, but aluminum, fertilizer and any number of other products are being affected. If shipping in the strait remains as constrained as it is now for months rather than weeks, the economic damage could become intolerable.

Iran is the equivalent of a piratical Barbary state that is managing to undermine a defining element of American geopolitical strategy, despite the beating that it is taking otherwise. We have two carrier strike groups in the region, representing alone more firepower than many nations can muster, and the Iranians have some missiles, drones and mines – and yet, they've effectively closed the strait and

See LOWRY, Page 7



View from here By Dr. Glenn Mollette

Iran, no peaceful day, there or here

I am ready for the Iran war to be over. I wasn't ready for it to start. War always means the loss of human life. The families and friends of those who have been killed will suffer emotionally for the rest of their lives. Children have now lost parents. Spouses have lost mates. We have lost Americans. Yes, we thank God for their service to our country, but they are still dead because of a war.

I was sick and tired of Afghanistan years before Afghanistan ever ended and

the same with Iraq. They spent two trillion dollars and thousands of American lives were lost. However, it was crazy the way we left Afghanistan. We should never have turned everything over to the Taliban. We should have kept our base and airport and a couple of thousand soldiers in Afghanistan to have maintained that strategic base.

Here we are again in the Middle East. Gasoline is skyrocketing. The stock market is plummeting.

Americans 55 and old are seeing their retirement funds drop like a rock. Groceries continue to become more expensive. Also, innocent people in Iran are dying. We have no way of knowing for sure how many good Iranian citizens have been killed. Everyone in Iran is not evil. There are millions who hate the current reigning regime and want change. It is tragic that good citizens have and will be killed by our attacks. This does not make us loved. We have to know that down the road there will definitely be blowback.

The current regime, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps or IRGC in Iran is evil. They recently executed a 19-year-old wrestler by

hanging him in public. They didn't like something he had said. These people will do anything. This is what we have to remember, and this is what our President knows. With a nuclear weapon they would hold the world hostage. The strait of Hormuz will eventually be open and moving again. Oil will eventually flow again. If Iran had a nuclear weapon they would be destroy massive cities. The economic impact would be far greater than what we are currently facing.

We could pay \$6 a gallon or more for gasoline before this is over. Iran, with nuclear bomb capabilities, might have brought about \$10 a gallon gas or maybe no gas in some parts of the world. The death would have been greater because the nuclear attacks would not only have targeted Israel, but

other neighboring countries as well as the United States. Iran and the regime had to be stopped. The current impact is bad but nothing like it would have been if they had been successful in building their own nuclear weapons.

Our President does not want this to go on forever. Let's pray that NATO countries will truly step up and do their part in opening up the straits of Hormuz. Let's hope and pray for a government run by the people of Iran. Without a real ending of what is currently in place there will never be a peaceful day there or here.

Dr. Glenn Mollette is a syndicated columnist read in all fifty states. He is also the author of numerous books and can be heard each weekday morning on XM Radio 131.

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

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Est. 1973
News, Inc.

HOW TO DRESS FOR THIS WEEK'S WEATHER:

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Moments in time

THE HISTORY CHANNEL

• On March 23, 1983, Barney Clark died of varied complications 112 days after becoming the world's first person to receive a permanent artificial heart. The last four months of his life had been spent in a hospital bed at the University of Utah Medical Center in Salt Lake City, where he was attached to a 350-pound console that pumped air in and out of the implant through a system of hoses.

• On March 24, 1943, G.I. Joe, one of military history's most decorated homing pigeons, was hatched. During World War II, he flew 20 miles in 20 minutes, just in time to save a battalion from being bombed, and was credited with saving some 1,000 British troops.

• On March 25, 1957, the U.S. Customs Department confiscated 520 copies of Allen Ginsberg's book "Howl." Poet and bookstore owner Lawrence Ferlinghetti had published it the previous fall, leading to his arrest on obscenity charges. But he was found not guilty after nine literary experts testified at his trial that the poem was not in fact obscene.

• On March 26, 1968, President Lyndon B.

Johnson decided to convene a nine-man panel of retired presidential advisors after Defense Secretary Clark Clifford told him that the Vietnam War was "a real loser." The group became known as the Wise Men and included generals, members of the State Department and McGeorge Bundy, National Security Advisor to both John F. Kennedy's and Johnson's administrations.

• On March 27, 1998, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of the drug Viagra, an oral medication to treat male impotence, which was originally studied for its effects on hypertension and angina pectoris.

• On March 28, 2006, Duke University officials suspended its men's lacrosse team for two games following allegations that team members had sexually assaulted a stripper hired to perform at a party. The following spring all charges were dropped for lack of evidence, and nearly two decades later the accuser admitted her story was false.

• On March 29, 1865, the final campaign of the Civil War began in Virginia when Union troops under General Ulysses S. Grant moved against the Confederate trenches around Petersburg.

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King Crossword

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Average Solve Time 23 Minutes

ACROSS

- 1 Makes a choice
- 5 Pear-shaped fruit
- 8 "The Black Prince" author Murdoch
- 12 High point
- 13 Hostel
- 14 Central point
- 15 "Citadel" actress Chopra
- 17 Only
- 18 Brooch
- 19 Rappers' improvisations
- 21 Signaled "Hi!"
- 24 _Bator
- 25 Battery fluid

- 26 Female royal
- 30 Roulette bet
- 31 Carried on, as war
- 32 Pickles on "Rugrats"
- 33 Inmate
- 35 Chorus syllables
- 36 "I dropped the fruitcake!"
- 37 How distant stars shine
- 38 Politico Nancy
- 41 Parcel of land
- 42 Latin 101 word
- 43 Archbishops, e.g.
- 48 Get overemotional
- 49 Slithery fish
- 50 Prime-time hour
- 51 Villa d'_
- 52 Tofu source
- 53 Bigfoot's cousin

DOWN

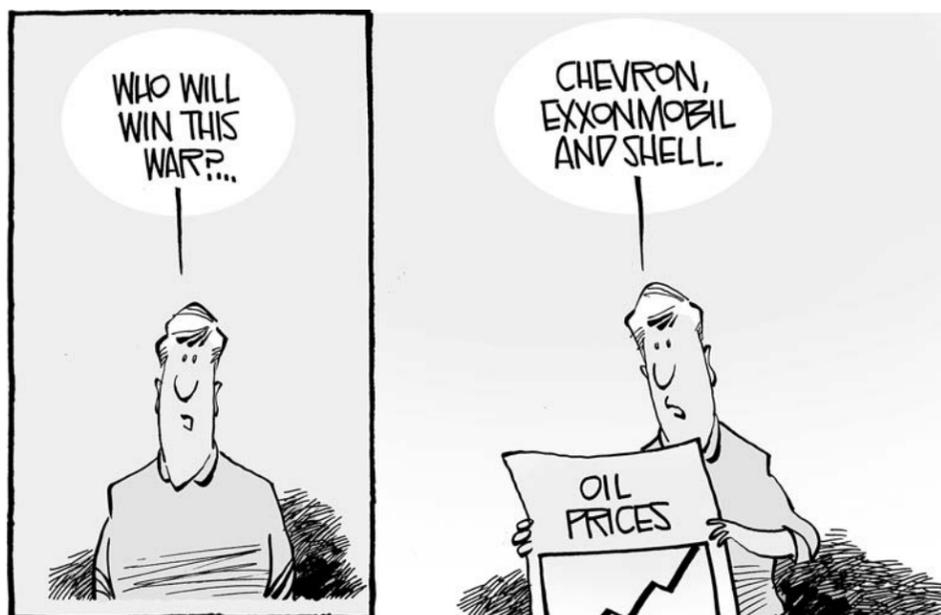
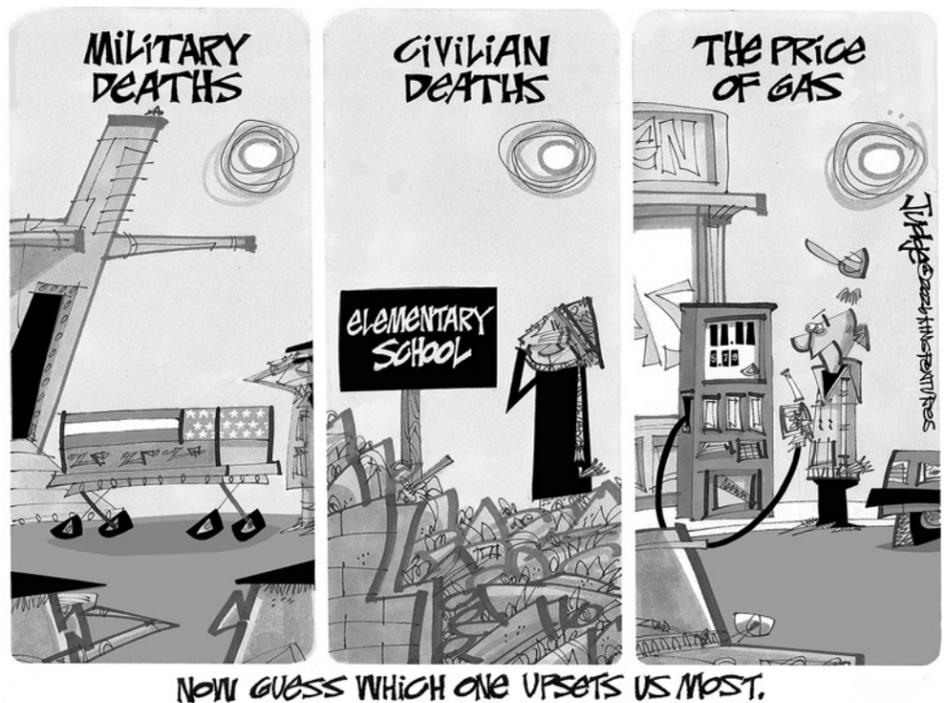
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- 21 Get bent out of shape
- 22 Computer brand
- 23 Caesar's "I saw"
- 24 Implores

- 26 Primitive flutes
- 27 Wax-coated cheese
- 28 Ledge
- 29 Do in
- 31 Courts
- 34 Mollify
- 35 Lengthy list
- 37 _Perignon
- 38 Leaf
- 39 Flightless birds
- 40 Endure
- 41 Easter bloom
- 44 Classic car
- 45 Dead heat
- 46 Sinusitis doc
- 47 Six, in Sicily

Answer Page 4

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WITCH
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— Photos by Alfredo Vasquez

SUGAR CRACKDOWN – Starting April 1, banned SNAP purchases will include sweetened drinks, above, that contain 5 grams or more of added sugar per serving or any amount of artificial sweetener, such as regular and diet sodas or drinks made with less than 50 percent vegetable or fruit juice, as well as candy bars, gum, taffy, nuts, raisins or fruits that have been candied, crystalized, glazed, or coated with chocolate, yogurt or caramel, like in the photo below.

SNAP STILL ALLOWS

Snack items that can still be purchased with SNAP benefits

(As approved by U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service)

- Breakfast bars, granola bars, nutrition bars, sports bars, protein bars, and yogurt bars, unless they are labeled and marketed as candy.
- Snack mix and trail mix.
- Nuts (but not including pine nuts or nuts that have been candied, crystalized, glazed, coated with chocolate, yogurt, or caramel, or roasted with a sweetener.)
- Popcorn.
- Chips, crackers, hard pretzels, pork rinds, and corn nuts.
- Sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds.
- Ice cream, sherbet, and frozen yogurt.
- Ice pops, juice pops, sorbet, and other frozen fruit items containing not more than 50 percent fruit juice by volume.

SNAP

From Page 1

beverages and candy are now ineligible.

“Texas is leading the way in aligning SNAP benefits with healthier food options. By implementing these changes, we encourage better nutrition and ensure this program helps families access nutritional food. I thank the Trump Administration and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission for their work to strengthen this program and better serve Texans,” Gov. Abbott stated in a recent news release.

However, opponents of the new SNAP regulations raised concerns by pointing out that there are people in urban and rural areas who don’t have access to nutritious foods and foods that are not as healthy may be the only options to fend off hunger. They also noted that if the Legislature is really concerned about Texans getting proper nutrition, it should double the value of food stamps for things like fresh produce so benefits could buy more of the health products and give retailers incentive to stock more of it.



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CryptoQuip Answer

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- Oysters can change genders back and forth.
- If the earth doubled in size, trees would fall over and dogs couldn't run without breaking a leg, due to the doubling of surface gravity.
- While we like to alter and decorate them, earlobes don't have any true biological purpose.
- Unlike any other rocky planet in the solar system, Mars isn't actually round, but shaped more like a rugby ball, with different sizes along its three axes.
- Platypuses sweat milk.
- Sorry, dieters, but there's no such thing as a zero-calorie food. Even things like celery and watercress contain more energy than the body needs to process them.
- Odors can pass through liquid.
- In 2013, an Indian woman was so badly constipated that doctors finally had to remove a football-size fecal mass from her body.
- A penguin can reach depths of up to 550 meters in a single dive.
- Research suggests that if you sleep badly and wake up multiple times during the night, you'll be more likely to recall any dreams you had.
- A lightning bolt is five times hotter than the surface of the sun.
- The world record for underwater breath-holding was set by Budimir Sobat in 2021, who held his breath for a total of 24 minutes and 37 seconds. Us average Joes, on the other hand, can typically hold ours between 30-90 seconds.
- You have a 50% chance of sharing a birthday with a friend.
- Wondering if you'll need an umbrella soon? Try looking at a pine cone. If it's closed, the air is humid and rain could be on the way.
- There are more algae in the oceans than stars in the universe.

Thought for the Day:
 "Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."
 – Mark Twain

Food for thought By Dr. Glenn Mollette

Is it amateur, professional or both?

Young athletes are getting rich in college sports

The top 25 highest-paid college athletes by NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) valuation for the 2025-26 season include Arch Manning with a leading valuation of \$6.8 million, and Fernando Mendoza, who ranks within the top 25 with a valuation of approximately \$2.6 million to \$2.2 million, depending on the source.

Fernando Mendoza is not the highest paid but doing quite well. The factors for his popularity include:

- Major Endorsement Portfolio: Fernando Mendoza has secured partnerships with major brands, including Adidas, Dr Pepper, T-Mobile, Keurig, Epic Games, and Royal Canin.

- Heisman Recognition: He won the Heisman Trophy, an achievement that significantly boosts an athlete's market value and earning potential.

- Authentic Persona: Mendoza is known for his dedication, leadership, and open discussions about his faith and his mother's battle with MS, which contribute to a positive public image and brand appeal beyond just his on-field performance.

- Projected NFL Future: As a projected first overall pick in the NFL Draft, his current high NIL valuation is seen as a way to "layer leverage" on his future professional contract negotiations.

Other general NIL trends include:

- Quarterback Premium: Elite quarterbacks dominate the highest NIL valuations, becoming the primary "luxury assets" for top programs.

- Transfer Portal as Free Agency: The transfer portal has amplified the role of NIL, with top players often receiving multi-million dollar offers from NIL collectives when they transfer to new schools. This essentially functions as a form of free agency within college sports.

- Direct School Payments: A significant new development for the 2025-26 season is that some schools can now directly pay athletes through a revenue-sharing model (up to approximately \$20.5 million per year), in addition to third-party NIL deals.

Valuation factors figure in. An athlete's NIL valuation is not a fixed salary but an estimated projection based on

performance, social media following (specifically Instagram is a major determinant), media exposure, and family legacy.

- Compliance Challenges: The rapid growth of the market and the new rules have led to concerns about non-compliance, as the value of reported deals appears to be a fraction of the actual money changing hands.

However, big money is not the norm for most college athletes. The majority will receive a scholarship or even a partial scholarship. In 2026, the landscape of college athlete compensation is divided between direct payments from schools and external marketing deals. While high-profile athletes earn millions, a vast majority of the approximate 200,000 NCAA student-athletes do not receive direct pay for their participation.

Dr. Glenn Mollette is a syndicated columnist read in all fifty states. He is also the author of numerous books and can be heard each weekday morning on XM Radio 131.

Top 25 Highest Paid College Athletes (2025-26 NIL Valuations)

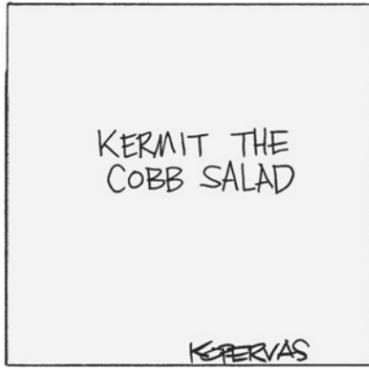
The following table lists the top 25 athletes based on recent NIL valuations:

Rank	Athlete	School	Sport; Position	Estimated NIL Valuation
1	Arch Manning	Texas	Football; Quarterback	\$5.3M - \$6.8M
2	Carson Beck	Miami (FL)	Football; Quarterback	\$4.3M - \$4.9M
3	Jeremiah Smith	Ohio State	Football; Wide Receiver	\$4.2M
4	AJ Dybantsa	BYU	Basketball; Forward	\$4.1M
5	Garrett Nussmeier	LSU	Football; Quarterback	\$3.7M - \$3.8M
6	LaNorris Sellers	South Carolina	Football; Quarterback	\$3.7M
7	DJ Lagway	Florida	Football; Quarterback	\$3.7M
8	Darian Mensah	Duke	Football; Quarterback	\$3.3M
9	Bryce Underwood	Michigan	Football; Quarterback	\$3.0M
10	JT Toppin	Texas Tech	Basketball; Forward	\$2.8M
11	John Mateer	Oklahoma	Football; Quarterback	\$2.6M - \$2.7M
12	Ryan Williams	Alabama	Football; Wide Receiver	\$2.6M - \$2.7M
13	Josh Hoover	TCU	Football; Quarterback	\$2.4M - \$2.5M
14	Jayden Maiava	USC	Football; Quarterback	\$2.4M
15	Caleb Downs	Ohio State	Football; Safety	\$2.4M
16	Ty Simpson	Alabama	Football; Quarterback	\$2.3M
17	Yaxel Lendeborg	Michigan	Basketball; Forward	\$2.3M
18	Cade Klubnik	Clemson	Football; Quarterback	\$2.2M - \$3.4M
19	Fernando Mendoza	Indiana	Football; Quarterback	\$2.2M - \$2.6M
20	Boogie Fland	Florida	Basketball; Guard	\$2.1M
21	Dylan Raiola	Nebraska	Football; Quarterback	\$2.1M - \$2.3M
22	Taylen Green	Arkansas	Football; Quarterback	\$2.1M - \$2.6M
23	Donovan Dent	UCLA	Basketball; Guard	\$2.0M
24	CJ Bailey	NC State	Football; Quarterback	\$2.0M - \$2.3M
25	Sam Leavitt	Arizona State	Football; Quarterback	\$2.0M - \$3.1M

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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

we, for now, can't reopen it. This is a stark demonstration of asymmetrical power, and the longer it goes on, the more it will look like a national humiliation. There's no one who is going to bail us out because we have a world-class navy, whereas our allies don't – even if they wanted to help. Trump would like to muster an international force to reopen the strait, but Germany has rebuffed him, and the Japanese and Australians aren't interested. France is putting together a force – to deploy after the end of hostilities. Imagine if that had been our attitude about the Battle of Belleau Wood. The fact of the matter, though, is that allied countries aren't going to think it's possible to reopen the strait if we haven't managed to do it on our own. Trump's two basic options are to seek some unsatisfactory accommodation with the Iranians that ends in a ceasefire – with the Iranians having demonstrated their de facto control of one of the most consequential waterways in the world – or to break their grip

on the strait by force of arms, perhaps up to and including the deployment of ground forces to secure the shores of the strait. Trump seems inclined to bludgeon the strait free of Iranian control. U.S. officials say we could begin naval escorts in a matter of weeks, and they worked during the Tanker War between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s. The great 19th-century naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan argued, "Control of the sea by maritime commerce and naval supremacy means predominant influence in the world." This was the experience of the British, and has been ours for a long time. "The necessity of a navy," Mahan also said, "springs from the existence of peaceful shipping and disappears with it." In the Strait of Hormuz right now, peaceful shipping has largely disappeared, while we are deploying a mighty navy. If our forces can't restore free navigation, it will represent a significant failure of a traditional pillar of U.S. power.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. ©2026 by King Features Synd., Inc.

FDA requires warnings on many estrogen treatments

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 70-year-old woman who has suffered with vaginal dryness ever since I went through menopause. My doctor has prescribed estradiol 0.01% hormone cream to help with the symptoms. The side effects and warnings are worrisome, even though my doctor assures me that it's safe to use. I value your opinion and would appreciate your thoughts. – K.C.



The Food and Drug Administration requires boxed warnings, which are the highest level of concern, on systemic estrogen like pills. Until November 2025, the same warnings existed on topical treatments like creams and gels. In my opinion, the risks of estrogen cream like the estradiol that you have been prescribed are low. I agree with removing the boxed warning since it can scare women from using these helpful, low-risk treatments for their symptoms of low estrogen, including vaginal dryness or painful sex.

As always, I do recommend that anyone who is prescribed estrogen and has a history of an estrogen-sensitive tumor (such as breast cancer) should discuss this treatment with their oncologist prior to starting it. For most healthy menopausal women, topical estradiol is an excellent and very safe choice.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I've read that millions of people have parasites and aren't even aware of it. How do I cleanse myself safely? I'm hesitant to use animal medications like fenbendazole or ivermectin. I drink clove tea daily, but I don't believe that it's sufficient because it doesn't cross the blood-brain barrier. What are your thoughts since this is one of your fields of study? – R.R.

It is probably true that millions of people in the United States alone have undiagnosed parasitic infections. The most common of these are intestinal parasites, such as Blastocystis or Strongyloides. While it may be unpleasant to think about intestinal parasites, we generally don't recommend treatment in asymptomatic people, even if it's been diagnosed.

Microorganisms are categorized into three groups: beneficial ones, like the healthy bacteria that are found in our intestines by the trillions; harmful (pathogenic) ones that cause disease; and commensals, which neither help nor hurt us much. For most people, protozoans like Blastocystis are commensals, so there is no need to treat them. There are very few instances of when an asymptomatic parasite needs to be treated, and it is quite rare among people who are born in the U.S.

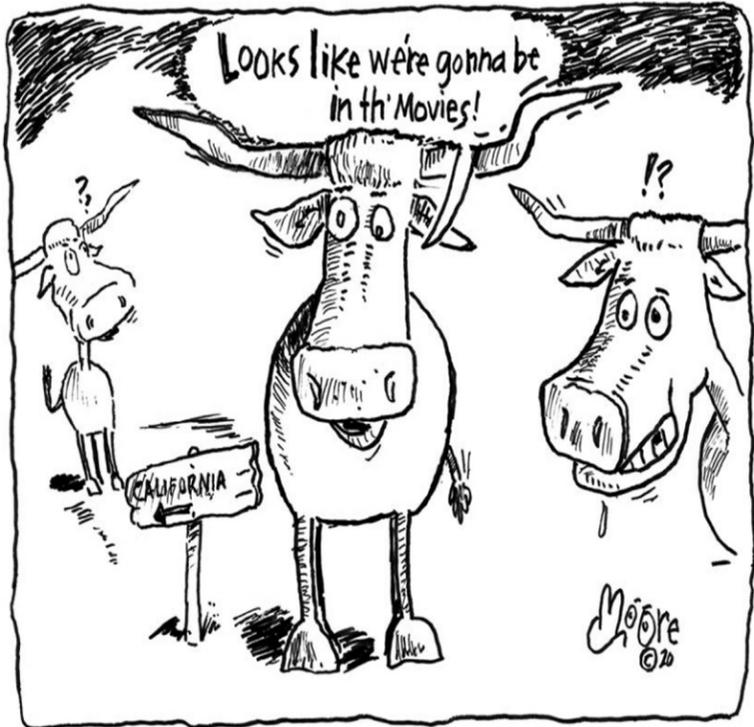
Clove tea is a traditional herbal medicine to treat some parasites, but it is not particularly effective; I don't recommend it as a treatment.

The most common symptoms of intestinal parasites are diarrhea, abdominal pain, bloating, gas, anal itching and weight loss. Parasites are not a common cause of these symptoms in the U.S., but persistent symptoms deserve a thorough evaluation, not home remedies and certainly not powerful antiparasitic medicine – unless it's been prescribed after a firm diagnosis.

Ivermectin is used in both animals and humans for parasitic infections. Although fenbendazole isn't approved for humans, similar medicines like albendazole can be used for humans in cases where a parasite is in need of treatment. Infectious disease doctors are the experts in the treatment of parasitic infections.

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.

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Moore Texas by Roger Moore
 March 18, 1848: T.J. Trimmier starts a cattle drive from Texas to California.

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: S equals O

H ZQ RSSCNE SU JVPEWHUK
 VRN RHJVSLW ST STTHBHZD
 CHUKDW ENBLNNJ. H KPNJJ
 H'Q ZU NEHBV ZEEHBV.

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

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

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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Thefts of taxpayer money



by Freddy Groves

Note to thieves: Don't get stopped on a traffic violation while you're carrying a pile of stolen goods and electronics in your car, especially if you're crossing state lines. One pathetic criminal was stopped while transporting electronics that were bought by an in-house thief at the VA who was in charge of buying goods with government credit cards.

The VA thief had handed over part of his \$200,000 stash of stolen electronics to have them sold by his thief partner. Found in the traffic stop were phones, a gun with a magazine, credit cards belonging to other people and a pile of cash. At the VA thief's home additional electronic items were found, including soundbars, headphones and speakers.

Unfortunately, these thieves will only serve a year in prison, but they do have

to pay back nearly \$200,000.

The VA's Office of Inspector General (along with the IRS and the Small Business Administration) was in on the investigation of a thief who stole \$1 million in CARES Act funds – and bought himself a 9-hole golf course. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security money was to help small businesses stay afloat through the Covid pandemic, a loan to be used for payroll, rent, mortgage and other business-related expenses.

The thief owned four companies at the time (including a bar, a bistro and a grill) and applied for economic injury money on all of them because he wasn't able to get a standard bank loan for the golf course purchase. When applying for the money, he neglected to mention that one of the companies was being sold to someone else at the time.

He could have gotten up to 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Instead, he was sentenced to only 15 months in prison and a year of supervised release – after

fraudulently obtaining over a million dollars of taxpayer money.

Perhaps taxpayers will get the money back: The golf course is currently for sale.

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• "This tip is good for an inexpensive watch or piece of jewelry that tends to rust or discolor on the skin-facing side. Clean it well and "paint" the side facing your skin with clear nail polish." – M.T. in Alabama

• "Here is a fun idea for a baby shower, especially if you have a small group: Have a supply of baby onesies, fabric paint and fabric markers, and have guests personalize a onesie for the baby. They are so easy to create and so necessary for Mom and Dad." – T.B. in Florida

• If you want to make a message station for dry-erase notes, try this cheap and fun DIY trick: Grab a picture frame with a glass insert. Use a photo, pretty piece of patterned paper or a piece of your child's artwork covered by a sheet of tracing paper in the frame. Hang on the wall. You can write on the glass with a dry-erase marker and erase as needed.

• Shower caps are an outstanding substitute for plastic wrap when covering a large plate or bowl. They are easily cleaned, super easy to use and can be found cheap at your local dollar store!

• "Do you have a toddler or preschooler who likes to lock him- or herself in the bathroom? This happened to us, and we found a great solution. We slipped a small section of pool noodle, slit down the side, over the door out of reach of little hands. The door simply won't close (or slam!), but an adult can easily take it off if necessary. This has been a lifesaver, because we were about to take the doorknob off!" – A.P. in Nevada

• For a fun magnet board, paint inexpensive burner covers and mount on the wall. Since they are metal, kitchen magnets will work easily.

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.

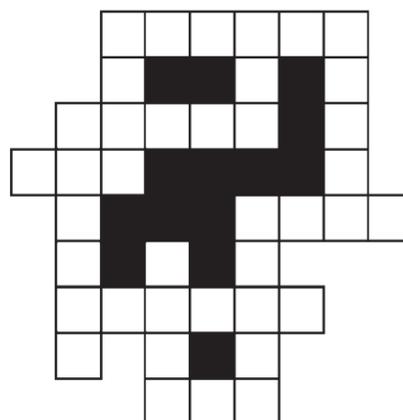
	-		×		=	24		
-		+		+				
	+		-		=	2		
+		+		×				
	+		÷		=	7		
=		=		=				
6		16		30				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Answer Page 4

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- ADH
- MARDLE
- NUTHA
- RUFT
- ASKWUQ
- WFE
- ♥UHTR
- DWATE
- ♥ATM
- REESHA
- ♥ERMLA
- ♥RWDA



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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