

# EPOCH INSIGHT

## BORN WITH MICROPLASTICS

BY PETR SVAB





# Microplastics Are Now Being Found in Newborns

**TINY PLASTIC PARTICLES**, known as microplastics, are so pervasive in our environment that babies are now being born with them already in their systems.

In this week's Epoch Insight, reporter Petr Svab explores the growing concern over microplastic contamination and its potential effects on the environment and our bodies.

Microplastics have been found in the animals we eat, in the water we drink, and in the air we breathe. It's in our blood and in our organ tissues, even the deepest tissue of our lungs.

"With regard to the human health impacts of it, perhaps unsurprisingly, none of them are good," said Sherri Mason, an expert on microplastic pollution at Penn State-Behrend.

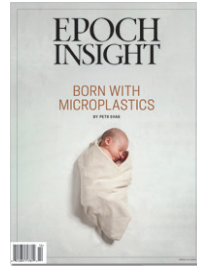
The in-depth report looks at the sources and pathways of microplastics and the potential health risks associated with microplastic exposure, from hormone disruption to immune system suppression.

The report also highlights some options for mitigation, mostly around single-use packaging, and technologies being developed such as new filtration systems.

Read more about the ubiquitous, but almost invisible, issue of microplastics, in this week's edition.



JASPER FAKKERT  
Editor-in-chief



**ON THE COVER**

There's growing concern over tiny plastic particles known as microplastics, which are now even being found in the bodies of newborn babies.

EMMA INNOCENTI/  
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## EPOCH INSIGHT

JASPER FAKKERT  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CHANNALY PHILIPP  
LIFE & TRADITION, TRAVEL EDITOR

CHRISY TRUDEAU  
MIND & BODY EDITOR

CRYSTAL SHI  
HOME, FOOD EDITOR

SHARON KILARSKI  
ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

BILL LINDSEY  
LUXURY EDITOR

FEI MENG, BIBA KAYEWICH  
ILLUSTRATORS

SHANSHAN HU  
PRODUCTION

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THE EPOCH TIMES ASSOCIATION INC.  
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People covered in flower petals and colored powder celebrate Holi, the festival of colors that marks the beginning of spring, in Vrindavan, India, on March 6.

RITESH SHUKLA/GETTY IMAGES





SPOTLIGHT

## Ancient Waterwheel

A BOY WALKS PAST A NORIA, a traditional water-raising machine for irrigation, on the Orontes River in Hama, Syria, on March 6.

PHOTO BY LOUAI BESHARA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



# The Week



The new Viking Lodge survival shelter is a work in progress, at Fortitude Ranch Nevada on March 2.

PHOTO BY ALLAN STEIN / THE EPOCH TIMES

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INSIDE



*“China, which is increasingly challenging the United States, ... remains our unparalleled priority.”*



**Avril Haines**, director of national intelligence, during a hearing in Washington

**\$3.8 BILLION**

The U.S. Department of Justice says **it’s suing to block JetBlue Airways’ proposed \$3.8 billion acquisition of Spirit Airlines.**

**“The ultimate level of interest rates is likely to be higher than previously anticipated.”**

**Jerome Powell**, chairman, Federal Reserve, in his semi-annual Monetary Policy Report address



**242,000 JOBS**

**U.S. private employment increased by 242,000 jobs last month**, payroll processor ADP says.

**350 DEMANDS**



The Federal Trade Commission has made **more than 350 specific demands for Twitter owner Elon Musk to hand over internal communications and information about layoffs**, as part of an investigation into the social media company, according to a House report.

**31%**

**The Los Angeles Police Department has reported 40 murders this year through the end of February, a 31 percent decrease from the year-earlier period.**

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: KEVIN DIETSCH/GETTY IMAGES, SAUL LOEB/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK/RIGHT PAGE: STRAPP VIA GETTY IMAGES

**1 MILLION**—A technology arm of the federal government had **lax security on about 1 million online accounts because it rejected using facial recognition technology over “equity” concerns, according to an inspector general’s report.**



Military vehicles transfer the two living U.S. citizens who had been kidnapped in Mexico back to the United States on March 7.

**TRAVEL**

**State Department Warns Americans About Mexico Travel Following Kidnapping**

**THE U.S. CONSULATE** in a Mexican border city has issued an alert about violence and warned U.S. citizens not to travel there, after two of the four Americans who were abducted last week were killed by criminals.

After the reported kidnapping, the U.S. State Department issued an alert about violence in Matamoros and reminded U.S. citizens that many parts of Mexico are under a “Level 4: Do Not Travel” warning. That’s the highest warning in the department’s travel advisory system.

The U.S. Consulate in Matamoros has issued at least four security alerts since early 2020, warning about kidnappings, cartel violence, crime, and other incidents.

**HEALTH**

**Temperature-Stable TB Vaccine Shows Encouraging Trial Results**

**RESEARCHERS HAVE CARRIED OUT** a phase one clinical trial of a freeze-dried, temperature-stable experimental tuberculosis (TB) vaccine that could one day be an alternative to the BCG vaccine, which has significant drawbacks.

According to WHO estimates, almost 2 billion people worldwide are infected with Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacterium that causes TB. The disease is calculated to have infected 10.6 million people in 2021 and killed 1.6 million in the same year.

AAHI’s single-vial TB vaccine is a freeze-dried formulation that can be stored at temperatures of up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit for months. At present, BCG is the only licensed vaccine against TB. BCG is a freeze-dried powder that must be stored under frozen conditions and can be “readily destroyed by sunlight,” according to the World Health Organization.

**TAXES**

**IRS Notice Urges Taxpayers Not to Fall for Credit Claim Scheme**

**THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS)** has issued a “renewed warning” that calls on people to be aware of employee retention credit guidelines amid widespread promotions that push “ineligible people to file” for the credit.

“While this is a legitimate credit that has provided a financial lifeline to millions of businesses, there continue to be promoters who aggressively mislead people and businesses into thinking they can claim these credits,” Acting IRS Commissioner Doug O’Donnell said in a notice. “Anyone who is considering claiming this credit needs to carefully review the guidelines.”

“If the tax professional they’re using raises questions about the accuracy of the Employee Retention Credit claim, people should listen to their advice. The IRS is actively auditing and conducting criminal investigations related to these false claims. People need to think twice before claiming this.”

If a taxpayer improperly claims the employee retention credit, they could be required to repay the credit and pay higher interest. Penalties may also be applied, the IRS warned.

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**Ned Price to Step Down as State Department Spokesman**

**STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN** Ned Price will step down from his role later this month, department officials have announced.

Price, who has served as spokesman since the beginning of the Biden administration, will continue working directly with Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a new capacity.





Jeremy Farrar, then-director of the Wellcome Trust, attends the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 19, 2017.

**WHO**

**New WHO Chief Scientist Made Crucial Change to Paper on COVID-19 Origin**

**THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**'s new chief scientist made a crucial change to an influential 2020 paper that claimed it was "improbable" that COVID-19 came from a laboratory, a newly disclosed email shows.

Jeremy Farrar, the chief scientist, was credited in one message with helping guide the paper about the origin of COVID-19, according to an email released by the U.S. House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic.

In the early 2020 paper, Dr. Ian Lipkin, a Columbia University professor, and four co-authors claimed that "it is improbable that SARS-CoV-2 emerged through laboratory manipulation of a related SARS-CoV-like coronavirus."

SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19.

A draft of the manuscript, published by Nature, included a different word, the House panel found.

"Sorry to micro-manage/microedit! But would you be willing to change one sentence?" Farrar wrote to Kristian Andersen, who co-authored the paper, in an email just one day before publication.

Farrar asked to insert "improbable" in place of "unlikely," the email showed.

"Sure," Andersen responded.

**US-IRAQ**

**Defense Secretary Makes Unannounced Visit to Iraq**

**TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE START** of the U.S.-led coalition's invasion of Iraq, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin made an unannounced visit to Baghdad on March 7 to meet with the nation's prime minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani.

Austin is on a week-long tour of the Middle East, during which he will meet with the leaders of nations that are allied with the United States.

The focus of Austin's meeting with al-Sudani was to discuss the future of the U.S. troop presence in Iraq.

There are 2,500 U.S. troops in the country.

**UK**

**Stopping Illegal Immigration Is Priority for British People, Sunak Says**

**PREVENTING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS** from reaching the UK's shores in small boats is a priority for the British people, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said, as he defended the government's plan to crack down on illegal crossings in the English Channel.

The government has announced the Illegal Migration Bill, which will ban anyone who arrives in the UK illegally from claiming asylum.

Under the new law, illegal entrants will be swiftly removed from the UK to their home country or a safe third country such as Rwanda. They also will be banned from reentry.

According to government figures, a record 45,755 illegal immigrants arrived in the UK after crossing the channel in 2022. More than 3,000 have already made the journey this year.

**US-CHINA**

**White House Dismisses China's Threat of 'Catastrophic Conflict'**

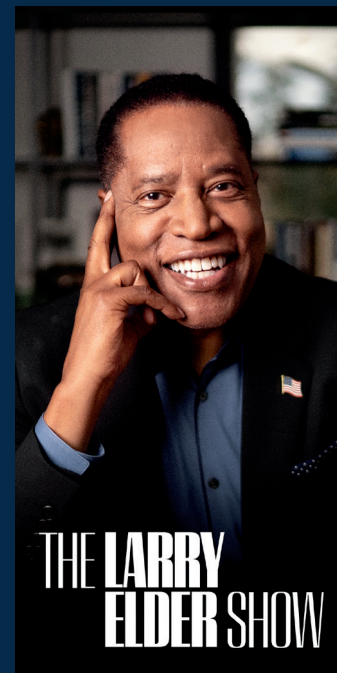
**THE WHITE HOUSE** is responding to threats from a senior Chinese communist official who demanded that the United States stop considering China a geopolitical threat or face consequences.

The Biden administration doesn't seek conflict with China's communist regime, according to National Security Council spokesman John Kirby.

"We seek a strategic competition with China," Kirby said during a press call. "We do not seek conflict."

The Chinese Communist Party has increasingly taken a more belligerent stance toward the United States since leader Xi Jinping came to power in 2012.

THIS PAGE: RUBEN SPRICH/REUTERS



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# The Week in Photos



1. Protesters take part in a demonstration against the French government's proposed pensions reform in Bordeaux, France, on March 7.



2. Arpo, the first prize winner of the "Cats Who Look Like Cows" competition, poses for a portrait with sunglasses in Bangkok on March 5. More than 100 cats were judged on how much their coat pattern resembled that of a cow, as well as fur color and softness, and personality.



3. A paramotor pilot flies over the Kedu Warna beach at Lampung Selatan, Indonesia, on March 5.

4. A woman walks her horse past the Silver Dollar Saloon during the 75th annual Leadville ski joring competition in Leadville, Colo., on March 5.

5. A decommissioned airplane that will be made into a tourist attraction in Alor Gajah, Malaysia, on March 6.

6. Locals gather after work to play cricket in Ahmedabad, India, on March 7.



COURTESY/DOCKWISE/FROM TOP: L: PHILIPPELOPEZ/IAF/PVIA GETTY IMAGES; LAUREN DECIOCA/GETTY IMAGES; PERDIANSYAH/AF/PVIA GETTY IMAGES; JASON CONNOLLY/AF/PVIA GETTY IMAGES; MOHID RASMAN/AF/PVIA GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT CIANFONE/GETTY IMAGES



*Microplastics have been found in all corners of the globe. Meanwhile, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch—the largest accumulation of plastic trash in the oceans—could contain up to 129,000 metric tons of plastic waste.*

PHOTO BY ALISTAIR BERG/GETTY IMAGES

ENVIRONMENT

# Microplastics: Pollution on a Planetary Scale

How microplastics are affecting our health and changing the world: **'We're all exposed'**

By Petr Svab



**O**UR WORLD IS GETTING POLLUTED with plastics on a planetary scale. We can't see much of it, but we're starting to feel it.

And it's getting worse.

The plastic bottle tossed by the roadside and the endless trash heaps in third-world countries are just the beginning. As the trash ages, it breaks down into increasingly smaller pieces, until it can't be seen with the naked eye anymore. At that point, however, the problems have barely begun.

These tiny pieces of plastic, called microplastics, have permeated everything, scientists have found in recent years. They can be as large as 5 millimeters and as small as 100 microns—about as thin as a human hair—or even smaller, at which point they're sometimes referred to as nanoplastics.

Microplastics have been found in the most remote corners of the world.

"It doesn't matter where we look—we find microplastics. In the environment, it could be at the bottom of the Mariana Trench, it could be the top of Mount Everest, and everywhere in between," said Sherri "Sam" Mason, an associate professor at Penn State-Behrend who is an expert on microplastic pollution.

"As a consequence of it being everywhere in the environment, it's everywhere within living organisms."

Microplastics have been found in the animals we eat, in the water we drink, and in the air we breathe. It's in our blood and in our organ tissues, even the deepest tissue of our lungs.

"We have a tendency to have this illusion that our skin separates us from the environment, but it is an illusion," Mason said.

Children nowadays are being born with microplastics already in their bodies.

Plastic particles have been found on both sides of the placental boundary, meaning it's seeping from the mother's body into the unborn child.

The repercussions of such pollution are largely unknown. Getting definitive answers has proven immensely difficult. What research has been done, however, indicates the effects are negative.

"With regard to the human health impacts of it, perhaps unsurprisingly, none of them are good," Mason said.

There are many ways to address the issue, but it isn't clear whether a definitive solution is practically achievable. The pollution can be greatly reduced by ditching single-use plastic packaging and reforming the fashion industry. However, that still leaves a massive amount of plastic entering the environment, not to mention the substantial pollution there already is.

So far, research has largely focused on gauging the scale of the issue. It wasn't until 2018, for example, that a paper was published at least somewhat accurately estimating how much plastic is floating in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch—the largest of several massive accumulations of plastic trash in the oceans. Even then, the estimate ranged

from 45,000 to 129,000 metric tons.

Worldwide, some 7 billion metric tons of plastic trash are estimated to be in the environment, in landfills, oceans, and dumps, as well as just strewn around. That amount is expected to grow to 12 billion by 2050.

Research already has found that small pieces of plastic are a problem for fish and birds who mistake them for food. The plastic sits in their stomachs, making them feel full even though they may be malnourished. That, in turn, affects their growth and ability to procreate.

What the more microscopic plastic particles may do to the bodies of animals—or humans for that matter—is mostly unknown and may to a large degree remain so.

One of the problems is isolating the effect of plastics from all the other factors messing with human health.

"Some of the impacts are not acute," said Marcus Eriksen, co-founder and researcher at 5 Gyres, an environmental group that aims to reduce plastic pollution. "If you have a liver packed full of nanoplastics or it's in your placenta, how do you correlate that to harm?"

He cautioned that "in many cases, we're not going to get clear-cut evidence because of the complexity of trying to establish a cause-effect relationship."

One of the most established ways to discover the health effects of a substance is through placebo-controlled clinical trials—preferably long-term. But that's particularly difficult in this case. Microplastics are so pervasive that there may be nobody left to form a control group.

"We're all exposed. Who's not?" Eriksen said.

Health impacts can be studied to some extent through animal experiments. It's also possible to use artificial human tissue grown from stem cells.

"It's expensive and time-consuming," he said.

It's easier to look at the effects of chemicals added to the plastics, such as flame retardants in solid plastics or water repellents in fabrics.

"We know more about the chemicals than we do the plastics, the material itself," Mason stated, adding that "there are more than 10,000 chemicals that are used in the manufacturing of plastics, and many of these we already know have human health impacts."

Moreover, microplastic can act as a "temporary sponge," absorbing chemicals from the environment and releasing them later inside an organism, said Lisa Erdle, director of Science & Innovation at 5 Gyres.

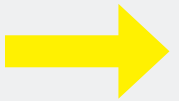
Some chemicals that are added to plastics can cause cancer or harm fertility, according to Mason. As for the

**7 BILLION TONNES**

**of plastic trash are estimated to be dispersed throughout the environment worldwide.**



*A volunteer checks plastic waste while conducting research on the amount of microplastics contained in the water, at a beach in Peukan Bada, Indonesia, on June 2, 2022.*



**About half** of all plastic pollution is estimated to come from single-use packaging.



plastics themselves, some studies suggest they may worsen Alzheimer's disease and disrupt cell function, Mason and Erdle say.

"There's starting to be a connection being made between this material and certain neurological diseases," Mason said.

Another factor complicating the research is the immense variability of plastics.

At their core, plastics are made of large hydrocarbon molecules that can be assembled into a virtually infinite number of shapes and variations, giving them different physical and chemical properties. The complexity of discerning their health effects one by one and in various combinations is then also nearly infinite.

Moreover, new kinds of plastics are developed all the time. Current science has no way to determine in advance all the long-term health effects of each type of plastic after it breaks down into microplastics and spreads throughout the environment.

"We have turned our planet into a giant chemistry experiment," Mason said.

"We're doing an experiment on ourselves and our children and our children's children."

She pointed to hubris as the cause of our throwing caution in the wind, as "we think that we're smarter than we are."

"Maybe it will take 10 years, maybe it will take 50 years, but it's going to come back to bite us," she said.

Eriksen acknowledged that the "jury is still out" on the long-term effects of plastic pollution. But he argued it's time to pause and rethink how we do things.

"The abundance of novel chemicals in society, in our environment, and the lack of understanding of how they affect these living systems and their interaction effects, it makes me want to employ the precautionary principle," he said, though he acknowledged data on the issue is still lacking.

"Does the research show that the impacts should cause public fear? Not quite there yet. Because the research, it takes a long time.

"But my gut says, 'Do no harm.' I'm always for prevention of a problem if you see it happening. Why wait until the problem is much bigger than it already is to then say, 'Oh, it's a big problem?'"

### Solutions

While the plastic pollution problem may be impossible to solve completely, there are ways to mitigate it. About half of all plastic pollution is estimated to come from single-use packaging. Much of it has non-plastic alternatives.

There are also companies working on alternative materials that naturally break down.

"We're seeing a lot of investment, [venture capital] money, going to some of the new biomaterial companies. It's pretty inspiring," Eriksen said.

A material called PHA, for example, is made of a chemical that microbes use in their cellular wall to store energy.

"We can extract that and make what looks and feels

like plastic. It has a long shelf life, it can be translucent, it can be made in different colors, and it can be made into rigid plastics or flexible plastics. And in the environment, it begins to break down very quickly," he said.

There's also a company that's developing a material that works as plastic cling wrap, but is made of seaweed and breaks down after discarding.

Those materials are still more expensive than plastics though.

"They have the challenges that any startup might have," Eriksen said, hoping that as the production scales up, the price will drop.

Industries that use plastics for single-use packaging may be willing to pay a bit more in exchange for the positive PR that a more nature-friendly material could bring, he suggested, referring to his conversations with corporate executives in the industry.

"They'll shift if the science is good, the packaging works for them and gives them a good story to tell," he said.

Recycling could work in theory, but in practice, it remains inefficient—new plastic ends up being cheaper.

"You have to get it back from the consumer, then you have to repolymerize it, repelletize it, and distribute that to your customers," Eriksen said. "Those are real expenses, and that's not as efficient as the system of extracting raw materials and making virgin resin."

Producers that are willing to use alternative or recycled materials are those in the high-end market able to absorb the costs, he said.

The only way to give recycling "an economic chance," he said, would be to force producers to buy recycled material by government fiat.

Another problem is that a lot of plastics can't be recycled, such as the thin plastic film used for packaging, which is expected to greatly increase in production in the coming years.

Even materials that can be recycled may end up in landfills if the manufacturer combines them with unrecyclable substances in the same product.

"If you take plastics and you line it with metal or paper or use adhesives or have different kinds of polymers in one product, it makes recycling mechanically very difficult, in some cases economically impossible—not worth it," Eriksen said.

"You've got to set up for success. And that's been an endless fight for decades."

One of the supposed success stories of recycling is turning plastic PET bottles into synthetic fleece fabric.

In Eriksen's view, however, that's a "marketing scheme" rather than "a long-term solution."

Synthetic textile, and fleece, in particular, stands as the No. 2 plastic pollutant behind single-use packaging. Synthetic threads are the most pervasive microplastic

*A worker sorts used plastic bottles at a plastics recycling mill in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in this file photo. China mismanages 25 percent of its plastic waste, 2020 estimates show.*



**Microplastics can be as large as 5 millimeters and as small as 100 microns, about as thin as a human hair, or even smaller.**

CHINA PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES



pollutant in human lungs, according to Erdle, who specializes in research in this area.

The fibers are shed directly from synthetic fabrics such as clothing, carpets, and upholstery. They also shed into wastewater when the fabric is washed.

“A single load of laundry can release up to 8 million fibers,” Erdle said.

Wastewater treatment plants are able to filter out the threads, but some end up in the sludge called “biosolids,” which is then used as a fertilizer. The fibers are thus dumped into soil, where they are then picked up by wind or surface water and can travel large distances in air currents. Just like other plastics, they break down into smaller pieces over time.

“We don’t really know how long they’ll last in the environment just because all the studies to date that have tested them show little to no degradation,” Erdle said.

A partial solution is installing filters in washing machines that can capture most of the escaping lint.

It would also help to use less synthetic fabric, or at least switch to ones that shed less.

“There are lots of brands that are working on developing textiles that shed fewer microfibers, or if they do shed fibers, they are less toxic and less persistent, and are ultimately causing less harm,” Erdle said.

A major remedy would be to step back from the current “fast fashion” culture that produces a never-ending stream of fleeting trends, followed by an avalanche of low-quality garments destined to be discarded.

“One movie star wears a hat and suddenly there are a gazillion low-quality hats on the market and people buy them. And in a few months, they’re not in fashion anymore,” Eriksen said, noting that trashed clothing has become a major source of pollution.

Many plastics can be easily burned, but that comes with its own suite of problems, Mason said.

“It’s very dirty.”

Burning plastics, particularly those that contain polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, releases large amounts of toxic chemicals, many of which are highly poisonous and carcinogenic. The fumes can be filtered, but some amount of the chemicals still get through.

“You can’t engineer these things to perfection. And many of these chemicals are known to have human health impacts at parts-per-trillion levels,” Mason said. “That’s like a single drop in an Olympic-size swimming pool.”

She sees only one true solution: use less plastic—substantially less.

Mason and Eriksen both support new government regulations that would ban single-use plastic packaging, for example.

The trouble is, much of the plastic packaging and much of the synthetic fabric is made overseas, in countries like Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and China. Even if they were forced to stop exporting such products to the United States, they still produce massive amounts of plastic pollution themselves.

The United States mismanages less than 3 percent of

its plastic waste, according to estimates made in a 2020 paper, while China mismanages 25 percent, Thailand and Indonesia over 60 percent, and the Philippines and India over 70 percent.

And that doesn’t even begin to address the billions of tons of plastic trash already in the environment that is steadily breaking down into microplastic trash.

Mason and Eriksen place some hope in the United Nations treaty on plastic pollution currently in the works. It was endorsed by 175 countries in a resolution last year.

But the resolution still emphasizes things such as recycling and ocean cleanups, neither of which amount to a solution, Eriksen said.

“The solution isn’t going to be more cleanups. We’re not going to recycle our way out of this problem. It’s going to take smart policy that applies to everyone and levels the playing field,” he said.

The resolution, however, suggests that it won’t apply to everyone equally.

It acknowledges that “the effective implementation of some legal obligations under the instrument is dependent on the availability of capacity building and technical and adequate financial assistance” and provides for “flexibility that some provisions could allow countries discretion in implementation of their commitments, taking into account the national circumstances.”

Beyond the treaty, Mason and Eriksen suggested the West should still do what it can on its own, but if that doesn’t make enough of a dent, there doesn’t appear to be a definitive solution, save a miracle.

“I do agree that currently it looks dark, that currently, at best, our present efforts are only working to slow the pace and not reverse the tide, which is what we need,” Mason said via email.

“I do certainly have my times of feeling like it is all hopeless, but cannot stay in that space because... well... I have a daughter and someday I may have grandchildren, and so I have to keep fighting.

“History does tell us that all is hopeless until it is not. At some point, and hopefully, at a point in which it is not too late, we will have no choice but to change.” ■



**“It doesn’t matter where we microplastics. ... It could be Mariana Trench, it could be**

*Sherri Mason, associate professor, Penn State-Behrend*

**Synthetic threads,** from fabrics such as fleece, are the most pervasive microplastic pollutant in human lungs, according to Erdle.



*A seagull struggles to fly while covered by a plastic bag, at Caleta Portales beach in Valparaíso, Chile, on July 17, 2018.*

**look—we find at the bottom of the the top of Mount Everest.”**

FROM L. PENN STATE BEHREND (AUDIO) REYES/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



COMMENDING RESOLUTION

# ‘Courage to Expose the Tyranny’

Lawmakers honor Virginia woman for efforts toward human rights and religious freedom

BY TERRI WU

Wang Chunyan, a Chinese refugee currently living in Virginia, shows the pictures of 16 friends who were persecuted to death for practicing Falun Gong in China, at a forum in the Rayburn Congressional Building in Washington on May 26, 2016.

PHOTO BY LISA FAN/THE EPOCH TIMES



**F**AIRFAX COUNTY, VA.—IN THE hallway of the Virginia General Assembly building, Wang Chunyan, a 67-year-old Chinese refugee, burst into tears and sobbed in the arms of Virginia state Del. Kaye Kory (D-Fairfax).

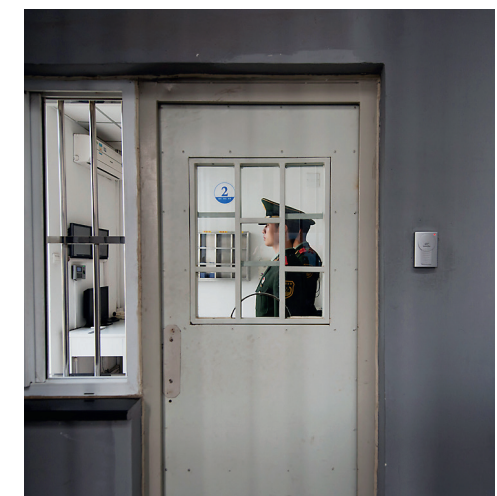
Shortly before, the delegate had introduced and honored Wang on the House floor. She also sponsored for Wang a commending resolution that passed just two days earlier, on Feb. 21.

Calling Wang “an advocate with the courage to expose the tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party,” the resolution praised her for her contributions to Virginia and “her efforts to promote the cause of human rights and religious liberty and to encourage more people in the Commonwealth to make their own contributions to help maintain our current freedoms.”

Usually calm and collected, Wang rarely lets her emotions show in public. But it was different this time.

The persecuted Falun Gong practitioners in China came to her mind, including 20 of her own friends who lost their lives for not giving up their beliefs. “I felt I received the commendation on their behalf,” Wang told The Epoch Times, adding that she thought of the resolution as a condolence to those who had died and an endorsement of Falun Gong’s core values—truth, compassion, and tolerance—which have been under attack in China for more than two decades.

“Tears flew from my heart,” Wang told The Epoch Times. “I experienced emotions like none before in my life, as if a bottle of five flavors was knocked over in my heart.” In



Wang Chunyan was imprisoned for many years in China for refusing to give up her faith.

ED JONES/AP/WIA GETTY IMAGES





the Chinese idiom, the five flavors—sour, sweet, bitter, spicy, and salty—represent the different feelings in life.

“Our journey has been so difficult,” she said, referring to decades of peaceful resistance to the nationwide persecution that then-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Jiang Zemin launched against the spiritual practice in July 1999. Jiang began the campaign with so much force that he didn’t expect Falun Gong to last more than three days. Yet, Falun Gong didn’t disappear in China, not even by the time he died, 20-plus years later, in November 2022.

Wang is one of the Falun Gong practitioners whose lives were turned upside down; an estimated 100 million people had taken up the practice before the persecution. Since 1999, she has lost her husband of 21 years and her life savings to the persecution.

During the Feb. 23 House session, Kory introduced Wang as “a survivor of the slave camps in communist China” and “an example of a very tough survivor with the will to help others—and not just an example of that, but an example of what we can all aspire to.”

Virginia House Speaker Todd Gilbert thanked Wang for her attendance and added, “If any of you

wonder why we push back against the People’s Republic of China at the state legislative level, there’s a great example.”

**‘Silent Strength’**

Sixteen years ago in China, policemen at a detention center told Wang that she might die in prison if she held onto her belief, Wang recounted to The Epoch Times. She responded with a smile: “That’s all right. I will take it as a change of lifestyle.” Before her trial, she was reminded again that she could retain all her assets if she signed paperwork to give up her practice of Falun Gong. Wang refused; as a result, she was sentenced to five years in prison in August 2007.

It wasn’t that she wasn’t afraid, she said. The

*Wang Chunyan holds a wreath in remembrance of a Falun Gong practitioner who was killed in China for her belief, in the National Mall in Washington on July 21, 2022.*

**Then-CCP leader Jiang Zemin, who launched the nationwide persecution against Falun Gong in 1999, expected the spiritual practice to fold within three days.**

memory of being a prisoner of conscience wasn’t in the distant past; she had suffered in prison from 2002 to 2004. Each day, she didn’t know whether she would survive the next.

During the first month of imprisonment in the Dalian Detention Center in northeast China’s Liaoning Province in 2002, three prisoners took turns beating her with a three-foot-long club made with two iron rods of about one-inch diameter twisted together. The beating lasted for about three hours, until she ran and hit her head against the wall in desperation. The torture session left her back soaked with blood. During the two years at the Liaoning Women’s Prison, she made Christmas ornaments and jackets for export.

At the same prison in 2008, she refused to do forced labor and was thrown into solitary confinement, where she suffered a heart attack and was unconscious for hours. In June 2012, two months before her jail term would be over, a lecturer from a local brainwashing center visited Wang. He said he would be waiting for her the day of her release and take her straight to his brainwashing class.

“I almost died several times in the prison and would be released soon. However, they still wanted to destroy me mentally and physically. I felt so despairing and had another heart attack,” Wang recalled. “I could not say a word, but my tears were running uncontrollably. The lecturer saw that and left me right away.” After she was released on Aug. 15, 2012, she started looking for ways to leave China. In May 2013, she managed to escape to Thailand. On her first day there, she applied for U.N. refugee status.

Ultimately, she overcame the persecution in China without denouncing her belief.

After entering the United States as a U.N. refugee in November 2015, she carried on with the same spirit. The first public events she participated in were a forum a month later and another in the following May in congressional buildings in Washington, exposing the CCP’s tyranny. Later, she joined many events calling for the release of detained Falun Gong practitioners whose family members lived in the D.C. area.

From late 2020 to 2021, the retired businesswoman and her friends collected more than 5,000 signatures in support of local resolutions in more than 20 Virginia counties, condemning the persecution of Falun Gong in China. These local resolutions led to a unanimously passed Virginia House resolution on the same issue last year. Kory was the chief co-patron of the resolution.

Kory told The Epoch Times: “I felt overwhelmed, but also honored that she was willing to be so au-



thentic with me. And I know she’s been through so much. And her tears were of pain and joy.”

Kory said she thought of “silent strength” when thinking of Wang: “I think she mostly keeps her pain to herself. And the reason that she came to the General Assembly was to support the ideals that she has, not to talk about herself. That’s what I meant by silent.

“That kind of perseverance, which is relatively without ego, is very impressive.”

Wang recalled collecting those signatures in shopping malls across Virginia in the summer of 2021: “I couldn’t clearly see the path ahead and my next steps. I just thought that I could at least inform people of the facts of the persecution, which were so hard to come by in China. My path is clearer now in hindsight. So [getting the commending resolution] is, in a way, closure for me.”

She said she would continue to expose the CCP’s tyranny and help Americans see the harm of communism. ■

*Wang Chunyan (L) with Virginia state Del. Kaye Kory (D-Fairfax) at the Capitol Rotunda in Richmond, Va., on Feb. 23.*

FROM LISA FAN/THE EPOCH TIMES; COURTESY OF WANG CHUNYAN





SPOTLIGHT

## A Night in Turkey

**A MAIN ROAD IN KAHRAMANMARAS**  
Turkey, on March 5, one month after a massive earthquake struck southeast Turkey. Teams of workers are still clearing the rubble in quake-hit cities.

PHOTO BY EYLUL YASAR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES





TRANSGENDERISM

# Girls Basketball Team Forfeits Game

*In decision to not play against male on opposing team, Vermont school cites fairness and safety*

By Jackson Elliott

**B**EFORE THEY LEFT THE Vermont Division IV state tournament, the Mid Vermont Christian School (MVCS) Eagles were the 12th seed in the girls' basketball tournament.

But they quit the tournament because they didn't want to play against a boy.

Their first opponent, the Long Trail Mountain Lions, had a transgender-identifying player.

According to the head of MVCS, playing against a man could endanger female players.

"We believe playing against an opponent with a biological male jeopardizes the fairness of the game and the safety of our players," MVCS head of school Vicky Fogg told The Epoch Times.

"Allowing biological males to participate in women's sports sets a bad precedent for the future of women's sports in general."

The Mountain Lions are the basketball tournament's fifth seed and have won 11 of their past 12 games.

**16 STATES**

and the District of Columbia allow high school boys to play against girls without restriction, according to TransAthletes.com.

## Men Versus Women

Men have massive biological advantages over women, studies say. Narrower hips give men a more efficient stride. Testosterone builds bigger muscles. The average American man is five inches taller than the average woman, population statistics show.

These advantages put high school boys in a different league from women physically.

High school boy athletes consistently dominate female Olympic finalists, according to statistics collected by BoysVsWomen.com.

"We are asking girls to compete against a class of athletes that outperforms the best female athletes who have ever lived," BoysVsWomen.com creator Jake Teater told The Epoch Times in a message.

A 17-year-old boy performs between 9 percent and 16 percent better than girls of the same age, said BoysVsWomen.com. This gap is equivalent to the gap between a 17-year-old and a 13-year-old, Teater said.

"Allowing male athletes to compete in high

*Biological advantages put high school boys in a different league from women physically. Statistics show that high school boy athletes consistently dominate female Olympic finalists.*

school events for female athletes is as unfair as is allowing high school seniors to compete in events that are specifically for junior high-aged youths," he said.

If the 2016 high school boys' New Balance Nationals Outdoors track and field champions were allowed to compete with the 2016 women's Olympic track and field finalists, the boys would win 34 medals to women's five.

In Vermont, athletes who identify as transgender can legally compete in whatever gender category they like.

The Vermont Principals Association (VPA), which supervises the league in which MVCS plays basketball, doesn't have rules to exclude transgender players who still have male levels of testosterone from women's sports.

MVCS's website emphasizes its Christian commitment.

"The mission of the school is to glorify God by preparing students for college and for life through a program of academic excellence established in Biblical truth," its mission statement reads.

According to Jay Nichols, the VPA's executive director, it's not the first time a transgender player has played in the girls' basketball league.

The VPA oversees sports for 75 member high schools.

"The Vermont Principals' Association supports school leaders to improve the equity and quality of educational opportunities for all students," the VPA's website reads.

In the past, the VPA has changed the names of high school mascots that were insufficiently politically correct.

"We've had transgender students participating in sports for a long time. This is the first time anything like this has happened," Nichols told The Epoch Times.

He added he's not sure why MVCS didn't leave the tournament the first time boys competed in the girls' league.

The Epoch Times reached out to MVCS but received a short written statement that didn't address this topic.

The VPA has received the occasional parental complaint about transgender players participating in the league.

"Parents write letters and stuff sometimes, saying, 'It's not fair that so-and-so gets to play,'" Nichols said.

No school has forfeited a game before, he said.

## Rules Changes Upcoming

The VPA supervises a major Vermont high school basketball league. Nichols said that at its next meeting on March 13, the VPA will decide whether to change its rules or membership criteria to prevent MVCS from forfeiting another game.

"It'll be one of the agenda items to have that conversation with the covering board to see what they think about the situation, and whether or not they think there need to be any adjustments to our rules," he said.

Nichols said the basketball league must obey Vermont law.

No matter what the meeting decides, boys will continue to play girls' sports.

Vermont isn't the only state where it's against the law to bar a male who claims transgenderism from entering women's activities.

According to TransAthletes.com, 16 states and the District of Columbia all allow high school boys to play against girls without restriction.

Among the remaining states, three require sex change surgery for transgender athletes to play, six ban transgender students from playing, 16 states restrict transgender participation in sports in some way, and eight have no laws on the subject.

When asked whether it was fair for high school boys to play sports against women despite their many biological advantages, Nichols pointed to state law.

"Vermont law says that students can identify as they identify. If they choose to play on the girls' hockey team or identify as a girl at school, then for all purposes on our end, they're going to be treated that way," he said.

Although this situation upsets some parents, most feel OK with it, he said.

Nichols added that teenage boys aren't switching genders for sports dominance. Transgender-identifying teens face enough peer pressure, bullying, and bad mental health outcomes that the change isn't attractive to most students, he said.

"One of the illusions that get put out there a lot is that kids will make believe they're one or the other so they can win championships in sports," he said. "And all the research has been done on that pretty much debunked that."

He added that when girls choose not to invite boys who say they are girls into their league, they're not being inclusive.

"Any time any kid gets a message that they're not valued or that someone thinks they shouldn't be included, that has a negative impact on that kid and their family and their friends and anybody else that cares about that person," he said. ■

**A 17-year-old boy performs between 9 percent and 16 percent better than girls of the same age, said BoysVsWomen.com.**

JARED C. TILTON/GETTY IMAGES



RESOLUTION

# Pushback Against Biden's New Water Rule

*House committee advances joint resolution disputing authority over the nation's waters*

By Nathan Worcester

**T**HE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION and Infrastructure Committee advanced a joint resolution that would cancel the Biden administration's new Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule during a Feb. 28 markup, the latest in an ongoing dispute as to federal authority over the nation's waters.

"I would argue that this may be the most important vote, one of the biggest votes that we cast this Congress," Rep. David Rouzer (R-N.C.) said prior to the vote.

Rouzer, Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-Mo.), and more than 140 other members of Congress first introduced the resolution in the House on Feb. 2.

They did so in conjunction with the introduction of identical legislation in the Senate by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.).

The joint resolution would render a veto by President Joe Biden useless if it receives two-thirds of the vote in both chambers. Democrats currently narrowly control the Senate, while Republicans hold a narrow edge in the House.

WOTUS has been a flashpoint for years. Under the Clean Water Act, "waters of the United States" are subject to federal regulation. The original law defined those waters as the country's "navigable waterways."

Expansive views of WOTUS, though favored by many environmentalists, are seen as a serious impediment by many farmers, ranchers, and other landowners, who want it narrower in scope.

Then-President Donald Trump's 2020 WOTUS rule was vacated by an Arizona judge in August 2021.

The joint resolution aims to thwart Biden's new WOTUS rule, which was published in January after being announced on Dec. 30, 2022.

"Farmer after farmer in my district talked to me about the litigation that they've become mired in over the WOTUS definition, and their frustrations with simply trying to put in a pond, or improve their own land," Graves said.

While Graves argued that Biden's WOTUS rule conflicts with the intent of the Clean Water Act,

Democrats have a different take on Republicans' frequent WOTUS challenges.

"Congressional efforts such as this, as well as the previous administration's rulemaking and the revisionist tendencies of conservative judges on [the] Supreme Court, all share a common goal—to weaken the federal protections of our nation's waters and benefit those who are polluting rivers, streams, and wetlands," said Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), the committee's ranking Democrat.

The markup follows a hearing of the panel's Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, chaired by Rouzer.

At the Feb. 28 hearing, Rep. John Duarte (R-Calif.) described his headaches as a farmer who has dealt with legal battles under a broader definition of WOTUS.

"This Clean Water Rule threatens our nation's food supply," he said. It would "effectively remove millions of acres of viable farmland from our food production system that could otherwise be deployed in the future."

"What we need in Arizona is certainty—and this resolution provides less certainty, not more," said Rep. Greg Stanton (D-Ariz.), a former mayor of Phoenix. He argued that the less expansive Trump WOTUS rule wasn't fitted to the realities of his dry southwestern state, "where every drop of clean water counts."

"Clarity needs to be for the customers, the people, not the convenience of the freaking government," said Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.), another farmer-congressman who voiced strong support for the resolution.

"This is another attack on rural America." His concerns were echoed by Rep. Marc Molinaro (R-N.Y.), who claimed that the Biden rule amounted to a "taking by the [Environmental Protection Agency]."

Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.), an opponent of the resolution, said it "places arbitrary and likely impossible timelines on states to act on permit requests."

"My friends across the aisle may not realize this, but this bill may lead to greater numbers of project rejections, as the state is pressured to



respond without the time to fully analyze the project," she said.

## Other Items Passed

Before considering WOTUS, Graves and his fellow representatives approved less contentious pieces of legislation.

Those items included the committee's Authorization and Oversight Plan—a roadmap for the ongoing Congress.

"This will be a work committee and [is] not going to be a show committee," Graves said.

The plan swiftly passed the committee, which then went on to consider its Views and Estimates for Fiscal Year 2024.

"We will aim to alleviate ongoing inflation, energy, and supply chain problems," Graves said.

The committee next passed House Resolution 152, which supports the state-level "move over" laws, which require drivers to put a lane between themselves and roadside emergency response efforts, or, if they are unable, to pass responders slowly and with great care.

"Tragically, in 2022, 50 traffic incident management responders were killed in roadside collisions. Those deaths are preventable," Larsen told his colleagues.

*A farmer adjusts sprinkler heads spraying water on a field near El Centro, Calif., in this file photo.*

**The joint resolution would override President Joe Biden's veto if it receives two-thirds of the vote in both chambers.**

House Concurrent Resolution 15, the next item passed by the committee, facilitates a national memorial service for law enforcement at the U.S. Capitol, sponsored by the National Fraternal Order of Police.

"It is critical for us to recognize that police officers are doing an extremely difficult and dangerous job, day in, day out, hour by hour, 24/7, 365, just to keep our citizens safe," one of the bill's co-sponsors, Rep. Scott Perry (R-Pa.), said.

In addition, the committee advanced a measure to rename a federal building at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory after physicist Helen Edwards, along with capital investment and leasing program resolutions from the General Services Administration.

"You'll notice that every lease resolution we are considering today has significant space reductions or is a short-term lease needed to consolidate agencies into more efficient lease space," Perry said. "It's simple: If space is not being used, taxpayers should not be paying for it."

The committee also passed the Water Quality Certification and Energy Projects Improvement Act of 2023. ■



**"This Clean Water Rule threatens our nation's food supply."**

Rep. John Duarte

FROM L: UNITED STATES CONGRESS/PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; DAVID MCNEV/GETTY IMAGES





An exam table in a room where surgeries, including abortions, are performed at a Planned Parenthood Health Center in Louisville, Ky., on July 9, 2022.

LEGISLATION

# Taxpayer-Funded Abortions

Republicans submit bills to allow states to opt out of Medicaid-funded abortions

By Alice Giordano

**R**EPUBLICANS HAVE revived a proposal that would allow states to exclude abortion providers from the government-run Medicaid program.

The Women’s Public Health and Safety Act seeks to halt the millions of dollars that Planned Parenthood receives in Medicaid reimbursements.

According to a recent report from the Government Accountability Office, the abortion organization received \$1.3 billion in Medicaid reimbursements over the past three years.

Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), a main sponsor of the abortion defunding bill,

said the money accounts for 81 percent of federal tax dollars received by Planned Parenthood.

“Abortion is not health care,” Lankford said. “It should not be controversial to say that taxpayers shouldn’t be forced to support abortion providers.”

Planned Parenthood didn’t respond to a request by The Epoch Times for comment about the proposed measure.

In December 2022, before Republicans took control of the House, Planned Parenthood praised Democrat-led legislation calling for a record funding of more than \$600 million to support abortion.

The organization also sought to end the longstanding Hyde Amendment, which

restricts the use of federal Medicaid money for abortions.

“This amendment most harms people who, due to this country’s legacy of systemic racism and bias, have relied most on Medicaid—including black, Latino, and LGBT people,” Alexis McGill Johnson, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said in a statement.

Rep. Michael Cloud (R-Texas), the main sponsor of the Women’s Public Health and Safety Act, emphasized that each state can decide to opt in or out of Medicaid funding of abortions under the measure.

He cited a study that showed that 60 percent of Americans oppose taxpayer-funded abortions.

“For too long, abortion providers have operated on the taxpayers’ dime, while performing elective abortions in the name of ‘health care,’” Cloud said.

The bill, which traces its origins to a similar proposal made by Republicans in 2016, is supported by several pro-life organizations, including Students for Life Action, which recently exposed Christian colleges with ties to Planned Parenthood.

The Ethics and Public Policy Center HHS Accountability Project also has endorsed the legislation. The conservative organization opposes abortions and takes on the issue as a baby’s constitutional right to protection.

With a majority in the House, Republicans are introducing a number of measures that failed while the chamber was controlled by Democrats. Many of the bills are aimed at government funding for abortion.

Another revived bill this session is the Prohibiting Abortion on Federal Lands Act, which would prohibit any kind of promotion of abortion on federal property, including military installations, national parks, and courthouses.

The Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, of which various versions have been introduced since 1998, is back before Congress. Under that legislation,

anyone who transports a minor across state lines for an abortion and isn’t her parent would be charged criminally and face imprisonment.

New anti-abortion legislation also has been introduced, including House of Representatives Bill 330, which seeks to extend Title X to prohibit any grants under the Public Health Service Act from being awarded to any organization that performs or supports abortion.

### Democrat Pro-Abortion Bills

Another Republican-sponsored bill, called the American Values Act, seeks to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, enacted during the Kennedy administration to exclude funding of abortions as a method of family planning.

The Pharmacist Conscience Protection Act seeks to protect pharmacists who decline to fill prescriptions for abortion-inducing drugs based on their moral or religious beliefs and to provide them with an avenue to file a civil action lawsuit against a government agency that violates the proposed law.

In January, the House approved another new bill that would give infants who survived an abortion procedure the same right to medical assistance under current laws as other newborns. The bill translates that right into criminal prosecution of doctors who fail to resuscitate babies born following a failed abortion.

“A child who survives an abortion attempt, who is outside the womb, breathing and struggling for life, doesn’t deserve equal protection under the law?” Rep. Kat Cammack (R-Fla.) asked at a hearing on the proposal.

While outnumbered by Republican-sponsored anti-abortion bills, there are some Democrat pro-abortion bills, including one that calls for the elimination of an existing risk evaluation requirement before receiving mifepristone.

Also known as RU-486, the oral medicine is used to trigger a miscarriage in the first 63 days of an unwanted pregnancy. It’s also used to end the second trimester of pregnancy.

In all, there are currently about 50 bills and another dozen proposed resolutions before Congress that deal with abortion. ■



**“For too long, abortion providers have operated on the taxpayers’ dime, while performing elective abortions in the name of ‘health care.’”**

Rep. Michael Cloud

**\$1.3 BILLION**

**PLANNED PARENTHOOD** received \$1.3 billion in Medicaid reimbursements over the past three years, a report shows.

**81%**

**THE MEDICAID** reimbursements account for 81 percent of federal tax dollars received by Planned Parenthood, a senator says.

**60%**

**OF AMERICANS OPPOSE** taxpayer-funded abortions, a study shows.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JON CHERRY/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN HAMEL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; ANNA MONYAK/POOL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



**“Abortion is not health care.”**

Sen. James Lankford



LEGISLATION

# TRIBES SEEK WAY OUT OF 'BUREAUCRATIC STRANGLEHOLD'

*Advocates tell lawmakers to deregulate and  
unleash economic potential*

By John Haughey

*Two Native Americans scan the horizon  
in Monument Valley,  
Ariz., in 1965.*

PHOTO BY EMIL MUENCH/ARCHIVE  
PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

**T**HE PRAIRIE BAND CASINO AND Resort off U.S. Highway 75 in northeast Kansas is a sprawling Las Vegas-style casino and hotel with an RV park and golf course that employs 750 and generates \$65 million in annual revenue.

Owned by the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, the resort in Mayetta, Kansas, features a 35,000-square-foot gaming floor, 1,100 slots, 300 hotel rooms, and seven bars and restaurants.

In 2000, the tribe submitted a permit to the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) seeking to build a retail plaza anchored by a convenience store next door.

More than 20 years later, it's still waiting for a decision.

Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Chair Joseph Rupnick told congressional lawmakers on March 1 that boggy regulations hatched from convoluted federal land-use laws administered by a chronically underfunded, undermanned BIA are among the head-banging hurdles hamstringing economic development on many of the 325 Indian reservations within the United States.

"We started this project 22 years ago and we're still not finished. Nowhere else in America does this type of bureaucratic stranglehold occur," Rupnick testified before the House Natural Resources Committee's Indian and Insular Affairs Subcommittee. "Frankly, what the government has done to us and our lands is nothing more than create a mess."

Rupnick was one of four tribal leaders to speak to the panel during a hearing on "unlocking Indian Country's economic potential," orchestrated by chair Rep. Harriet Hageman (R-Wyo.).

Laws affecting 2.8 million members of 574 federally recognized Indian tribes are a muddled matrix of scaffolded complexities that have been tacked one upon an-

other for more than two centuries. None are more clapboard than the land-use laws that regulate 56 million "Indian Country" acres nationwide.

## Universal 99-Year Lease Law

The day before the hearing, Hageman filed legislation seeking to chip away at one of the growth-snuffing entanglements in Indian Country land-use regulations: a 25-year sunset on all leases of trust lands.

Her proposed House Resolution 1246 would authorize leases up to 99 years for land held in trust for Indian tribes and individual tribal members.

"One of the biggest hindrances to economic development on tribal lands is the uncertainty associated with 25-year lease agreements," Hageman said, noting her proposal would amend the 1955 Long-Term Leasing Act, which allowed tribal leases but required federal approval and limited their duration.

The act has since been amended by Congress more than 50 times to grant 99-year leases, she said, insisting her measure "will get rid of the piecemeal approach of the last 67 years."

"Lands will be able to be used the way tribes want to use them to unlock economic potential," she said.

Federal law defines Native American tribes as "domestic, dependent nations." While "sovereign," the federal government in treaty and subsequent agreements retains "trust responsibility," which confers legal obligation and fiduciary responsibility to provide services to individual Native Americans and tribal governments on reservations.

There are three types of federal Indian Country land classifications: trust land, restricted fee land, and fee simple land, with the former two most affected by the 25-year lease cap.

Trust lands are held by the Department of the Interior on behalf of tribes and



**"We started  
this project  
22 years ago  
and we're still  
not finished."**

Joseph Rupnick, chair, Prairie  
Band Potawatomi Nation



individual tribal members. They are essentially in the care of the federal government, exempt from state regulatory and taxing authority. They can't be sold or leased without federal approval.

Restricted fee lands are also exempt from state taxation and regulation but are used by tribes and individual tribal members as homes and for business and other activities. They can be leased without federal permission, but for only 25 years.

Tribes say the BIA's development approval process, which can involve check-offs from multiple federal agencies, hinders economic activity and fosters investment-zapping uncertainty.

"Many developers cannot partner with tribes for much-needed commercial, retail, or industrial projects without the certainty of longer-term land leases," Hageman said. "By extending tribal land leasing, we will help to unlock economic potential and streamline development opportunities."

Hageman's proposal, similar to a measure introduced into the Senate last year, has bipartisan support, including from the subcommittee's ranking Democrat, Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.), who applauded the effort to create a rule "that will apply to all tribes."

"This is not a silver bullet," Fernández said, "but one of the important pieces" needed to streamline BIA land-use regulations.

### Self-Perpetuating Disparities

Native Americans suffer significantly higher poverty than non-native communities, as the Indian Health Service (IHS) documents. This contributes to higher rates of unemployment and an underdeveloped business and entrepreneur environment in Indian Country, according to IHS and multiple analyses.

Those disparities are rooted in land-use restrictions, such as the 25-year lease cap—themselves among lingering legacies of broken treaties, neglect, and "outright



*The U.S. government officially recognizes 574 Indian tribes and their 2.8 million members.*

theft," Rupnick said.

Lease restrictions are "the biggest obstacles in gaining access to financing," Wavalene Saunders, vice chair of the Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona, said.

She said that without a "fiscal infrastructure" in place, many tribal roads, utilities, and public works degrade in a self-perpetuating downward spiral—and communities secure no financing because investors don't like what they see.

Saunders said that about 350,000 reservation residents nationwide lack access to safe drinking water and that many more subsist with inadequate sewer, electricity, roads, and bridges.

A lack of access to broadband internet "makes a technically trained workforce and continuing education difficult," she said, noting that 95 percent of reservation residents are unserved or have dodgy access to the internet.

The 34,000-member Tohono O'odham Nation's reservation in south-central Arizona, which Saunders said is "the size of Connecticut," spans 62 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border and includes 734 miles of BIA roads.

She said that Tohono O'odham roads have sinkholes, potholes, and washed-out bridges. "Flooding completely washes out our roads and makes them unpassable. This creates diminishing opportunities for development," she said.

The nation's planning and economic development department has a "BIA roads program" that charts maintenance and improvements but faces "chronic underfunding" and a morass of red tape from the BIA, Saunders said.

"The time that it takes to get that funding and contract in place to address the roads, [maintenance] is years behind," she said, adding that in the past three years, the BIA has only authorized maintenance "for less than 100 miles" of the sprawling reservation's roads.

"These fundamental deficiencies" in fiscal and physical infrastructure pose a

**"The more time that passes, the more likely that outside interests will lose interest or find another place for their investments."**

*Dustin Klatush, chair, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation*

persistent "barrier to reservation-based employment and economic development," Saunders said.

### Something We Can Use

Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation Chair Dustin Klatush said the Chehalis needed an exemption from the 1834 Non-Intercourse Act, which allowed the U.S. Army to destroy any distilleries discovered on supposedly sovereign reservations to build Talking Cedar, a restaurant, brewery, and the "largest craft distillery west of the Mississippi," in Rochester, Washington, about halfway between Seattle and Portland on I-5.

The 4,870-acre reservation is in a flood plain with little suitable land for development, but its proximity to I-5 makes it ideal for dining and entertainment development, Klatush said. But it was a long process to get Congress to repeal the otherwise obscure 1834 law.

The tribe has a new development proposal also taking advantage of its I-5 proximity: warehouses. In December 2022, Congress granted it one of the 50-plus 99-year lease amendments to the 1955 act to move forward with the project. Now, it awaits the BIA permitting process.

The 99-year lease applications "have always been noncontroversial," but the Chehalis encountered "a drawn-out situation" with the amendment bill "being held in the Senate for reasons other than the merits of the bill itself," Klatush said.

The Senate did adopt it, and the House sent it to President Joe Biden, who signed it in December. The tribe hopes to begin construction soon.

Klatush said "a priority is getting a 99-year bill adopted" to trim back costly federal agency reviews because time can be of the essence in economic development.

"The more time that passes, the more likely that outside interests" will lose interest or find another place for their investments, he said.

A key issue is staffing at the BIA. "There aren't enough people in the BIA's Northwest Regional Office to process routine applications and tasks," Klatush said, noting that most of the staff continues to work remotely.

Rupnick said that after waiting for 22 years for the BIA to approve its development proposal, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation supports Hageman's proposal because it would give it something it can use immediately.

Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians Lands and Resources Officer Jason Robison said the 99-year leases are "a must" for tribal self-autonomy.

The tribe manages 30,000 acres, including 15,000 fee land acres, in southwest Oregon and a casino resort off I-5 that draws 1 million visitors a year and employs more than 800 people.

Robison said the Cow Creek Band seeks 99-year leases to manage forests "under tribal rules, not federal rules" for timber harvests by tribal managers who are more responsive, saying the BIA permitting process that could often take years "can now be done by the tribe in a few months while still complying with federal law."

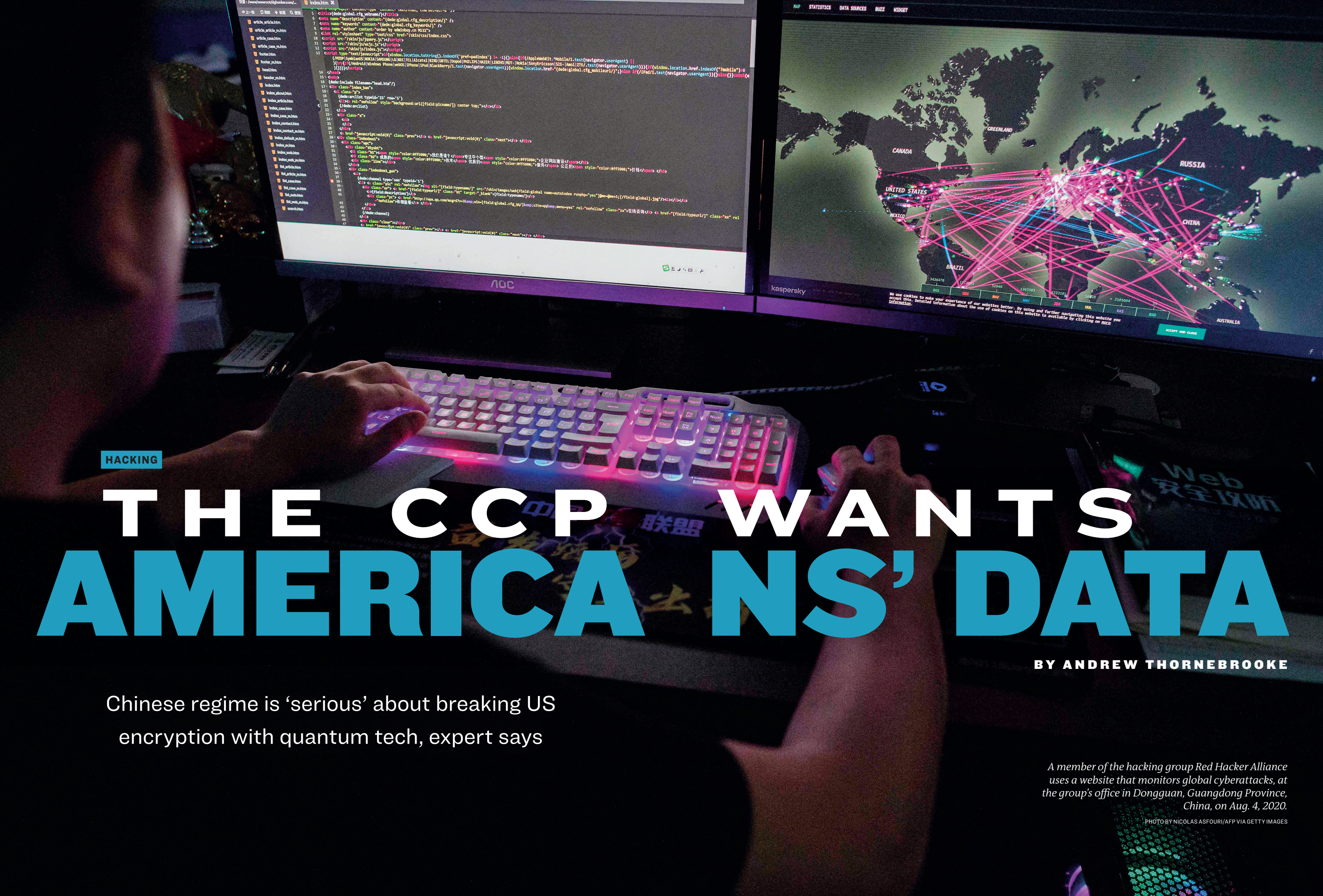
Rupnick said tribes have other priorities for the newly convened two-year congressional session, including bills imposing a 90-day lease process.

He said that he'd like to see a bill to recognize that his nation is the owner of the land.

"The federal government should be able to protect our lands from sale and external taxation, but not interfere in tribes' land-use decisions," he said. ■

FROM TOP: PAUL J. RICHARDS/AP PHOTO; IMAGES; KENEM/UCOE/AP PHOTO; IMAGES; PEDRO PABLO/AP PHOTO; IMAGES; KENEM/UCOE/AP PHOTO; IMAGES





HACKING

# THE CCP WANTS AMERICANS' DATA

BY ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

Chinese regime is 'serious' about breaking US encryption with quantum tech, expert says

*A member of the hacking group Red Hacker Alliance uses a website that monitors global cyberattacks, at the group's office in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, China, on Aug. 4, 2020.*

PHOTO BY NICOLAS ASFOURI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



**Y**OUR PASSWORDS, YOUR CREDIT cards, your bank accounts, and your emails all belong to China's communist regime.

It isn't a reality yet, but the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is working tirelessly to ensure that it becomes so.

To achieve that reality, the regime is increasingly turning to quantum computing to process previously unfathomable amounts of data. Its goal is to break the RSA encryption used to protect most of the information stored online.

Quantum computing's potential to wholly shatter the encryption that safeguards so much of the world's data has long been feared, but most believed that the threat was still a decade away at least.

However, a December 2022 paper co-written by 24 researchers from numerous academic bodies and state-owned laboratories in China claims to have developed a method to do just that.

The paper, titled "Factoring integers with sub-linear resources on a superconducting quantum processor," claims that researchers in China

have developed a method to break the RSA algorithm used by most online encryption systems by using quantum computing to improve upon code-breaking algorithms.

Specifically, the paper claims that an algorithm developed by mathematician Claus-Peter Schnorr last year, which couldn't be scaled on classical computers, could effectively be implemented by offloading some of the most time-consuming processes to a quantum system.

The incident highlights not only that China has taken one more step toward total domination of the online ecosystem but also the unique role that hybrid quantum-classical systems will have in ushering forward a new era of security uncertainty.

### Hybrid Systems Are the Next Threat

Regardless of the success of Schnorr's algorithm, the episode presents new evidence that the CCP and its many state-owned research bodies are seeking to leverage the high-stakes field of quantum computing to undermine and displace the



The Data Analysis Center during the 2017 China International Big Data Industry Expo at Guiyang International Eco-Conference Center in Guiyang, China, on May 27, 2017.

FROM: LINTAOZHANG/GETTY IMAGES; THOMAS NENZEL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

United States, according to Arthur Herman, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank.

"What it establishes is that they are working very hard on two aspects of the quantum race with the United States," Herman said. "One is developing their own quantum computer technology including quantum computers that would be able to eventually decrypt systems both symmetric and asymmetric."

"On the other hand, they're very busy hardening their own sites and protecting themselves against that type of decryption effort on the part of the United States."

Herman, who also oversees Hudson's Quantum Alliance Initiative, said hybrid quantum-classical machines would be an integral aspect of the quantum race between the liberal international order and authoritarian regimes the world over.

A quantum bit, or qubit, is a basic unit of quantum information used by quantum computers. Whereas traditional processors use regular bits, which can be turned on or off to create binary code, qubits can be turned on, off, or both on and off simultaneously in a phenomenon known as superposition.

The existence of this third state will allow quantum processors to achieve much quicker processing speeds than their traditional counterparts, but getting the two systems to work together is tricky.

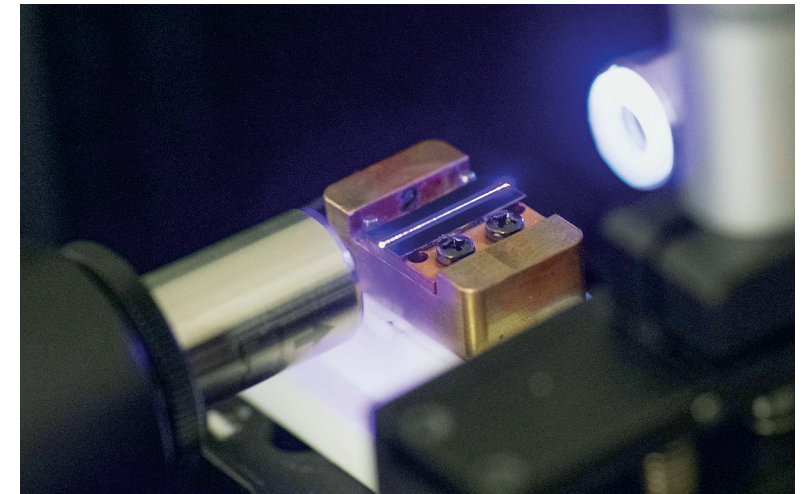
By connecting a quantum system with a classical system, researchers can effectively leverage the raw power of one with the stability of the other.

To that end, Herman authored a report for the Hudson Institute late last year that explored how the creation of hybrid systems using quantum and classical computers for various tasks could catapult the field forward into uncharted and likely dangerous new territories.

"The true path to the quantum future is the combination of quantum and classical digital technology, especially in computing, which will powerfully accelerate access to the potential benefits of quantum information science," the report reads.

"In short, 'hybrid' computation creates a collaboration in which users run different aspects of a problem through the quantum and classical components within the system. The division of labor depends on which system is best suited to solve a particular aspect of the problem."

The Chinese researchers who authored their paper on Schnorr's algorithm proposed just such a system, saying that "practical quantum advantage" could be obtained by delegating key



complex tasks to a quantum machine while using a classical system for the rest of the processes.

Although the researchers themselves used only a small portion of the quantum power that would be needed to break RSA encryption outright, they reported that their model could be sufficiently scaled and was likely to succeed "in the near future."

"What they've done is they've linked up their quantum components for their research ... with classical computing," Herman said. "In other words, it's a hybrid system that they're using. "The idea that you have to wait until you have a big, monolithic quantum computing system [to break encryption] ... I think is becoming exposed as false."

*A laser tests the optical waveguide of a chip for quantum computing in a laboratory in Stuttgart, Germany, on Sept. 14, 2021.*

**The CCP had won a propaganda victory with the paper and could use its advances in quantum computing to inspire fear the world over, expert Arthur Herman says.**

### Propaganda Victory and the CCP's Research 'Behind Closed Doors'

Because CCP laws designate data as a national resource and enable the regime to collect any data in the possession of an entity within China for national security purposes, any research conducted, algorithms invented, or data gleaned by cracking RSA will ultimately belong to the regime.

That the paper published in December 2022 involved researchers from state-owned institutions and was widely telegraphed rather than conducted with any modicum of secrecy demonstrated a wider ambition of the CCP, Herman said.

"What [this paper] really shows is that they're not doing this in a sort of stealth way," he said. ♦



“They see this as a way to really proclaim just how tough and how serious they are about this quantum decryption effort.”

Herman previously described the race toward quantum supremacy as a search for an “ultimate weapon,” and has compared the effort to the Manhattan Project, which resulted in the creation of the first atomic bomb.

While the paper is no atomic bomb, it may be a smoking gun, and he fears that the regime could be working on far more complex research behind the scenes as part of its effort to undermine and eventually displace the United States.

“This is going to increasingly be a part of their strategic offensive against the United States and against the West,” Herman said.

“We should take it very seriously, even if the announcement itself is not something we have to worry about in the near term.”

To that end, he said the regime had definitely won a propaganda victory with the paper and could use its advances in quantum computing to inspire fear the world over, but its unknown projects could be much more threatening.

“These are all scientific papers that are being published widely,” Herman said.

“This is what the [CCP] is telling us that they’re doing. We don’t really know what it is that they are doing behind closed doors.”

As such, although Herman believed just last year that world-altering breakthroughs in quantum computing would be a product of the 2030s, he said this most recent development has forced him to truncate that timeline.

The realization of an effective hybrid system at this stage means that the CCP could be much further along, and encryption-breaking efforts could appear in the next few years, he said.

### Unrestricted Warfare

For retired U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert Spalding, the CCP’s rush toward quantum supremacy is just one more tool in the regime’s multi-pronged attack on the United States.

Rather than an ultimate weapon, Spalding considers quantum computing to be part of the regime’s much larger campaign of “unrestricted warfare,” through which it seeks to leverage every nonmilitary means at its disposal to garner real military advantage over the United States.

“The Chinese have been vacuuming up data for a long time in hopes of having a powerful enough quantum computer to crack the RSA encryption,” he said.

“That being said, the technique mentioned in the paper does not necessarily confer advantage until and unless it is able to be usefully



accessed by those that have an interest in the data they have collected.”

To that end, Spalding believes that the AI required to sort and make sense of the immense amount of data that quantum is capable of gleaming is more important than the means to acquire it.

At any rate, he connected both AI and quantum to the CCP’s ambition to build out and operate a state based on “data-powered authoritarianism,” which required the regime to amass data through legal, quasi-legal, and illicit means.

“Taking unrestricted warfare into account lets us see that it is the evolution of technology and particularly the internet with its vast amount of data, which is the binding agent for all things that give incredible advantages to any authoritarian who would wield it correctly,” Spalding said.

“Quantum is merely a tool. It can allow for communications that cannot be listened in to and can be used to do things like crack modern encryption. For the purposes of the

*Physicists make adjustments to a dilution refrigerator that controls the temperature of a superconducting qubit.*

FROM: ANDREA STARR/PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL LABORATORY; COURTESY OF ARTHUR HERMAN

pling the economies. By coupling China to ours we have given them the ability to defeat us with our own system,” he said.

“The fact that the CCP can rely on America for talent, technology, and capital ensures that any advantage the U.S. has because people are given the latitude to create also goes to benefit China. There is no separation.”

### US Must Prepare for Decades of Quantum Defense

For his part, Herman wasn’t so sure that decoupling was the future.

Although national leaders were slow to act at first, the United States isn’t without its own efforts to defend against the quantum threat, and Herman noted that the Biden administration had “stepped up” its efforts to prepare the nation for a quantum future.

Particularly, he commended the Biden administration for passing the Quantum Computing Cybersecurity Preparedness Act, which orders government agencies to begin the process of transition to “post-quantum cryptography.”

“It takes a long time to migrate to post-quantum cryptography, and making systems quantum-safe is going to take time and effort and resources,” Herman said.

“The Biden administration, much to their credit, has been really stepping up this last year with regard to making government agencies quantum-safe and quantum-secure. The next step is that we’ve got to get the private sector and the private companies including our banks and power companies to get serious about making themselves quantum-ready and quantum-secure.”

The battle isn’t yet won, however, and he believes that the war for quantum dominance will be one borne out through stiff competition and innovation over the course of decades. The victor of which will shape the future of the world.

“This is going to be decisive in the next couple of decades,” Herman said. “We still have time, but we may not have quite as much time as we used to think before that threat becomes imminent.

“An article like this is another straw in the wind. It’s another indication that that day is coming and we need to really focus on this now as a way to protect our economy and national security and to think about how we can deter a threat like China.” ■



**“We don’t really know what it is that [the CCP] are doing behind closed doors.”**

Arthur Herman, senior fellow, Hudson Institute



PREPPING

# PREPARED FOR THE WORST

By Allan Stein

Jason, a carpenter at Fortitude Ranch Nevada, works on a new section of survival shelters on March 2.

PHOTO BY ALLAN STEIN/THE EPOCH TIMES

*As concern grows over the “collapse of society,” so do survival companies.*



**R**ENO, NEV.—  
Set against a rocky slope, Fortitude Ranch resembles almost any other desert grange scattered along a barren highway in northwestern Nevada, far from any city or town.

ON THIS 174-ACRE privately owned spread are free-roaming cattle, pens for raising sheep and chickens, a main house, and other living quarters under construction.

The ranch has good soil for growing crops, fruit-bearing trees, natural springs for gardening and livestock, and austere, rolling mountains on either side of the highway for cover.

But the resemblance ends there. Fortitude Ranch is anything but your typical farmstead. Its founder, Drew Miller, said its purpose is to ensure the safety of its inhabitants during a societal disintegration.

“Our design is to survive any collapse,” he said. “We define a collapse as no functioning economy and widespread loss of law and order.”

It could take any form: a bird flu pandemic with heavy casualties, an economic depression, a world war, or global famine resulting in civil unrest and death.

**A Question of Survival**

During such a scenario, Miller said, “some people will just stay at home and starve to death.”

Others won’t go quietly into the twilight of civilization.

“A lot of people will say, ‘You know what? I will go out and steal food from my neighbor and do what I can to keep my family alive,’” he said.

Miller said this group poses a significant risk to the prepared.

Today, only some people feel the urgency to stock up against these terrifying scenar-



ios or even think about them, said Miller, who started building survival ranches in 2012 as the need became more apparent.

Back then, the notion of preparing for a collapse of civil society still carried the stigma of tin foil hats and conspiracy theories.

The television series “Doomsday Preppers” further tarnished the image of “preppers” for years.

Miller, a former U.S. Air Force colonel, said that a decade ago, people either smirked or turned away whenever he

**(Top)** Ranch manager Brandon M. stands in front of the new survival shelter lodge at Fortitude Ranch Nevada on March 2.

**(Above)** Raising sheep is one of the main activities at Fortitude Ranch Nevada.

ALL PHOTOS BY ALLAN STEIN/THE EPOCH TIMES



**(Top)** An aerial view of the dome as it is built over the existing missile silo at Survival Condo in central Kansas.

**(Above)** Manager Brandon M. surveys the open range flanked by a solar panel at Fortitude Ranch Nevada.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF SURVIVAL CONDO; ALLAN STEIN/THE EPOCH TIMES

mentioned prepping.

That was then.

After the COVID-19 lockdowns and urban riots of 2020, the power substation attacks of 2022, the possibility of looming war with Russia—and China—and toxic chemical spills in 2023, hardly anyone is smirking now.

“People get it now. There’s much more recognition that you need to prepare for the fragile electric grid. For the avian flu contagion—and bad people,” Miller said.

“We tell our members there’s a chance a collapse could be something they haven’t even considered.”

The company lists 50 known triggers for a societal collapse on its website, taking each one seriously as its likelihood increases with each passing year.

Miller said the probability of an unexpected “black swan” event occurring this year is anywhere from 1 percent to 21 percent, based on current trends and models.

**Network of Like-Minded Survivors**

The purpose of Fortitude Ranch is to meet the challenge through a network of survival communities with close to 500 members across the United States. Miller sees it as a work in progress, with five discreet corporate locations and a sixth survival ranch franchise.

He envisions as many as 100 nationwide franchises to keep pace with the demand.

From a survival standpoint, Fortitude Ranch is less costly than going alone, Miller said, because “you’ve got a survival community to share the cost.”

“We’ve got the staff. We’ve got the facilities. When our members show up in a collapse, all they have to do is follow directions,” he said.

However, Fortitude Ranch isn’t geared toward the well-to-do. Its target membership is the middle class.

While yearly dues are low (about \$1,000 per person), amenities are substantial and guaranteed to ride out the collapse in comfort and safety, Miller said.

“We are affordable because of large numbers of members and economies of scale. Fortitude Ranch is attractive to join because it is a recreation/vacation facility as well,” the company’s website states.

Each ranch setup has a basic fortified shelter design that varies by location.

There are log cabin-style living quarters and below-ground configurations made

**“I think everybody should be concerned [about a societal collapse]. Not like fear—just aware.”**

Heather, assistant to Brandon M.



with corrugated steel, including shared spaces, quarantine buildings, recreational areas, and guard posts.

The simplicity of each location's design is the key to its efficiency, Miller said.

"That's why we formed Fortitude Ranch. Our system is for the middle class. We have plywood bunk beds in some of the rooms. It's not fancy. We've got some nice digs, but many of our rooms are called Spartan rooms," he said.

"We don't give out our locations because it upsets our members," Miller told *The Epoch Times*, but "if you're alive in a collapse, they will find you. You cannot hide. You've got to be able to protect yourself."

The rule is safety in numbers and armed security around the clock. When it's time to "bug out," members will arrive with extra food, guns, and ammunition.

"Hopefully, before the collapse occurs—if a collapse occurs—we tell them don't wait for a warning," Miller said. "If you can't contact us—that's a good clue."

At Fortitude Ranch Nevada, Brandon M. said the facility has everything an individual or family would need to survive following a general collapse.

"We've got over a year's worth of food for more members than we have," he said. "That gives us time to have our agriculture and crops in place. We've also got our livestock."

The ranch, built in 2020, is operational with solar and gas-powered generators for off-grid living. Brandon is the full-time manager, and Heather is his new assistant. Jason is a carpenter, helping construct the new Viking Lodge overlooking the ranch.

"I've been to some of the ranches. [Fortitude Ranch Nevada] is probably my favorite from a strategic standpoint," Brandon said. "You have a lot of high points, but you don't have a lot of trees, which can be a disadvantage as far as not having wood. The advantage is to see who's coming at you."

Brandon, now retired from the military, said the political climate in the United States has become more unstable and divided.

"I was looking to find a place with like-minded [people]. I realized I couldn't do it alone," he said.

After a decade of serving in the Air Force, Heather said she found Fortitude Ranch online and applied for a job. She's been out here for about three weeks and has enjoyed her experience.

"I like this because it's more realistic. I don't know if you even think about luxuries; water, food, and shelter—those are the priorities. I think everybody should be concerned [about a societal collapse]. Not like fear—just aware," Heather said.

The new Viking Lodge features a pair of log cabins joined with a corrugated steel enclosure to provide even more living space when complete. The ranch also has a small medical clinic, a workshop, and a practice firing range.

"We're still building. We're always building as we keep adding members," Brandon told *The Epoch Times*. "Once we finish the Viking Lodge, we could easily have 200 [people]."

"Like right now, I'm working on rooms for paid members. It was just me out here for a long time, so it was slow. I don't mind it; I like the isolation. You can't just run to the store and grab some cough medicine."

Brandon said Fortitude Ranch offers good protection against thieves and roaming bands of marauders. Given its remote location, finding the ranch wouldn't be easy for the hungry and desperate following a collapse in the city.

"Being this far out here, nobody will want to waste calories walking and not even knowing what you'll find," Brandon said. "North of us, there isn't anything for 30 miles."

The ranch currently has more than 50 members, and everyone will have a job to do when they arrive, as determined by their skill set.

Brandon said two members are medical professionals. There are engineers and teachers as well. One member is a culinary chef. The oldest member is 90.

"We've got big families, small families, individuals—all kinds of political backgrounds. Right and left. You'd think it would be all right [leaning]. We do have some [left-leaning] people. We're getting more and more," Brandon said.

"It's like any other community. When civilization started, people had to come together in some way. It comes down to this: Are the things that unite you stronger than those that divide you?"

The nearest town is about a half-hour drive south. Brandon said some people suspect a nearby survival community whenever he shops for supplies. They'll spot him at the supermarket loading 20 bags of beans and 20 bags of rice into a cart.



*The interior floor plan for Survival Condo, a former missile silo turned into a luxury survival shelter on the higher end of the affordability spectrum, in central Kansas.*

COURTESY OF SURVIVAL CONDO

**“We’ve got big families, small families, individuals—all kinds of political backgrounds.”**

*Brandon M., manager, Fortitude Ranch*

Sometimes, they'll ask him questions. "I'll make a joke. I don't talk about what we are or where we are. They think you're from a restaurant," he said.

**Rebuilding Society**

In the main house at Fortitude Ranch are furnished rooms with beds, fresh linen, and other amenities. The ranch guarantees a daily minimum of 2,000 calories for one year for each member.

However, some members prefer to stock their own food for long-term storage.

Brandon said members are serious about their preparations as national and global tensions worsen.

"A lot of them will come out here and store stuff. They're constantly asking me how we are doing, where are we at," he said.

Members receive a monthly online newsletter to stay informed. So when the critical moment arrives, they will know what to do.

"It's just about bringing communities back to what they once were," Jason told *The Epoch Times*. "We're trying to get people to work together in an environment to sustain themselves from anything."

"The template was there back in the day. It's a winning model that works for everybody."

Believing that "history repeats itself" and that collapse is inevitable, Jason said the sooner members work as a community, the sooner they can help to rebuild society.

"We've seen this before, and we'll see it again. The probability of biological attacks is the norm right now," he said.

Brandon said the collapse of society would look different than what people expect or imagine.

"You saw the rioting with [Hurricane] Katrina. This time will be on a much bigger scale," he said.

"It's going to suck," he said, as people long to go back to life before the collapse.

"When we get knocked back into the ♣️



Stone Age, you're going to have a lot of unhappy people," he said.

Jason added, "People will get caught where they don't want to be. That's the beauty of being a member [of Fortitude Ranch]."

### Living Large Post-Apocalypse

Located in central Kansas, the Survival Condo is a former missile silo turned into a luxury survival shelter on the higher end of the affordability spectrum.

Developer Larry Hall considers the project life-affirming in a world gone further off the deep end.

"For me, I took an intercontinental ballistic missile site that used to have a weapon of mass destruction designed to kill hundreds of thousands of people. I turned it into the complete opposite," Hall said.

"It's now a green facility, state-of-art technology that protects families."

He concedes that the condo units are expensive. A 3,600-square-foot penthouse unit starts at \$4.5 million. A full-floor unit measuring 1,840 square feet costs \$3 million, and a half-floor condo costs about \$1.5 million.

"People buy what they can afford and what they perceive they need protection from," Hall told *The Epoch Times*. "I decided there was a missing niche market in the luxury high-end bunker where people didn't know how long they'd need a bunker."

He said that before COVID-19, people used to scoff at survival shelters as a fringe market demographic.

The question was always, "What are the chances of society collapsing?"

Then came the lockdowns, the urban riots, and the general chaos in 2020.

He said the events of the past three years have only vindicated the preparedness mindset. Survival Condo is now considered the "gold standard" for survival shelters.

"I never get asked that question [will society collapse] anymore," Hall said. "You've pretty much become mainstream. People realize the value of having a hardened property to go to and that extra degree of safety."

He said Survival Condo's purpose is to make sure that clients will survive the collapse and thrive in the process.

To that end, Survival Condo hired a psychologist to aid in the project design for extended off-grid living. The psychologist looked at basic human physical and emotional needs, including the need for



optimum lighting and color schemes to foster a positive mood, better food quality to improve personal satisfaction, and recreational activities to keep tenants happy and fit.

"The single thing you need to have to keep people from going stir crazy—what people call cabin fever—is to have a good quality of food," Hall said.

The original complex held 72 silos. Hall bought two silos with options to purchase another four, built out the first silo, and is working on completing the second.

The finished silo is 15 stories tall and has a military-grade redundant air filtration system to handle nuclear, chemical, and biological attacks. The facility has redundant power sources and more than 20,000 square feet of floor space under the dome.

Each fully furnished condo unit has a biometric key entry. Other high-end amenities include a custom theater, a bar and lounge, a library, an indoor swimming pool

*A furnished condominium at Survival Condo in central Kansas. Developer Larry Hall said events of the past three years have only vindicated the preparedness mindset. Survival Condo is now considered the "gold standard" for survival shelters.*

FROM L. COURTESY OF SURVIVAL CONDO. ALLAN STEW/THE EPOCH TIMES

and spa, a workout facility, a command and control center, hydroponic gardens, a medical first-aid clinic, a digital weather station, and homeschooling classrooms.

Hall said there's a long waiting list for units when they become available.

"Ours is way up at the top for a reason—military-grade everything with high engineering," he said. "We went by the book and did everything with very tough standards."

"We're constantly keeping the place in a state of readiness. We could scale it up if we needed to be here for an extended time."

That time now appears close as the "Doomsday Clock" of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists stands 90 seconds away from midnight.

Whether a natural or man-made disaster is on the horizon, "pick a poison," Hall said. "All result in one common denominator, and that's civil unrest."

"People are afraid and trying to get by and survive. So, ultimately, you need some-



thing where you can sleep with both eyes closed and don't have to worry about a gang of MS-13 guys kicking in your door.

"The whole thing is you have a place designed to protect families. We've got a facility that can do that. We're not out to muck with anybody. We want to be out of sight and mind, do our best to survive, not burden society, and take care of ourselves."

Miller, at Fortitude Ranch, said the demand for survival ranch franchises has been growing exponentially.

"We're going like mad now through franchising. We'll double our number of locations this year. It could take off even more," he said.

But even with 100 new franchise locations, "that's still a tiny percentage of the population," he said. "We're not even close to handling 1 percent of the population."

Miller said people owe it to themselves and the future to survive the coming collapse, as the opportunities to rebuild will be "phenomenal."

"I hope the United States will recover and follow the Constitution. We don't follow it today." ■

*The medical clinic is fully stocked at Fortitude Ranch Nevada. The ranch has a small medical clinic, a workshop, and a practice firing range.*

**Fortitude Ranch's target membership is the middle class, with yearly dues at around \$1,000 per person.**



*An illustration comparing the size of lethal doses of heroin and fentanyl, during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington on March 22, 2018.*

PHOTO BY CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

DRUG CRISIS

# 'As Easy as Ordering Pizza'

*How fentanyl-laced pills are killing America's youth*

By Katie Spence





**O**N THE MORNING OF JULY 25, 2020, Matthew Thomas took what he believed was Percocet, a prescription drug for pain relief. He died moments later, a victim of fentanyl poisoning.

On Jan. 26, 2019, Austen Babcock took what he believed was cocaine. Unbeknownst to him, it was laced with fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid. He died shortly after, another victim of fentanyl poisoning.

April Babcock, Austen's mother, and Wendy Thomas, Matthew's mother, have both become activists to raise awareness about illicit fentanyl. Babcock is the founder of Lost Voices of Fentanyl, a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness on illicit fentanyl, and Thomas is the founder of Matthew's Voice.

Both told The Epoch Times that obtaining illicit fentanyl is as easy as ordering a pizza.

"I talk to all these moms [in Lost Voices of Fentanyl], and their kids go on social media and literally ordered drugs just like a pizza. It's just like Uber Eats. Well, now it's like Uber drugs," Babcock said.

"Some of these parents in the group literally saw the dealer on their Ring. They'd pull up into their driveway, and their kid would run out. I mean, these pills are cheap.

"We got fake Adderall pills on social media. Fake Xanax. Fake Percocet. I mean, all the pills are fake. These kids just don't realize they're literally buying death. They don't know."

Thomas agreed and noted that when she has given presentations at schools, kids have told her that they hear about Percocet and Xanax in music videos, and when they buy pills over social media, that's what they think they're getting.

"But it's not. They need to know that 6 in 10 pills are ... potentially deadly," she said, citing Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) data.

### Undercounted

Families Against Fentanyl reported that in 2021, fentanyl poisoning was the leading cause of death among Americans aged 18 to 45.

And in 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that 4,765 children and young adults



*Fentanyl and cash seized by the Drug Enforcement Administration in Los Angeles. Eighty-two percent of drug-related deaths in 2020 and 2021 involved at least one opioid, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with fentanyl being the most common.*

aged 14–23 died from the use of synthetic opioids—more than double the 1,984 deaths in 2018.

Babcock said she thinks the number of overdose deaths from fentanyl is significantly underreported.

"There's a family ... that's pretty definite their kid died from fentanyl because they found fentanyl at his house. But guess what: He was never tested!" she told The Epoch Times. "[The death certificate] says he died from cocaine. No, he didn't. He died from fentanyl.

"So [that family] is trying to pass a bill in Maryland, so every hospital has to test for fentanyl. And, you know, I know there's places that still don't test for fen-

tanyl, but I had no idea that was going on in my own state, and that's criminal! Those stats are a very lowball number.

"I hear it all the time: 'They didn't test for fentanyl.' How are we ever going to get the right data?"

Babcock started Lost Voices of Fentanyl, a Facebook group, in 2020. The group now has more than 24,000 members, and every day, Babcock said she hears from parents who have lost a child to fentanyl poisoning.

"Why isn't our government warning the public? They're not warning them!" she said. "I mean, I know certain states are doing it. Like I know, in my state, Maryland, I've seen two fentanyl com-

FROM COURTESY OF DEA LOS ANGELES, U.S. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

mercials. And that's great. That's fine and dandy, but it's not good enough. You know, teenagers don't watch that anyway. We need a COVID-like response from our government for fentanyl."

### A Growing Problem

In 2020, there were a reported 91,799 total drug-related deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. By 2021, that number had climbed to 106,719. In both years, approximately 82 percent of deaths involved at least one opioid, with fentanyl being the most common.

"I started Mathew's Voice because my son Matthew died of fentanyl poisoning in 2020, in July. He was 20 years old," Thomas told The Epoch Times.

"He took what was supposed to be Percocet, and it was fentanyl. And so I



*An illustration comparing two milligrams of fentanyl, a lethal dose for most people, with a U.S. penny, which has a diameter of 0.75 inches.*

## The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2021 that the deaths of children and young adults aged 14–23 from synthetic opioids/fentanyl more than doubled compared to 2018.

decided to go ahead and focus on high schools. I've been to several high schools in North Carolina, and the biggest thing that surprises me is that most of them have not even heard of illicit fentanyl.

"I thought maybe if Matthew had heard about it sooner ..."

Babcock concurred, "What I'm seeing is most of these people have no idea what fentanyl is. They're getting their [deceased] kids' toxicology reports back, and they had no warning to even warn their kids about fentanyl. Like they just didn't know."

Thomas and Babcock are both quick to point out that what they're talking about isn't the pharmaceutical fentanyl prescribed to treat severe pain—often post-surgery and for advanced-stage cancer. Instead, they're talking about illicit fentanyl found in counterfeit pills.

In 2022, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued a public safety alert, warning that 6 out of 10 fake prescription pills contained "a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl."

"More than half of the fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills being trafficked in communities across the country now contain a potentially deadly dose of fentanyl," DEA Administrator Anne Milgram said.

"These pills are being mass-produced by the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco Cartel in Mexico. Never take a pill that wasn't prescribed directly to you. Never take a pill from a friend. Never take a pill bought on social media. Just one pill is dangerous, and one pill can kill."

Despite that warning, Song for Charlie—yet another nonprofit started by grieving parents, after their son Charlie Terman's fentanyl poisoning death—found that only 36 percent of teens are aware that fentanyl is used to create counterfeit pills. And that lack of awareness has real-world consequences.

Song for Charlie reported that since 2018, drug deaths of teens have increased three times faster than in any other age group, and most of those deaths are attributable to fentanyl.

"Last year, I had a group of about 200 seniors that I presented to, and before I started, I asked them how many had heard of fentanyl, and only about a quarter of them raised their hands," Thomas said. "Just a quarter! And that's pretty scary."

But it isn't just teens and young adults who are unaware of the dangers of fentanyl and counterfeit pills; it's their parents, too. In 2018, Tracy Ritter's son, Evan Ritter, died of an accidental overdose. ❖





April Babcock holds a picture of her son Austen, who died in January 2019 after unknowingly taking some fentanyl-laced cocaine.

Tracy Ritter explained that she and her husband experimented when they were younger and believed that Evan was going through a similar phase.

“Many parents experience more of the drugs and alcohol use from their kids through middle and high school years,” she told *The Epoch Times*.

“We as parents felt, you know, that things would change for Evan. And that was something that was going on in high school, but he would grow up and graduate from school and move forward onto college, and that wouldn’t be such a concern for us. Every young person does this kind of thing.”

However, Evan continued to struggle with drugs and alcohol through college and even went to an inpatient treatment center for help. In the end, the addiction was too much.

Ritter now works as a family support specialist for Advocates for Recovery Colorado and co-chairs a work group within Colorado’s state response to the drug crisis, the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention.

She helps guide families through their loved ones’ addictions and, all too often, their deaths.

Ritter explained that her story isn’t unique. Parents in the Affected Families and Friends work group often say they thought that their son or daughter was going through a phase of experimenta-

tion, only to find out that the addiction was out of control.

“It’s heartbreaking, you know, when you discover that the disease of addiction is so powerful that it still has that power over [addicts] with the best intentions [of beating addiction] in mind,” Ritter said.

Babcock said, “We’ve got 13- and 14-year-old kids walking around hooked on [fentanyl], and they really don’t even realize it. And even the adults. By the time they realize they’re actually hooked on fentanyl, it is just too late. They’re dependent on it.

“Once you depend on it, it’s almost a miracle for the people that get off that. I mean, it’s way more potent than heroin. You think heroin withdrawal is bad? Not compared to fentanyl.”

**Awareness Is Key**

Ritter said of experimenting with drugs: “I think everybody is in different places and has different reasons for using substances in their life. I hear from family members that their son or daughter often started, as Evan did, probably in middle school at about age 13.

“However, that being said, I think another area I’m trying to learn more and more about, piecing it all together, is the mental health issues piece. Sometimes the people that have experienced drugs and substance use at an early age, or later in life, is because of a traumatic experi-

*“We need a COVID-like response from our government for fentanyl.”*

April Babcock, founder, Lost Voices of Fentanyl

ence that’s happened to them.”

Ritter noted as a caution that when someone young tries drugs, they increase their chances of developing an addiction.

“When you start younger, the brain isn’t developed. The brain isn’t actually developed fully until about 25 years of age. So because of that immature brain development, there is that greater chance for that addiction than if you started later in life.”

Ritter said that to help reverse the escalating drug trend, schools must invest in training and implement campaigns that increase awareness of mental health concerns and drug use. One she believes is effective is Mental Health First Aid for Youth, which teaches students how to spot someone experiencing an addiction or mental health crisis.

“It’s especially important for fellow students to take [the course] and to be proactive, so they can look for the signs. And be willing to talk about this more than it is talked about. Because it’s still stigmatized, and I think that would help destigmatize substance use and mental health issues,” Ritter said.

Babcock said she thinks the government needs to increase fentanyl awareness by putting campaign ads on social media sites such as Snapchat and Instagram.

“They did it for COVID. Why are they not doing it for fentanyl when it’s the leading cause of death of our youth? These are our future generation that’s getting wiped off the planet Earth,” she said.

Drug overdose statistics aren’t yet available for 2022 and 2023. But the Colorado Behavioral Health Administration told *The Epoch Times* via email, “As we exit the acute stages of the pandemic, there is consensus that substance use in [youth] is increasing again.” ■

THIS PAGE COURTESY OF APRIL BABCOCK

# Perspectives

*The endless expansion of college has failed to produce a supply of desperately needed middle-skill workers, columnist Milton Ezrati says.*

PHOTO BY ALLEN XIE



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INSIDE



# Thomas McArdle



## Stagflation Perils

*The Federal Reserve is falling short in conquering inflation*

**“T**HE DECADE AHEAD may well be a Stagflationary Debt Crisis the likes of which we’ve never seen before,” warned New York University economics Professor Emeritus Nouriel Roubini, who has the distinction of having forecast the home mortgage-driven 2008 financial debacle as early as 2006. The Turkish-born Roubini is no conservative, having served on President Bill Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisers and as an adviser to Clinton Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner. Yet he sees the Biden administration marking the beginning of “a new era of Great Inflationary/Stagflationary Instability.”

He fears the repeat of the recessionary, inflationary conditions of the 1970s but with an added negative: high debt levels.

According to Roubini, “Between today’s surging stocks of private and public debts (as a share of GDP) and the huge unfunded liabilities of pay-as-you-go Social Security and health systems, both the private and public sectors face growing financial risks.”

And when it’s clear to all that the economy is in a protracted nosedive, Roubini worries “that central banks will wimp out and blink, and not be willing to fight inflation. In this case, the Great Moderation of the past 30 years may be over.”

Clearly, the Federal Reserve is falling short in conquering inflation; its tightening of the federal funds rate from near zero early last year to 4.75 percent today, its highest since 2007, even with a couple more hikes certain this year, simply isn’t the kind of Volcker-esque aggressiveness that can achieve the goal.

The Consumer Price Index is 6.4 percent, more than three times the Fed’s 2 percent target. Equally clearly, Americans will soon feel the painful effects of an economic downturn that will leave politicians demanding that the Fed abandon even those inade-

quate anti-inflationary policies.

Alarming, there are some unusual indicators of the hazards that lurk before us. Home prices, for example, continue to rise despite rising interest rates—up nearly 15 percent from a year and a half ago. The rate of rise was the greatest since the 1970s, as the combination of COVID-stimulus cash and cabin fever artificially boosted demand.

Home prices became so high that the gulf between the average mortgage payment for a just-bought home and the average monthly rent for an apartment reached 57 percent—the biggest differential ever; compare this with a gap of only 8.5 percent before the COVID lockdowns.

### Americans will soon feel the painful effects of an economic downturn that will leave politicians demanding that the Fed abandon even those inadequate anti-inflationary policies.

This affordability decline is likely the prelude to an all-out housing price crash. On Feb. 28, an analysis from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas warned of a global “domino effect, where investors pull out of international housing seeking safety and liquidity elsewhere.”

The S&P 500 Index lost 20 percent in 2022, and Morgan Stanley chief U.S. equity strategist Michael Wilson and Bank of America chief economist Michael Hartnett both warn of significant stock market decline, with Wilson remarking that “the equity market may have one last stand before we fully price the earnings downside.”

He compared stockholders’ situation in the current environment to that of a Mount Everest hiker in the

“death zone” where ultra-thin air can easily spell doom, calling it “a perfect analogy for where equity investors find themselves today.”

The debt element of the impending new stagflationary era is international, governments having welcomed the fiscal temptation posed by COVID. Europe’s NextGenerationEU (NGEU) “emergency” program, allegedly designed to combat the pandemic, authorized \$858 billion. But not surprisingly, as University of Munich economics Professor Emeritus Hans-Werner Sinn observed last month, “there seems to be no correlation between the distribution of NGEU funds and the severity of local COVID-19 outbreaks.”

Like Roubini, no friend of the growth-through-tax-cuts economic right, Sinn recalls that in the 1970s, “it took a while for a wage-price spiral to take hold,” and like Roubini, he believes that “high inflation is likely here to stay.”

But if Roubini’s new era of economic instability sounds scary, consider Sinn’s citing of Austrian exile Stefan Zweig’s memoir “Die Welt von Gestern” (The World of Yesterday, published in 1941) and University of California–Berkeley historian Gerald Feldman’s study of pre-Nazi German inflation, “The Great Disorder,” in reminding us that the impoverished bourgeoisie were rendered “hateful and ripe for Hitler” by the uncontrolled cycle of ever-rising prices and wages.

With all the inflammatory talk from the left in Washington about threats to democracy, and with President Joe Biden refusing to negotiate with the House Republican majority on spending restraints in regard to raising the ceiling on what’s now an incomprehensible \$31.4 trillion national debt, it’s worth remembering that history.

Inflationary government spending producing a bottomless ocean of red ink can and has led to real crises of democracy—and to oceans of blood.

# Anders Corr



## The Only Winner in Ukraine Is China

*Beijing benefits economically, diplomatically, and militarily*

**N**EAR THE END OF February, the G-20 finance ministers adjourned without a joint statement because two of them, from Russia and China, refused to condemn “in the strongest terms” Moscow’s aggression against Ukraine. Beijing likewise abstained a few days earlier from a similar U.N. General Assembly resolution.

Despite widespread global support for Ukraine, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) thinks it can attract European countries that senior diplomat Wang Yi perceives as malleable: Germany, France, Italy, and Hungary. With the last of that list, under Viktor Orbán, Beijing is actually making inroads.

The CCP sees the war as beneficial and as a distraction for the United States from the Chinese regime’s own territorial ambitions in Taiwan, the South China Sea, and northern India. A poll published by Morning Consult on Feb. 23 found that Chinese citizens strongly believe that Russia’s war helps their country.

Diplomatically, Beijing seeks to use the war as a pretext to expand its influence in the “Global South” by appearing as a neutral peacemaker. But Beijing’s support of negotiations, when Russia still occupies large parts of Ukraine, effectively rewards Russia by pressuring Kyiv into concessions. That would pave the way for the CCP’s future planned aggression against Taiwan.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping likely encouraged Vladimir Putin in their meeting just 20 days before the invasion. The two issued a joint statement expressing a “no-limits friendship” and “new era” of international relations, agreeing to \$117.5 billion in oil, gas, and other deals that later mitigated the impact of sanctions.

Beijing demonstrated ideological alignment with Russia within days of the invasion by blaming the United

States, rationalizing it as a “legitimate” expression of Russian national security, and repeating Russian disinformation that the United States financed a network of secret bioweapon labs across Ukraine.

Beijing didn’t fool Kyiv. “The only country who really benefits now from this ... war in Ukraine, is China,” noted Ukraine’s presidential economic adviser Oleg Ustenko in March 2022, two weeks after the invasion.

Russia’s pariah status and subjection to sanctions make it ever more reliant on Beijing.

### Beijing’s new peace proposal doesn’t call for withdrawal of Russian troops, instead denouncing alliance ‘blocs’ like NATO and the use of ‘unilateral’ sanctions.

Militarily, the two countries join for up to five major exercises annually. While the Biden administration repeatedly asserts that Beijing hasn’t yet sent military materiel for Russia’s war in Ukraine, China has in fact supplied jet fighter parts, jamming technology, satellite imagery for weapons targeting, and dual-use items such as computer chips and civilian drones that have reached the front lines.

In February, Beijing released an anti-American manifesto titled “US Hegemony and Its Perils.” It blames the United States for Ukraine’s 2004 Orange Revolution and claims that in Ukraine and other countries, “the United States is repeating its old tactics of waging proxy, low-intensity, and drone wars.”

The CCP’s support for Moscow comes at a price, including major discounts on oil and diplomatic subordination,

as most recently illustrated by Beijing’s now-easy diplomatic access to Belarus.

Kyiv cautiously hopes that Beijing might stop Putin’s war. But the best one might realistically expect is that China opposes Russian nuclear threats, which could leverage the CCP into increasing conventional arms exports to Russia.

Beijing’s new peace proposal shows how the CCP favors Russia. It doesn’t call for the withdrawal of Russian troops, instead denouncing alliance “blocs” such as NATO and the use of “unilateral” sanctions. However, Moscow quickly rejected even this pro-Russian proposal, saying it didn’t recognize “new territorial realities.”

President Joe Biden responded to China’s plan by saying Beijing’s involvement was “not rational” and that the plan only benefited Russia. He warned that if the CCP supported Moscow’s brutality with weapons shipments, then U.S. corporations would leave China.

With no negotiated solution in sight, the war’s outcome still hinges on international sanctions and battlefield assets. On Feb. 26, Biden announced another \$2.5 billion in aid to Ukraine, bringing the total to \$113 billion.

Two days earlier, the United States sanctioned more than 200 entities linked to Russia’s war, including by prohibiting five Chinese groups from acquiring U.S. technologies. NATO and the G-7 responded with additional sanctions and threats, some against Beijing. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned of a “third world war” if China supplies Russia with weapons.

The risks are dire. Yet Ukraine’s partners can’t allow military support or appeasement of Moscow. Beijing must be held to account for any support it gives, including through non-military trade. New territory for Russia would incentivize further invasions by other dictatorships, including one by the CCP into Taiwan.



**MILTON EZRATI** is chief economist for Vested, a contributing editor at The National Interest, and author of “Thirty Tomorrows” and “Bite-Sized Investing.”

# Milton Ezrati



## The Question of College

*More and more people are challenging the goal of college for all*

**S**TUDENT DEBT DEBATES have, among other things, enlivened conversation about the nation’s long-standing emphasis on college.

With so many graduates unable to repay the cost of their education, questions naturally have arisen about whether college effectively serves the economy’s skills needs and, accordingly, whether many now in college might do better with some other sort of training and education.

Apart from onerous debt burdens, the waste in the long-standing “college for all” push is clear in figures on graduation and on who gets what jobs.

The Department of Education reports that more than 60 percent of those who finish middle school will eventually attend either a four-year or two-year post-secondary institution, but only slightly more than half these will graduate. Meanwhile, more than 60 percent of these graduates will fail to get a job requiring their degree.

In other words, only 16 percent of those involved achieve the promise of a degree for themselves and for society. For the rest, there is debt and little benefit, while the economy loses out on what they might have contributed with a different sort of training.

This is hardly a good return on the national effort. It should be apparent, then, that the emphasis on college wastes public and personal resources while inducing many who don’t belong there to forgo the vocational training that might serve them and society better.

It might seem on the surface that artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics will eventually preclude the need for vocational training. It is, after all, widely known that industry, because of AI and robotics, has less and less need of the unskilled millions who once manned assembly lines and did comparable tasks in activities outside

of manufacturing. Robots and off-shore placement to less-developed and lower-wage countries have reduced the need for these kinds of workers.

But that is only part of the picture. In fact, the AI orientation of industry today, whether it builds highways or manufactures cars or produces medical supplies, has created a huge need for skilled technicians—not quite engineers, but people of middle-skill levels, something that college doesn’t produce.

### **The Manufacturing Institute estimates that more than 7 in 10 American manufacturers now have difficulty finding people of middle-skill levels.**

Already, U.S. industry faces constraints because of a shortage of just this sort of training. That shortage became evident as early as 2011, even though the lingering effects of the great recession had left some 14 million Americans jobless.

The Manufacturing Institute estimates that now more than seven in 10 American manufacturers have difficulty finding people with this sort of essential training. By 2030, the institute reckons, more than 2 million of these sorts of positions will be left unfilled. Siemens, the huge German conglomerate with a significant presence in the United States, has confirmed these calculations. It has announced that in 2022, more than half of all its job openings are at this level.

Though college can’t meet this need, this country continues to neglect such technical training. Certainly, all the public money goes to college. During the 30 years before the pandemic, the average college-bound student could expect

the taxpayer to spend some \$100,000 on him or her. For vocational training, that student can expect nothing after high school. Under the present system, college isn’t a choice; it’s an ultimatum.

Yet, it’s clear that the endless expansion of college has failed to produce a supply of desperately needed middle-skill workers while injecting into the economy a surplus of people with questionable career credentials.

Meanwhile, U.S. apprenticeship programs presently involve a mere 800,000 or so workers. But there are signs of a developing change. German firms such as Siemens, as it strives to find the technicians it needs, have found a welcome reception for apprenticeship ideas, especially in depressed regions of the country.

North and South Carolina have, for instance, partnered with Siemens and European firms to establish programs that combine on-the-job training with vocational courses in high school and community college. Colorado has made similar arrangements in its “Career-Wise” program, as has New Hampshire.

Under then-President Donald Trump, even Washington, always slow in the draw, entered the effort. The National Council of the American Worker, founded at that time, aimed to create a million apprenticeships. More recently, however, this program has lost support.

None can doubt that some careers demand the fruits of a good college education and more. But many jobs that otherwise require skill and intelligence don’t. Employers have insisted on college for many jobs that really don’t require it because they don’t trust the quality of a high school diploma and, in the absence of a vocational track, have no other basis on which to judge.

The nation could serve its economy, its employers, and its workers by offering an effective vocational alternative and reallocating some of the college-linked largesse to other sorts of training.

**KEVIN STOCKLIN** is a business reporter, film producer, and former Wall Street banker. He wrote and produced “We All Fall Down: The American Mortgage Crisis” and “The Shadow State.”

# Kevin Stocklin



## Schumer Versus DeSantis

*Democrats back corporations as GOP punishes them*

**T**HE IDEOLOGICAL CLASH about how much control government should have over private companies was encapsulated recently in two Wall Street Journal op-ed pieces that many readers might find surprisingly contradictory.

The first, written by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), rails against government intervention in corporate affairs; the second, by Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, justifies his anti-corporate actions.

These two pieces capture the tug of war between political parties over the rising influence of the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) ideology among the world’s largest corporations.

Under the heading “Republicans Ought to Be All for ESG,” Schumer states his opposition to congressional action to block a new Labor Department rule that allows pension fund managers to invest retirees’ money according to ESG criteria. When it comes to ESG investing, he argues, a laissez-faire approach is best.

“Republicans talk about their love of the free market, small government, and letting the private sector do its work,” Schumer writes. “But their obsession with eliminating ESG would do the opposite, forcing their own views down the throats of every company and investor ... I say let the market work.”

ESG is an ideology that includes climate change and racial equity. Public companies today are rated according to ESG compliance, and many asset managers have signed pledges with groups such as the Net Zero Asset Managers initiative to advance ESG goals “across all assets under management.”

Many Democrats, like Schumer, say they oppose regulations that infringe on corporate freedom. Meanwhile, the GOP, historically the pro-business party, is fighting ESG companies. States such as Florida, Texas, and West



### **While it may seem that Democrats are the new free-market champions, they are rapidly expanding state intervention into the private sector.**

Virginia banned state pension funds from ESG investing and boycotted asset managers and banks that they say discriminate against fossil fuels.

In his op-ed “Why I Stood Up to Disney,” DeSantis writes: “When corporations try to use their economic power to advance a woke agenda, they become political, and not merely economic, actors. In such an environment, reflexively deferring to big business effectively surrenders the political battlefield to the militant left.”

DeSantis made headlines recently when Disney CEO Bob Chapek vowed to fight a new Florida law that bans the teaching of sexual topics in kindergarten through third grade. In response, Florida revoked the privileged self-governing status of the Walt Disney World theme parks.

“Democrats often rail about corporations’ nefarious influence over politics

and oppose favorable exceptions for big companies. Yet they supported keeping Disney’s special-governing status,” DeSantis writes. “This confirms how much the modern left has jettisoned principle in favor of power. As long as large corporations help advance the left’s woke agenda, the left is willing to do their bidding.”

Private pensions are regulated by a 1974 law called the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), which was enacted in response to misuse of retirees’ money. ERISA states that fund managers must act purely in the interest of maximizing monetary returns. The Biden administration, however, provided new rules that ESG criteria were also acceptable for the approximately \$12 trillion in retirement savings.

While it may seem that Democrats are the new free-market champions, they are rapidly expanding state intervention into the private sector.

According to the American Action Forum, which tracks the scale of government regulation, the Biden administration has implemented 532 new executive orders and regulations, at an estimated cost of \$359 billion. By comparison, the cost of new regulations during the Trump administration was \$6.8 billion.

The Biden administration also created hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies for renewable energy and electric vehicles through the Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. A new regulation from the Securities and Exchange Commission requires listed companies to report their CO2 emissions and plans to reduce them.

The Biden administration is also working to ban gas stoves, and laws in Democrat-run states including California, Washington, and Massachusetts would ban the sale of gasoline-powered cars and gas heating in new homes and buildings.





## Is the Dollar Under Threat?

*The first sign of a country's fall is the destruction of its currency*

**T**HE U.S. DOLLAR enjoys its world reserve currency status due to numerous factors: legal and investor security, an open and transparent market, as well as independent institutions with checks and balances that limit political power and strengthen the country's currency in relative terms.

No, a country doesn't have a world reserve currency due to military power. No one accepted the kopek when the Soviet Union ruled half the world. For a fiat currency to be a world reserve, it needs to be widely accepted as a unit of measure, method of payment, and reserve of value.

Increasing pressure from politicians is threatening the reserve of value status of fiat currencies, and the political threat isn't only against monetary authorities but also aimed at all institutions that provide independent checks and balances that limit political imposition.

When politicians talk about the “social use” of money, what they're basically saying is that you'll suffer higher inflation for longer. It means using the currency to disguise massive fiscal imbalances under the illusion that citizens will always have to use the local currency. It makes no sense.

A fiat currency, like any other good or service, is subject to supply and demand. Excessive supply damages its purchasing power in the same way that excessive supply lowers the price of a good, but weakening demand added to rising supply leads to the collapse of the currency.

The moment politicians stop defending the reserve of value status of their currency, they're destroying the country they promise to defend. Destroying the currency is the



### The moment politicians stop defending the reserve of value status of their currency, they're destroying the country they promise to defend.

first sign of the decline of a nation. The rulers of the state never think that it will end, because the process is slow until it suddenly accelerates with hyperinflation and the state crumbles. This happens when neither domestic nor foreign citizens will accept the state currency as a means of payment and reserve of value. It erodes slowly and the collapse happens fast.

Countries lose their currency demand when governments attack the reserve of value status and the independence of their institutions under the perception that nothing will change. Assessing the patience of foreign and domestic users of a currency always ends badly.

However, political powers believe that they can always issue a devalued currency to hold hostage citizens who can only use the credit note issued by the state. It's false. When domestic citizens lose their patience

with an increasingly worthless currency, they move on to other systems of trade, using other means of payment and even barter.

In fact, most politicians believe that if “nothing” has happened so far and the country's currency remains widely used, then they can continue eroding the independence of institutions and the currency's purchasing power forever. It's incorrect, and all empires have vanished under this illusion—the illusion of monetary sovereignty.

This is why modern monetary theory is so wrong. It assumes that monetary sovereignty is static and gives the right to governments to mismanage money at will. And monetary sovereignty vanishes as quickly as the fallacy of endless money printing.

The federal government and the central bank may believe that there's no contender today because other fiat currencies are worse, and they're right in that analysis. The problem is that alternatives may come from truly independent means. So far, the Fed has been smart enough to point at the Achilles' heel of cryptocurrencies: liquidity. However, regardless of the weakness of the currently available alternatives, the only thing that will strengthen a fiat currency is for it to be a reserve of value.

Politicians demolish the independence of institutions and the purchasing power of the currency via inflationary measures because they probably believe it's for a greater good and for “the people,” but the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

If the Fed and the U.S. government ignore the importance of the currency's reserve of value as a policy, the end of the United States' global status will be closer.

GARY CAMERON/REUTERS

## The Big Bitcoin Discount

*Will Grayscale be another high-profile crypto failure?*

**A**NYONE WHO WATCHED television in 2022 saw the ubiquitous TV commercials for Grayscale, which manages the world's biggest bitcoin investment fund. Those ads touted bitcoin as “the future” and stated that it should be part of a retiree's portfolio.

But investors in Grayscale Bitcoin Trust (GBTC) are facing both a problem and an opportunity.

The problem? GBTC trades at a 46 percent discount to its underlying holdings, as of Feb. 24. This means that the per-share value of the fund is 46 percent less than the bitcoins held in the fund's portfolio. No doubt the ongoing legal issues facing Digital Currency Group (DCG), the parent company of Grayscale, is one factor in the large discount.

The opportunity is that if the fund were to trade up to its net asset value—and that's one giant “if”—investors would realize an 84 percent gain.

Nontraded funds such as real estate investment trusts and business-development companies pricing below asset value isn't a new phenomenon. There can be factors such as supply and demand and the quality of the underlying asset that could drive this spread. But a discount of up to 50 percent? That's almost unheard of, and it amounts to roughly \$7 billion of trapped value.

The simple explanation for such a wide spread is that investors are concerned about challenges at DCG, a cryptocurrency conglomerate of sorts. DCG is backed by none other than SoftBank, which seems to have its hand in a number of failed or failing startups. DCG owns Grayscale, crypto news media CoinDesk, bitcoin miner Foundry, a small London-based crypto exchange named Luno, and crypto brokerage and lending giant Genesis Capital.

EDWARD SMITH/GETTY IMAGES



### A discount of up to 50 percent is almost unheard of, and it amounts to roughly \$7 billion of trapped value.

The last company, Genesis Capital, is currently under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection after its lending arm blew up after last year's crypto rout and FTX's collapse.

DCG has been selling its stakes in various investment vehicles run by Grayscale, according to regulatory filings. Despite GBTC and its ether-focused fund trading below their asset values, DCG presumably has needed to raise cash by all means necessary to support Genesis during bankruptcy. The Financial Times also reported that DCG retained investment bank Lazard to explore a sale of CoinDesk.

A competitor has also targeted Grayscale. Osprey Funds, which also runs several crypto-focused investment funds, sued Grayscale in January for putting out misleading marketing statements to gain market share.

“Grayscale has made materially false and misleading statements in its advertising and promotion ... that

turning its Bitcoin asset management services into access to a Bitcoin ETF was a foregone conclusion, when it knew that access was never likely to happen,” reads the complaint, filed in the Connecticut Superior Court.

GBTC isn't an exchange-traded fund (ETF). It also holds actual bitcoins. There are bitcoin-focused ETFs, such as the ProShares Bitcoin Strategy Fund, but all of them invest in bitcoin futures, not bitcoin itself. Futures are regulated by the Commodities and Futures Trading Commission in the United States.

Grayscale (and many other asset managers) has tried to convert its GBTC fund to an ETF for years, without success. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has rejected every single application so far. The SEC argues that, unlike futures, the spot bitcoin is unregulated and the market is ripe with manipulation and potential fraud.

To Grayscale, the best way to eliminate this massive discount is to convert to an ETF. And it sued the SEC to force its hand, with oral arguments set to begin in Washington in early March. If successful, it may be a pathway to unlock the approximate \$7 billion.

In the meantime, institutional and activist investors are circling Grayscale.

Hedge fund Fir Tree filed a lawsuit against Grayscale in December 2022 alleging mismanagement and severe conflicts of interest. The fund believes that Grayscale and DCG have very little incentive to act in the best interest of investors because they are earning lucrative fees that aren't affected by the discount to fair value.

Will the \$7 billion of value ever be unlocked and returned to shareholders? Or will Grayscale be remembered as another high-profile failed crypto venture?



**Mike Benz,**  
executive director of  
the Foundation For  
Freedom Online.



THOUGHT LEADERS

# America Has Adopted a System of ‘Mass Domestic Censorship’

*The Twitter files are a ‘tiny tip’ of the iceberg, Mike Benz says*

“**T**HE FOREIGN POLICY establishment has seized jurisdiction over all things domestic,” Mike Benz says. “Whoever controls the Department of Dirty Tricks can remove all opposition on the political, social, and cultural side.”

In a recent comprehensive interview on “American Thought Leaders,” host Jan Jekielek spoke with Mike Benz about today’s censorship regime and how tactics once used abroad were deployed to target Americans and so-called election delegitimization or COVID-19 “misinformation” online. Benz is the executive director of the Foundation For Freedom Online and a former State Department diplomat under the Trump administration.

**JAN JEKIELEK:** Mike, you have a mission of fostering a free and open internet. Where are we now?

**MIKE BENZ:** We’re far removed from what I consider the golden age of the internet between 2006 and 2016, when you had a mature social media where people could share information. The political turbulence of 2016 instituted a revenge of the gatekeepers, a regimented system of censorship.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** How did that change?

**MR. BENZ:** In June 2016, Brexit wasn’t just a domestic issue within the UK but was viewed as a threat to the integrity of the European Union. The EU would come undone, NATO would fall apart, and the rules-based international order would collapse.

And then, in quick succession, you had a candidate for president who at the time was an almost 20–1 underdog in *The New York Times*. It was thought that he couldn’t win, and yet he did. And both events were viewed as internet elections, if you will.

Nigel Farage developed the popularity of Brexit through his viral YouTube speeches to the European Parliament. Twitter hashtags and Facebook groups were responsible for Donald Trump’s

**“Four categories of institutions are working together toward the common goal of censorship: the government, the private sector, civil society, and the news media.”**

popularity with his base. So you had an organized effort to contain this populism by containing the means through which populists could mobilize and distribute their messaging.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** You’ve described this as a “whole of society” effort. What does that mean?

**MR. BENZ:** “Whole of society” is the terminology of every mainstream censorship industry professional. It means four categories of institutions are working together toward the common goal of censorship: the government, the private sector, civil society, and the news media.

You’ve got the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), FBI, Department of Defense (DOD), the State Department, the National Science Foundation, the CIA, and the National Endowment for Democracy. On issues like COVID-19 censorship, you’ve got the Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases all playing various roles at the government level.

Then you’ve got the private sector, the tech platforms where the censorship occurs. That’s where the button gets pressed, where the algorithms play out.

Then you’ve got corporate social re-

sponsibility and the universities, NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], activists, nonprofits, and foundations.

Finally, you’ve got the politically like-minded media that can manage public narratives and amplify pressure for censorship.

When they have disinformation conferences, representatives from all four institutions will talk with each other about doing favors for favors. They’ll work out common problems.

In late 2016, when I first came across literature around the deployment of artificial intelligence for purposes of content moderation, I became fixated on the threat this posed. But nobody took my concern seriously. Now the infrastructure is consolidated and much harder to stop.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** The Twitter files revealed that this censorship is happening, this ability to shape perceptions by excluding information. But you’ve said the Twitter files are just the tip of the iceberg?

**MR. BENZ:** A tiny tip. My foundation, the Foundation For Freedom Online, had already covered a lot of the things that came out in the Twitter files. What the Twitter files really revealed was the presence of censorship operatives at virtually every national security-related institution in the government, as well as in the public health spheres.

There were Twitter files for the FBI, the DHS, the DOD, and the State Department. These files tended to focus on one-off requests for censorship takedowns. For example, the FBI would contact the Twitter Trust and Safety Team saying: “Here’s a batch of six or seven tweets we don’t like. They violate your terms of service, so you may want to take them down.” But that only captures the tiniest fraction of censorship in each of the major geopolitical events in the past few years.

Consider these six or seven takedowns in the context of something like the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP), which formerly had a partnership with the Department of Homeland

ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES, JACK WANG/THE EPOCH TIMES



## “Whoever controls the Department of Dirty Tricks can remove all opposition on the political, social, and cultural side.”

Security to operate as their designated disinformation flagger. Twenty-two million tweets were categorized as misinformation for purposes of take-downs or throttling through the EIP.

Compare that to the six or seven tweets highlighted in a Twitter files dump, and it's not even in the same ballpark. It wasn't just about individual takedown requests; it was about government pressure to coerce the tech companies to create whole new categories of censorship and then arming them with the artificial intelligence to scan and ban the new thought violations.

The EIP, using the DHS's clout and pressure on the back end, coerced the tech companies to create a category of censorship called delegitimization, which was anything in the 2020 election that delegitimized public confidence in mail-in ballots, early voting drop boxes, or ballot tabulation issues on election day; 100 percent of their targets were Trump voters and right-wing populist groups.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** Are these tools being used in the same way when it comes to COVID-19 information?

**MR. BENZ:** When the 2020 election ended, EIP had censored 22 million tweets. They had 120 staffers censoring Trump supporters for the 2020 election for the DHS. There was no more election cycle until 2022, when they came back and partnered with DHS again for the midterms.

But in between, they rebranded themselves as a new entity, VP, the Virality Project. But instead of doing election censorship, they did COVID-19

censorship, with the exact same ticketing system. They had the same relationships with Facebook, Google, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, Reddit, and the 15 different platforms they monitored. They then began censoring opposition to COVID-19 origins, vaccine efficacy, mask mandates, or narratives about Bill Gates or Anthony Fauci.

Let me add that COVID-19 started at the end of 2019, before the 2020 election, and actually the COVID-19 censorship consortium began immediately. Graphika, for example, is one of the four component entities of the EIP censorship consortium that the DHS partnered with. It's a U.S. Department of Defense-funded censorship consortium initially funded to do social media counterinsurgency work in conflict zones for the U.S. military. Then, it was redeployed domestically to monitor social media discourse about COVID-19, COVID-19 conspiracies, or other issues.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** You're reminding me of something I read, which is the foreign-to-domestic disinformation switcheroo.

**MR. BENZ:** Before 2016, the idea of domestic censorship in the United States wasn't just rare and isolated—it was an attack on everything American. Censorship distinguished the United States from every other country on the planet. No other Western democracies have a First Amendment.

Now, we're going directly from that into this system of mass domestic censorship, where if you challenge mail-in ballots in a Twitter post, the Department of Homeland Security will categorize you as conducting a

cyberattack on U.S. critical infrastructure, because you've undermined public faith in the elections.

They did that in the censorship industry through the creation of a Russian boogeyman that was said to have hacked the 2016 election and to have created these bot farms, troll farms, and Facebook pages that magically disappeared right before the 2020 election.

It was a hoax from the start, but it was a useful one, because it allowed the handoff of the censorship infrastructure on the foreign side to be grafted onto the domestic side.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** Having these systems that traditionally target foreign threats turned inward domestically means that the whole system has been upended. Is that what you're saying?

**MR. BENZ:** It means that the foreign policy establishment has seized jurisdiction over all things domestic. Whoever controls the Department of Dirty Tricks can remove all opposition on the political, social, and cultural side.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** So where do things need to go?

**MR. BENZ:** Just as a whole-of-society approach was done on the censorship side, it's a network attack, and it requires a network defense. People who believe in freedom need to merge elements of government, private sector, civil society, and news media into a common effort to restore a free and open internet.

It's a hard road to fight for freedom. There's no lobby for the American people. Those who stand for freedom and the people are on their own, and every person who goes through that journey experiences isolation. But you make a lot of friends along the way, and being proud and brave in this fight can actually cure the isolation and helplessness that comes from accepting things as they are. ■

*This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.*



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# Ignore the Distractions and Listen



*Developing a laser focus for conversations is a must*

By Jeff Minick

**O**N OUR WAY to a park, one of my grandchildren started to sprint across a street to the swings and sliding boards. I corralled the boy and explained, as his parents already had, that two tons of metal, plastic, and rubber going 30 miles per hour don't mix well with 6-year-olds. "You stop, look, and listen," I said, pantomiming that dictum that every kid should have engraved on the brain. Judging from the way he kept eyeballing the jungle gym across the way, I'm pretty sure my grandson wasn't hearing a thing I said.

Many of us are just as easily distracted. The next time you're in a sports bar, for example, watch for a couple engaged in conversation. The woman is talking and looking directly at her companion. The guy's nodding his head, and maybe he's catching every word out of her mouth, but his eyes keep sidling away to the big screen where the Packers are playing the Bears.

Better yet, note the number of people in the room staring at a phone while others at their table are conversing.

Ours is the great age of distraction. From subway and bus ads to media or to our phones, someone or something is always trying to snag our attention. Surveys show, for example, that employees daily spend considerable time at work surfing the internet, checking out social media, or shopping online. And who hasn't spoken to an employer, a friend, or even a spouse about some important matter, only to realize that they're miss-

ing in action? Conversely, how many of us have listened to a friend's troubles while privately pondering some extraneous topic, such as whether we'll have time over the weekend for some tennis?

Distractions damage our workplace performance, our focus at home, and, eventually, our ability to handle troubles expeditiously. Given free rein, this neglect can even destroy marriages and ruin relationships.

The solution? We learned that about the same time that we were learning to read.

## The person seeking to give attention to others does so by looking at them.

### Stop

If Mike sticks his head into your office and asks, "Got a minute?" close your laptop and wave him into the opposite chair. Right off the bat, you've signaled your availability and interest.

If your 15-year-old asks, "Can we talk a minute?" put down the phone, pat the space beside you on the sofa, and swing your entire body toward her. Whatever she has to say, she knows you're ready to hear her.

Stop means shutting down distractions.

### Look

The adolescent who doesn't want to get nailed by a car looks both ways, up and

down the street. The person seeking to give attention to others does so by looking at them. This tells them that we're ready to listen, and it reminds us to be present.

You can "look" at someone even when you're on the phone. If you're washing the dishes when your mom calls to wonder for the umpteenth time when you're coming for a visit, instead of shaking your head and rolling your eyes, put down the dishcloth and speak to her as if she were there and not some disembodied voice.

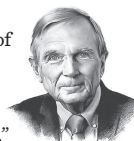
### Listen

When listening to a friend or relative, how many of us keep interrupting, injecting our two cents into the conversation before they've finished speaking? How many of us are absorbing what's said, rather than letting our thoughts fly off in a dozen directions?

Just as you can't truly listen while weeding the garden, sweeping the floor, or playing with your phone, you can't listen if you're cranking out solutions instead of hearing the problems.

Shoving aside distractions and zeroing in on people will improve our work performance, our love life, and our relationships. And here's some more good news: It's as simple as crossing a street. ■

**Jeff Minick** lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man."



# Unwind

The spectacular oceanfront Diplomat Beach Resort in Hollywood, Florida, is an ideal place to relax in complete luxury.

PHOTO BY ANJELIKAGR/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Soak Up the Sun 72

### TRADITIONAL 12-YEAR-OLD

balsamic vinegar from Italy's Modena region is the other "black gold" that transforms meals into epicurean adventures. 75

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are efficient way to drive cross-country, but to discover the real America, slow down and take a two-lane blue highway. 76

### TAKE A MOMENT FOR A QUICK

review of some specific manners that can help make sure your next trip to the mall is a fun experience. 83

INSIDE





# Sydney Harbour Mansion

A simply elegant waterfront residence

By Mihaela Lica-Butler

Set on a point lot, the property has a wide, unobstructed view of Sydney Harbour.

**T**HIS ICONIC AUSTRALIAN PROPERTY has come on the market for the first time in more than 80 years. The stunning building in P&O architectural style stands in glistening white at the tip of Parsley Bay Wharf, overlooking Sydney Harbour and the Tasman Sea, in Vaucluse, one of Sydney's most prestigious suburbs.

It occupies a 13,681-square-foot parcel with a beautifully manicured lawn. A few arbors add a touch of green without distracting from the elegant architectural flow of the building.

P&O was a popular 1930's architectural style inspired by the cruise liners of the Pacific and Orient line ships. As a result, the mansion's interior decor maintains nautical influences. With bright interiors bathed in natural light, the luxury estate offers ocean views from all of its rooms.

It's an imposing structure on three levels. The lower ground floor features storage spaces, a full bathroom, two bedrooms, and a garage with parking places for two

cars. Two other parking spots are available in the driveway.

A staircase leads to the ground floor, which boasts a bright kitchen with modern fixtures, a sumptuous living room, a dining room with a fireplace, a guest bathroom, a balcony, and a sunroom with panoramic seascape views.

The first floor has three ample bedrooms, two full baths, and two balconies. From here, a staircase leads to the rooftop terrace that reveals still more sweeping views of the sea and Sydney Harbour.

For history lovers, it may be interesting to know that architect George Thomas designed the mansion in the late 1930s for Horace Bracey. It was named Point Seymour after Bracey's father's third Christian name. The estate is considered a Sydney Harbour landmark and is coveted by many investors for its location and unique design. ■

*A former military journalist, Mihaela Lica-Butler is a senior partner at Argophilia Travel News.*



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- LANDMARK EDIFICE IN P&O ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

**AGENT**

SYDNEY SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY  
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**(Above)** The formal dining room exudes simple elegance; a door leads to the adjacent kitchen.

**(Top Right)** The residence, set at the water's edge, is buffered by a wide swath of lawn to ensure maximum privacy. **(Right)** The home's common areas feature generous use of large windows to allow natural light in while providing the owners with a great view.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYDNEY SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY



# Lap of Luxury

Affordable splendor can be found at Florida's stunning Diplomat Beach Resort

By Cary Dunst



The Diplomat Beach Resort sits along the Intercoastal Waterway and Atlantic Ocean in Hollywood, Fla.

PHOTO BY FELIX MIZIONNIKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK

AS THE BLACK NIGHT SKY YIELDED to twilight over the calm Atlantic, I gasped in awe as the tippy-top of the sun's sphere pierced the horizon. Like the first brush stroke from a new color palette onto a watercolor painting, the whites and blues were met with bursts of warm glowing orange. Instantly, a myriad of new color combinations fused onto the sky, clouds, water, and sand. With each passing moment, the sun further revealed itself, and its light grew in intensity. It seemed to pulsate as it pushed up from the horizon, shooting beams across the entire composition.

I was staying at the surprisingly accessible 1,000-room luxury Diplomat Beach Resort in Hollywood, Florida, a Hilton Curio Collection property. In this modern high-rise, styled with a vintage beachy vibe, half of the rooms have an epic sunrise, the other half get an equally astonishing sunset, and the corner suites are treated to a view of both dawn and dusk.

### Luxury Easily Within Reach

My family of four recently planned a weekend escape to minimize travel and maximize quality time and vitamin D from the warm South Florida sun. The Diplomat offers everything one could possibly want for such a trip—a soft, white sand beach with Caribbean blue-green waters, an expansive pool area overlooking the ocean, great food, tons of activities for the kids, an indulgent spa, an exercise facility—all with a luxurious yet casual vibe.

As one of South Florida's largest resorts, we felt the Diplomat's grandness immediately as we pulled up the driveway. The kids oohed and ahed as they saw the hotel's street sign surrounded by water features and vegetation.

We were wowed by the expansive lobby, which combines warm furnishings, lush plant life, and a dramatic six-story glass ceiling and windows that flood the space with light and ocean views.

### Home Away From Home

Despite its winning tons of awards and its four-diamond rating by AAA, when you compare it to the rates of other South Florida luxury beach hotels, you come to understand the Diplomat's value.

Sixty percent of the hotel's stays are for business conferences. However, during weekends and holidays when the hotel isn't hosting a huge conference, the supply-demand balance tips strongly in favor of the guest. That's why vacationers can get both a lower rate and

Guests can rent any of the resort's

**36**  
cabanas.



It's a 7-minute drive to the famous Hollywood Beach Broadwalk.

The Diplomat was rebuilt and added to the Hilton's Curio Collection in 2014.

Kids enjoy playing on a stand-up paddle board on the beach.



FROM TOP: THE EPOCH TIMES; COURTESY OF THE DIPLOMAT BEACH RESORT





The lobby of the Diplomat Beach Resort beckons you to relax with a coffee, juice, or cocktail at one of its many sitting areas.

better amenities than the Diplomat's peer set in nearby Fort Lauderdale and Miami.

While the Diplomat has a great bar and restaurant scene all centered around that priceless ocean view, if you're looking for the bustling nightlife and singles scene that South Florida is famed for, those cities are a better fit. But if you want the best beach, pool, and luxury amenities at an affordable rate to enjoy with your spouse, family, or small group—the Diplomat is unrivaled.

### Fun in the Sun

The Diplomat's main attraction is undoubtedly the pool and beach.

The facilities are vast, letting each family find space to relax and spread out. When you walk onto the back patio beyond the lobby bar, the first thing you notice is the view from every area of the pool to the sweeping ocean below. The upper-level patio features an infinity pool that has a glass-bottomed, see-through-to-the-lagoon pool that's directly underneath.

On the ground level are two waterfalls flowing from the above infinity pool, a hot tub, chaise lounges as far as one can see, cabanas, and music from the hip Playa restaurant.

Through the back gate of the patio, we walked onto the soft beach where the gentle blue-green waves of the ocean gently rolled onto the sand. Chaise lounges, umbrellas,

and even full-shaded beds are looked after by attendants who offer towels and refreshments.

### For the Kids

It's hard to find a resort that balances what parents are looking for while having enough kid-friendly activities. We found a variety of things for our kids to do.

First and foremost, there's the Diplomat kids club! Located oceanfront on the beachside patio, the kids are supervised by kind counselors who guide them to the pool, beach, arts and crafts, dress-up, video games, and even cooking classes. You can drop the kids off for a full day, half day, or as needed.

In addition to the structured kids club, there's the Dip + Slide Kids Splash Zone that features various water features and a slide.

For those seeking more adventure, there's a water sports activity center on the beach that offers kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, jet skis, and banana boat rides.

### Spa and Gym

To take the relaxation to the next level, we visited the spa, where we enjoyed the steam room, saunas, and an organic facial. While the gym has two floors of modern exercise equipment and an upbeat vibe, we decided that this trip was all about relaxing. Perhaps we'll hit the gym next time, as we hope to return soon. ■

### If You Go

**Fly:** The preferred airport is the Fort Lauderdale–Hollywood International Airport, which is a 20-minute drive.

**Getting Around:** We found it easiest to order an Uber to the Diplomat. However, it's very easy to valet or self-park your car.

**Dining:** Counterpoint is a fast option that offers breakfast, lunch, coffee, juices, and pastries. Point Royal offers a more formal breakfast in a tropical dining room.

**Room Reservation:** Visit DiplomatResort.com to check on room types, rates, and availability.

THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF THE DIPLOMAT BEACH RESORT

## FINDING ITALY'S REAL 'BLACK GOLD': TRADITIONAL BALSAMIC VINEGAR OF MODENA

*A far cry from the salad dressing condiment, the real deal is dark, rich, intensely concentrated, and precious—an edible legacy passed down generations*

By Kevin Revolinski

IF YOU'RE A CASUAL FAN of balsamic vinegar, I may have some troubling news for you: Most likely, whatever you're using isn't the traditional form. True, traditional balsamic vinegar comes at a dear cost in a 3.3-ounce globelike bottle—a hand grenade of deliciousness.

Much like Champagne, you can't put "balsamic vinegar of Modena" on vinegar that isn't produced in its home region. But there are two distinctions for Modena: balsamic vinegar of Modena PGI (protected geographical indication—IGP on an Italian label) and traditional balsamic vinegar of Modena PDO (protected designation of origin—or DOP). The former allows for blending with wine vinegar; the latter is made strictly with grape must (crushed grapes with skins, stems, and all), aged at least 12 years and even judged for quality. But the tradition is a lot older than these labels—historical records date back to the Romans—and it's been kept alive by generations of home producers.

On a tour through the Museum of Traditional Balsamic Vinegar in Modena, which is also headquarters to the consortium that judges the DOP vinegar, Director Cristina Sereni showed me a series of five barrels descending in size. This is a "battery," she told me.

"Tradition says that any time a baby girl is born, we should start a new set."

The process begins with the fall grape harvest. The must is cooked down, sealed in a large bottle, and cellared until spring.

**Barrels of** balsamic vinegar age in the attic of the Museum of Traditional Balsamic Vinegar.

**A few drops** on a chunk of Parmigiano Reggiano is a simple but classic pairing.

**Look for** the red and yellow PDO seal on the bottle.



**Made under strict requirements** and aged for at least 12 years, pure traditional balsamic vinegar of Modena has a complex flavor and thick, syrupy texture, to be doled out in precious drops.

### NEED TO KNOW

**Buy:** Look for "aceto balsamico tradizionale di Modena D.O.P." on the label. Anything aged at least 25 years is also labeled "extravecchio" (extra old).

**Enjoy:** Try a few drops on Parmigiano Reggiano, risotto, strawberries, chocolate, or ice cream. Never heat it.

**Visit:** See the Museum of Traditional Balsamic Vinegar's website for more information.

This liquid is poured into the largest barrel, and the hole in the top is left open or covered with only a cloth to allow evaporation. Thus, natural fermentation begins, and in a few weeks, it's vinegar.

The following year, a portion of the mother barrel moves to the next smaller barrel, and the new batch is blended into the mother. This process continues annually, and after many years, that small one at the end is eventually producing a small amount of old but blended vinegar.

"When girls grew up and got married, their sets would be part of the dowry. When we start a new set, we are not doing it for ourselves; it's for future generations," Sereni said.

The tradition at the commercial level is basically identical to a local maker's. For the DOP label, everything must be made in

Modena, with only local grapes. And for the pros, everything is controlled, from the vineyard to the bottling phase; producers can't bottle their own.

"They have to bring it here to the consortium, where five expert master tasters will evaluate the quality," Sereni said.

For local makers, pride is on the line.

"We have a contest every year, [where] families bring a sample," Sereni said.

They had 1,636 entries in 2022. The winner received a diploma, a medal, and a spoon of gold.

"But what really matters is, they can say to everyone, 'My vinegar is better than yours,'" she said. ■

Portions of this trip were arranged by Emilia-Romagna Tourism.

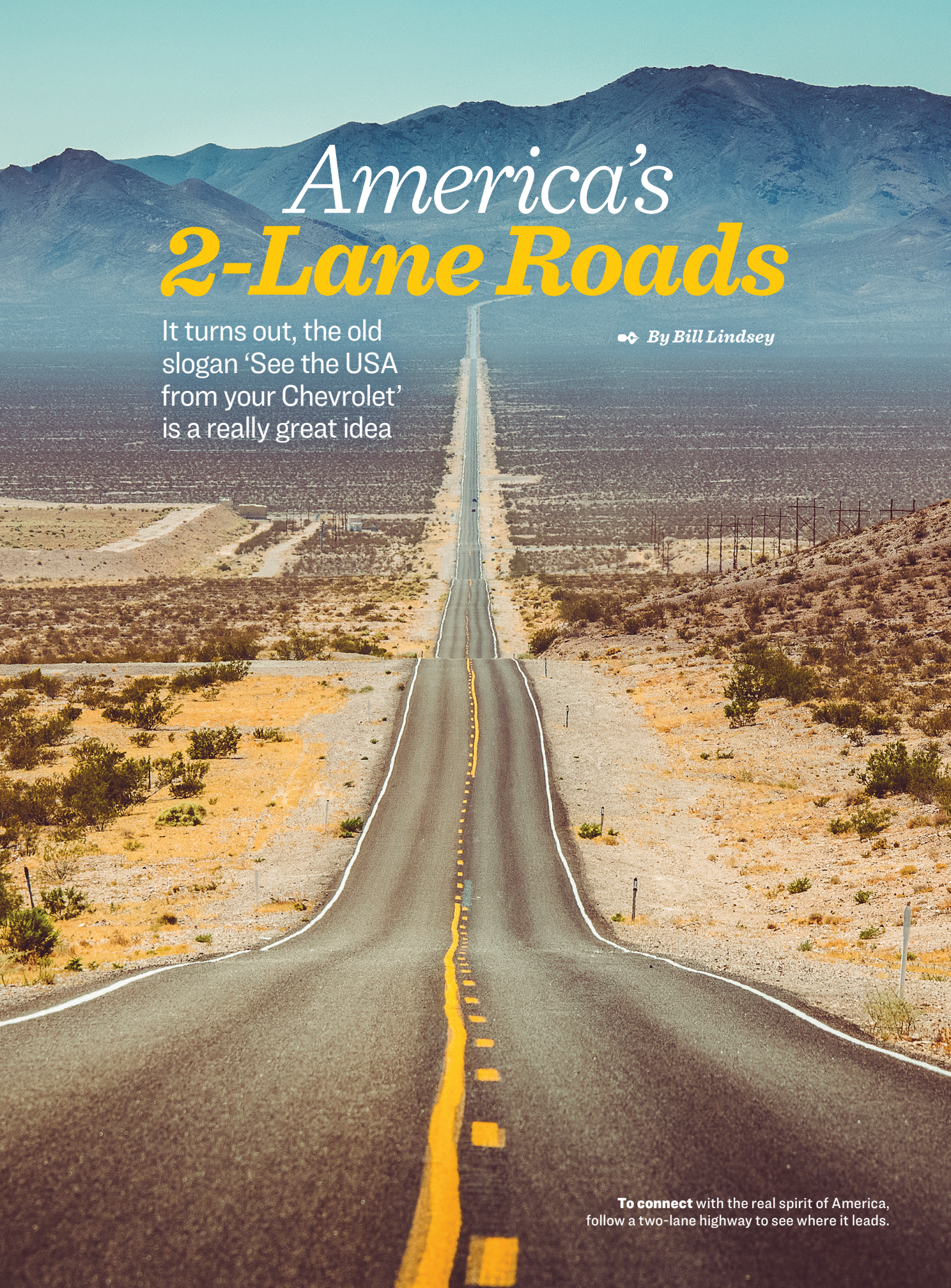
**Kevin Revolinski is an avid traveler, craft beer enthusiast, and home-cooking fan.**



# America's 2-Lane Roads

It turns out, the old slogan 'See the USA from your Chevrolet' is a really great idea

By Bill Lindsey



To connect with the real spirit of America, follow a two-lane highway to see where it leads.

LEFT PAGE: PHOTO BY CANADASTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK; THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: EKATERINA POKROVSKY/SHUTTERSTOCK, A. MARINO/SHUTTERSTOCK, DIANA ROBINSON PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES, INGOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK, NATALIA MACHEDA/SHUTTERSTOCK

**T**HE FOLLOWING ROADS represent a very small sampling of epic road trips that provide a connection with a less hurried and hectic way of life. Some can be driven in a day, while others require at least a week to traverse. Pick up a map—a real one, printed on paper—and find your own route to see from a motorcycle, car, or RV.

### Take a Back Road

Many years ago, the Rand McNally Road Atlas showed small, two-lane roads linking small towns in blue. Most travelers and those on the road hauling freight or moving goods avoided these out-of-the-way roads in favor of faster, more efficient, multi-lane highways. Now shown in a shade of gray, these slower-paced roads meander across America, leading through small towns and past farms, over hills and mountains, and through forests.

Following them provides an opportunity to discover an America many never knew existed. The goal is to set a slower pace, taking time to discover what lies over the next hill or stopping for lunch in a town so small it has only a flashing red light at a four-way intersection, a town where strangers passing by on the sidewalk smile and say hello.

### The Mother Road

Known as Route 66, or the "Mother Road," U.S. Highway 66 is perhaps the ultimate blue highway. One of the

**The goal is to set a slower pace, taking time to discover what lies over the next hill.**

oldest highways in the country, it was opened in 1926, with the signs, reportedly designed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, installed in 1927. Celebrated by John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath," a song by Nat King Cole, a television show bearing its name, and the animated movie "Cars," Route 66 has become an indelible part of America.

Originally 2,448 miles long, stretching from Chicago to Santa Monica, it was rendered obsolete by the Interstate Act that created a system of efficient, multilane highways across the country. Though it's no longer recognized as an official U.S. highway, parts of it still survive, traversing eight states, over and past more than 250 bridges, buildings, and unusual sights listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As you roll along the road, make sure to stop at the blue whale in Catoosa, Oklahoma; the Leaning Water Tower in Groom, Texas; the Cadillac Ranch outside of Amarillo, Texas; the Petrified Forest National Park and the Painted Desert in Arizona; the Calico Ghost Town Regional Park; and Elmer's Bottle Tree Ranch in California.



Blue highways often pass through largely unpopulated sections of the United States, so top off the gas tank before setting off.

Route 66 is perhaps the most iconic of all blue highways and a grand adventure rolling across the United States.



The High Road to Taos goes through towns with adobe churches built before there was a United States.



The Leaning Water Tower of Texas is one of thousands of quirky sights awaiting along Route 66.



The Santa Monica Pier is the western terminus of Route 66, or the place to start it when taking it east to Chicago.







The reward to taking a two-lane highway is seeing inspiring sights most people will never get to experience.

### Pennsylvania's Path

After you've explored Route 66, consider a drive along a stretch of Route 6. Beginning in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and ending 3,200 miles later in Bishop, California, it's officially called The Grand Army of the Republic Highway. However, for those who don't have time to make a cross-country trek, this idyllic two-lane road winds for 430 miles over hills and through valleys and forests of Pennsylvania, from Matamoras to the village of Pennline.

In addition to rustic towns that seem frozen in time and plenty of roadside diners to sate any appetite, several of the more notable attractions along the way include Claws 'N' Paws Wild Animal Park in Lake Ariel, home to 120 species of snow leopards, white tigers, wolves, bears, and many more. The Corry Area Historical Society Museum is a must for railroad buffs, who will enjoy seeing a large collection of railroad equipment, including a restored Climax Engine locomotive that was manufactured in Corry and is available for an up-close look in Mead Park.

### French Highway

History buffs will be sure to pull over to see French Azilum, a colony established in 1793 by French refugees fleeing the revolution. Anticipating her arrival, the residents even built a home for Marie Antoinette and her children.

The original structures are gone, but a reconstructed log cabin houses a collection of artifacts. Located alongside Route 6 in Pennsylvania's Grand Canyon is Mack's Chainsaw Art, where visitors can witness Joel and Katelyn Mack wielding roaring chainsaws as they create sculptures.

### Road Less Traveled

Taos and Santa Fe are popular tourist destinations in New Mexico, but the 105 miles of NM Route 503, the High Road to Taos linking the two towns, is an often-overlooked delight that takes visitors back to a time when Spanish missionaries were exploring the region.

From Pojoaque, Route 503 leads into the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and through several Spanish Land Grant villages, stopping to visit adobe churches and art galleries and generally soak up the Southwestern small-town atmosphere.

A good place to stop for lunch is Chimayo, known for its red chiles and the lovingly maintained El Santuario de Chimayo, an adobe church built in 1816 on what is said to be "holy dirt"—the Vigil Store adjacent to the church sells small bags of the dirt, eliminating the need to dig your own. Along the way, the elevation climbs to 8,500 feet, but the road soon descends as it nears Taos.

Regardless of where the two lanes take you, slow down and enjoy the ride. ■



## LIFESTYLE EXPLORING AMERICA

The Great Road Trip



1

### Drive All Day or All Week

There are many two-lanes highways to choose from, so use a map to plan a route based on how much time you have available.



2

### DIY or Pre-Packaged

Tour operators offer guided tours along many epic roads such as Route 66, but by going where you want at your own pace, you can see things the tours zoom past. If you take a tour one year, drive yourself the next time.



3

### Slow Your Roll

Hurrying defeats the purpose of a road trip, so take your time, and consider doing the trip in phases over a span of months or even over the course of several years.

FROM L: REID DALLAND/SHUTTERSTOCK; THE EPOCH TIMES

# HANDHELD TOOL KITS

It isn't practical to carry a tool box full of pliers, screwdrivers, files, and more everywhere, but this collection of multifaceted tools can keep you going

By Bill Lindsey



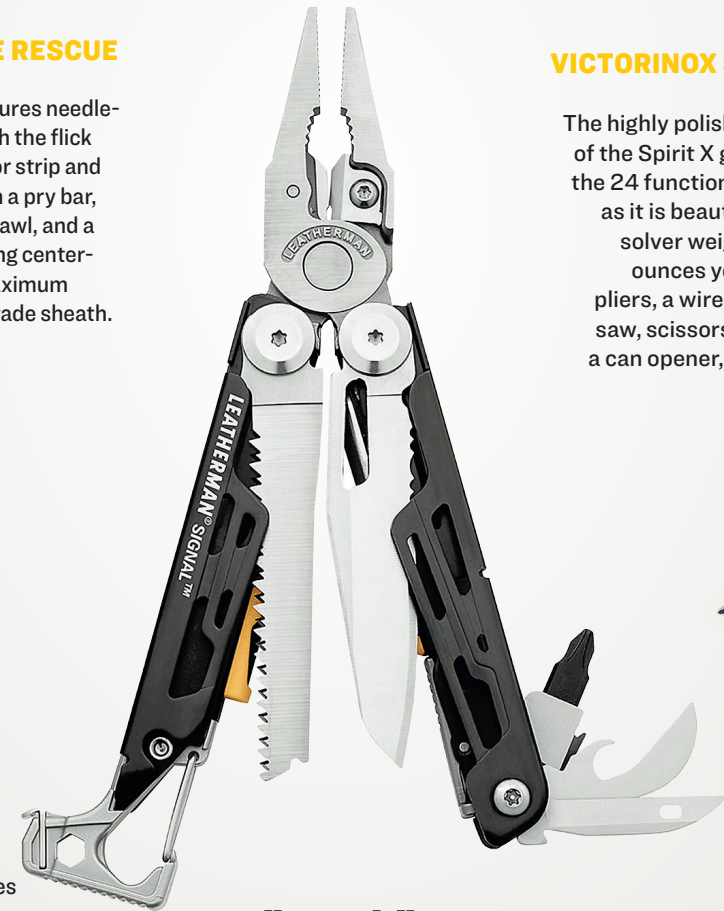
### Professional Grade GERBER CENTER-DRIVE RESCUE \$145

This no-nonsense multitool features needle-nose plier jaws that slide out with the flick of a thumb and can grasp bolts or strip and cut wire. It's well-equipped, with a pry bar, serrated knife, strap cutter, file, awl, and a selection of 13 bits for the locking center-axis bit driver engineered for maximum torque, all stored in a military-grade sheath.



### Commando Quality SOG POWERACCESS ASSIST \$99.95

From the company originally founded to provide combat knives to special forces operators, the PowerAccess uses a patented gear-driven compound leverage system designed to deliver twice the gripping and cutting power of conventional pliers. With an impressive 21 tools, including a magnetic hex bit holder complete with 12 bits, two knife blades, a saw, a chisel, a hook-shaped strap cutter, and assorted screwdrivers, it's ready for duty.



### Hammer It Home LEATHERMAN SIGNAL \$139.95

Every Signal can be completely customized to make it truly one of a kind. Nine handle colors are available, and both sides of the partially serrated blade can feature a customer-provided image, a 20-character message, or one of 14 patterns, from a flag to woodgrain. To make it even better, the 19 tools include a firestarter rod, an emergency whistle, a diamond-coated sharpener, and even a hammer.



### A Jewel of a Tool VICTORINOX SWISS TOOL SPIRIT X \$132.99

The highly polished stainless-steel handles of the Spirit X give it an elegant look, while the 24 functions make it just as functional as it is beautiful. This compact problem solver weighs a little more than seven ounces yet has a chisel, needle-nose pliers, a wire cutter and stripper, a wood saw, scissors, a knife, two screwdrivers, a can opener, and more all tucked into an attractive sheath.



### Tiny Powerhouse GARRETT WADE 19- IN-1 KEY RING TOOL \$18.50

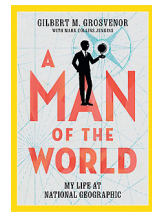
Sized to fit on a key chain, this little dynamo crafted of durable stainless steel opens to reveal 19 tools, including six screwdriver tips, a wire cutter, micro pliers, a hand drill, metric and standard rulers, and a nail file. The compact size makes it easy to carry all the time, while the tools are engineered to provide years of service.



Are there books you'd recommend?  
We'd love to hear from you. Let us know at [features@epochtimes.com](mailto:features@epochtimes.com)

**RECOMMENDED READING**

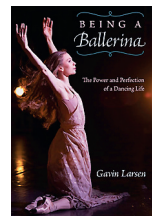
This week, we feature a collection of Tolstoy's most famous stories and an inspiring memoir of one man's mission to save a friend from the Taliban.



**MEMOIR**  
**'A Man of the World'**  
By Gilbert M. Grosvenor with Mark Collins Jenkins

Gilbert Grosvenor spent six decades at The National Geographic Society. His destiny to guide the Society followed four generations of his family before him. Over the years, he was privileged to know the likes of Sir Edmund Hillary, Jacques-Yves Cousteau, and Jane Goodall, among others who were honored for their contributions to the field. More than doing a job, Grosvenor sought to leave the world a better place. His story about running a media company in changing times is told with unflinching honesty.

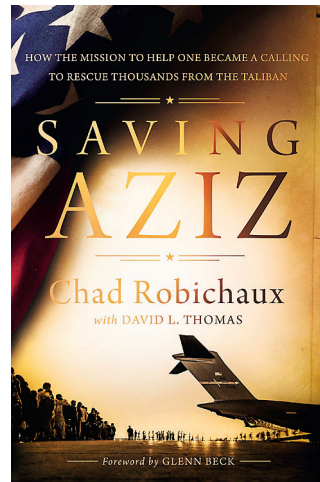
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, 2022, 320 PAGES



**MEMOIR**  
**'Being a Ballerina'**  
By Gavin Larsen

Subtitled "The Power and Perfection of a Dancing Life," Larsen's well-written memoir takes us from her 8-year-old days as a stumbling beginner to her life as a professional ballerina. Readers learn about the intense physical demands of dance and of the constant quest to learn more, to aim at perfection, and to overcome disappointment. For those who love the ballet or wish to gain insights into its workaday world, Larsen shines a light on the joys and realities of this unique profession.

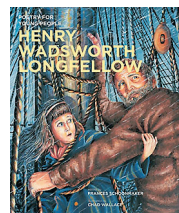
UNIVERSITY PRESS OF FLORIDA, 2021, 272 PAGES



**MEMOIR**  
**'Saving Aziz'**  
By Chad Robichaux

The exit from Afghanistan is one of the greatest tragedies to occur on America's watch. In the midst of this disaster, however, there were shining moments of heroism and loyalty so inspiring that they could hardly be scripted better. One of those moments is captured by Chad Robichaux, a Force Recon Marine, in his efforts to rescue Aziz, his former interpreter, and Aziz's family. This memoir is a reminder of American soldiers' bravery and sacrifice and the heart behind what they do.

THOMAS NELSON, 2023, 224 PAGES



**FOR KIDS**  
**'Henry Wadsworth Longfellow'**  
Edited by Frances Schoonmaker, illustrated by Chad Wallace

The Poetry for Young People series provides a wonderful introduction to poetry's greats—bringing to life the works of the world's most renowned poets with engaging illustrations. In this edition featuring Longfellow's recognizable works—"Paul Revere's Ride," "Woods in Winter," and more—the beautiful images enhance understanding. Collect them all.

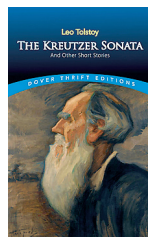
UNION SQUARE KIDS REPRINT EDITION, 2010, 48 PAGES



**NATURE**  
**'Reading the Glass'**  
By Elliot Rappaport

Elliot Rappaport commands sailing ships. A lifetime at sea has led him to develop a fascination with weather, and in this book, he draws upon 30 years' experience to share everything he has learned about it. Traveling the world through his voyages, we look at seafaring and tall sailing ships in modern times, receiving a painless education in modern meteorology: from trade winds and storms to clouds and jet streams. Thoroughly entertaining, it effortlessly blends adventure, humor, and science.

DUTTON, 2023, 336 PAGES



**CLASSICS**  
**'The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Short Stories'**  
By Leo Tolstoy

Here are three of Tolstoy's most highly regarded stories. "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" reminds us that the possessions we own in life mean nothing in the grave. "The Death of Ivan Ilych" tells of an official who has lived an artificial rather than authentic life, though in the end, he finds a sort of redemption. "The Kreutzer Sonata" gives us as dark a portrait of love and marriage as we are likely to find. Gloomy, yes, but these stories should spark intellectual debate and self-reflection.

DOVER PUBLICATIONS REVISED EDITION, 1993, 144 PAGES



**Ian Kane**  
is a U.S. Army veteran, filmmaker, and author. He enjoys the great outdoors and volunteering.

**MOVIE REVIEWS**

This week, we feature a couple of patriotic films: one about the WWII Battle of Iwo Jima and the other about a U.S. Olympic hockey team.

**NEW RELEASE**



**'Supercell'** (2023)

Teenager William Brody (Daniel Diemer) lives in the shadow of his famous storm-chaser father, Bill, who tragically died following a supercell tornado. But when a catastrophic supercell develops, Williams joins his father's old partner, Roy Cameron (Skeet Ulrich), to travel into the eye of the storm.

This entertaining movie may seem like a disaster flick at first, but it eventually delves deeper into a tale of a boy's search for himself and the importance of family. It also features outstanding cinematography and special effects.

**ACTION | ADVENTURE | DRAMA**

**Release Date:**  
April 20, 2023

**Director:**  
Herbert James Winterstern

**Starring:**  
Skeet Ulrich, Alec Baldwin, Anne Heche

**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 40 minutes

**MPAA Rating:**  
PG-13

**Where to Watch:**  
Theaters

★★★★★

**JOHN WAYNE AND MARINE GRIT**



**'Sands of Iwo Jima'** (1950)

When U.S. Marine Sgt. John Stryker (John Wayne) is tasked with whipping a brash new crop of recruits, he soon

discovers that his harsh training methods make them resentful of him.

This entertaining World War II drama features an iconic performance by American legend

John Wayne and carries positive messages about comradery, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and good ol' American grit.

**ACTION | DRAMA | ROMANCE**

**Release Date:**  
March 1, 1950

**Director:**  
Allan Dwan

**Starring:**  
John Wayne, John Agar, Adele Mara

**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 40 minutes

**Parental Guidance Rating:**  
Approved

**Where to Watch:**  
Vudu, Kanopy, Apple TV

★★★★★

**Epoch Watchlist**

**INDIE PICK**

**'The Thin Blue Line'** (1988)

Dallas, Texas, 1976. When 27-year-old Randall Adams's car runs out of gas, he gets picked up by teenager David Harris. Later, the same car gets pulled over, and as Dallas policeman Robert Wood nears it, he is fatally shot. Adams gets arrested for the crime, despite contrary evidence.

This frightening, capably directed documentary relies on reenactments and shows what can sometimes happen when incompetence and corruption



permeate aspects of the American criminal justice system. It features a mesmerizing score by Philip Glass.

**DOCUMENTARY | CRIME**

**Release Date:**  
Aug. 25, 1988

**Director:**  
Errol Morris

**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 41 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** Not Rated

**Where to Watch:**  
Apple TV, The Criterion Channel, Amazon

★★★★★

**TEAMWORK, UNDERDOGS, AND PATRIOTISM**

**'Miracle'** (2004)

When American hockey coach Herb Brooks (Kurt Russell) is chosen to train the U.S. 1980 Olympic team, he handpicks its members and begins a rigorous training regimen. Will Brooks's unorthodox training methods and hard-driving personality be enough to topple the dominant Soviet team?

Although a Disney film, it doesn't feature any schmaltz or sentimentality. Instead, we get a fascinating character study about a complex, some-



times harsh man and his relationship with the men of the team he led.

**BIOGRAPHY | DRAMA | HISTORY**

**Release Date:**  
Feb. 6, 2004

**Director:**  
Gavin O'Connor

**Starring:**  
Kurt Russell, Patricia Clarkson, Nathan West

**Running Time:**  
2 hours, 15 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** PG

**Where to Watch:**  
Apple TV, Vudu, Redbox

★★★★★





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—Richard Connema, Broadway critic

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—Donna Karan, creator of DKNY

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# Enjoying Shopping

*Tips to Have Better Experiences at the Mall*

With the holiday crowds now in the past, trips to the mall can once again be a welcome diversion and a comfortable place to get in a good walk, as long as everyone behaves themselves.

By Bill Lindsey

## 1 Doctors Aren’t the Only Ones With Patience

Busy shops, stores, and even vendors in the food court can mean a long wait to make your purchase, especially on rainy weekend days when everyone seems to be at the mall with you. If the lines are long, take a deep breath and let it out slowly. A trip to the mall should be a fun experience, so if it’s crowded, go at your own pace, making a conscious decision to enjoy yourself.



## 5 Practice RAK

A random act of kindness can make a powerful impression. Small gestures, such as holding the door for other shoppers struggling with bags, can help calm a hectic attitude. Compliment the store associate who was exceptionally polite to a rude shopper, let someone with just one item go ahead of you in line, and if you see someone circling to find a parking space, indicate that yours is about to become available.

## 2 Right of Way

Perhaps because we drive on the right, many shoppers tend to stay to the right as they meander through the mall. By going with the flow, you can often make better progress getting to and from your destination. However, there are no rules that say you can’t walk against traffic, so be careful to not bump into other shoppers walking toward you. If you do bump into someone, offer a quick “excuse me.”

## 3 Not a Playground

While many malls have kid zones where children can burn off excess energy, shoppers are expected to make sure their children are well-behaved in all other areas. Allowing children to run, be overly loud, or even scream is never appropriate; running could lead to a fall, which could lead to an injury, and isn’t something other shoppers should be forced to endure. If the children are very young and simply unhappy, it may be best to go home.

## 4 Parking Lot Courtesy

Road rage isn’t limited to the highway, as anyone who has searched for a parking space on a busy day at the mall can attest. If you notice another driver acting erratically, do your best to stay away. Avoid making eye contact; even if you are being hospitable and friendly, the other driver may not see it that way. Let that parking space go—you’ll find another, and avoiding an altercation is worth a bit more time and effort.

CSA IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



# What Our Readers Say

“It’s a magazine that’s FOR the American people, not against.”

*Vanessa Morrison, medical records clerk*

“Well thought out material, thoroughly investigated, and I trust [the] sources.”

*Gail F. Sauve, homemaker*

“It is straightforward, rather than a lot of speculation or pontificating.”

*Jan Hamilton, retired professional*

“[Insight] reminds me that there are still a LOT of wonderful, good, and dedicated people in this country.”

*Creed Haymond, surgeon*

“Unbiased reporting. Short, impactful articles.”

*Mark Naumann, photographer*

“I can trust what I read and make up my own mind how I feel about the subject.”

*Jim Edwards, retired*

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