Subject: FOI records
Date: Thursday, May 7, 2026 at 4:38:44 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Chavis, Madelyn
To: AO Records
Category: PRODUCTION
Attachments: Responsive Records.pdf, SC-SEC-26-0935.pdf, SC-SEC-26-0936.pdf, SC-SEC-26-0937.pdf

EXTERNAL SENDER

Good afternoon,

Attached are the records responsive to request ***26-0936.***

As for request ***26-0935:*** we have no responsive records.

As for request ***26-9037:*** we have no responsive records.

Thank you,

Madelyn Chavis
Senior Paralegal

South Carolina State Election Commission
1122 Lady St., 5th Floor, Columbia, SC 29201
P.O. Box 5987, Columbia, S.C. 29250
Office: 803.734.0145
Fax: 803.734.9366

From: Chavis, Madelyn
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 12:29 PM
To: AO Records <records@americanoversight.org>
Subject: Response to FOI requests

Good afternoon,

We have received your FOI requests.

For request 26-0935: All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, calendar invitations, and calendar invitation attachments)between any of the officials listed below, and any of the external entities or individuals listed below (including the listed email addresses and/or domains).

This request is granted.
Please note that the contents of responsive documents may be redacted where required by state or federal law.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

From: The New York Times
To: Knapp, Howard
Subject: [External] The Morning: All your lists
Date: Friday, December 5, 2025 6:52:21 AM

View in browser | nytimes.com

The Morning

December 5, 2025

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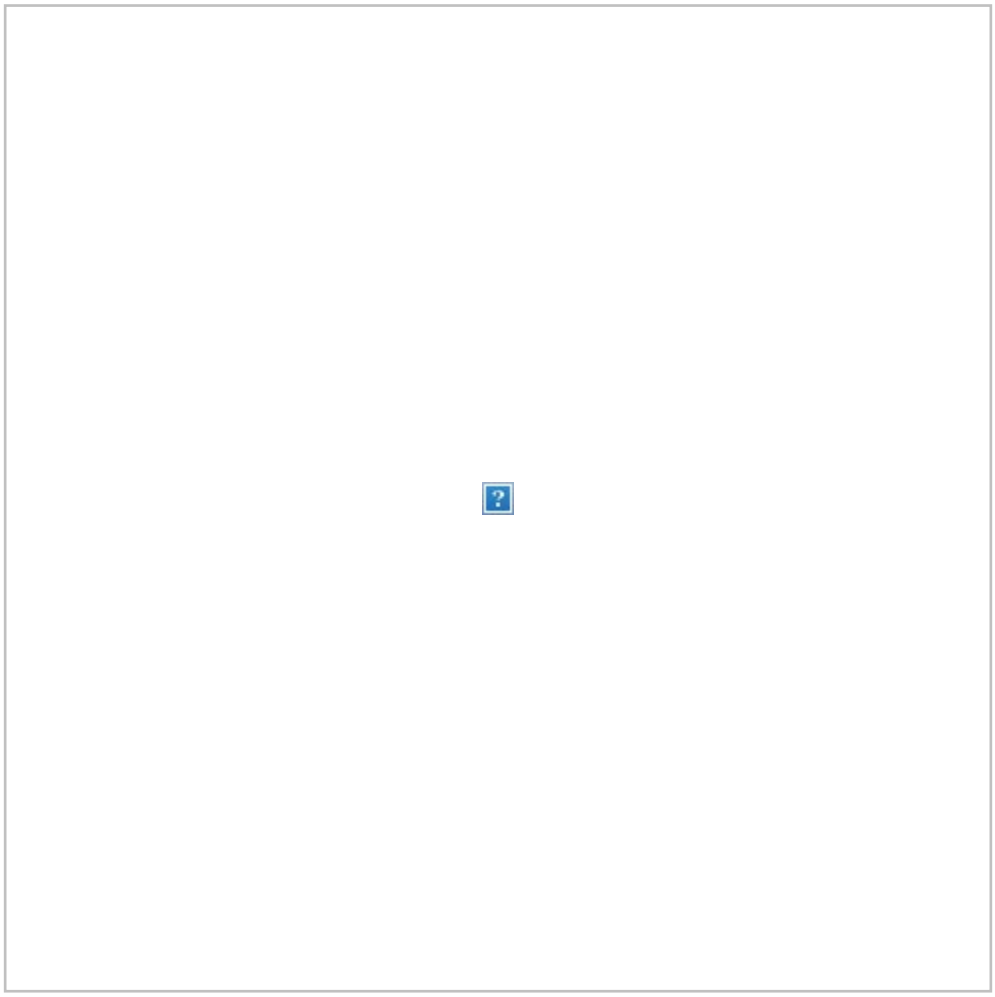
By Sam Sifton

Good morning. President Trump presided over a Congo-Rwanda peace deal yesterday, as his administration was being questioned about potential war crimes. And in an emergency ruling, the Supreme Court cleared the way for Texas Republicans to use their gerrymandered map for the midterm elections.

We have more news below. Let's start, though, by talking about the best stuff we experienced this year.

[redacted]

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A screen showing Spotify Wrapped in London. John Phillips/Getty Images for Spotify

Take your best

The lists are coming. The lists are here. Spotify and Apple Music pushed out their “wrapped” lists this week, telling users what they listened to most this year. YouTube did something similar yesterday. It can be a shock to see a dispassionate account of how you spent your time. A lot of Big Thief, wow.

The Times makes lists, too. Already we’ve published the best books of the year, the best movies, the best TV shows and the best cookbooks. Many, many more are coming — The Morning will have a few of our own. Best albums dropped today: Geese made the cut. So did Effie, Bad Bunny, Morgan Wallen and Rosalía. Debate our critics in the comments.

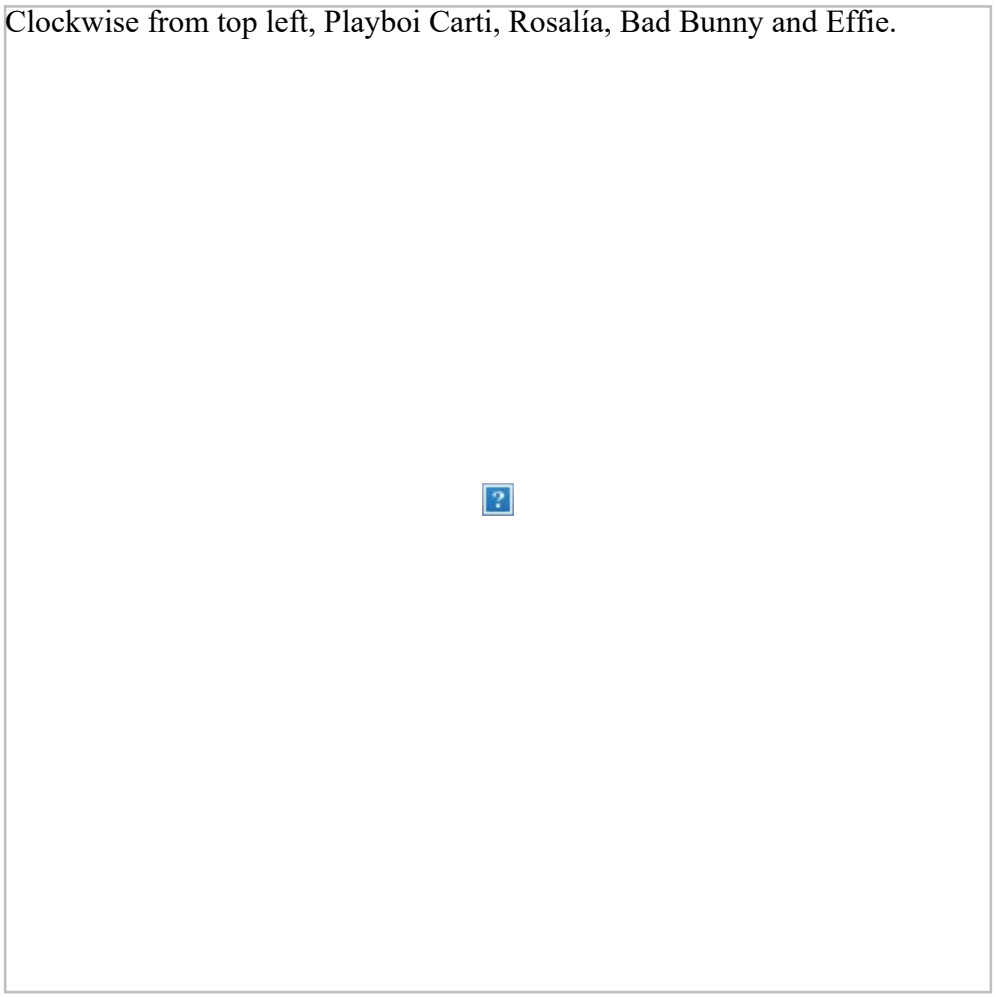
I used to oversee our culture and lifestyle coverage, and I was and remain a big proponent of these catalogs. They’re fun to read and digest and discuss. They’re

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popular, too.

Also, they can be dizzying. Do they help us make decisions, or validate ones we've already made? Can we really measure one artist against another, when what they create is so categorically different? Playboi Carti vs. Smerz? Really? (I've worked as a critic, too. That's a fun part of the job.) What is the exercise actually about? Maybe it's part of our compulsion to tabulate and optimize every part of our lives? I knew the right person to ask.

Making a canon



Clockwise from top left, Playboi Carti, Rosalía, Bad Bunny and Effie. Graham Dickie for The New York Times; Cristina Quicler/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images; Erika Santelices/Reuters; Elly Xia

The fates were aligned. When I found him in the newsroom yesterday afternoon, Wesley Morris, a critic at large for The Times and host of the "Cannonball" culture podcast, was listening to a playlist of the 885 greatest covers of all time, as chosen by the listeners of WXPN in Philadelphia, his

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hometown station. He was interrupting a list to talk to me about lists. He laughed, pointing that out.

For Wesley, an inventory can be revealing — "a way to have the year explained to me through a list, a story I can have a conversation with, a story that's yearbookish, a record of what transpired," he said.

The ones made by critics do that and more: show us new music, new books, new art. Sometimes these lists can appear disordered, strange in the aggregate — here is a horror film, a documentary, a hip-hop track, a grief memoir, a Caribbean restaurant. But that, too, tells us about our culture. "You want a mess," Wesley said. "Because the mess is the truth. These compendiums of artistic feats that accrue over the year? Even if you haven't experienced them yet yourself, they tell us something about … us."

What's good

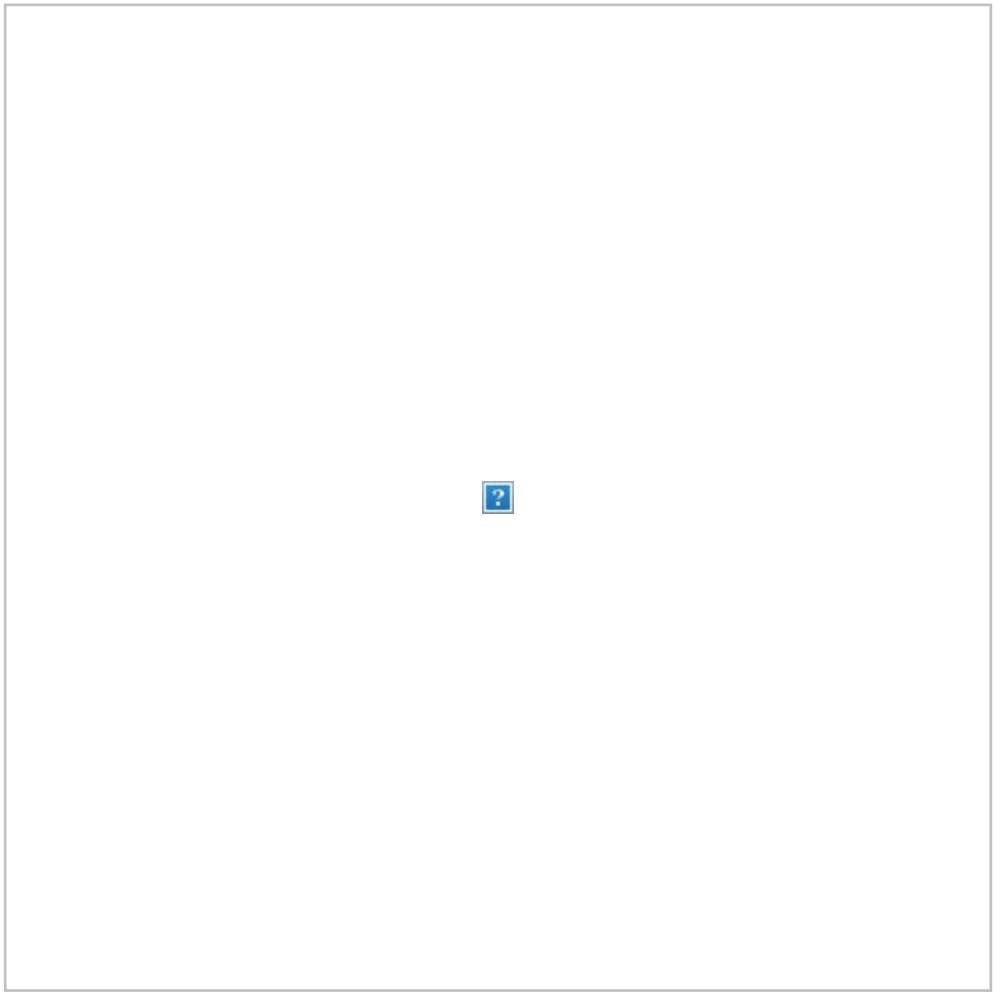
You can't explore new worlds from every list, though. The "wrapped" accounting tells us only about artists we already know — or artists that recommendation algorithms think are similar. "It's like going to the doctor for a test," Wesley said, "and this is the result. 'You eat a lot of peanuts, friend. How about a cashew?'"

Wesley prefers the best-of lists created by his colleagues, people who spend their years consuming art for a paycheck. Their work is a rebuke to how the digital entertainment ecosystem operates, he says. What critics can do is tell us about our art, our year, our culture, ourselves. The right list can tell us a story about all that. And it can raise high what's best — so we can talk about it, so we can experiment and learn.

"The algorithm can't canonize," Wesley said. "The algorithm doesn't know what it's recommending."

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ASK THE TIMES



Hundreds of deportees detained in a hotel in Panama City in February.

Our On Politics newsletter recently asked readers for questions about immigration and invited reporters to answer. Read the chat. Here's one question:

When an immigrant is deported and sent somewhere other than their native country (for example to Uganda rather than El Salvador), what happens to them? — Angela Mack, Branford, Conn.

***Julie Turkewitz**, our Andes bureau chief, writes:*

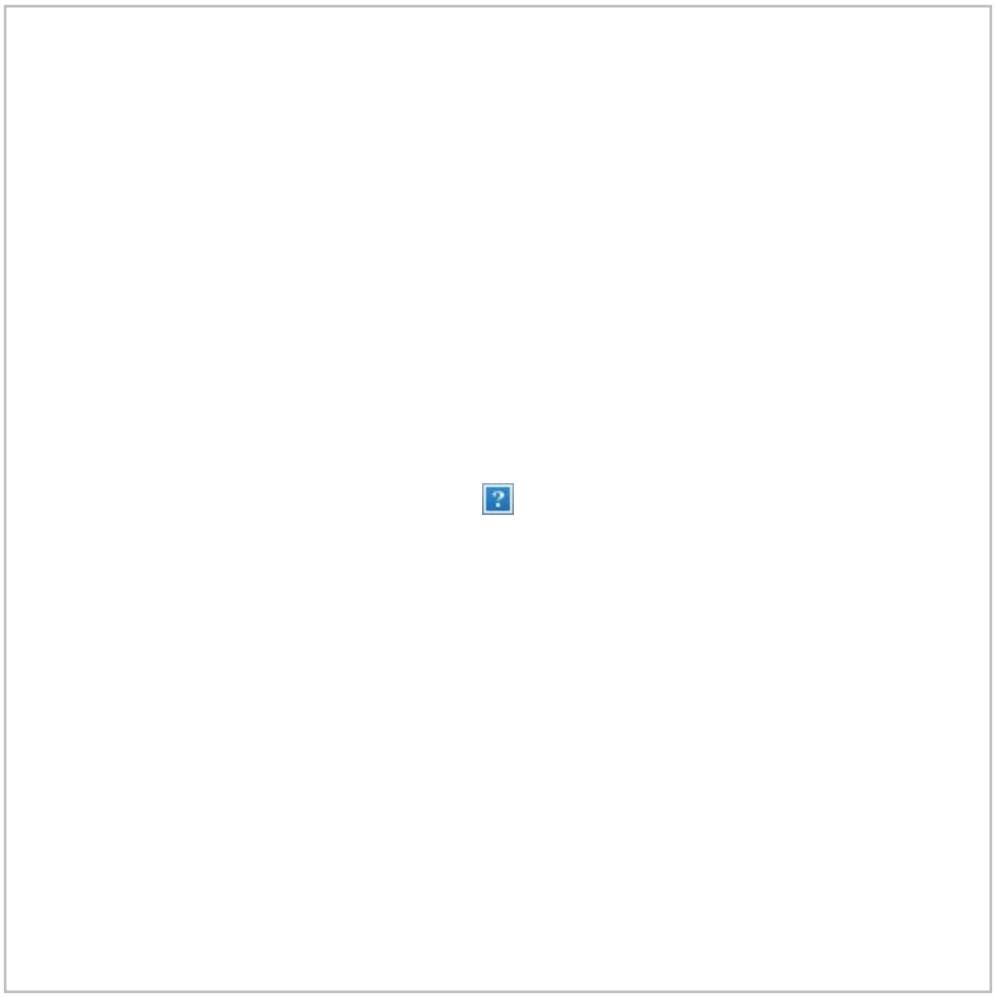
A group of about 300 migrants sent to Panama were locked in a hotel in Panama City, then in a jungle-side detention camp, before being freed. Some agreed to return to their home countries, while others were granted temporary legal status in Panama.

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A group of more than 200 Venezuelan men sent to El Salvador spent four months in a maximum-security prison, where many of them endured abuse that experts said met the definition of torture. In July, the men were sent back to Venezuela. A few of them were detained by the Venezuelan government, which has declined to comment on their whereabouts.

In other cases, migrants have also been detained in third countries, like Eswatini, before ultimately being sent home.

More immigration news



The New York Times

- In the big cities targeted for ICE crackdowns, most arrested migrants have no criminal record, new data shows.
- One New Orleans woman described what happened when agents came

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for the workers fixing her roof.

- ICE separated a 6-year-old boy from his father during an effort to deport them to China.

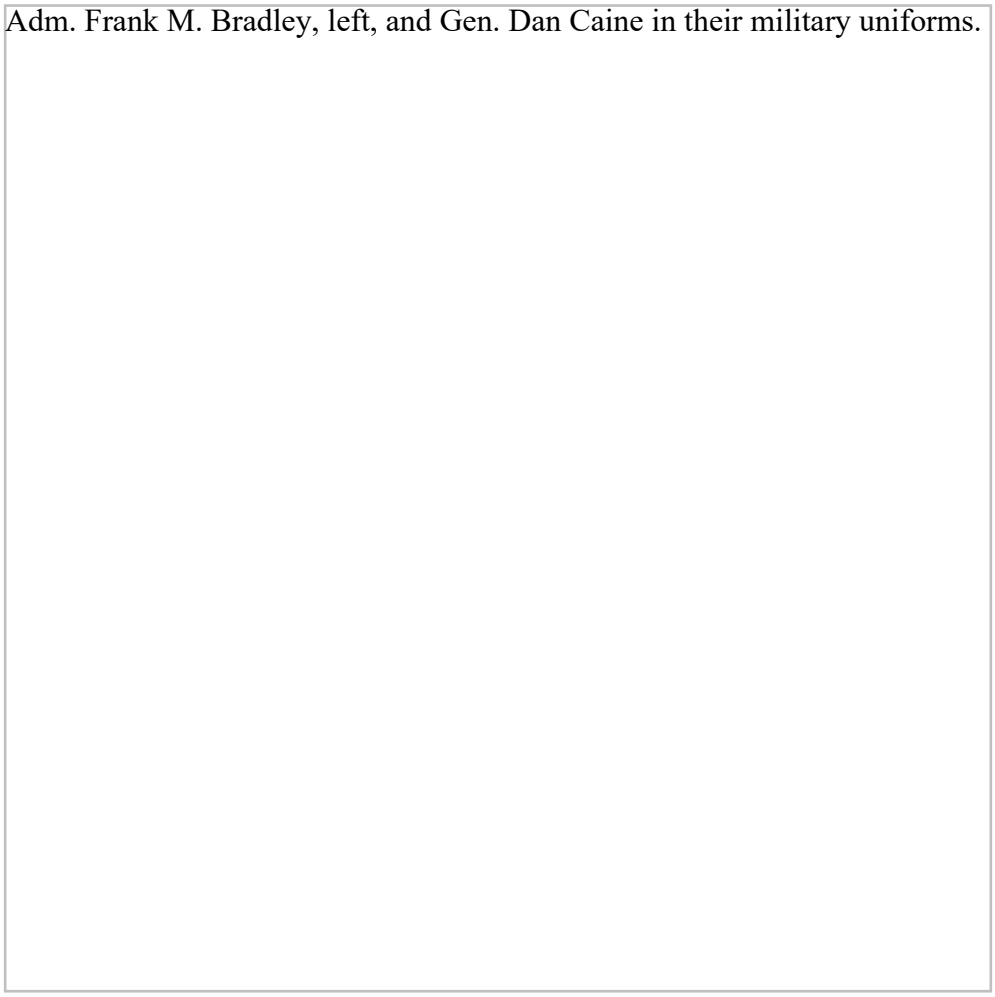
THE LATEST NEWS

Vaccines

- A vaccine panel appointed by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is expected to decide today whether to change a recommendation that newborns receive the hepatitis B vaccine.
- The vote, originally set for yesterday, has been deferred several times because of disagreements over the underlying science. (Since all newborns began receiving the vaccine in 1991, rates of the disease have fallen.)
- The Times has been tracing Kennedy's two-decade quest to dismantle vaccine policy.

Boat Strikes

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Adm. Frank Bradley, the commander of the operation, at the Capitol yesterday. Tierney L. Cross/The New York Times

- Military officers showed lawmakers a video of the Sept. 2 attack on a boat in the Caribbean, and they defended the follow-up strike that killed two survivors.
- Reactions to the footage were split along partisan lines. A Democratic lawmaker described it as “one of the most troubling things I’ve seen in my time in public service”; a Republican one described it as “exactly what we’d expect our military commanders to do.”
- Congress is focusing on the two deaths in that strike. But the focus may be obscuring the bigger picture: Nine other people died in that same attack, and the U.S. has killed 87 in all.

Politics

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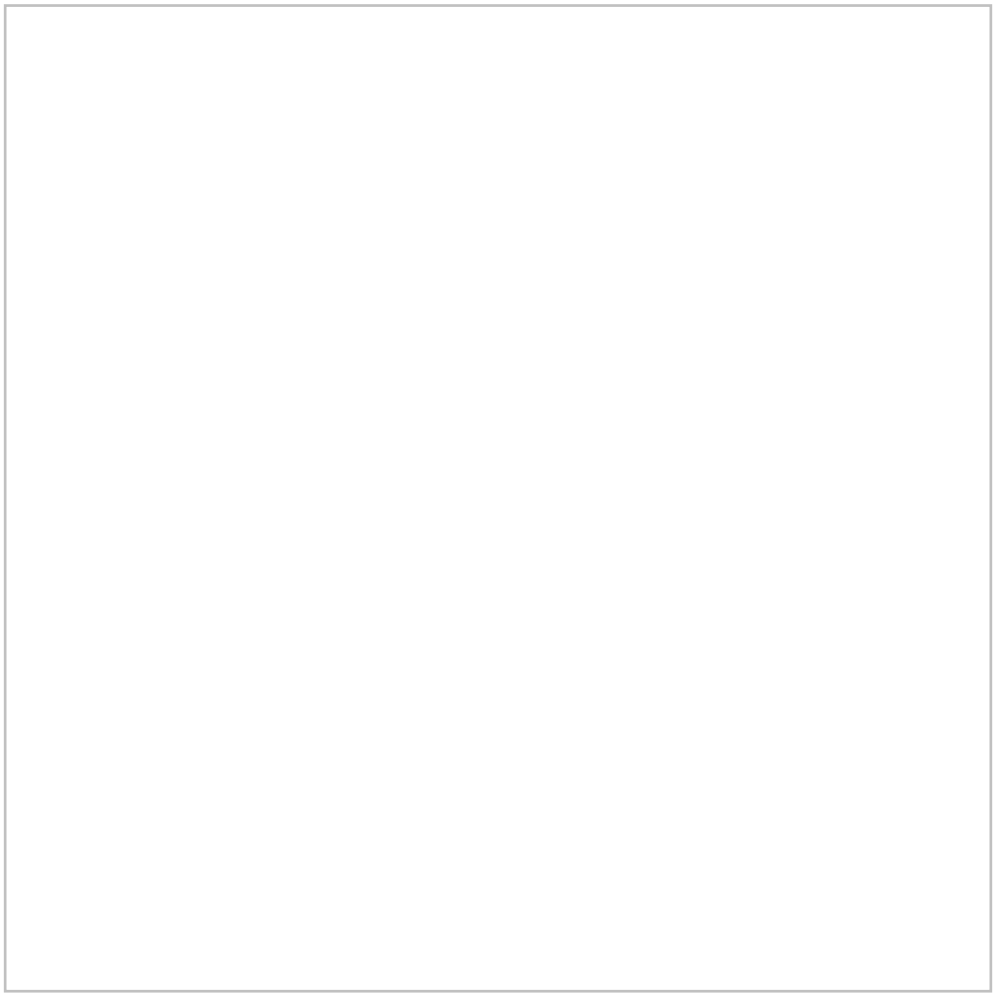
- A grand jury is said to have declined to re-indict Letitia James, New York's attorney general, rejecting a Trump effort to revive a criminal case.
- Federal agents arrested a Virginia man they say planted pipe bombs near the Capitol before the Jan. 6 riot in 2021. The arrest follows nearly five years of false investigative leads and conspiracy theories.
- Republican lawmakers, particularly women, are increasingly frustrated with Speaker Mike Johnson's leadership. Some predict he may not remain speaker for the rest of this term.
- A bipartisan group of lawmakers released a plan to extend, but scale back, Obamacare subsidies set to expire at the end of the year.

Israel

- Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands and Slovenia said they were boycotting next year's Eurovision Song Contest because Israel would participate.
- Israel authorized 22 settlements in the West Bank in May. Researchers say the move has led to the largest displacement of Palestinians in 50 years.

Catholic Church

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The New York Times

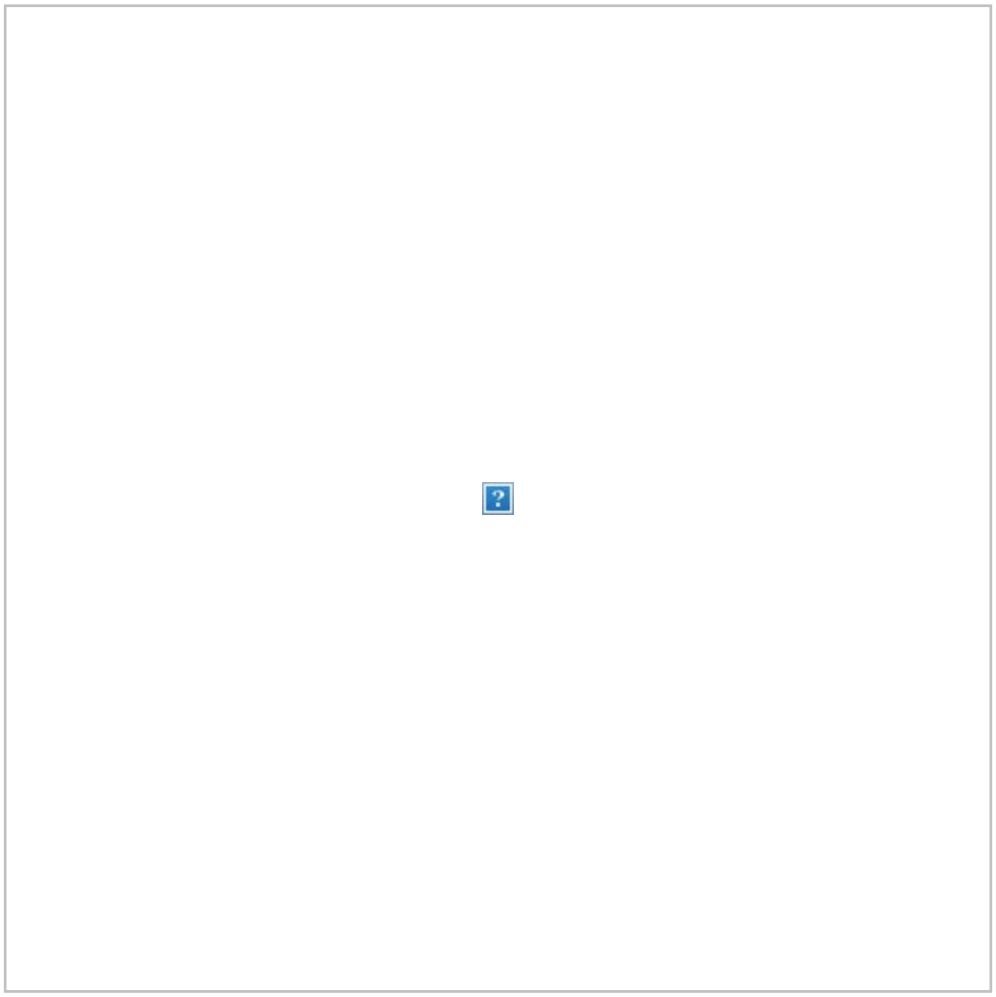
- Pope Leo XIV has wrapped up the first international trip of his papacy. In the video above, **Motoko Rich**, our Rome bureau chief, describes covering the new pope up close. Click to watch.
- After years of debate, the Vatican announced that women shouldn't become deacons, at least for now.

Other Big Stories

- It's difficult to build computer-chip factories in America. To do so requires significant expertise from abroad.
- In Brooklyn, an 11-year-old boy is missing. His mother won't answer questions about where he is.

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FARE DODGERS



New York City subway turnstiles. Jonah Rosenberg for The New York Times

New York City's public transit system lost nearly $1 billion to fare evasion last year, officials say. More than 150 million riders hopped, ducked or dodged subway turnstiles.

The state's transit agency is testing tools to stop the free rides. They include jagged metal partitions and taller turnstiles — as well as a few less obvious changes to how the fare gates work. See the efforts here.

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OPINIONS

China's former one-child policy has left the country with over 30 million more men than women. **Violet Du Feng** follows a dating boot camp meant to help Chinese men find love.

If an A.I. bubble popped, it would force tech companies to do more with less, **Carl Benedikt Frey** argues.

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MORNING READS

Who's that snake? Gary Goldman is an old Hollywood hand who in 2017 sued Disney for copyright infringement. He said the studio had stolen ideas from him that became the film "Zootopia," a billion-dollar hit. He lost. Then came "Zootopia 2," which opened last week. One creature in it is a one-fanged snake named Gary De'Snake, an amiable character with a specific point of view: He has been ripped off. That was unsettling for Goldman. While he told The Times he didn't have much appetite for another legal action, you never know. De'Snake is very Goldmanish, his friends have told him. "I do have one fang left," he said.

Village people: The two men lived around the corner from each other for almost half a century. But a sidewalk bump led to a shove, the police say. Now one is dead.

It's really December: Two bursts of Arctic air could send temperatures plunging in the central and eastern U.S.

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TODAY'S NUMBER

70 billion

— That's how many dollars Meta's Reality Lab, which builds the hardware and software for Mark Zuckerberg's virtual-reality goals, has lost over the past four years.

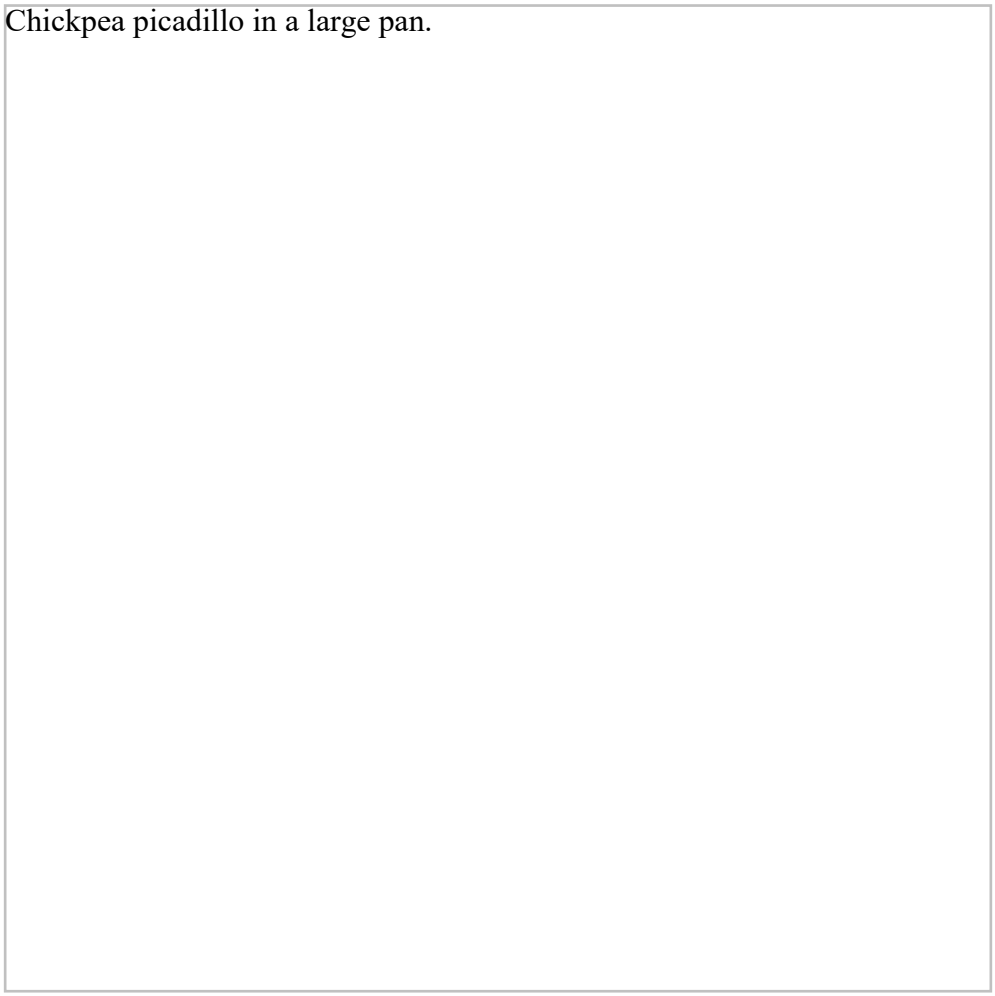
SPORTS

N.B.A.: LeBron James's historic streak has had double digit points for nearly 1,300 regular-season games. That ended last night.

World Cup: The 2026 draw is today. President Trump will speak after receiving the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

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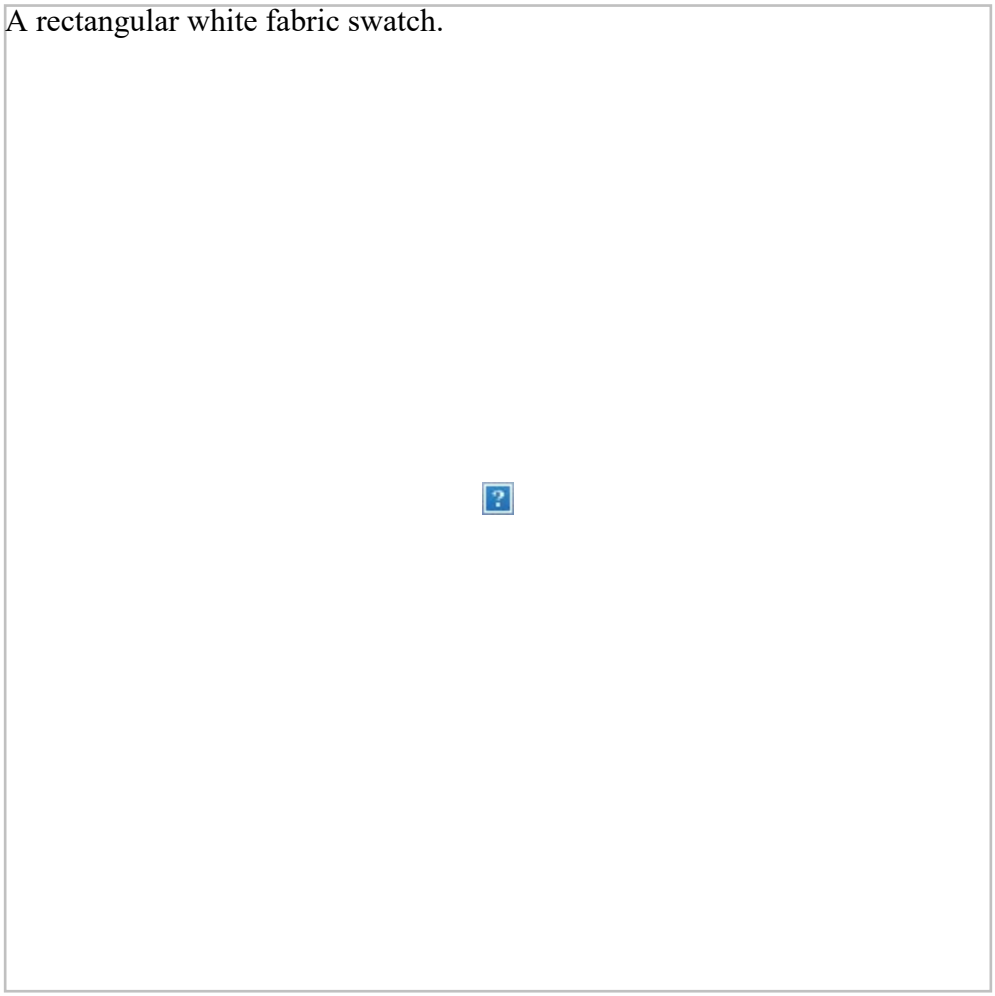


Bryan Gardner for The New York Times

Picadillo is a dish you'll find all over Latin America and in the Philippines — chopped beef, usually, simmered with tomatoes, onions, garlic, bell peppers and warm spices. (In the Philippines, there'd be fish sauce, too.) It's terrific over rice, stuffed into empanadas or folded into tortillas. Now the great Rick Martínez has brought us a vegetarian version, chickpea picadillo, that uses a combination of grated tofu, mushrooms and chickpeas as the protein at its base. Simmer everything with tangy tomatillos, poblano and scallions, and it all comes together into a savory, comforting, ever-so-slightly spicy scramble. Do with that what you wish!

COLORWAYS

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Pantone

The 2026 color of the year — at least according to the colorists at Pantone, who have been declaring these hues since 1999 — is Cloud Dancer, officially known as PANTONE 11-4201. That is, basically … white? Reporters on our Styles desk discussed the choice.

More on culture

- "Jay Kelly," Noah Baumbach's new movie starring George Clooney as an alternate-universe George Clooney-like character, "has a strange, old-fashioned charm," writes our critic Alissa Wilkinson. It slips "in and out of registers, seeming to work on multiple levels at once." Let's go.
- Kyle Buchanan, who writes the Projectionist column, kicks off Hollywood's awards season with a first look at the Oscar race. It's hard to pick an obvious top 10. Apple has even bought billboards to support its

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glossy but empty “F1,” thinking it has a chance, Kyle reports. Maybe it does!

- On late night, Jimmy Kimmel thanked Trump for making him more famous this year.

THE MORNING RECOMMENDS …

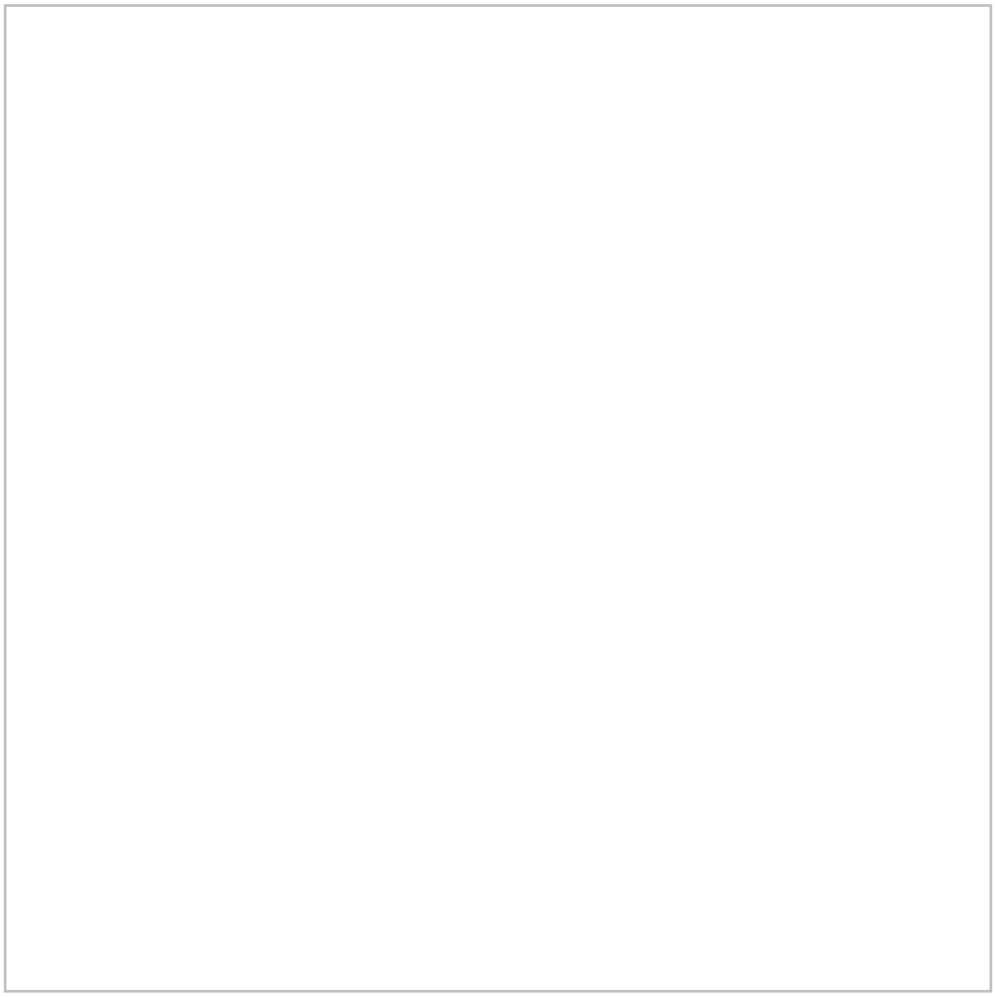
Conceive of a memory-foam pillow that won’t crick your neck, recommended by the side sleepers at Wirecutter.

Stream a new documentary from Amy Berg, “It’s Never Over, Jeff Buckley,” on HBO Max. Using a trove of rare video, audio and photographs provided by Buckley’s mother, the film tells the story of the singer-songwriter who died in 1997 at age 30 and whose music found wide fame after his death.

Take our news quiz.

GAMES

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Here is today's Spelling Bee. Yesterday's pangram was *exaltedly*.

And here are today's Mini Crossword, Wordle, Connections, Sports Connections and Strands.

Thanks for spending part of your morning with The Times and me. See you tomorrow. — Sam

Reach our team at themorning@nytimes.com.

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The Morning Newsletter Logo



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Subject:	Daily News: September 16, 2025
Date:	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 9:47:23 AM
Attachments:	image001.png image002.png image003.png image004.png image005.png image006.png image007.png image008.png image009.png

National News

Pocket guides on election laws offer bridge between election officials, law enforcement

Michigan Advance by Kyle Davison, September 15, 2025

As election officials continue to face threats, harassment and abuse, a bipartisan coalition of election experts and law enforcement officials is working to build collaboration in hopes of protecting voters, elections and their administrators from bad actors.

The Committee for Safe and Secure Elections, created in 2022, is offering a number of new resources for both election officials and law enforcement officers, including pocket-sized legal guides detailing election laws in all 50 states, giving both groups an easily accessible reference should questions – or issues – arise on Election Day.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 22 states have enacted or updated laws to protect election officials and poll workers since 2020. In August, the committee released an updated version of these guides to reflect changes to election laws in states across the country.

In observance of the International Day of Democracy, Sept. 15, the Michigan Advance spoke with Tina Barton, the committee's co-chair and the former Rochester Hills city clerk, about the threats election workers face, and the committee's work to prepare and protect them.

Election law is not something that's taught at an academy when law enforcement officers begin their careers, Barton said, and laws can differ at sites like schools or libraries when they're being used as an election site.

"We work with Secretaries of State, with [attorneys general], with election officials' associations in all the different states to say, 'Hey, what are the most common offenses, or what would law enforcement most likely be confronted with during an election cycle that you would want them to have that law right there in their hands,'" Barton told the Advance.

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Committee for Safe and Secure Elections Co-Chair Tina Barton | Photo courtesy of the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections
Barton pointed to laws regarding carrying guns at polling places as one example.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation in 2024 barring individuals from possessing a firearm in a polling place on Election Day, or while in-person early voting is being held, as well as banning weapons within 100 feet of the entrance to an early voting location or polling place. The new laws also bar individuals from carrying a gun within 100 feet of an absentee voter dropbox, local clerk's office or satellite office in the 40 days leading up to an election.

Law enforcement also may not be aware of specific details on how many feet campaigners are required to stand away from the entrance to a polling place, Barton said. The guides produced by the coalition act as a roadmap detailing for exactly what an officer's authority and powers are, and what the restrictions are for violations of the law.

"When they're road law enforcement and they're out writing tickets for speeding, for a light that's out or running a stop sign, whatever that might be, those are common occurrences for them," Barton said. "Election cycles, people breaking election laws, committing fraud, that sort of thing, that is not [a] commonality for them. So, this puts that in their hands."

The guides can also serve as a resource for election officials who are struggling to start a conversation about collaboration with law enforcement, Barton said.

"They can provide that to them… and that often is a really good launching point to start the conversations about, 'Hey, yeah, things have changed around elections,'" Barton said. "We are seeing some threats and harassment, and we probably do need to know more about this, and we probably should be collaborating,"

The committee recommends that clerks provide printed copies of their election law guides in the supply kits they send out to their precincts, and to introduce them in training sessions with election workers, especially the individuals in charge of overseeing a voting site.

"It empowers and really kind of arms, if you will, election officials, poll workers, precinct workers, law enforcement," Barton said."It puts it, again, quick reference, right in their hands. They don't have to go searching for it, especially if they're dealing with somebody who's belligerent."

It gives law enforcement a clear path, and it also gives election officials some security of an added layer of protection, recognizing them as a protected profession.

They can also serve as an introduction and a guide for other resources the committee makes available, like its security assessment checklist, and its bomb threat resource guide, Barton said.

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Michigan instituted its own protections for election workers in 2023, setting criminal penalties for intimidating election officials or preventing them from performing their duties during an election.

Barton said these laws provide an added layer of assurance for election officials and offer a clear line for law enforcement to proceed with an investigation and prosecution if there is an official that's being threatened, harassed or abused.

"I think that it's good on both sides." Barton said. "It gives law enforcement a clear path, and it also gives election officials some security of an added layer of protection, recognizing them as a protected profession."

The Brennan Center for Justice, one of the committee's supporting organizations, in July published a survey showing an increased number of election officials have begun coordinating with law enforcement.

In 2024, 62% of the election officials surveyed reported working with local law enforcement, while 83% of the 858 officials surveyed in 2025 reported some form of collaboration.

Barton called those efforts a step in the right direction, noting the benefits that can come from the two groups sharing information and working to understand each other's work environment.

"My husband's [in] law enforcement. I'm an election official," Barton said. "If we were to walk into a big room – consider it maybe as a polling location – our lens on how we view that room and what's important to us is going to be very different."

Although Barton said her focus would be on the number of outlets to plug in equipment, the flow of foot traffic and where to place booths, her husband's focus would be more on safety and the ingress and egress of individuals within the polling place.

When looking at the driving force behind threats to election workers, Barton said it was often a loss of trust in public institutions, which can breed anger against individuals in government at any level for any reason.

In Michigan particularly, where elections are decentralized, election workers are often the face of government in their communities, she added.

It's also no secret that the country is very politically polarized, Barton said that's not something election officials often talk about. Instead, they often keep their focus on the election process, the voters and the accuracy and security of the election.

"I will say, as a career election official, I have been friends with election officials all across the

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country for many years and the vast majority of them, I have no idea what their politics [are],” Barton said.

The close election results in 2020 also sparked a spread of mis- and disinformation, with the modern technological landscape making it easier for people to be siloed into circles and online algorithms without hearing outside perspectives or opinions.

“We’ve lost the ability to have civil conversations,” Barton said. “And I think that in and of itself is a challenge too. I’ve seen it break down friendships, I’ve seen it break down families, and a lot of it is driven by this mis-disinformation.”

At present, one of the committee’s most requested classes focuses on deescalation techniques, Barton said, telling the Advance that even outside of election season, clerks often find themselves in need of those skills. That’s especially true for those in Michigan who carry other responsibilities outside of administering elections.

Additionally, one in three election workers have experienced threats, harassment or abuse because of their job, Barton said. Data from the Brennan Center survey shows that of those reports, 63% said they’d received threats in person and 59% have received threats over the phone.

The attacks have also gone beyond the professional realm into election worker’s personal lives, with Barton telling the Advance she’d had some officials tell her their children have been harassed at school because of their jobs.

Barton said her career is now focused on teaching election officials how to avoid and respond to threats, like having SWAT teams called to their residence and having their personal information leaked online.

“We want to protect our staff, we want to protect ourselves, we want to protect our voters and we want to protect our families,” she said. “And so it’s an added layer of stress and concern and anxiety that I can tell you 10 years ago I did not feel.”

Right Wing Groups Press Election Agency on Proof Citizenship Rule for Voter Registration

Democracy Docket by Jim Saska, September 15, 2025

Right-wing groups are mobilizing activists to pressure a top federal voting agency to require documentary proof of citizenship on the federal voter registration form.

It’s the latest tactic by anti-voting groups to impose a proof of citizenship requirement for people to register to vote — a restriction that could keep large numbers of potential new voters

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off the rolls.

After federal courts told President Donald Trump he couldn't directly order the U.S. Election Administration Commission (EAC) to require documentary proof of citizenship on its voter registration forms, America First Legal (AFL), a right-wing legal group founded by Stephen Miller, petitioned the independent agency to do it anyway.

And now, roughly halfway through the public comment period on that proposal, almost all of the more than 1,000 submissions urge the commission to adopt the proof of citizenship requirement. The comments appear to have been mobilized by a handful of anti-voting groups.

AFL's petition, filed in July, asks the EAC to add the proof of citizenship requirement to the national mail voter registration form, the standard application for federal election registration. The EAC opened the petition for public comment August 21 and it will close October 20.

The AFL request mirrors the executive order Trump signed in March that purported to direct the EAC, an independent agency, to require a photo-ID citizenship check when someone registers to vote. Courts quickly blocked that provision in the executive order.

Both the AFL request and Trump's order go further than the SAVE Act, the sweeping voter suppression bill passed earlier this year by the House, as well as most state measures to require proof of citizenship. Those would allow voter registrants to show a birth certificate to prove citizenship.

AFL encouraged its followers and allies to submit comments supporting the petition.

Democracy Docket reviewed the 1,088 public comments available for download as of Monday.

A few are prominent anti-voting activists at the state level.

Patrice Johnson wrote in support of the proposal, under the name of one of her anti-voting groups, the Michigan Fair Elections Institute, adding that another group she leads, Pure Integrity Michigan Elections, also backed it. And Jim Womack offered his support on behalf of the North Carolina Election Integrity Team, a chapter of Cleta Mitchell's Election Integrity Network (EIN).

Another EIN affiliate, Tennessee Fair Elections, likewise urged the EAC to take up a rulemaking, writing: "Non-citizen voting, even if rare, undermines public confidence in election outcomes."

Most comments so far are short statements in support, along the lines of Erik Kocher of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. "REQUIRE PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP TO VOTE!" Kocher wrote. A few ran

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hundreds of words long.

Noncitizen voting is exceedingly rare. An audit by the Republican Secretary of State in Georgia last year found 20 noncitizens out of 8.2 million registered voters, or 0.00024%. In Texas, a review of 18.6 million registrations between 2021 and 2024 identified just 581 noncitizens, or 0.00003%. In Alabama, election officials cancelled registrations of 3,251 individuals suspected of being noncitizens in 2024, but then later acknowledged at least 2,000 were in fact eligible voters. A database of proven election fraud cases since 1982 maintained by the Heritage Foundation finds just 98 cases of alien ineligible voting across the entire U.S.

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Election deniers now hold posts on local US election boards, raising concerns for midterms

The Guardian, George Chidi, September 2025

A number of people who deny the legitimacy of the 2020 election, and often of other elections in which Republicans have not been victorious, have been elevated to positions of power since Donald Trump's re-election, raising concerns about the potential for partisan meddling in

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critical parts of the country such as Arizona and Georgia.

State by state, activists aligned with the “election integrity” movement have found their way on to local elections boards and elections offices, raising red flags for Democrats who have already started efforts to have them removed.

“I think Republicans want to put us in jail,” Fulton county commissioner Dana Barrett said, moments after a contempt hearing in an Atlanta, Georgia, courtroom in August, where she and five other county commissioners were fighting a battle to reject the appointment of two Republican election denialists to the Fulton county board of registrations and elections.

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“At the end of the day, we have no choice but to resist,” Barrett said. “This is not a particularly strategic move on my part, but rather a move to defend the integrity of our elections and to do what I can in my corner of the world to try to help hold this democracy together. If that means I’m resisting, then by all means, I’m resisting.”

One of the two appointees in question, Julie Adams, works for the Election Integrity Network, an election denial activist organization founded by Cleta Mitchell, a Trump ally who aided his efforts to overturn the election in Georgia and elsewhere.

The other, Jason Frazier, is a consultant for EagleAI, software that collects open-source data of dubious validity to aid activists making thousands of voter challenges at a time. Frazier was a plaintiff in a 2023 lawsuit demanding voter registration purges by the county and the state.

“I believe that Jason Frazier and Julie Adams are election deniers,” Barrett said.

“We all find ourselves in positions where we have to make tough decisions considering the climate in our country,” said Fulton county commissioner Mo Ivory. “I’m glad to be standing up for the people that put me in office, and continue to fight for our democracy, not for partisan politics, but for what it means to live in a democracy.”

In Georgia, board appointments to county election offices are idiosyncratic. Fulton county’s charter gives power to the board of commissioners and to the political parties’ county committees. In neighboring DeKalb county, the appointments are made by the chief judge of its superior court, who is free to reject a nominee by one of the party’s committees if that person doesn’t meet the judge’s legal standards.

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Such was the case earlier this year, when Shondeana Morris, chief judge of the DeKalb county superior court, rejected William Henderson after a letter campaign by the county's Democratic committee and voting rights activists. But the judge did allow the appointment of Gail Lee, another Republican activist linked to the Election Integrity Network.

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Places such as Durham county, where less than 10% of voters are registered Republicans, now has a Republican majority on its elections board. But most new board members appear to have been rewarded for their loyalty to the party and not their fidelity to election denialism.

"There are concerns that there are people that are getting rewarded as a political favor, as opposed to their working knowledge and their experience in elections," said Jim Womack, Lee county GOP chair and the president of the non-profit North Carolina Election Integrity Team, speaking to North Carolina news site The Assembly.

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From:	Bain, Sydni
To:	Catalano, John; Lundeen, TJ; Knapp, Howard; Nicholson, Thomas; Williams, LaToria; Wooten, Jenny; Phillips, Courtney; Salonich, Paige
Subject:	Daily News: September 16, 2025
Date:	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 9:47:23 AM
Attachments:	image001.png image002.png image003.png image004.png image005.png image006.png image007.png image008.png image009.png

National News

Pocket guides on election laws offer bridge between election officials, law enforcement

Michigan Advance by Kyle Davison, September 15, 2025

As election officials continue to face threats, harassment and abuse, a bipartisan coalition of election experts and law enforcement officials is working to build collaboration in hopes of protecting voters, elections and their administrators from bad actors.

The Committee for Safe and Secure Elections, created in 2022, is offering a number of new resources for both election officials and law enforcement officers, including pocket-sized legal guides detailing election laws in all 50 states, giving both groups an easily accessible reference should questions – or issues – arise on Election Day.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 22 states have enacted or updated laws to protect election officials and poll workers since 2020. In August, the committee released an updated version of these guides to reflect changes to election laws in states across the country.

In observance of the International Day of Democracy, Sept. 15, the Michigan Advance spoke with Tina Barton, the committee's co-chair and the former Rochester Hills city clerk, about the threats election workers face, and the committee's work to prepare and protect them.

Election law is not something that's taught at an academy when law enforcement officers begin their careers, Barton said, and laws can differ at sites like schools or libraries when they're being used as an election site.

"We work with Secretaries of State, with [attorneys general], with election officials' associations in all the different states to say, 'Hey, what are the most common offenses, or what would law enforcement most likely be confronted with during an election cycle that you would want them to have that law right there in their hands,'" Barton told the Advance.

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Committee for Safe and Secure Elections Co-Chair Tina Barton | Photo courtesy of the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections
Barton pointed to laws regarding carrying guns at polling places as one example.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation in 2024 barring individuals from possessing a firearm in a polling place on Election Day, or while in-person early voting is being held, as well as banning weapons within 100 feet of the entrance to an early voting location or polling place. The new laws also bar individuals from carrying a gun within 100 feet of an absentee voter dropbox, local clerk's office or satellite office in the 40 days leading up to an election.

Law enforcement also may not be aware of specific details on how many feet campaigners are required to stand away from the entrance to a polling place, Barton said. The guides produced by the coalition act as a roadmap detailing for exactly what an officer's authority and powers are, and what the restrictions are for violations of the law.

"When they're road law enforcement and they're out writing tickets for speeding, for a light that's out or running a stop sign, whatever that might be, those are common occurrences for them," Barton said. "Election cycles, people breaking election laws, committing fraud, that sort of thing, that is not [a] commonality for them. So, this puts that in their hands."

The guides can also serve as a resource for election officials who are struggling to start a conversation about collaboration with law enforcement, Barton said.

"They can provide that to them… and that often is a really good launching point to start the conversations about, 'Hey, yeah, things have changed around elections,'" Barton said. "We are seeing some threats and harassment, and we probably do need to know more about this, and we probably should be collaborating,"

The committee recommends that clerks provide printed copies of their election law guides in the supply kits they send out to their precincts, and to introduce them in training sessions with election workers, especially the individuals in charge of overseeing a voting site.

"It empowers and really kind of arms, if you will, election officials, poll workers, precinct workers, law enforcement," Barton said."It puts it, again, quick reference, right in their hands. They don't have to go searching for it, especially if they're dealing with somebody who's belligerent."

It gives law enforcement a clear path, and it also gives election officials some security of an added layer of protection, recognizing them as a protected profession.

They can also serve as an introduction and a guide for other resources the committee makes available, like its security assessment checklist, and its bomb threat resource guide, Barton said.

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Michigan instituted its own protections for election workers in 2023, setting criminal penalties for intimidating election officials or preventing them from performing their duties during an election.

Barton said these laws provide an added layer of assurance for election officials and offer a clear line for law enforcement to proceed with an investigation and prosecution if there is an official that's being threatened, harassed or abused.

"I think that it's good on both sides." Barton said. "It gives law enforcement a clear path, and it also gives election officials some security of an added layer of protection, recognizing them as a protected profession."

The Brennan Center for Justice, one of the committee's supporting organizations, in July published a survey showing an increased number of election officials have begun coordinating with law enforcement.

In 2024, 62% of the election officials surveyed reported working with local law enforcement, while 83% of the 858 officials surveyed in 2025 reported some form of collaboration.

Barton called those efforts a step in the right direction, noting the benefits that can come from the two groups sharing information and working to understand each other's work environment.

"My husband's [in] law enforcement. I'm an election official," Barton said. "If we were to walk into a big room – consider it maybe as a polling location – our lens on how we view that room and what's important to us is going to be very different."

Although Barton said her focus would be on the number of outlets to plug in equipment, the flow of foot traffic and where to place booths, her husband's focus would be more on safety and the ingress and egress of individuals within the polling place.

When looking at the driving force behind threats to election workers, Barton said it was often a loss of trust in public institutions, which can breed anger against individuals in government at any level for any reason.

In Michigan particularly, where elections are decentralized, election workers are often the face of government in their communities, she added.

It's also no secret that the country is very politically polarized, Barton said that's not something election officials often talk about. Instead, they often keep their focus on the election process, the voters and the accuracy and security of the election.

"I will say, as a career election official, I have been friends with election officials all across the

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country for many years and the vast majority of them, I have no idea what their politics [are],” Barton said.

The close election results in 2020 also sparked a spread of mis- and disinformation, with the modern technological landscape making it easier for people to be siloed into circles and online algorithms without hearing outside perspectives or opinions.

“We’ve lost the ability to have civil conversations,” Barton said. “And I think that in and of itself is a challenge too. I’ve seen it break down friendships, I’ve seen it break down families, and a lot of it is driven by this mis-disinformation.”

At present, one of the committee’s most requested classes focuses on deescalation techniques, Barton said, telling the Advance that even outside of election season, clerks often find themselves in need of those skills. That’s especially true for those in Michigan who carry other responsibilities outside of administering elections.

Additionally, one in three election workers have experienced threats, harassment or abuse because of their job, Barton said. Data from the Brennan Center survey shows that of those reports, 63% said they’d received threats in person and 59% have received threats over the phone.

The attacks have also gone beyond the professional realm into election worker’s personal lives, with Barton telling the Advance she’d had some officials tell her their children have been harassed at school because of their jobs.

Barton said her career is now focused on teaching election officials how to avoid and respond to threats, like having SWAT teams called to their residence and having their personal information leaked online.

“We want to protect our staff, we want to protect ourselves, we want to protect our voters and we want to protect our families,” she said. “And so it’s an added layer of stress and concern and anxiety that I can tell you 10 years ago I did not feel.”

Right Wing Groups Press Election Agency on Proof Citizenship Rule for Voter Registration

Democracy Docket by Jim Saska, September 15, 2025

Right-wing groups are mobilizing activists to pressure a top federal voting agency to require documentary proof of citizenship on the federal voter registration form.

It’s the latest tactic by anti-voting groups to impose a proof of citizenship requirement for people to register to vote — a restriction that could keep large numbers of potential new voters

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off the rolls.

After federal courts told President Donald Trump he couldn't directly order the U.S. Election Administration Commission (EAC) to require documentary proof of citizenship on its voter registration forms, America First Legal (AFL), a right-wing legal group founded by Stephen Miller, petitioned the independent agency to do it anyway.

And now, roughly halfway through the public comment period on that proposal, almost all of the more than 1,000 submissions urge the commission to adopt the proof of citizenship requirement. The comments appear to have been mobilized by a handful of anti-voting groups.

AFL's petition, filed in July, asks the EAC to add the proof of citizenship requirement to the national mail voter registration form, the standard application for federal election registration. The EAC opened the petition for public comment August 21 and it will close October 20.

The AFL request mirrors the executive order Trump signed in March that purported to direct the EAC, an independent agency, to require a photo-ID citizenship check when someone registers to vote. Courts quickly blocked that provision in the executive order.

Both the AFL request and Trump's order go further than the SAVE Act, the sweeping voter suppression bill passed earlier this year by the House, as well as most state measures to require proof of citizenship. Those would allow voter registrants to show a birth certificate to prove citizenship.

AFL encouraged its followers and allies to submit comments supporting the petition.

Democracy Docket reviewed the 1,088 public comments available for download as of Monday.

A few are prominent anti-voting activists at the state level.

Patrice Johnson wrote in support of the proposal, under the name of one of her anti-voting groups, the Michigan Fair Elections Institute, adding that another group she leads, Pure Integrity Michigan Elections, also backed it. And Jim Womack offered his support on behalf of the North Carolina Election Integrity Team, a chapter of Cleta Mitchell's Election Integrity Network (EIN).

Another EIN affiliate, Tennessee Fair Elections, likewise urged the EAC to take up a rulemaking, writing: "Non-citizen voting, even if rare, undermines public confidence in election outcomes."

Most comments so far are short statements in support, along the lines of Erik Kocher of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. "REQUIRE PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP TO VOTE!" Kocher wrote. A few ran

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hundreds of words long.

Noncitizen voting is exceedingly rare. An audit by the Republican Secretary of State in Georgia last year found 20 noncitizens out of 8.2 million registered voters, or 0.00024%. In Texas, a review of 18.6 million registrations between 2021 and 2024 identified just 581 noncitizens, or 0.00003%. In Alabama, election officials cancelled registrations of 3,251 individuals suspected of being noncitizens in 2024, but then later acknowledged at least 2,000 were in fact eligible voters. A database of proven election fraud cases since 1982 maintained by the Heritage Foundation finds just 98 cases of alien ineligible voting across the entire U.S.

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From:	Bain, Sydni
To:	Catalano, John; Lundeen, TJ; Knapp, Howard; Nicholson, Thomas; Williams, LaToria; Wooten, Jenny; Phillips, Courtney; Salonich, Paige
Subject:	Daily News: September 16, 2025
Date:	Tuesday, September 16, 2025 9:47:23 AM
Attachments:	image001.png image002.png image003.png image004.png image005.png image006.png image007.png image008.png image009.png

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The Committee for Safe and Secure Elections, created in 2022, is offering a number of new resources for both election officials and law enforcement officers, including pocket-sized legal guides detailing election laws in all 50 states, giving both groups an easily accessible reference should questions – or issues – arise on Election Day.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 22 states have enacted or updated laws to protect election officials and poll workers since 2020. In August, the committee released an updated version of these guides to reflect changes to election laws in states across the country.

In observance of the International Day of Democracy, Sept. 15, the Michigan Advance spoke with Tina Barton, the committee's co-chair and the former Rochester Hills city clerk, about the threats election workers face, and the committee's work to prepare and protect them.

Election law is not something that's taught at an academy when law enforcement officers begin their careers, Barton said, and laws can differ at sites like schools or libraries when they're being used as an election site.

"We work with Secretaries of State, with [attorneys general], with election officials' associations in all the different states to say, 'Hey, what are the most common offenses, or what would law enforcement most likely be confronted with during an election cycle that you would want them to have that law right there in their hands,'" Barton told the Advance.

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Committee for Safe and Secure Elections Co-Chair Tina Barton | Photo courtesy of the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections
Barton pointed to laws regarding carrying guns at polling places as one example.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation in 2024 barring individuals from possessing a firearm in a polling place on Election Day, or while in-person early voting is being held, as well as banning weapons within 100 feet of the entrance to an early voting location or polling place. The new laws also bar individuals from carrying a gun within 100 feet of an absentee voter dropbox, local clerk's office or satellite office in the 40 days leading up to an election.

Law enforcement also may not be aware of specific details on how many feet campaigners are required to stand away from the entrance to a polling place, Barton said. The guides produced by the coalition act as a roadmap detailing for exactly what an officer's authority and powers are, and what the restrictions are for violations of the law.

"When they're road law enforcement and they're out writing tickets for speeding, for a light that's out or running a stop sign, whatever that might be, those are common occurrences for them," Barton said. "Election cycles, people breaking election laws, committing fraud, that sort of thing, that is not [a] commonality for them. So, this puts that in their hands."

The guides can also serve as a resource for election officials who are struggling to start a conversation about collaboration with law enforcement, Barton said.

"They can provide that to them… and that often is a really good launching point to start the conversations about, 'Hey, yeah, things have changed around elections,'" Barton said. "We are seeing some threats and harassment, and we probably do need to know more about this, and we probably should be collaborating,"

The committee recommends that clerks provide printed copies of their election law guides in the supply kits they send out to their precincts, and to introduce them in training sessions with election workers, especially the individuals in charge of overseeing a voting site.

"It empowers and really kind of arms, if you will, election officials, poll workers, precinct workers, law enforcement," Barton said."It puts it, again, quick reference, right in their hands. They don't have to go searching for it, especially if they're dealing with somebody who's belligerent."

It gives law enforcement a clear path, and it also gives election officials some security of an added layer of protection, recognizing them as a protected profession.

They can also serve as an introduction and a guide for other resources the committee makes available, like its security assessment checklist, and its bomb threat resource guide, Barton said.

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Michigan instituted its own protections for election workers in 2023, setting criminal penalties for intimidating election officials or preventing them from performing their duties during an election.

Barton said these laws provide an added layer of assurance for election officials and offer a clear line for law enforcement to proceed with an investigation and prosecution if there is an official that's being threatened, harassed or abused.

"I think that it's good on both sides." Barton said. "It gives law enforcement a clear path, and it also gives election officials some security of an added layer of protection, recognizing them as a protected profession."

The Brennan Center for Justice, one of the committee's supporting organizations, in July published a survey showing an increased number of election officials have begun coordinating with law enforcement.

In 2024, 62% of the election officials surveyed reported working with local law enforcement, while 83% of the 858 officials surveyed in 2025 reported some form of collaboration.

Barton called those efforts a step in the right direction, noting the benefits that can come from the two groups sharing information and working to understand each other's work environment.

"My husband's [in] law enforcement. I'm an election official," Barton said. "If we were to walk into a big room – consider it maybe as a polling location – our lens on how we view that room and what's important to us is going to be very different."

Although Barton said her focus would be on the number of outlets to plug in equipment, the flow of foot traffic and where to place booths, her husband's focus would be more on safety and the ingress and egress of individuals within the polling place.

When looking at the driving force behind threats to election workers, Barton said it was often a loss of trust in public institutions, which can breed anger against individuals in government at any level for any reason.

In Michigan particularly, where elections are decentralized, election workers are often the face of government in their communities, she added.

It's also no secret that the country is very politically polarized, Barton said that's not something election officials often talk about. Instead, they often keep their focus on the election process, the voters and the accuracy and security of the election.

"I will say, as a career election official, I have been friends with election officials all across the

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country for many years and the vast majority of them, I have no idea what their politics [are],” Barton said.

The close election results in 2020 also sparked a spread of mis- and disinformation, with the modern technological landscape making it easier for people to be siloed into circles and online algorithms without hearing outside perspectives or opinions.

“We’ve lost the ability to have civil conversations,” Barton said. “And I think that in and of itself is a challenge too. I’ve seen it break down friendships, I’ve seen it break down families, and a lot of it is driven by this mis-disinformation.”

At present, one of the committee’s most requested classes focuses on deescalation techniques, Barton said, telling the Advance that even outside of election season, clerks often find themselves in need of those skills. That’s especially true for those in Michigan who carry other responsibilities outside of administering elections.

Additionally, one in three election workers have experienced threats, harassment or abuse because of their job, Barton said. Data from the Brennan Center survey shows that of those reports, 63% said they’d received threats in person and 59% have received threats over the phone.

The attacks have also gone beyond the professional realm into election worker’s personal lives, with Barton telling the Advance she’d had some officials tell her their children have been harassed at school because of their jobs.

Barton said her career is now focused on teaching election officials how to avoid and respond to threats, like having SWAT teams called to their residence and having their personal information leaked online.

“We want to protect our staff, we want to protect ourselves, we want to protect our voters and we want to protect our families,” she said. “And so it’s an added layer of stress and concern and anxiety that I can tell you 10 years ago I did not feel.”

Right Wing Groups Press Election Agency on Proof Citizenship Rule for Voter Registration

Democracy Docket by Jim Saska, September 15, 2025

Right-wing groups are mobilizing activists to pressure a top federal voting agency to require documentary proof of citizenship on the federal voter registration form.

It’s the latest tactic by anti-voting groups to impose a proof of citizenship requirement for people to register to vote — a restriction that could keep large numbers of potential new voters

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off the rolls.

After federal courts told President Donald Trump he couldn't directly order the U.S. Election Administration Commission (EAC) to require documentary proof of citizenship on its voter registration forms, America First Legal (AFL), a right-wing legal group founded by Stephen Miller, petitioned the independent agency to do it anyway.

And now, roughly halfway through the public comment period on that proposal, almost all of the more than 1,000 submissions urge the commission to adopt the proof of citizenship requirement. The comments appear to have been mobilized by a handful of anti-voting groups.

AFL's petition, filed in July, asks the EAC to add the proof of citizenship requirement to the national mail voter registration form, the standard application for federal election registration. The EAC opened the petition for public comment August 21 and it will close October 20.

The AFL request mirrors the executive order Trump signed in March that purported to direct the EAC, an independent agency, to require a photo-ID citizenship check when someone registers to vote. Courts quickly blocked that provision in the executive order.

Both the AFL request and Trump's order go further than the SAVE Act, the sweeping voter suppression bill passed earlier this year by the House, as well as most state measures to require proof of citizenship. Those would allow voter registrants to show a birth certificate to prove citizenship.

AFL encouraged its followers and allies to submit comments supporting the petition.

Democracy Docket reviewed the 1,088 public comments available for download as of Monday.

A few are prominent anti-voting activists at the state level.

Patrice Johnson wrote in support of the proposal, under the name of one of her anti-voting groups, the Michigan Fair Elections Institute, adding that another group she leads, Pure Integrity Michigan Elections, also backed it. And Jim Womack offered his support on behalf of the North Carolina Election Integrity Team, a chapter of Cleta Mitchell's Election Integrity Network (EIN).

Another EIN affiliate, Tennessee Fair Elections, likewise urged the EAC to take up a rulemaking, writing: "Non-citizen voting, even if rare, undermines public confidence in election outcomes."

Most comments so far are short statements in support, along the lines of Erik Kocher of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. "REQUIRE PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP TO VOTE!" Kocher wrote. A few ran

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hundreds of words long.

Noncitizen voting is exceedingly rare. An audit by the Republican Secretary of State in Georgia last year found 20 noncitizens out of 8.2 million registered voters, or 0.00024%. In Texas, a review of 18.6 million registrations between 2021 and 2024 identified just 581 noncitizens, or 0.00003%. In Alabama, election officials cancelled registrations of 3,251 individuals suspected of being noncitizens in 2024, but then later acknowledged at least 2,000 were in fact eligible voters. A database of proven election fraud cases since 1982 maintained by the Heritage Foundation finds just 98 cases of alien ineligible voting across the entire U.S.

A few comments did urge the EAC to reject the proposal. One anonymous submitter argued that a proof of citizenship requirement would unduly burden physically handicapped voters who "may be less likely to need a license or U.S. passport because they may not be physically able to drive or travel."

"Our elections are already secure—this is voter suppression," Kurt Allebach wrote in opposition.

Some people made multiple comments and 231 comments were submitted anonymously. A few comments included allusions to far right conspiracy theories, like Q-Anon's "WWG1WGA" or United4Freedom's claims that 30 million U.S. voter registrations are defective.

The number of rulemaking comments has ballooned in recent years, powered by the ease of mass-email appeals campaigns. Commenters are not required to provide their name or contact information, but may do so if they desire. Some very high-profile rulemakings attract millions of public comments, but even more obscure proposals can garner thousands of statements. Research suggests that public comments can still exert some influence on the agency's regulatory decision making.

The petition specifically asks for applicants to submit one of the following as proof of citizenship: a U.S. Passport, state-issued Real ID-compliant driver's license indicating that the applicant is a citizen, an official military identification card noting citizenship, or a valid federal or state government-issued photo identification showing citizenship.

Election deniers now hold posts on local US election boards, raising concerns for midterms

The Guardian, George Chidi, September 2025

A number of people who deny the legitimacy of the 2020 election, and often of other elections in which Republicans have not been victorious, have been elevated to positions of power since Donald Trump's re-election, raising concerns about the potential for partisan meddling in

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critical parts of the country such as Arizona and Georgia.

State by state, activists aligned with the “election integrity” movement have found their way on to local elections boards and elections offices, raising red flags for Democrats who have already started efforts to have them removed.

“I think Republicans want to put us in jail,” Fulton county commissioner Dana Barrett said, moments after a contempt hearing in an Atlanta, Georgia, courtroom in August, where she and five other county commissioners were fighting a battle to reject the appointment of two Republican election denialists to the Fulton county board of registrations and elections.

The commission’s charter says the board must appoint two nominees made by each political party. A finding of criminal contempt could have resulted in commissioners being jailed until they agreed to make the appointment, but Fulton county superior court judge David Emerson found the board in civil contempt last month for refusing to vote for the appointment as ordered by the court. A $10,000 daily fine for failing to make the appointment is on hold, pending appeal.

“At the end of the day, we have no choice but to resist,” Barrett said. “This is not a particularly strategic move on my part, but rather a move to defend the integrity of our elections and to do what I can in my corner of the world to try to help hold this democracy together. If that means I’m resisting, then by all means, I’m resisting.”

One of the two appointees in question, Julie Adams, works for the Election Integrity Network, an election denial activist organization founded by Cleta Mitchell, a Trump ally who aided his efforts to overturn the election in Georgia and elsewhere.

The other, Jason Frazier, is a consultant for EagleAI, software that collects open-source data of dubious validity to aid activists making thousands of voter challenges at a time. Frazier was a plaintiff in a 2023 lawsuit demanding voter registration purges by the county and the state.

“I believe that Jason Frazier and Julie Adams are election deniers,” Barrett said.

“We all find ourselves in positions where we have to make tough decisions considering the climate in our country,” said Fulton county commissioner Mo Ivory. “I’m glad to be standing up for the people that put me in office, and continue to fight for our democracy, not for partisan politics, but for what it means to live in a democracy.”

In Georgia, board appointments to county election offices are idiosyncratic. Fulton county’s charter gives power to the board of commissioners and to the political parties’ county committees. In neighboring DeKalb county, the appointments are made by the chief judge of its superior court, who is free to reject a nominee by one of the party’s committees if that person doesn’t meet the judge’s legal standards.

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Such was the case earlier this year, when Shondeana Morris, chief judge of the DeKalb county superior court, rejected William Henderson after a letter campaign by the county's Democratic committee and voting rights activists. But the judge did allow the appointment of Gail Lee, another Republican activist linked to the Election Integrity Network.

During a DeKalb county election board meeting last week, local political activists challenged the qualification of Jason Lary, a former mayor of Stonecrest, Georgia, to run for the city council. Lary recently returned from federal prison, where he was serving a sentence for fraud after being convicted of stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal Covid-19 relief funds allocated to the city.

Lary is a Democrat and the board has a Democratic majority, but after a brief discussion, the board voted unanimously to kick him off the ballot and strip him of his voter registration, given that he was still under supervision for his sentence and thus ineligible to vote.

"The one thing that became clear is the importance of the public to remain vigilant on little things like people who qualified for office," Lee said at the end of the meeting. "Because if a person hadn't come for and challenged the candidates then they would have gone forward and possibly had a felon in office."

There's only so much a Republican activist can accomplish on a five-person board with a Democratic majority, as is the case in metro Atlanta's core counties. When Adams refused to certify a primary election in Fulton county in 2024, state superior court judges ruled that she was required to do so by state law, a decision affirmed by the Georgia supreme court this week. The duty to certify is "ministerial", a pronouncement that is obligatory, not discretionary.

And many if not most decisions by an elections board involve mundane procedural questions about where to site a voting drop box or how to schedule poll worker training. Even contentious issues often result in unanimous votes.

But elections offices are staffed by human beings maintaining sensitive equipment and critical records, all of which are vulnerable to someone with authority and an agenda.

Protect Democracy, an advocacy organization, describes a strategy of election subversion in three parts: deceive, disrupt and deny.

Disinformation from influencers suggests that voter fraud or noncitizen voting occurs often enough to swing an election. Then these influencers call on their supporters to disrupt election administration and voting process and introduce chaos into the system. Finally, they attempt to interfere or halt the certification process and "declare the true result untrue, unknown, or unknowable", Protect Democracy's advocates wrote.

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The object is to allow the loser to claim victory regardless of the results, forcing a court to either choose a winner or order a new election, delegitimizing a fair vote.

Changes wrought by a new law specific to Spalding county, Georgia, populated its board with Republican election activists. The board members and the county's new elections director called for a hand-count of ballots following elections in 2022 and 2023. The process, observers noted, was painfully slow and riven by inaccuracies that took days to rectify, with an end result that showed Dominion machines had counted votes correctly.

They did not hand count ballots in 2024.

Spalding county's Republican elections board members – Ben Johnson, Roy McClain and James Newland – are among the many defendants in a federal lawsuit seeking to overturn a law permitting mass voter challenges passed in the wake of the 2020 election that voting rights advocates argue violates the Voting Rights Act.

Meanwhile, Maricopa county's board of supervisors has been in a political war with the county's elected recorder Justin Heap to prevent this outcome. Maricopa county contains Phoenix and almost two-thirds of Arizona's population.

Heap, a former state representative, defeated the incumbent Republican in 2024 while refusing to say if he believed the 2020 and 2022 elections were fair and calling Maricopa county elections a "laughingstock".

After Heap's victory, the board stripped the recorder's office of its duties to manage in-person early voting and some IT management of voter rolls. Negotiations broke down in May, leading to lawsuits and acrimony. Heap retained America First Legal, a Trump-aligned firm, to represent him in the lawsuit.

"Justin Heap is lying about me, and going forward, he better keep my name out of his lying mouth," Maricopa county supervisor Steve Gallardo said in a July release, refuting claims by Heap that Gallardo had agreed to restore power to the recorder's office. "Since his election, Justin Heap has taken actions that have confused voters and damaged relationships. This must end. Justin Heap should stop the performative theater and just do his job."

Some states appear to be more fertile ground than others for election denialist's influence on boards.

North Carolina's Republicans controlled the state legislature with a veto-proof majority last year, even though its former governor Roy Cooper was a Democrat. After Josh Stein, another Democrat, won the governor's race, legislators stripped the governor of the power to appoint members to state and county elections boards, handing it to newly elected state auditor Dave

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Boliek, a Republican.

The state's Republican-majority supreme court ratified the law in May after court challenges. Boliek almost immediately replaced 3-2 Democratic majorities with 3-2 Republican majorities across all 100 county election boards.

Those appointments have drawn pushback from election denialists as well as from Democratic activists.

Places such as Durham county, where less than 10% of voters are registered Republicans, now has a Republican majority on its elections board. But most new board members appear to have been rewarded for their loyalty to the party and not their fidelity to election denialism.

"There are concerns that there are people that are getting rewarded as a political favor, as opposed to their working knowledge and their experience in elections," said Jim Womack, Lee county GOP chair and the president of the non-profit North Carolina Election Integrity Team, speaking to North Carolina news site The Assembly.

Local News

No relevant coverage.

Podcasts & Videos

No relevant coverage.

Sydni Bain
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#PrepForThePolls | #NoExcuseSC

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SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTION COMMISSION

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From: The New York Times
To: Knapp, Howard
Subject: [External] The Morning: All your lists
Date: Friday, December 5, 2025 6:52:21 AM

View in browser | nytimes.com

The Morning

December 5, 2025

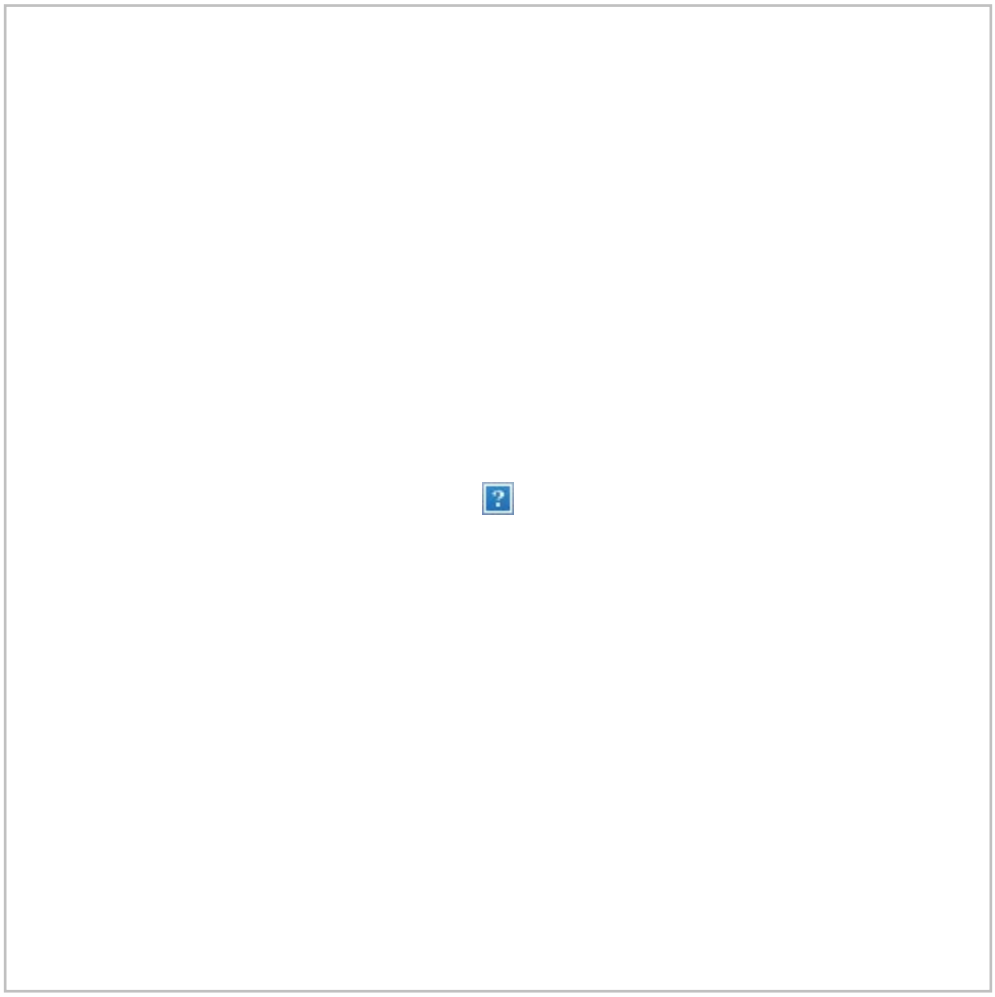
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By Sam Sifton

Good morning. President Trump presided over a Congo-Rwanda peace deal yesterday, as his administration was being questioned about potential war crimes. And in an emergency ruling, the Supreme Court cleared the way for Texas Republicans to use their gerrymandered map for the midterm elections.

We have more news below. Let's start, though, by talking about the best stuff we experienced this year.

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A screen showing Spotify Wrapped in London. John Phillips/Getty Images for Spotify

Take your best

The lists are coming. The lists are here. Spotify and Apple Music pushed out their “wrapped” lists this week, telling users what they listened to most this year. YouTube did something similar yesterday. It can be a shock to see a dispassionate account of how you spent your time. A lot of Big Thief, wow.

The Times makes lists, too. Already we’ve published the best books of the year, the best movies, the best TV shows and the best cookbooks. Many, many more are coming — The Morning will have a few of our own. Best albums dropped today: Geese made the cut. So did Effie, Bad Bunny, Morgan Wallen and Rosalía. Debate our critics in the comments.

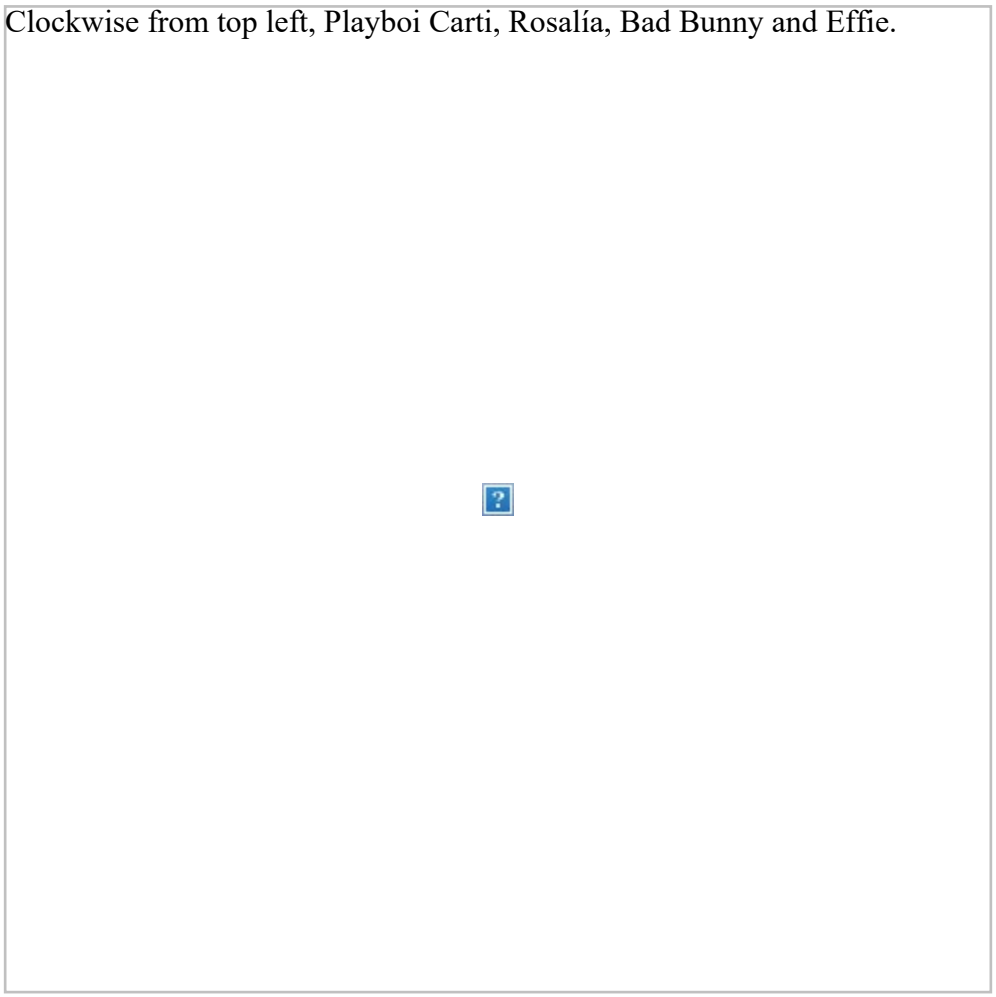
I used to oversee our culture and lifestyle coverage, and I was and remain a big proponent of these catalogs. They’re fun to read and digest and discuss. They’re

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popular, too.

Also, they can be dizzying. Do they help us make decisions, or validate ones we've already made? Can we really measure one artist against another, when what they create is so categorically different? Playboi Carti vs. Smerz? Really? (I've worked as a critic, too. That's a fun part of the job.) What is the exercise actually about? Maybe it's part of our compulsion to tabulate and optimize every part of our lives? I knew the right person to ask.

Making a canon



Clockwise from top left, Playboi Carti, Rosalía, Bad Bunny and Effie. Graham Dickie for The New York Times; Cristina Quicler/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images; Erika Santelices/Reuters; Elly Xia

The fates were aligned. When I found him in the newsroom yesterday afternoon, Wesley Morris, a critic at large for The Times and host of the "Cannonball" culture podcast, was listening to a playlist of the 885 greatest covers of all time, as chosen by the listeners of WXPN in Philadelphia, his

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hometown station. He was interrupting a list to talk to me about lists. He laughed, pointing that out.

For Wesley, an inventory can be revealing — "a way to have the year explained to me through a list, a story I can have a conversation with, a story that's yearbookish, a record of what transpired," he said.

The ones made by critics do that and more: show us new music, new books, new art. Sometimes these lists can appear disordered, strange in the aggregate — here is a horror film, a documentary, a hip-hop track, a grief memoir, a Caribbean restaurant. But that, too, tells us about our culture. "You want a mess," Wesley said. "Because the mess is the truth. These compendiums of artistic feats that accrue over the year? Even if you haven't experienced them yet yourself, they tell us something about … us."

What's good

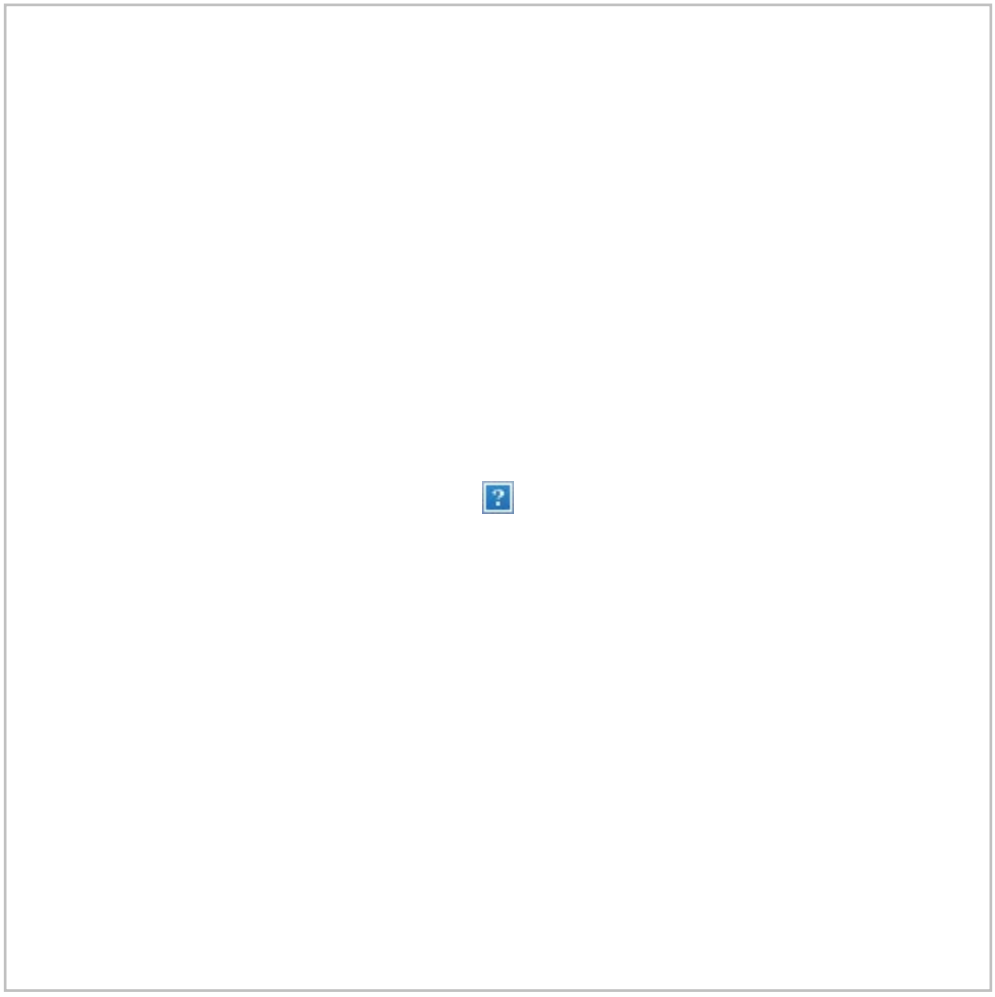
You can't explore new worlds from every list, though. The "wrapped" accounting tells us only about artists we already know — or artists that recommendation algorithms think are similar. "It's like going to the doctor for a test," Wesley said, "and this is the result. 'You eat a lot of peanuts, friend. How about a cashew?'"

Wesley prefers the best-of lists created by his colleagues, people who spend their years consuming art for a paycheck. Their work is a rebuke to how the digital entertainment ecosystem operates, he says. What critics can do is tell us about our art, our year, our culture, ourselves. The right list can tell us a story about all that. And it can raise high what's best — so we can talk about it, so we can experiment and learn.

"The algorithm can't canonize," Wesley said. "The algorithm doesn't know what it's recommending."

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ASK THE TIMES



Hundreds of deportees detained in a hotel in Panama City in February.

Our On Politics newsletter recently asked readers for questions about immigration and invited reporters to answer. Read the chat. Here's one question:

When an immigrant is deported and sent somewhere other than their native country (for example to Uganda rather than El Salvador), what happens to them? — Angela Mack, Branford, Conn.

***Julie Turkewitz**, our Andes bureau chief, writes:*

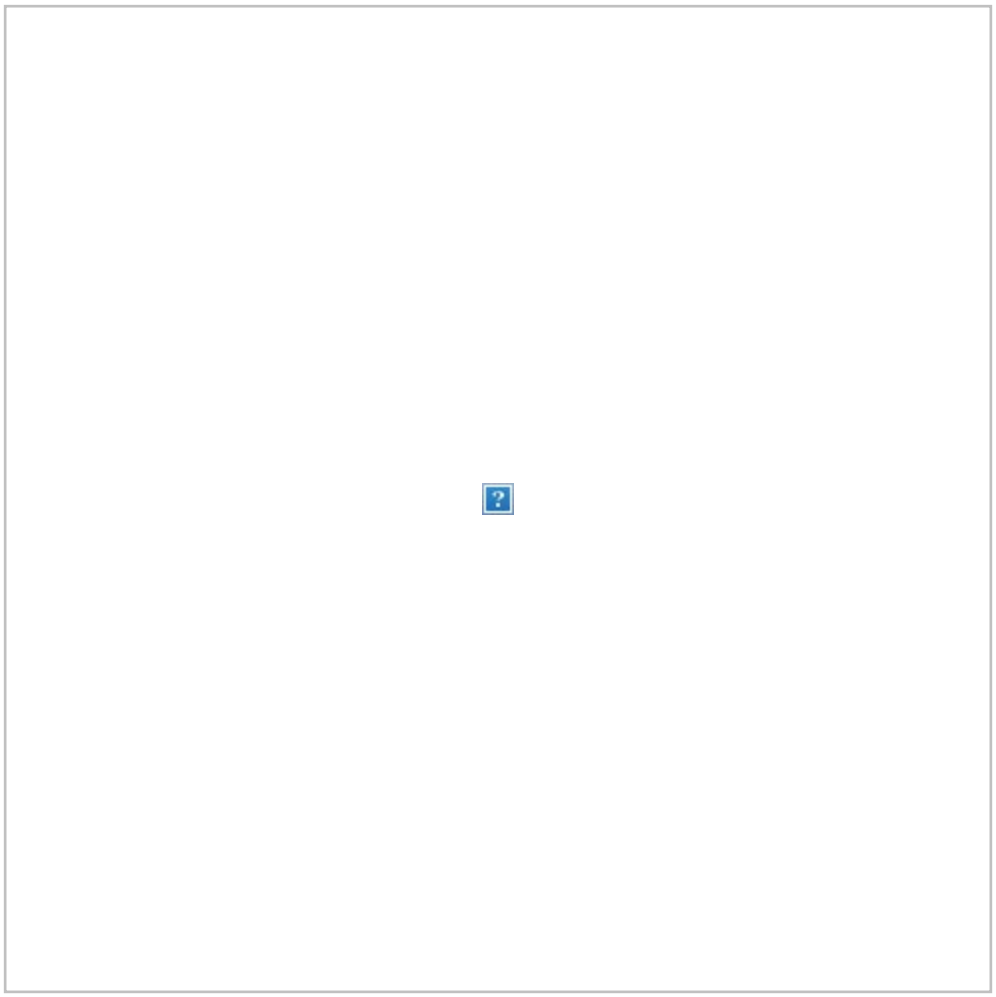
A group of about 300 migrants sent to Panama were locked in a hotel in Panama City, then in a jungle-side detention camp, before being freed. Some agreed to return to their home countries, while others were granted temporary legal status in Panama.

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A group of more than 200 Venezuelan men sent to El Salvador spent four months in a maximum-security prison, where many of them endured abuse that experts said met the definition of torture. In July, the men were sent back to Venezuela. A few of them were detained by the Venezuelan government, which has declined to comment on their whereabouts.

In other cases, migrants have also been detained in third countries, like Eswatini, before ultimately being sent home.

More immigration news



The New York Times

- In the big cities targeted for ICE crackdowns, most arrested migrants have no criminal record, new data shows.
- One New Orleans woman described what happened when agents came

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for the workers fixing her roof.

- ICE separated a 6-year-old boy from his father during an effort to deport them to China.

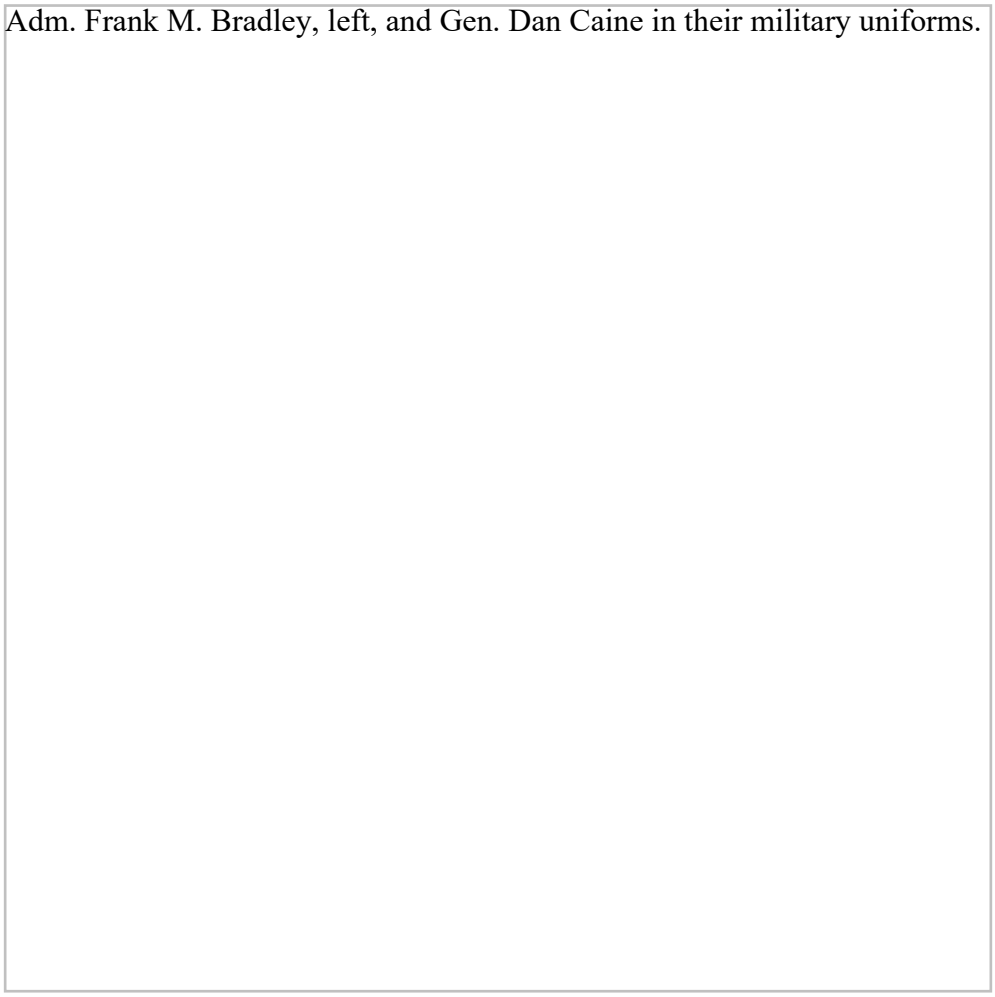
THE LATEST NEWS

Vaccines

- A vaccine panel appointed by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is expected to decide today whether to change a recommendation that newborns receive the hepatitis B vaccine.
- The vote, originally set for yesterday, has been deferred several times because of disagreements over the underlying science. (Since all newborns began receiving the vaccine in 1991, rates of the disease have fallen.)
- The Times has been tracing Kennedy's two-decade quest to dismantle vaccine policy.

Boat Strikes

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Adm. Frank Bradley, the commander of the operation, at the Capitol yesterday. Tierney L. Cross/The New York Times

- Military officers showed lawmakers a video of the Sept. 2 attack on a boat in the Caribbean, and they defended the follow-up strike that killed two survivors.
- Reactions to the footage were split along partisan lines. A Democratic lawmaker described it as “one of the most troubling things I’ve seen in my time in public service”; a Republican one described it as “exactly what we’d expect our military commanders to do.”
- Congress is focusing on the two deaths in that strike. But the focus may be obscuring the bigger picture: Nine other people died in that same attack, and the U.S. has killed 87 in all.

Politics

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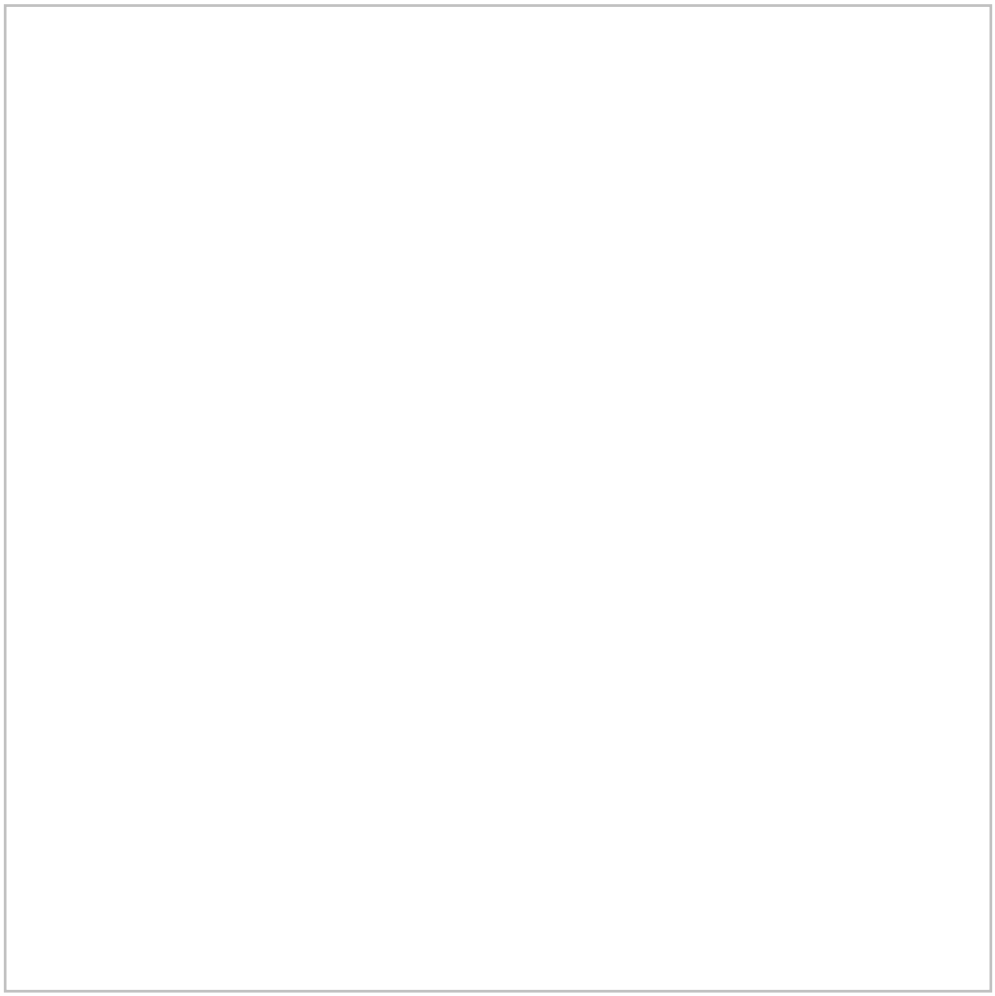
- A grand jury is said to have declined to re-indict Letitia James, New York's attorney general, rejecting a Trump effort to revive a criminal case.
- Federal agents arrested a Virginia man they say planted pipe bombs near the Capitol before the Jan. 6 riot in 2021. The arrest follows nearly five years of false investigative leads and conspiracy theories.
- Republican lawmakers, particularly women, are increasingly frustrated with Speaker Mike Johnson's leadership. Some predict he may not remain speaker for the rest of this term.
- A bipartisan group of lawmakers released a plan to extend, but scale back, Obamacare subsidies set to expire at the end of the year.

Israel

- Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands and Slovenia said they were boycotting next year's Eurovision Song Contest because Israel would participate.
- Israel authorized 22 settlements in the West Bank in May. Researchers say the move has led to the largest displacement of Palestinians in 50 years.

Catholic Church

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The New York Times

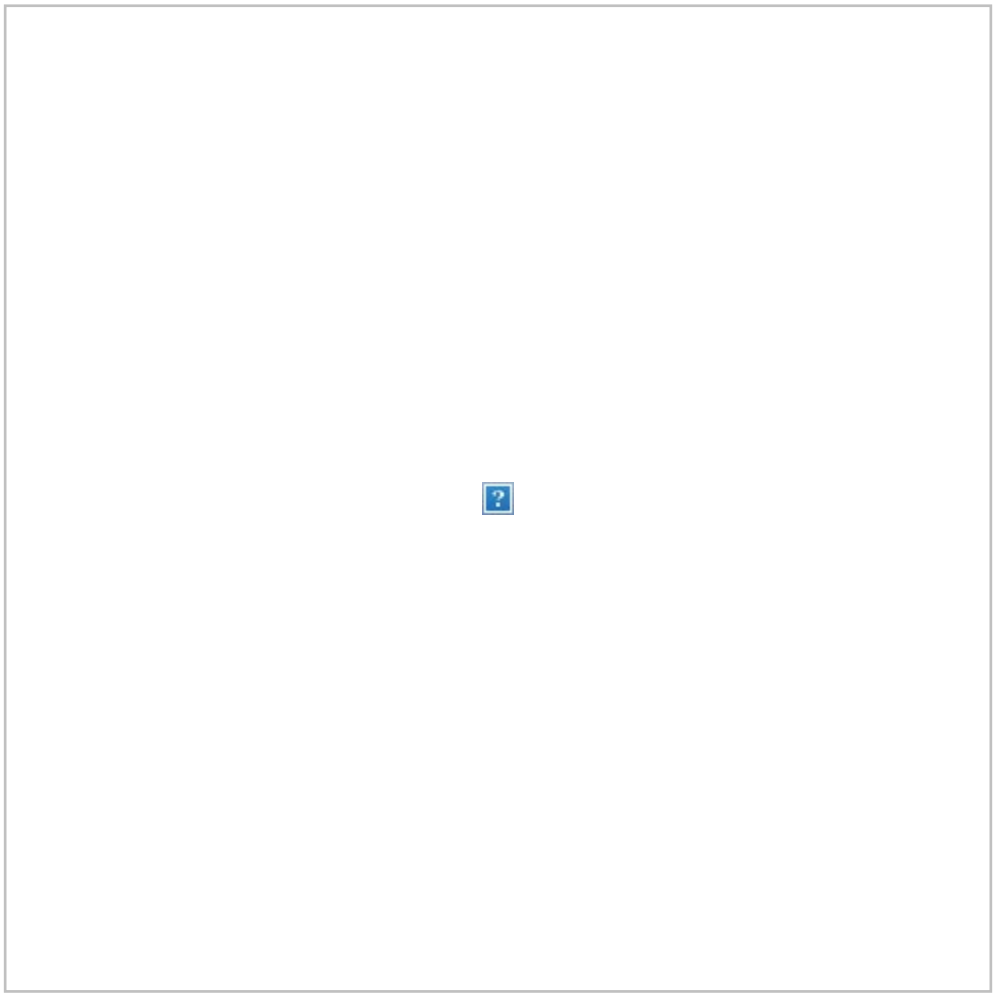
- Pope Leo XIV has wrapped up the first international trip of his papacy. In the video above, **Motoko Rich**, our Rome bureau chief, describes covering the new pope up close. Click to watch.
- After years of debate, the Vatican announced that women shouldn't become deacons, at least for now.

Other Big Stories

- It's difficult to build computer-chip factories in America. To do so requires significant expertise from abroad.
- In Brooklyn, an 11-year-old boy is missing. His mother won't answer questions about where he is.

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FARE DODGERS



New York City subway turnstiles. Jonah Rosenberg for The New York Times

New York City's public transit system lost nearly $1 billion to fare evasion last year, officials say. More than 150 million riders hopped, ducked or dodged subway turnstiles.

The state's transit agency is testing tools to stop the free rides. They include jagged metal partitions and taller turnstiles — as well as a few less obvious changes to how the fare gates work. See the efforts here.

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OPINIONS

China's former one-child policy has left the country with over 30 million more men than women. **Violet Du Feng** follows a dating boot camp meant to help Chinese men find love.

If an A.I. bubble popped, it would force tech companies to do more with less, **Carl Benedikt Frey** argues.

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MORNING READS

Who's that snake? Gary Goldman is an old Hollywood hand who in 2017 sued Disney for copyright infringement. He said the studio had stolen ideas from him that became the film "Zootopia," a billion-dollar hit. He lost. Then came "Zootopia 2," which opened last week. One creature in it is a one-fanged snake named Gary De'Snake, an amiable character with a specific point of view: He has been ripped off. That was unsettling for Goldman. While he told The Times he didn't have much appetite for another legal action, you never know. De'Snake is very Goldmanish, his friends have told him. "I do have one fang left," he said.

Village people: The two men lived around the corner from each other for almost half a century. But a sidewalk bump led to a shove, the police say. Now one is dead.

It's really December: Two bursts of Arctic air could send temperatures plunging in the central and eastern U.S.

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TODAY'S NUMBER

70 billion

— That's how many dollars Meta's Reality Lab, which builds the hardware and software for Mark Zuckerberg's virtual-reality goals, has lost over the past four years.

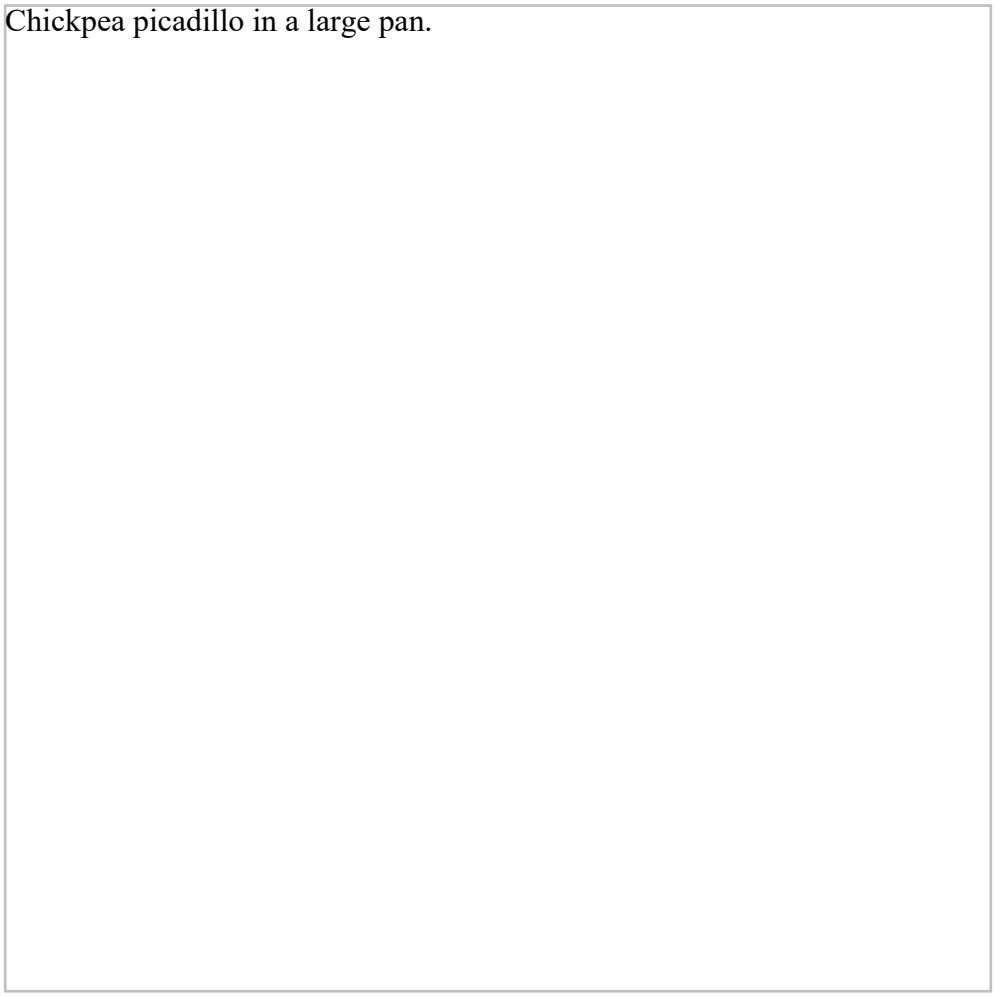
SPORTS

N.B.A.: LeBron James's historic streak has had double digit points for nearly 1,300 regular-season games. That ended last night.

World Cup: The 2026 draw is today. President Trump will speak after receiving the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

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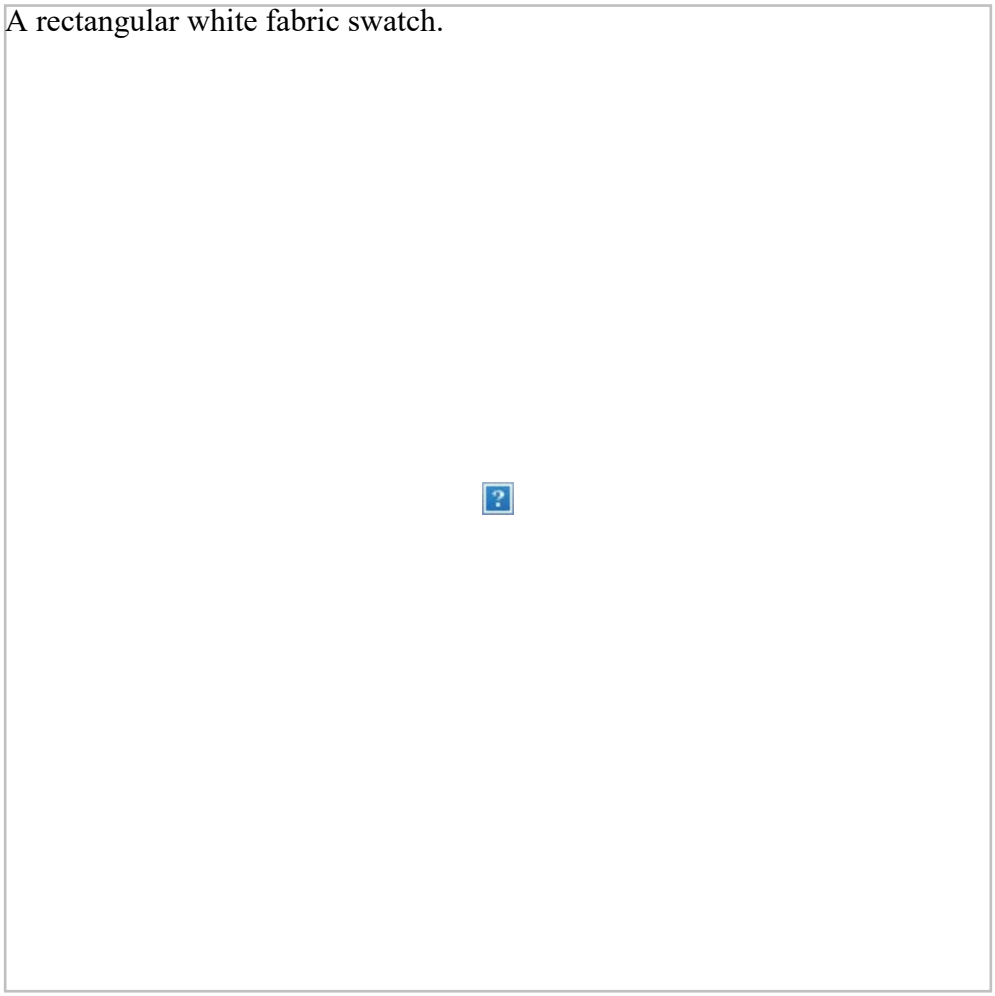


Bryan Gardner for The New York Times

Picadillo is a dish you'll find all over Latin America and in the Philippines — chopped beef, usually, simmered with tomatoes, onions, garlic, bell peppers and warm spices. (In the Philippines, there'd be fish sauce, too.) It's terrific over rice, stuffed into empanadas or folded into tortillas. Now the great Rick Martínez has brought us a vegetarian version, chickpea picadillo, that uses a combination of grated tofu, mushrooms and chickpeas as the protein at its base. Simmer everything with tangy tomatillos, poblano and scallions, and it all comes together into a savory, comforting, ever-so-slightly spicy scramble. Do with that what you wish!

COLORWAYS

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Pantone

The 2026 color of the year — at least according to the colorists at Pantone, who have been declaring these hues since 1999 — is Cloud Dancer, officially known as PANTONE 11-4201. That is, basically … white? Reporters on our Styles desk discussed the choice.

More on culture

- "Jay Kelly," Noah Baumbach's new movie starring George Clooney as an alternate-universe George Clooney-like character, "has a strange, old-fashioned charm," writes our critic Alissa Wilkinson. It slips "in and out of registers, seeming to work on multiple levels at once." Let's go.
- Kyle Buchanan, who writes the Projectionist column, kicks off Hollywood's awards season with a first look at the Oscar race. It's hard to pick an obvious top 10. Apple has even bought billboards to support its

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glossy but empty “F1,” thinking it has a chance, Kyle reports. Maybe it does!

- On late night, Jimmy Kimmel thanked Trump for making him more famous this year.

THE MORNING RECOMMENDS …

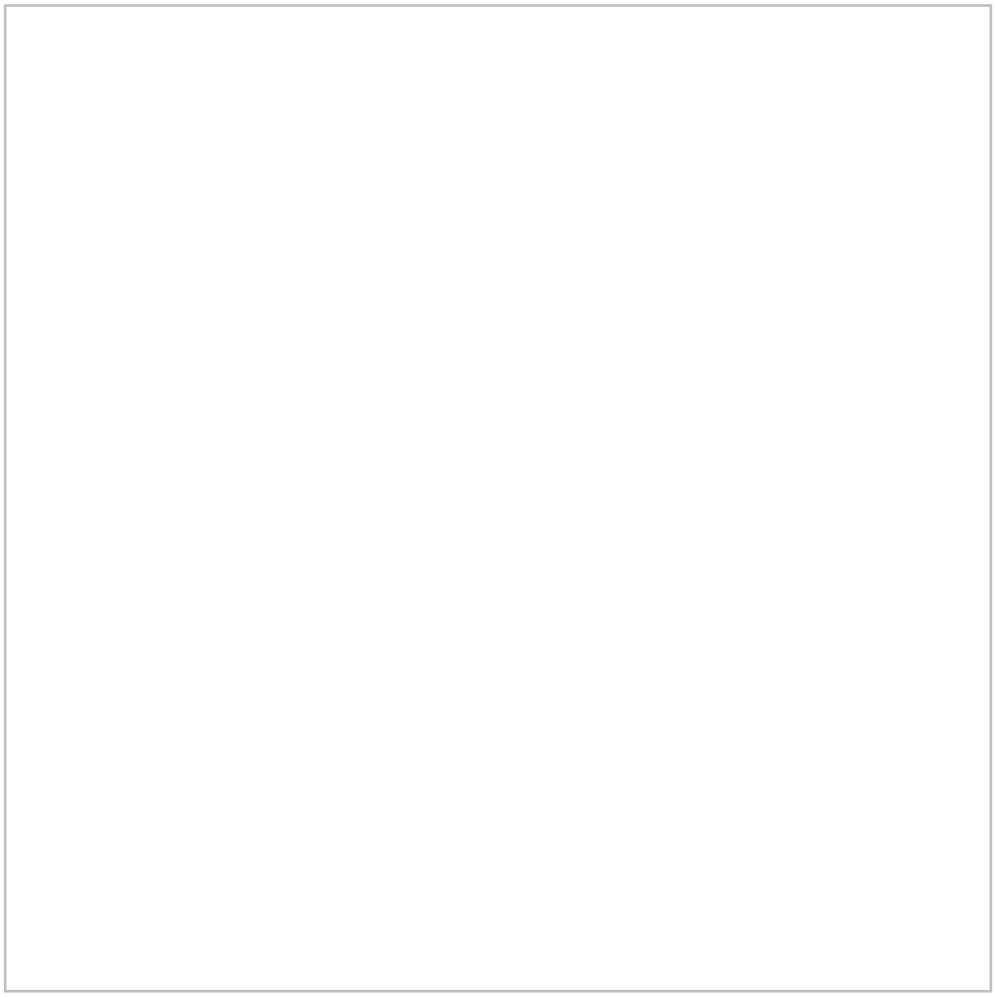
Conceive of a memory-foam pillow that won’t crick your neck, recommended by the side sleepers at Wirecutter.

Stream a new documentary from Amy Berg, “It’s Never Over, Jeff Buckley,” on HBO Max. Using a trove of rare video, audio and photographs provided by Buckley’s mother, the film tells the story of the singer-songwriter who died in 1997 at age 30 and whose music found wide fame after his death.

Take our news quiz.

GAMES

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Here is today's Spelling Bee. Yesterday's pangram was *exaltedly*.

And here are today's Mini Crossword, Wordle, Connections, Sports Connections and Strands.

Thanks for spending part of your morning with The Times and me. See you tomorrow. — Sam

Reach our team at themorning@nytimes.com.

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From: Amy Sams
To: Wooten, Jenny
Cc: Curtis, Randall; Nicholson, Thomas
Subject: Re: [External] Re: Follow-up re: SAVE Program Implementation and Voter Roll Verification
Date: Monday, November 10, 2025 1:54:20 PM
Attachments: Outlook-rj4vwwkz.png

Jenny,

Mr. Wistar has resigned from the Pickens County VR&E Board effective Friday, Nov. 7th. His Board email address (from which the original email was sent) has been deactivated.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kindest regards,
Amy



From: Wooten, Jenny <jwooten@elections.sc.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2025 4:16 PM
To: Tom Wistar <twistarvrpickenssc@gmail.com>
Cc: Amy Sams <amys@pickenscountysc.gov>; Cary Berkley Kaye <ckayevrpickenssc@gmail.com>; Nicholson, Thomas <tnicholson@elections.sc.gov>
Subject: RE: [External] Re: Follow-up re: SAVE Program Implementation and Voter Roll Verification

Tom,

I don't have a record of an email from you dated October 14, 2025, but I appreciate you resending the information. I confirm that I've received it this time. I'll review the materials and either respond myself or determine the appropriate person to follow up as soon as I have the opportunity.

Thank you,

Jenny

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Jenny Wooten
Interim Director

South Carolina Election Commission
1122 Lady St, 5th Floor, Columbia, SC 29201
P.O. Box 5987, Columbia, SC 29250
Phone: 803.734.4139 Website: scVOTES.gov
jwooten@elections.sc.gov

From: Tom Wistar <twistarvrpickenssc@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 22, 2025 5:55 PM
To: Wooten, Jenny <jwooten@elections.sc.gov>
Cc: Amy Sams <amys@pickenscountysc.gov>; Cary Berkley Kaye <ckayevrpickenssc@gmail.com>
Subject: [External] Re: Follow-up re: SAVE Program Implementation and Voter Roll Verification

22 October 2025
Dear Ms. Wooten,
I wanted to follow up on the letter I sent to you on October 14th (copied below). I realize this is a particularly busy time with the Special and Municipal Elections underway. When convenient, could you please confirm receipt of the letter and let me know if you are the appropriate point of contact?
All the best,
Tom Wistar
Pickens County Voter Registration & Elections Board
****

> On Oct 14, 2025, at 12:34 PM, Tom Wistar <twistarvrpickenssc@gmail.com> wrote:
>
> **Dear Ms. Wooten,**
> My name is Tom Wistar, and I serve on the Pickens County Voter Registration and Elections Board. Below, I have included a series of emails exchanged with Mr. Howard Knapp, presented in chronological order.
> The origin of our correspondence stemmed from Mr. Knapp's May 20, 2025 press release regarding federal verification tools. I had contacted Mr. Knapp to inquire whether the SEC had entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the

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Department of Homeland Security—which he confirmed—as well as to request an update on the implementation of Executive Order 14248, *"Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections."*

Based on those earlier communications, I scheduled a follow-up at this time to learn how the bulk data uploads have progressed and whether any challenges remain, particularly relating to the audit of South Carolina's voter registrants against U.S. citizenship records.

Additionally, I am interested in whether any trends or anomalies have been identified at the county or precinct level, and whether any external data analytics or "Big Data" firms have been engaged to assist with the 3.8 million voter records Mr. Knapp referenced.

Since that time, I have learned that several states and counties facing similar challenges are evaluating or utilizing two specialized software platforms:

- **Psephos** – Operating at the Secretary of State level under direct state contracts, utilizing state-provided data along with USPS and the Social Security Administration Master Death List (SSA MDL).
- **ELLY – The Elector List** – Designed for county-level use, available via subscription, and incorporating a broader range of public and proprietary data for enhanced accuracy.

Both platforms draw upon the same primary datasets used by the Election Registration Information Center (ERIC) and the USPS National Change of Address (NCOA) system. Notably, ELLY aligns with the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's guidance in *Improving State Voter Registration Databases* (Recommendation L-12), encouraging the use of third-party data to resolve potential record discrepancies.

ELLY Incorporates Additional Data Sources Including:

1. Corporate filings from Secretaries of State
2. Property zoning, class, and land use codes (most U.S. counties)
3. Property tax records, homestead status, sale dates and amounts
4. Property descriptions (rooms, bedrooms, owner occupancy)

   5–11. USPS CASS address formatting, corrections, and non-deliverable / non-residential indicators
5. Obituary data (funeral homes, newspapers)
6. State felony records
7. Proprietary Change of Address (PCOA) – 60-month data
8. USPS NCOA – 48-month data
9. Google® Business records

   17–18. Google® and Zillow® mapping and imagery
10. Multi-sourced email and cellular contact data

As of October 1, 2025, ELLY reports maintaining over 170 million voter registrations across 38 states and the District of Columbia, with plans to include additional records from several more states by year's end. ERIC continues to serve participating states using data provided directly through state-level channels.

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Given the scale of the 3.8 million records referenced by Mr. Knapp, these tools could provide meaningful efficiency, accuracy, and insight. It may be worthwhile for the State to explore their potential applications in supporting ongoing registration integrity efforts. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to any update you may be able to provide.

Best regards,
Tom Wistar
Pickens County Voter Registration & Elections Board
Cc:
Dr. Amy T. Sams, Executive Director
Cary Berkeley Kaye, Chair

****

Previous Communications with Mr. Knapp:

1.) Inquiry:

On Jul 11, 2025, at 7:15 AM, Tom Wistar <twistarvrpickenssc@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Director Knapp,
My name is Tom Wistar, and I serve on the Voter Registration and Election Board in Pickens County.
I'm writing in reference to the press release dated May 20, 2025, regarding the new Federal Verification Tools. It was an excellent and encouraging update. It is always appreciated when federal agencies partner
with states in a shared commitment to safeguarding the integrity of our elections by ensuring that only U.S. citizens participate.
The press release noted:
"Following a change in federal administration and renewed momentum around election integrity, the SEC submitted a second formal request to USCIS in early 2025. In response, the federal government announced new enhancements to the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program under Executive Order 14248, Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections."
In light of this, I have two questions:
1. Has the SEC entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the SAVE program?
2. If so, are reports now being run against South Carolina's voter rolls using the updated SAVE database?

Thank you very much for your time and leadership. I've copied Dr. Amy Sams, Executive Director, and Cary Berkley Kay, Chair of the Pickens County VR & Election Board, for their awareness.

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Best regards,
Tom Wistar

2.) Response:

Good morning, Mr. Wistar,

In 2024, the SEC entered an MOA with the Dept. of Homeland Security to be an authorized user of the USCIS SAVE system. This allowed the agency to conduct individual searches of voters against the SAVE system, one at a time (keep in mind, we have roughly 3.8M voters in SC).

This year, upon my request, USCIS piloted the batch upload capability, allowing the agency to upload multiple voters in a single file, to be compared against the data in the various SAVE systems. We uploaded a test batch to the SAVE system and are currently analyzing the data we just received back. As we are the first state to do this and the data from SAVE is data collected from over a dozen other federal agencies, there are some questions that still need answering by USCIS, as well as processes that need to be refined before we fully integrate this into our statewide voter list maintenance procedures.

If you have any other questions, please let me know.

Have a great week,
Howie

3.) My Response:

Dear Director Knapp,

Thank you for your prompt and informative response.
It's encouraging to hear that South Carolina is leading the way—hopefully, other states will take note and follow suit.
If agreeable, I'd like to follow up in the next couple of months to see how the "batch" uploads are progressing, as voter integrity remains critical to the health of our elections.
I'm also curious whether there's an opportunity to "stack rank" counties and precincts based on voter registration issues to help identify patterns or areas of concern? One approach might be to partner with a Big Data analytics firm—these organizations can sift through very large, complex datasets from multiple data sources to uncover trends, correlations, and actionable insights. In a previous role, I helped stand up a big data system and was struck by how impactful it was for decision-making and overall performance.
Wishing you continued success, and thanks again.

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Best regards,
Tom Wistar

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