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Congressional Black Caucus sounds alarm to protect SNAP benefits

By Lauren Burke

During a press conference outside the U.S. Capitol on March 25, members of the Congressional Black Caucus spoke out with concern about budgetary threats to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). CBC Chair Yvette Clarke spoke of "grave concerns" about the "Republican scheme to cut billions of dollars to cut SNAP benefits that held millions of American families."

"Twenty percent of Black households have faced food insecurity compared to 7 percent of their white counterparts. Forty-two percent of all SNAP recipients are children. In fact, 4 in 5 SNAP households include a child, an elder, or an individual with a disability," the CBC Chair added. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program formerly known as the Food Stamp Program began during the Great Depression but has changed significantly over time. In 2008, the Food Stamp



If there are big cuts to SNAP, "over 285,000 jobs would be at risk" Rep. Bishop pointed out. "Real people are going to be hurt if the \$230 billion in SNAP cuts are forced upon the American people," (Photo via NNPA)

Program was renamed SNAP. The 1980s saw budget cuts and stricter eligibility requirements under President Ronald Reagan. In the 1990s, a welfare reform push under President Bill Clinton led to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. That legislation mandated

work requirements and restrictions on certain groups such as non-citizens.

Today with a push towards billions in cuts by President Trump and continuous talk of cuts to social programs by Elon Musk, Republicans

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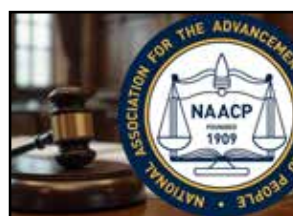
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People In The News ...



Mia Love



Rep. Greg Meeks

NDG Quote of the Week: "You really can change the world if you care enough."

- Marian Wright Edelman

Mia Love

Love served in the U.S. Congress for Utah's 4th congressional district from 2015 to 2019. Love made history when as the first Black Republican woman elected to the U.S. Congress in history.

She was a rare Black Republican serving in a state with a very small Black population. Mia Love's career was marked by historic firsts and coastal moves from East and West.

She also underwent several personal changes in career and religion from Roman Catholic to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Love was born



in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in Norwalk Connecticut. Love was the first Haitian American elected to Congress.

After her time in office, she became a political commentator. She often appeared on CNN.

After working for Continental Airlines as a flight attendant, Love moved to Utah in 1998. In 2023, she ran and won a seat on the Saratoga Springs City Council. Love was the first female member of the Saratoga Springs City Council in history.

She served on the City Council for six years with a focus on tax policy and boosting the city's revenue. Love was then elected Mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah, and served from 2010 to 2014. IN 2012, Love won a speaking slot at the 2012 Republican National Convention on August 28, 2012.

The moment marked her as a rising star in the Republican Party.

Even though Love lost her first run for Congress in the 2012 primary, she ran again in 2014 and was victorious. She arrived just as the Tea Party movement was getting underway in opposition to the Obama presidency. In Congress, she became a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and attended meetings regularly.

After her time in Congress, Love stayed connected to social issues and was dubious of MAGA Republicanism. But in early 2022 she was diagnosed

with one of the deadliest cancers: glioblastoma, a form of brain cancer. Love enrolled in an immunotherapy clinical trial in August 2023 but on March 1, 2025, the announcement by Love's daughter on social media confirmed that medical treatment against brain cancer was no longer effective.

A March 23 note from her family on social media read the following:

"With grateful hearts filled to overflowing for the profound influence of Mia on our lives, we want you to know that she passed away peacefully today.

"She was in her home

surrounded by family. During a celebration of her life and an avalanche of happy memories, Mia quietly slipped the bands of mortality and, as her words and vision, always soared heavenward.

"We are thankful for the many good wishes, prayers, and condolences. We are taking some time as a family and will provide information about funeral services and a public celebration of her life in the days to come."

The former Congresswoman was survived by her husband Jason and their three children.

Rep. Greg Meeks

"I am immediately calling on Chairman Mast to hold a hearing on what might be the most astonishing breach of our national security in recent history," says New York Congressman Greg Meeks. The ranking House Foreign Affairs committee chair is addressing the reported revelation that Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Vice President J.D. Vance, and others used the encrypted phone app Signal to map out a war plan against the Houthis that took place on March 15. A reporter from the Atlantic was accidentally pulled into the encrypted Signal text chain conversation with high-ranking Trump officials. Once the March 15th attack happened, the reporter realized this was not a hoax and subsequently wrote a story titled "The Trump Administration Accidentally Texted Me Its War Plans."

Hegseth is working to discredit the reporter the



high-ranking Trump officials accidentally included in the text chain during the Signal conversation he was privy to. The new Defense Secretary told reporters yesterday, "Nobody was texting war plans..." Meanwhile, as the Trump officials allegedly used the Signal phone app for this war plan, they were supposed to follow long-standing national security protocol and use a secure site that would not allow eavesdropping. One of those places happened to be the Situation Room in the White House, which was created specifically for instances like this. That room has been used for many

military missions to include the demise of Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind behind the 9-11 attacks. In the meantime, elected officials want answers to a myriad of questions about this national security breach. Congressman Meeks has drafted and sent a letter to Secretary Hegseth awaiting answers to questions.

Here is a portion of the letter from Congressman Meeks to Secretary Hegseth.

In the interest of congressional oversight, we request answers to the following questions:

1. *Was information regarding U.S. military activities against the Houthis on or about March 15, 2025, disclosed via the Signal messaging service by any National Security Council principal? If so, by whom and what specific information was disclosed?*

2. *In how many instances has the National Security Council held discussions*

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Trump loves the poorly educated

By Julianne Malveaux

After he won the Nevada Republican caucuses in 2016, the current President crowed his victory. "We won with young. We won with old. We won with highly educated. We won with poorly educated. I love the poorly educated."

Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) reflected on this comment as he asked Republicans to join Democrats in preserving the Department of Education. The 47th President loves the poorly educated because he knows how to manipulate them, and because the less you know the more you can be persuaded by false rhetoric.

The cuts in education, including cuts in educational services for the differently abled, both physically and intellectually, will likely have a long-term deleterious effect on the condition of education in our country.

The President's reason for cutting the Department of Education is poor test scores, but the first phase of cuts, separating at least 1300 workers from their jobs, will also likely reduce the amount of educational data that is available.

So, we may not learn, from the Survey of Doc-

torate Recipients (SDR), which academic areas we need to boost. We are not able to follow graduates over time to analyze career trends. Fewer employees collecting data may impact data accuracy.

Given this President's anti-DEI stance, we may not measure achievement gaps appropriately. Many of my research colleagues are concerned that this anti-detail-oriented President and his motley crew of incompetents prefer aggregate numbers to disaggregated ones.

That means they may continue to report an overall unemployment rate, but fail to report changes in Black, Latino, and Asian unemployment. Data collection costs money, and the President aims to cut budgets. That includes more than \$600 million in grants, many of which go to benefit the "least and the left out."

Further, many are concerned that the Office of Civil Rights has reduced effectiveness because of staff cuts. The Office of Civil Rights lost at least 240 employees, including 180 staff attorneys. Regional offices have been closed, making it more difficult for people to file civil rights complaints.

People aren't taking this action lying down. The National Education Association (NEA), the NAACP, and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) are all suing the Department of Education to prevent its closure. According to the NEA "If the Education Department is broken apart, the rights of students, particularly our most vulnerable – to an education that imparts academic lessons, civil rights protections, and prepares them for their future, will be undercut."

In addition, with fewer workers' protections, and an indifference to safety net supports, people will be forced into low wage work instead of workforce development activities that will better prepare them for good jobs in the future.

This president loves the poorly educated because they are most easily exploited. We are headed into a dystopian nightmare unless Democrats are willing to take some action.

This President and his allies, assisted by a woman who used to lead Worldwide Wrestling (great preparation to lead the Department of Education) will reorganize or eliminate many critical functions of the Department of Educa-

tion. Our young people will be the ones to pay.

This year 3.9 million young people are slated to graduate from high school. About 62 percent of them will enroll in either two- or four-year colleges. What will the atmosphere on campuses this fall?

Unless some of the lawsuits are successful, lower-income students, differently abled students, and those in need of extra services will be sidelined. DEI programs that offer counseling and solace to some students are likely to be dismantled.

Tens of thousands of students, if not millions, will be disadvantaged by the way the Department of Education is being transformed into the Department of MisEducation. This is the era of the MisEducation of the Marginalized. Scrubbing our history books of reference to Black, Brown, and other patriots is just a first step to dismantling any notion of critical thinking. This current President and his minions are dedicated to ignorance, and indeed they love the "poorly educated". What does this mean for our nation's future?

Dr. Julianne Malveaux is a DC-based economist and author. juliannemalveaux.com

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in the U.S. House have been positioning to cut programs to free the budget up for a tax cut focused on the top 1 percent in the U.S. "It is outrageous that Republicans have spent all their time working to dismantle the social safety net including SNAP," Rep. Clarke

said outside of the Capitol today. "SNAP is not a handout, it is a lifeline," she added. One of the lead members of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA).

"SNAP's effects go beyond just the people in need — it's also the farmers and

the businesses that provide the food," Rep. Bishop said standing in front of ten of his colleagues as tourists and school groups listened nearby. If there are big cuts to SNAP, "over 285,000 jobs would be at risk" Rep. Bishop pointed out. "Real people are going to be hurt if the \$230 billion in SNAP cuts are forced upon the

American people," Rep. Bishop added. In 2023, approximately 36.8 million people in the U.S. were living in poverty, representing an official poverty rate of 11.1%. This figure reflects a slight decrease from the previous year's rate of 11.5%, equating to about 37.9 million individuals in poverty in 2022.

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ACS study finds nearly 4 million pre-mature lung cancer deaths in U.S. averted and 76 million years of lives gained due to tobacco control

(Newswise) — New research led by American Cancer Society (ACS) researchers estimates more than 3.8 million lung cancer deaths were averted and a little over 76 million years of life gained in the United States during 1970-2022 due to substantial reductions in smoking prevalence driven by tobacco control. The study is published today in CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians.

“The substantial estimated numbers of averted lung cancer deaths and person-years of life gained highlight the remarkable effect



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of progress against smoking on reducing premature mortality from lung cancer,” said Dr. Farhad Islami, senior scientific director, cancer disparity research at the American Cancer Society

and lead author of the study. “However, despite these findings, lung cancer is still the leading cause of cancer death in the United States, and smoking-attributable morbidity and mortality

from other cancers or diseases remain high.”

Dr. Islami and his team analyzed information using the 1970-2022 National Center for Health Statistics mortality data (with national coverage). The number of averted lung cancer deaths was calculated by subtracting the observed number of deaths from the expected number in each year, age, sex, race, and age group. Person-years of life gained were estimated as a measure of avoided premature mortality based on the average additional years a person would have lived if

they had not died from lung cancer. As mortality rates for all cancers combined have declined in recent decades, the researchers also estimated the proportions of averted all-cancer deaths in 1970-2022 that were attributable to the averted lung cancer burden.

Study results showed 3,856,240 lung cancer deaths (2,246,610 in men, 1,609,630 in women) were averted and 76,275,550 person-years of life (40,277,690 in men, 35,997,860 in women) were gained during 1970-2022, with an average of 19.8 person-years of life

gained (17.9 in men, 22.4 in women) per averted death. The number of averted lung cancer deaths accounted for 51.4% of the estimated declines in overall cancer deaths and was substantially greater in men (60.1%) than women (42.7%). By race, this proportion was 53.6% in the White population (62.6% in men, 44.6% in women) and 40.0% in the Black population (44.4% in men, 34.7% in women).

“Reducing smoking through tobacco control has saved millions of lives and

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UTEP researchers develop portable device that detects colon cancer

(Newswise) — EL PASO — No one looks forward to a colonoscopy. The procedure, which is used to screen for colorectal cancers, is unpleasant and costly and can lead to medical complications. But screening for the cancer is critical; colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S., according to the National Cancer Institute.

Other screening methods for the cancer, like stool-based tests, can be unreliable and result in false positives. To remedy this

problem, scientists at The University of Texas at El Paso are developing a less invasive portable device that would use blood samples to detect colorectal cancers. Their device is described in a new study published in the journal ACS Measurement Science Au.

Study co-author Ruma Paul, a doctoral student in chemistry at UTEP, said colorectal cancer is very treatable if detected early.

“The earlier the detection, the greater the hope for saving lives,” Paul said. “Blood-based tests are much

easier on patients while also being able to precisely detect the early signs of colorectal cancer. Our research could one day make simpler early detection possible.”

The device detects a colon cancer secreted protein known as CCSP-2. The protein’s presence in colon cancer cells is 78 times higher than in normal colon cells, making its occurrence in the body a strong indicator of cancer, Paul said. CCSP-2 is also detectable in blood, the team said, which makes it an excellent biomarker; biomarkers are measurable

biological “signals” that can indicate the presence of certain diseases.

Carlos Cabrera, Ph.D. the study’s corresponding author and a UTEP professor of chemistry and biochemistry, said, “Ruma’s doctoral research opens the possibility of developing a simple point-of-care portable device for colorectal cancer detection.”

Paul designed the device, known as an electrochemical immunosensor, to detect CCSP-2. She explained that this kind of device can be miniaturized and mass-

produced, allowing it to potentially be used at home or in a doctor’s office. Before being available to patients, she added, the device would have to be patented and go through clinical trials, which can take many years to complete.

Sourav Roy, Ph.D., is an associate professor of biological sciences at UTEP and additional co-author on the study. He explained that the study is the first in a series of research projects that will test how suitable different biomarkers are to the portable device. Roy

and his team are working to identify new proteins that are over-expressed in colon cancer tissues at different stages, which can be used as biomarkers and tested on the device.

“Our goal is to come up with inexpensive, accessible, non-invasive, and reliable strategies for early detection of colorectal cancers using computational and molecular biology,” Roy said.

The research was funded by the National Science Foundation’s Partnership for Innovation Grant.

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on national security matters involving Principals Committee members or any other relevant executive branch officials using the Signal messaging service or any other messaging service application that has not been approved for the transmission of classified information? In each in-

stance, please describe the specific national security matter or matters that were discussed.

4. Was classified information shared in the instance reported by The Atlantic or in any other instance described in reply to the previous question?

5. Was unclassified but

highly sensitive information shared in any such instance?

6. Was information shared in any such instance that could have compromised the operational security of any military activities?

7. Was information shared in any such instance that could have compromised the safety of mem-

bers of the U.S. armed forces or those of a U.S. ally or partner?

8. Was information shared in any such instance that could have compromised any of the capabilities of the U.S. armed forces or those of a U.S. ally or partner?

9. What measures has the National Security Council, the Department of State, the

Department of Defense and the intelligence community taken to ensure that the disclosure of any such instance and any other discourse involving national security matters via an electronic messaging service are preserved by applicable federal record-keeping law?

10. If classified or any other sensitive information was disclosed via the

Signal messaging service, what measures have been put into place by the National Security Council, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the intelligence community to ensure that it will not occur again?

We appreciate your attention to these questions and look forward to your prompt replies.

Texas NAACP joins national lawsuit challenging executive order to dismantle Department Of Education

HOUSTON - The Texas State Conference of NAACP Branches announces its participation as a plaintiff in a federal lawsuit alongside the National NAACP and multiple state branches including Lubbock, Texas, South Carolina, and Maryland chapters.

This legal action challenges President Trump's recent Executive Order that seeks to dismantle the Department of Education, which the NAACP contends significantly exceeds presidential authority and threatens educational equality across the nation.

"The dismantling of this vital agency will have devastating consequences for students of color and their families," said Gary L. Bledsoe, President of the Texas State Conference of NAACP. "This Executive Order undermines academic success, eliminates crucial family educational sup-



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port systems, and removes an independent entity that enforces federal constitutional and statutory rights in education."

The lawsuit highlights Texas's documented history of educational discrimination against African-Americans and Latinos.

Past federal interventions

through the Department of Education have secured critical reforms, including the Texas Plan, which mandated substantial state funding to address historical discrimination, and the recent resolution of discrimination complaints in Southlake where students boldly videoed themselves

using the N-Word and then posted online.

The School Board and District leadership were powerless to fight the forces that were protecting the students who did this. In Slaton we had talented young African-American scholar who was abused by the use of the N-Word who left the district after she was the subject of discipline for continuing to proceed with her cry for help.

Sadly, the Texas Legislature heard these matters but failed to pass legislation that would protect these students. The United States Department of Education then provided protection to the students in Southlake and are now considering complaints which would allow them to do the same in Slaton and Lubbock.

Currently, the Texas NAACP has a pending

complaint regarding the University of Texas's use of a racially discriminatory school song that has a history tied to blackface minstrel performances. Additionally, as described above the Lubbock NAACP has two outstanding complaints against school districts in Slaton and Lubbock for failing to protect African-American students from persistent racial bullying and harassment.

"The Office of Civil Rights provides a free, confidential forum for addressing educational discrimination," Bledsoe explained. "Its elimination would leave countless Texans without recourse against hostility and harassment in educational settings that are supposed to serve all students."

Lubbock NAACP President Milton Lee went to the

School Boards in Slaton and Lubbock and sought relief but they did nothing, so their only recourse was OCR.

The press release notes that legislative attempts to strengthen state-level protections, including a bill filed by Senator Jose Menendez and Representative Ron Reynolds last session, have been unsuccessful.

"This Executive Order represents a dangerous regression in civil rights protection reminiscent of the Compromise of 1877, which abandoned federal protection of African-Americans in the South," Bledsoe concluded. "We will vigorously oppose this unconstitutional overreach and defend every student's right to equal educational opportunity."

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can save millions more in the future," Dr. Islami added. "But we need a stronger commitment at the local, state, and federal levels to help further reduce smoking and substantially augment the progress against smoking-related mortality. It's also important that these tobacco control programs be designed to reach groups at a higher risk of smoking, such as people of lower socioeconomic status, to help save even more lives. For example, smoking prevalence and lung cancer mortality rates in individuals with a high school diploma

or lower education levels are 5 times higher compared with individuals with a college degree."

"Increased and sustained funding for evidence-based tobacco prevention and cessation programs is needed now more than ever as part of a comprehensive approach to reducing tobacco use and, ultimately, the cancer burden for everyone in the U.S.," said Lisa A. Lacasse, president of ACS's advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN).

"The study's findings

show the impact of past tobacco control measures but also underscore the preventable deaths that continue to persist. Access to barrier-free, culturally competent cessation services, substantially increasing tobacco taxes, and implementing comprehensive smoke-free policies are proven policies to help people quit and prevent people, especially youth, from ever starting."

Other ACS researchers contributing to the study include Dr. Nigar Nargis, Dr. Qinran Liu, Dr. Priti Bandi, Rebecca L. Siegel, Dr. Parichoy Pal Choudhury, and senior author Dr. Ahmedin Jemal.

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Education executive order gets heavy pushback from congress, academia

By Lauren Burke
& April Ryan
NNPA Correspondents

There are plenty of negative reactions to President Donald Trump's latest Executive Order abolishing the Department of Education. As Democrats call yesterday's action performative, it would take an act of Congress for the Education Department to close permanently. "This blatantly unconstitutional executive order is just another piece of evidence that Trump has absolutely no respect for the Constitution," said Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) who is the ranking mem-

ber on the House Financial Services Committee. "By dismantling ED, President Trump is implementing his own philosophy on education, which can be summed up in his own words, 'I love the poorly educated.' I am adamantly opposed to this reckless action, said Rep. Bobby Scott who is the most senior Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee.

Morgan State University President Dr. David Wilson chimed in saying "I'm deeply concerned about efforts to shift federal oversight in education back to the states, particularly regarding equity, justice, and

fairness. History has shown us what happens when states are left unchecked—Black and poor children are too often denied access to the high-quality education they deserve. In 1979 then President Jimmy Carter signed a law creating the Department of Education. Arne Duncan, former Obama Education Secretary, reminds us that both Democratic and Republican presidents have kept education a non-political issue until now. However, Duncan stressed Republican presidents have contributed greatly to moving

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Honoring excellence in education...



Jennifer Arbelaez
Keyes Elementary School



Holly Koch
Brown Elementary School



Julien Yacho
Lively Elementary School



Charles Burey
Lamar Middle School



Corey Cole
Houston Middle School



Elisha Lucero
Bowie Middle School

Irving ISD recently announced its 2025 finalists for Teacher of the Year recognition. The annual Teacher of the Year ceremony will be held on Tuesday, April 22, at Irving High School from 6:30 to 8 pm. (Photos: Irving ISD)

Trump formally moves to shut down Education Department

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

President Donald Trump formally announced on Thursday, March 20, his intention to sign an executive order to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education, delivering on a campaign promise that targets an agency long criticized by conservatives. A week earlier, a White House official reportedly revealed that the order would cut the department's workforce in half and significantly scale back its functions, including crucial operations in the Office



The American Civil Liberties Union immediately condemned the plan, stating it puts millions' education and civil rights at risk. (Photo via NNPA)

for Civil Rights and the Institute of Education Sciences. The American Civil Liberties Union immediately condemned the plan, stating it puts millions'

education and civil rights at risk. The organization called the action reckless, asserting it strips essential resources and dismantles previous administrations'

efforts toward educational fairness. "This reckless action strips students of vital resources and tears down statutorily mandated functions that are essential to addressing racial and economic inequality in education," the ACLU stated.

The National Parents Union reacted strongly to the news, saying, "This isn't fixing education. It's making sure millions of children never get a fair shot." Critics argue that the shutdown would disproportionately harm marginalized students and exacerbate racial inequities in education. The directive

outlined in the White House fact sheet would authorize Secretary Linda McMahon to start the closure process, reassigning education authority to the states. However, experts highlight that fully abolishing the department would require an act of Congress, as lawmakers established it in 1979.

The proposed cuts would endanger federal programs such as Title I funding for schools serving low-income communities and critical federal student loan programs. The ACLU also expressed concern about the potential impact of the Individuals with Dis-

abilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures access to education for students with disabilities. The ACLU warned that the dismantling of the Office for Civil Rights could lead to unchecked discriminatory practices, affecting school discipline, access to advanced coursework, and resources for English learners and students with disabilities. "Attacks on the ED are an attack on the progress we have made to advance educational equity," said Ricardo Mimbela, ACLU Communications

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Analyst predicts trade back scenario for Dallas Cowboys in latest NFL Mock Draft

By Jamal Baker
NDG Contributing Writer

The NFL Draft is less than a month away and the Dallas Cowboys have a golden opportunity to set themselves up for success in the years to come. Dallas has filled important roster holes through a series of free agency signings—allowing them to select the best player available when they are on the clock.

NFL.com's draft analyst Chad Reuter released a four-round mock draft where he predicts the Cowboys will trade down from the 12th spot. Dallas swung a deal with the Denver Broncos and received a first-round selection at No. 20 and second-round selection at No. 51 in return.

The Dallas Cowboys accomplished two goals with their first-round pick at No. 20—finding a second option at wide receiver alongside Ceedee Lamb and an elite player in this draft in Emeka Egbuka. He is a wicked route runner, and his baseball background is evident in his premier ball-tracking skills. Egbuka's presence would open up the passing attack and relieve some of the pressure Lamb carries week in and week out.

With the Cowboys' original pick at No. 44, Reuter projects them taking another Ohio State product in running back TreVeyon Henderson. If Dallas does not get a running back in the first round and Henderson is still on the clock at 44, they should sprint to turn in their draft card with his name on it. Henderson is a three down back who is a dynamic playmaker. Adding him to a running back room that features Miles Sanders and Javonte Williams would form a formidable trio.

Reuter has the cowboys taking



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Alfred Collins with the 51st pick to shore up their interior defensive line. Collins is a 6-foot-6, 332-pound nose tackle with untapped potential. He plays with a relentless motor and has the prototypical physical traits to blend right into an NFL defensive rotation.

Without a fourth-round pick in this mock, Reuter's final selection for the Cowboys comes at pick No. 76 in the third round and is Ohio State center Seth

McLaughlin. McLaughlin is coming off an Achilles tear but is highly intelligent from the center position. He has good recognition of blitzers and provides depth along the Dallas offensive line.

Mock Drafts are always fun to analyze as the draft quickly approaches. If the Dallas Cowboys can walk away with four top 100 selections as Reuter predicts, they will certainly be in position to have another A+ draft.



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Film Review: 'Magazine Dreams' fall short, in life and on the big screen

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

(**) Images of Jonathan Majors (Creed III) in a skimpy swimsuit, sporting a lean, muscular body that would shame Michelangelo's David don't portend what's to come.

Based on the male eye candy, some film fans may anticipate the joy of a comedy/drama like Magic Mike or the enthusiasm of the inspiring documentary Pumping Iron. Think twice. This isn't that kind of party. In fact, it isn't a party at all. It's a descent into mental illness, ultra violence and an odd take on body imagery and self-esteem that will leave most viewers scratching their heads and wondering who the hell dreamed this up?

Writer-director Elijah Bynum (Hot Summer Nights) has two talents. The writing part, as evidenced by this hugely demonic script, wants to tell a story about a man on a spiral that goes downward and never up. The premise is questionable, as it will not attract large audiences, nor please most. Unless they want to ambulance chase a reckless human being who's imploding and exploding. (Any comparisons to Taxi Driver are hype and not warranted.) The film-making part of Bynum's talent is better-developed, and his ability to show visually what he thinks a scene should look like is quite advanced.

Bynum's visions are carried out perfectly by his cinematographer Adam Arkapaw (Emmy winner True Detective) who's sense of lighting, angles



Sundance Institute / Glen Wilson

and composition is impeccable. Their efforts are aided by Freyja Bardell's bare bones production design, Bex Crofton-Atkins' simple costumes, a musical score (Jason Hill) that hits the right notes and Jon Otazua's editing that makes scenes as lean as the lead character. No fat. All muscle. Technically, this indie feature has its act together. Pity the story fails the team behind the camera and the cast.

In Los Angeles, the city of angels, Killian Maddox (Majors) is a mentally disturbed young man shooting steroids to fulfill his dream of winning a bodybuilder competition. Ultimate goal? Being a magazine cover model. He's driven: "You have to do something big and important, or nobody will remember you when you are dead."

On the one hand he's kind to his aging grandfather (Harrison Page), which shows his sensitive side. Flirts sweetly and awkwardly with Jessie (Haley Burnett), a grocery store clerk. Gets along with Pink Coat (Taylour Page, Zola), a sex worker. But largely in his volcanic emotions, demonic delusions and hostile threats drive him. That's his

gasoline. That's what he uses as he goes from competition to competition experiencing defeats he can't digest.

In fact, he's more than willing to threaten judges, store clerks and anyone who evaluates him badly, defies or seemingly maligns him: "I'm gonna come down there, split your skull open and drink your brains like soap." Needless to say, having anger as an anchor emotion is tough on starting or sustaining relationships. That's why his idol, the professional bodybuilder Brad Vanderhorn (Mike O'Hearn), a lech, will regret the day he let the amateur into his life.

A shrink looking inside Maddox's brain might find him a fascinating study. But a bewildered audience, after one or two moments of the violent outbursts, may ask themselves, "Where is this going?" That's where Bynum, as a writer, runs out of ideas. That's why this piece of desensitizing ultra-violent mayhem fades like a nightmare you don't want in your memory banks. Its repulsiveness adds up to nothing. And in the process, it presses the wrong buttons—including the angry black man who

can't control his rage (a stereotype) and a gay man who grooms another man (a trope). Potential black audiences may flinch. While the Tarantino crowd, who never have enough grisly violence in one movie, may yawn.

Which segues into the elephant in the room. Jonathan Majors is a gifted, talented and skilled Yale School of Drama-trained actor. His filmography speaks for itself: Lovecraft Country, The Harder They Fall, The Last Black Man in San

Francisco... Choosing a mean-spirited film with a devilish lead like this shows his range. He's a character actor who can weave himself into any scenario. In that way, this project pro-

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NDG Book Review: A pair for those who have (or want) a green thumb

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

In a way, it's kind of a little miracle.

You place tiny little seeds in dirt – DIRT! – and you keep it damp. Wait a week or so, and something grows. Wait a bit longer and that something becomes food or flowers to make you smile. It's pretty miraculous, when you think about it, so think about reading these books about gardening and plants...

Nobody ever said you had to have serious acreage in order to garden; in fact, you can grow your own food on a balcony or in a basic back yard. You'll want to know how to do it right, though, and in "Black Girls Gardening: Empowering Stories and Garden Wisdom for Healing and Flourishing in Nature" by Amber Grossman (Chronicle Books, \$26.95),



Terri Schlichenmeyer

you'll get a good overview of what starts underground.

Want inspiration? That's here, in personal essays

about gardening and growing food to nourish one's self, the family, and your community, written by

women who have learned and are willing to share their expertise. You'll also find chapters on keeping your plants happy and flourishing, how to compost, what tools you'll want for your garden, how to map out what you're going to grow, and how to take advantage of "companion planting." Once you've got the hang of things, there are chapters on teaching your kids to grow their own food, and how to spread the love in a community or neighborhood garden.

Full of photos that will make you hungry and that'll make you want to get outside now and put your hands in the dirt, "Black Girls Gardening" is the perfect springtime read. You'll dream – and you'll

love how those dreams will taste next fall.

But okay, let's say that, though it's very tempting and you can't wait, it's a little too early to think about gardening. Good news: it's never too late to think about plants and in "Mythic Plants: Potions and Poisons from the Gardens of the Gods" by Ellen Zachos (Workman, \$22), you can mix your love of mythology with your love of all things green.

For the gardener who loves to read about ancient Greek history, beliefs, and practices, this book is a delight. It's full of quick-to-read, browse-able chapters that explain the origins and cultures associated with various plants, and the ways that ancient folks used everyday plants

and weeds in their lives. Zachos tells readers how modern science, laws, and knowledge compares to what the Greeks knew and thought, and how it's relevant to your garden today.

Best of all, this book presents the tales of plants that aren't just food – and plants that aren't safe to have around, either...

So these two books aren't exactly what you want? You're in luck: your favorite librarian or bookseller can steer you in the direction of rows and mounds of books on gardening that will fit your unique space and match your geographical area for best results. Grab these two books or any good gardening book, find a comfortable chair, plant yourself in it, and read.

PUSHBACK, from Page 9

education forward in this country.

During a CNN interview this week Duncan said during the Civil War President Abraham "Lincoln created the land grant system" for colleges like Tennessee State University. "President Ford brought in IDEA." And "Nixon signed Pell Grants into law." In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush which increased federal oversight of schools through standardized testing. Meanwhile, the new Education EO jeopardizes funding for students seeking higher education. Duncan states, PellGrants are in jeopardy after servicing "6.5 million people" giving them a chance to go to col-

lege. Wilson details, "that 40 percent of all college students rely on Pell Grants and student loans."

Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) says this Trump action "impacts students pursuing higher education and threatens 26 million students across the country, taking billions away from their educational futures."

Meanwhile, During the president's speech in the East Room of the White House Thursday, Trump criticized Baltimore City, and its math test scores with critical words. Governor West Moore, who is opposed to the EO action, said about dismantling the Department of Education, "Leadership means lifting people up, not punching them down."



Meanwhile, the new Education EO jeopardizes funding for students seeking a higher education. Duncan states, PellGrants are in jeopardy after servicing "6.5 million people" giving them a chance to go to college. (Photo via NNPA)

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Recently approved budget plan favors wealthy, slashes aid to low-income Americans

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

The new budget framework approved by Congress may result in sweeping changes to the federal safety net and tax code. The most significant benefits would flow to the highest earners while millions of low-income families face cuts. A new analysis from Yale University's Budget Lab shows the proposals in the House's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Resolution would lead to a drop in after-tax-and-transfer income for the poorest households while significantly boosting revenue for the wealthiest Americans. Last month,

Congress passed its Concurrent Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2025 (H. Con. Res. 14), setting revenue and spending targets for the next decade. The resolution outlines \$1.5 trillion in gross spending cuts and \$4.5 trillion in tax reductions between FY2025 and FY2034, along with \$500 billion in unspecified deficit reduction.

Congressional Committees have now been instructed to identify policy changes that align with these goals. Three of the most impactful committees—Agriculture, Energy and Commerce, and Ways and Means—have been tasked with proposing major changes. The Agriculture

Committee is charged with finding \$230 billion in savings, likely through changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps. Energy and Commerce must deliver \$880 billion in savings, likely through Medicaid reductions. Meanwhile, the Ways and Means Committee must craft tax changes totaling no more than \$4.5 trillion in new deficits, most likely through extending provisions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Although the resolution does not specify precise changes, reports suggest lawmakers are eyeing steep cuts to SNAP and Medicaid benefits while

seeking to make permanent tax provisions that primarily benefit high-income individuals and corporations.

To examine the potential real-world impact, Yale's Budget Lab modeled four policy changes that align with the resolution's goals:

- A 30 percent across-the-board cut in SNAP funding.
- A 15 percent cut in Medicaid funding.
- Permanent extension of the individual and estate tax cuts from the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

• Permanent extension of business tax provisions including 100% bonus depreciation, expense of R&D, and relaxed limits on interest deductions.

Yale researchers determined that the combined effect of these policies would reduce the after-tax-and-transfer income of the bottom 20 percent of earners by 5 percent in the calendar year 2026. Households in the middle would see a modest 0.6 percent gain. However, the top five percent of earners would

experience a 3 percent increase in their after-tax-and-transfer income.

Moreover, the analysis concluded that more than 100 percent of the net fiscal benefit from these changes would go to households in the top 20 percent of the income distribution. This happens because lower-income groups would lose more in government benefits than they would gain from any tax cuts. At the same time, high-income

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Plans to shutter Education Department add to financial aid confusion

Pell Grant shortfalls, tech issues lead to income-based loan repayments spikes

By Charlene Crowell

The chaos and confusion resulting from systemic changes and closures at multiple federal agencies have now reached the \$242 billion budget of the Department of Education. With the agency's workforce cut in half, and plans announced to shut it down, millions of students and families who rely on federal financial aid for higher education are facing a front-line assault.

State attorneys general in 20 states and the District of Columbia filed a lawsuit challenging the agency's gutting. According to the AGs, the department is a congressionally authorized executive agency with laws creating its various programs and funding streams. As such, the Executive Branch lacks the legal authority to unilaterally incapacitate or dismantle it without an act of Congress.

"The administration's lay-off is so massive that ED will be incapacitated and unable to perform essential functions," said Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown. "As the lawsuit asserts, the administration's actions will deprive students with special needs of critical resources



DWG Studio

and support. They will gut ED's Office of Civil Rights, which protects students from discrimination and sexual assault. They would additionally hamstring the processing of financial aid, raising costs for college and university students who will have a harder time accessing loans, Pell Grants, and work study programs."

"This administration may claim to be stopping waste and fraud, but it is clear that their only mission is to take away the necessary services, resources, and funding that students and their families need," said New York Attorney General Leticia James.

While it is encouraging for state attorneys general to file legal challenges against administration actions, and education advocates to raise their voices and influence to thwart these changes, every day that passes without direct

relief makes borrowers' financial challenges harder and more difficult to resolve.

For example, even before legislation was enacted to avert a government shutdown in March, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicted the popular Pell Grant program that over six million students rely upon faced a \$2.7 billion funding shortfall this year. Pell Grants, the single largest source of post-secondary education grants provided \$31 billion in aid with approximately 6.5 million undergraduate students in FY2023.

Without additional funding, the grant shortfall is expected to balloon to \$10 billion in 2026. Currently, the maximum annual award per eligible student in the formula-based program is \$7,395. Most Pell recipients come from families whose total income is

\$60,540 or less.

It is relevant to note that the new round of cuts to the Pell Grant program are not the first time that significant changes have been made. Instead, the new changes come in addition to others never restored. For example, in the aftermath of the Great Recession in FYs 2011 and 2012, the option for "year-round"

Pell, which helped students make continuous progress toward their credentials was eliminated. That same action also cut the number of lifetime semesters a student can receive Pell Grants from 18 to 12 semesters and remains unchanged.

In response to CBO's disturbing report, a coalition of over 100 higher education organizations

signed a February letter appealing to committee chairs and ranking members in both the Senate and the House to act with dispatch. Its signatories included an array of organizations such as: the American Association of University Women, Center for Law & Social Policy, Georgetown

See CONFUSION, Page 13

CellCo Partnership and Its Controlled Affiliates Doing Business as Verizon Wireless (Verizon Wireless) proposes to build a 100-foot Monopole Communications Tower. Anticipated lighting application is medium-intensity dual red/white strobes. The Site location is located at the approx. vicinity of South Airfield Drive, Dallas, Tarrant Co., TX 75261 [Lat: 32-51-47.54 N, Lo: 97-2-17.16 W]. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Antenna Structure Registration (ASR, Form 854) filing number is A1309028.

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FILM, from Page 9

vides a prime showcase. Maddox is a soul-torn, out of control monster and Majors conveys that down to his emotional core. Tough subject matter. Revolting character. Bad timing for a skilled actor looking for a

comeback film and trying to shed a violent persona that this role perpetuates.

Elijah Bynum makes perfectly crafted footage because his visual and auditory instincts are impeccable. Pity he stumbles and spews

an ugliness so vile it won't attract flies or vultures. Majors is a great thespian. Wrong movie. Wrong character. Wrong time. Beware of men in G-strings bearing false promises.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.

← **CONFUSION**, from Page 12

University Center on Education & the Workforce, NAACP, National Education Association, National Consumer Law Center, Student Borrower Protection Center, and the United Negro College Fund.

“If additional funding is not added to the Pell Grant program very soon, students could face eligibility or award cuts for the first time in more than a decade,” wrote the educators. “Students cannot afford such cuts during a time of rising living costs, and our economy cannot afford to have students lose access to the education and training they need to succeed in the labor market. The maximum Pell Grant

already covers the lowest share of college costs in the program’s history, contributing to a persistent “affordability gap” that forces low- and middle-income students to either take out loans or forgo higher education and training entirely.”

And speaking of loans – borrowers understand that when it takes longer to repay principal owed, interest fees rise as well. Further, fixed interest rates on graduate student loans come at a higher price than those for undergraduate loans. New federal direct loans disbursed between July 1, 2024 and July 1, 2025 carry 6.53 percent fixed interest rates for un-

dergraduate loans, but an 8.08 percent rate for graduate and professional loans.

In other words, higher education comes with higher costs. And the longer loan repayment takes, the higher and harder it becomes to fully repay them.

Today, many borrowers currently enrolled in affordable, income-based repayment options have been frustrated by a lack of online access to complete mandatory income recertification. Without that timely access, spikes in monthly payments ensue. As recently reported by Forbes, “This effectively keeps millions of student loan borrowers who had enrolled in SAVE stuck in a forbearance. The forbearance pauses payments and

sets interest to zero, but the period does not count toward student loan forgiveness, including for Public Service Loan Forgiveness, or PSLF – a popular program for borrowers working in nonprofit or government settings.”

“For many of us, student loans were supposed to be a path forward, not something that holds us back,” said Mike Pierce, executive director of the Student Borrower Protection Center. “We need leaders that prioritize policies that put working people first.”

Charlene Crowell is a senior fellow with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.

← **BUDGET**, from Page 11

households would enjoy significant tax reductions with little or no loss in benefits.

“These results indicate a shift in resources away from low-income tax units toward those with higher incomes,” the Budget Lab report states. “In particular, making the TCJA provisions permanent for high earners while reducing

spending on SNAP and Medicaid leads to a regressive overall effect.” The report notes that policymakers have floated a range of

options to reduce SNAP and Medicaid outlays, such as lowering per-beneficiary benefits or tightening eligibility rules. While the Budget Lab did not assess each proposal individually,

the modeling assumes legislation consistent with the resolution’s instructions.

“The burden of deficit reduction would fall largely on those least able to bear it,” the report concluded.

↔ **DOE**, from Page 6

Strategist. “The ACLU is calling on Congress to act immediately to restore the federal government’s role in enforcing civil rights, maintaining transparency through data collection, and ensuring that students in low-income communities are not left behind,” he asserted.



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Another Week On My Own

By Dr. James L. Snyder

Several weeks ago, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage informed me she would be in St. Augustine with our daughter and granddaughter for spring break.

As always, I really didn't properly process this information. I get so busy with other things that there are some things I can't process.

It was a Monday, and as I was drinking my morning coffee, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came into my office and said, "Well, I guess the girls and I will be leaving for the week. I hope you have a good week."

I put my coffee cup down, looked at her, and said, "What are you talking about? Where are you going?"

"Don't you remember weeks ago I told you that our daughter, granddaughter and I will be going to St. Augustine for the spring break?"

I was stunned and said, "I guess I forgot."

She looked at me and smiled. As she was going out the front door, she said, "Try to behave yourself this

week, and most importantly of all, do not get any apple fritters. Remember our agreement?"

Then she opened the door and said, "Your dinners and suppers are in the refrigerator. Try not to make a mess." Then she closed the door.

It took me a few minutes to process this whole idea, and I'm sure she told me about it, and was helping me prepare for this week. There are times I get so busy with a project that I don't hear what's going on around me. I may not be at my computer, but I'm still writing in my head and thinking about my project.

I may know what's happening around me, but I'm not processing it as I should.

Sitting back in my chair, I thought about the week before me. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage will be in St. Augustine, and I will be here managing every moment of every day. That doesn't happen often, and I wasn't sure where to begin.

I went back to my office and worked until lunchtime. Usually, at lunchtime, The Gracious Mistress of the

Parsonage has my lunch all prepared for me. All I have to do is sit down and eat it. That has been my schedule since I said, "I do."

I walked into the kitchen, and there is nothing. I almost call out for my wife, but then I remember that she isn't here. I am in charge of my week.

I was beginning to feel rather happy. I have the whole week to do whatever I want, which rarely happens.

Opening the refrigerator, I saw that she had prepared a whole week's worth of eating. There were dishes and bowls in the refrigerator, and all of them had tags telling me what they were. That was rather convenient for me, and I appreciated it very much.

As I was planning my apple fritter, I remembered that in the Publix store where I usually get them, all the workers know my wife, and she knows them. I remember one time when she was away, I got an apple fritter.

When she came home and went to Publix to buy groceries, everybody told her I had bought an apple fritter. By the time my wife

got home from shopping, she knew I had bought an apple fritter behind her back. How can you buy something behind her back when everybody knows her?

I had to put a plan together, which was to go across town to a Publix that she had never been to.

I got in my vehicle to drive across town to acquire several apple fritters for the week. As I began my journey, I just couldn't help but chuckle and smile. I can't remember the last time I had an apple fritter, and I was surely looking forward to this one.

As I was driving, I was listening to some preacher on a radio station. I was listening as I was driving, still very happy inside. Unfortunately for me, his sermon that day was on lying.

I enjoyed his sermon, and as I was driving into the Publix parking lot, I began to think about it. What is a lie?

I knew I could go into that store, buy as many apple fritters as I wanted, and then take them home. I knew I could put this together so that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would never know about it.

Then, a thought burned into my head. Am I cheating on The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage?

Halfway from my vehicle to the store, I stopped. Is it worth lying?

I'm unsure what was happening in my heart, but I stopped, turned around, returned to my vehicle, and went home. Not all the apple fritters in the world are worth lying to The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

Driving home, I remembered a hymn that had the phrase, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin." I can't stop the temptation, but I can refuse to yield to it.

I also thought of a Bible verse. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Temptations will come, but I do not have to yield.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamesnsnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamesnsnyderministries.com.

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"And I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel."

Isaiah 45:3.

If you are going through a trial that seems to be lasting, to you at least, a long time, now is the time to tie a knot to the end of your rope and continue to trust God.

You may find yourself out of your comfort zone because you are in a difficult place in your life. However, study the scriptures and allow God to lead you to certain passages that will help to increase your faith and help you to hang on until your situation change for the better.

What you may perceive as dark periods in your life are designed to be treasures from God. They are riches stored in secret places. You, perhaps, cannot see the treasures in your darkness because of the pain and fear that you are feeling. But, God has a purpose for your trials. During these trying times you are com-

pletely at God's mercy for breakthroughs in your life. You will never know how personal God is, or that He can be trusted to meet the deepest needs in your life. You will never experience God's faithfulness without your trials. God want you to know that you are "called by your name;" that every hair on your head is numbered. God is aware of every activity that you are involved in. His love for you knows no bounds and He will use every opportunity to show this to you.

An old adage says, "God's answer to your prayer is seldom early, but it is never late!" If you trust Him, God will give you the

grace you need and at the right time. If you keep a right attitude and not allow bitterness or resentment to take hold, then at the right time, in due season (if you faint not); God will answer your prayers. Habakkuk

2 tells us that God has an appointed time to answer your prayers so that you receive just what you need at just the right time to live victoriously and happily. Believe that God is at work in your life bringing about

what He knows is best for you. Ask God for patience as you faithfully wait for your situation to improve.

(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in April 2013. It has been edited for space.)

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Fri, April 4, 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Thurs, April 10, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

For more information or to register, please visit dallascasa.org




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