

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

www.thecr.com

\$1

Tavzel, Lutheran contracts OK'd

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

The airport will stay under the same leadership for another couple of years at least and the medical helicopter based there will remain as well.

Portland Board of Aviation approved contracts Monday with airport manager Hal Tavzel and Lutheran Air, extending their relationships with Portland Municipal Airport.

Tavzel's salary was raised to \$40,000 per year from the current \$35,000 in his new two-year contract.

Contracts with Lutheran Air

Two-year extension approved for manager; three-year deal in place for medical helicopter

for its hangar space and rental of a house just west of the airport are each for three years with two optional one-year extensions. Monthly rent is \$1,850 for the hangar space and \$700 for the house.

Tavzel has served as airport manager for 15 years. He also owns and operates Sonrise Aviation, which is based at Portland Municipal Airport.

Lutheran Air has had one of its medical helicopters based in

Portland since 2015. At that time, the other was based at Wabash Municipal Airport. Lutheran has since added a third helicopter that flies out of Starke County Airport.

Aviation board members

Faron Parr, Clyde Bray, John Ferguson and Caleb Lutes approved all three contracts unanimously.

Jason Clearwaters of engineering firm Butler, Fairman and Seufert reported that the airport is still waiting on the release of funds from the 2021 infrastructure bill that are planned to be used for the apron expansion project late this summer. He said no new Federal Aviation Administration grants have been released yet under the administration of President Donald Trump.

See **Contracts** page 2



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Focused on flight

East Jay Elementary School students watch a drone fly from windows in the Jay County Junior-Senior High School auxiliary gym Thursday morning. The demonstration was part of a presentation by Kent Siegrist of Siegrist Farms during "A Look At Jay County Agriculture," a series of educational opportunities sponsored by Jay County Farm Bureau and the Jay County Ag Week Committee. Students also learned about ATV safety, pork, ethanol, soil erosion, technology, bees and farm safety.

Committee moves measure, reluctantly

Russia, Ukraine continue drone attacks amid energy truce

By WHITNEY DOWNARD
Indiana Capital Chronicle
indianacapitalchronicle.com

Nearly every lawmaker on the Senate Health and Provider Services Committee voted in favor of a house priority bill on Wednesday, but few seemed happy about it.

"This is probably the worst bill — collectively, as a total — that I have seen in many years," said Sen. Jean Leising, R-Oldenburg. "I have to support this bill because of the (hospital assessment fee) language ... assuming (it) might help the HAF continue through the legislative process."

House Bill 1004 would implement "price caps" on nonprofit hospital charges and restruc-

ture a provider tax to increase federal reimbursements for health care entities. While the latter was universally praised, eight of the ten senators who voted to advance the bill flagged the attempt to control pricing.

Leising went on to express her dismay after repeatedly hearing about the need for an amendment but seeing no such language introduced before the committee. Due to its financial impact, the bill must also move through the Senate Appropriations Committee.

"The other part of this bill, I think, is really not workable at all. And it's just very disappointing to me," Leising continued. "But I hope that the people in appropriations take this seriously."

Like other legislators, Leising had concerns about whether adding price caps tied to Medicare would hurt hospitals, especially rural or critical access facilities like those in her southeastern Indiana district.

Others questioned why insurers weren't getting the same scrutiny while acknowledging that the majority of the state's residents are covered by an



Indiana Capital Chronicle/Whitney Downard

Rep. Martin Carbaugh, R-Fort Wayne, introduces House Bill 1004 in a Senate committee on Wednesday. The bill was approved in committee, but many who voted in favor of the bill expressed reservations and the need for revisions.

insurance type that can't be regulated by the state.

Rep. Martin Carbaugh, R-Fort Wayne, understands the struggles to regulate insurers as the chair of the House insurance committee.

"For the past several years, we've been looking for ways to lower the cost of health care in the state and save taxpayers

money in the process," said Carbaugh. "(But)I don't believe that this bill is exactly in a form that's going to pass into law."

Michael Schroyer, the president of Baptist Health Floyd in New Albany, committed to working with legislators on the bill, even offering to review the hospital's finances one-on-one.

See **Moves** page 2

Attacks continue despite a truce

By ALIAKSANDR KUDRYTSKI
Bloomberg News
Tribune News Service

Russia and Ukraine exchanged mass drone attacks overnight, even as the two countries declared they're ready to observe a moratorium on strikes against energy infrastructure sought by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Russia sent 171 explosive-laden Shahed drones toward Ukraine, up from 145 and 137 in the previous two days, the Ukrainian Air Force command reported Thursday.

"Russian strikes on Ukraine do not stop, despite their propaganda claims," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a statement on social media platform X. "With each such launch, the Russians expose to the world their true attitude towards peace."

See **Attacks** page 2

Weather

Jay County had a high temperature of 66 degrees Wednesday. The low was 55.

Tonight's forecast calls for continued windy conditions with gusts up to 30 mph and a 20% chance of showers. The low will be in the upper 30s.

Expect partly cloudy skies with a chance of showers Saturday morning followed by mostly sunny skies in the afternoon. The high will be in the upper 40s with winds gusting to 25 mph.

See page 2 for an extended outlook.

In review

Jay County Solid Waste Management District will have recycling trailers available today. Trailers will be open from 9 a.m. to noon in the shopping center at 220 Lincoln St., Portland, and Dunkirk City Park.

Coming up

Saturday — Details from Friday's Portland Redevelopment Commission meeting.

Tuesday — Results from the Fort Recovery softball season opener.

Wednesday — Coverage of next week's Dunkirk City Council meeting.



Moves ...

Continued from page 1
He reported losing \$4 million alone in February, despite high patient volume, as costs for pharmaceuticals, supplies and salaries were up a collective 30%.

"We want health care costs to come down as well ... we're at the mercy of so many others because we can't control what we're charged for the things we need to care for patients," Schroyer told the Indiana Capital Chronicle. "Insurance companies have a big part in this that affects our costs because we spend millions of dollars a year negotiating, doing pre-authorization (and) dealing with denials."

The sole dissenting vote came from Fort Wayne Republican Sen. Liz Brown, who detailed the years of effort and millions of dollars spent to try to reduce health care costs.

"There is a lot of work to do; this bill didn't do it," Brown said. "I'm hearing car prices are going up and everything in between, but somehow it's only

the hospitals' responsibility to bring down costs."

Hospital insights
Senators balked at the notion of establishing price caps, which would be based on Medicare rates. A nonprofit hospital charging a private insurer more than 265% of that rate, which is established on the federal level but varies from facility to facility, would be penalized with an excise tax.

Those entities would also lose their nonprofit status, meaning they'd have to pay state taxes.

In his introduction, Carbaugh pointed to a Rand Corp. study that identified Indiana hospitals are the eighth-highest cost nationwide, regardless of nonprofit status. That analysis found that, nationwide, commercial payers were charged 2.5 times what hospitals charged Medicare for the same service. In Indiana, the rate was even higher at 3.4 times the cost of Medicare.

But Rand's report was repeatedly criticized in committee for not truly mirroring the money

received by hospitals since the analysis is based on what employers pay, which adds in insurer charges and overhead.

"If you set a cap on how we get paid, that money saves the insurance company. It's up to them whether they pass it on or not," said Randy Christophel, the CEO and president of Goshen Health. "We have been reducing our costs significantly over the last four or five years and we have not seen those dollars passed along to our regional employers."

Schroyer said his hospital charged 207% of Medicare, according to RAND, but specialties like open heart procedures or neurosurgeries cost more. With even one charge above the 265% threshold, Schroyer would lose his nonprofit status under House Bill 1004.

But Schroyer and other hospital systems praised the inclusion of changes to the hospital assessment fee, which would leverage additional dollars in federal reimbursements to hospitals.

"If we didn't pass the HAF changes, my hospitals would be

losing \$35-50 million a year. And that's unsustainable," said Schroyer.

In the committee room
Sen. Tyler Johnson, an emergency care physician, expressed a concern about "increased bureaucracy that will require increased administrative costs," something he said would "probably (go) back to the patients at a time when we're trying to figure out how to lower costs."

The bill, he worried, wouldn't lower costs or improve accessibility, but would rather "make it worse for our rural communities."

He, and other lawmakers, asked those testifying in support of the bill if they would support price caps in other industries. Such supporters included Gov. Mike Braun's administration, mainstay employer-focused organizations and Families USA, a national organization representing consumers.

"This bill is a major step forward for the state to curb the growth of unchecked health care consolidation, particularly on

hospitals and its impact on rising and unaffordable health care across the state," said Sophia Tripoli, the group's strategic and innovative health policy thought leader. "Local institutions ... have now become large corporate entities focused on maximizing revenue rather than improving health."

Despite the hours of testimony, senators seemed unconvinced by the arguments of those supporting price caps. It was a stark contrast to the House, where the bill advanced easily and with the support of nearly every Republican lawmaker.

"My concern ... is we're arbitrarily taking this cookie-cutter approach to how we're going to do health care in Indiana with a hope and a prayer that it's going to reduce costs and increase access," said Sen. Shelli Yoder, D-Bloomington. "I have not heard one argument that that is going to be the case."

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Indiana Capital Chronicle is an independent, nonprofit news organization. Its website is indianacapitalchronicle.com.

CR almanac

Saturday 3/22	Sunday 3/23	Monday 3/24	Tuesday 3/25	Wednesday 3/26
46/29	53/38	49/33	51/29	50/30
Mostly sunny on Saturday when wind gusts may reach up to 25 mph.	There's a 90% chance of showers on Sunday with highs in the lower 50s.	Mostly sunny on Monday when there's a 20% chance of showers.	Tuesday looks to be mostly sunny with a slight chance of rain.	There's a 40% chance of rain Wednesday with temperatures dipping to 30 late.

Lotteries

Powerball 8-11-21-49-59 Power Ball: 15 Power Play: 2 Estimated jackpot: \$444 million	Daily Four: 3-2-7-8 Quick Draw: 7-8-11-12-22-26-27-30-33-37-38-39-42-46-47-51-56-73-78-80 Cash 5: 8-9-16-28-31 Estimated jackpot: \$157,500
Mega Millions Estimated jackpot: \$324 million	Ohio Wednesday Midday Pick 3: 8-1-7 Pick 4: 3-6-8-2 Pick 5: 5-3-5-7-2 Evening Pick 3: 1-1-6 Pick 4: 5-0-8-3 Pick 5: 0-0-6-7-4 Rolling Cash: 7-22-24-27-39 Estimated jackpot: \$140,000
Hoosier Wednesday Midday Daily Three: 0-2-8 Daily Four: 1-1-8-2 Quick Draw: 1-8-10-14-15-19-20-24-25-29-32-36-41-42-45-46-53-70-77-80 Evening Daily Three: 5-4-1	

Markets

Cooper Farms Fort Recovery Corn.....4.56 April corn.....4.58 May corn.....4.66	April beans10.12 Wheat 5.22
POET Biorefining Portland Corn.....4.84 April corn4.84 May corn.....4.84	ADM Montpelier Corn.....4.66 April corn4.68 Beans10.06 April beans10.09 Wheat5.27
The Andersons Richland Township Corn4.76 April corn4.76 Beans10.09	Heartland St. Anthony Corn.....4.54 April corn4.59 Beans9.79 April beans9.84 Wheat5.23

Today in history

In 2013, the Allen County Athletic Conference voted to invite Jay County High School to become its ninth member. JCHS had been independent since the Olympic Athletic Conference folded at the close of the 2009-10 school year. The school had been invited a month earlier to join the North Central Conference.

In 2022, a group of Portland residents visited a city council meeting to express concern about a proposed Indiana Department of Transportation project in downtown Portland. INDOT had proposed a variety of changes, including reducing lanes. Most of those changes were later removed from the project.

—The CR

Citizen's calendar

Today 7 a.m. — Fort Recovery School Board special session, board room, high school, 400 Butler St. 8 a.m. — Portland Redevelopment Commission, Community Resource Center, 118 S. Meridian St., Portland.	Tuesday 6 p.m. — Redkey Town Council, park cabin, 50 Mooney St., Redkey.
	Wednesday 6 p.m. — Dunkirk Park Board, city building, 131 S. Main St.

Capsule Reports

Failed to yield
Damage is estimated between \$1,000 and \$2,500 after a Portland man turned his vehicle into another Portland man's car while leav-

ing Motel 6 on the north side of Portland.
Jason D. Harding Jr., 25, was driving his 2008 Dodge Grand Caravan and attempting to leave the

parking lot at 1147 U.S. 27 when he turned south onto the highway, causing him to strike a northbound 2007 Subaru Impreza driven by 21-year-old Hunter R. Shaneyfelt.

Contracts ...

Continued from page 1
"I think it's still coming," said Clearwaters. "It's just on hold. So we'll continue to monitor that."

He said that while there have been changes with FAA personnel, he has not heard of any changes to funding from the federal agency.

Clearwaters also noted that the FAA has asked the airport to complete a runway safety area inventory within the next few weeks. His firm will handle the

inventory, which calls for making sure there are no holes, drainage issues, vegetation, equipment or other hazards within a radius around the airport runway.

He added that he is continuing to work on the draft agreement for the runway pavement rehabilitation project. He said he will send it out by email in advance of a planned vote at the April 16 meeting.

In other business, the board:

•Learned from Tavzel that all of the airport's hangars are rented and there is a waiting list.
•Heard the fuel report, which indicated that the airport sold 3,681 gallons of fuel in February for \$14,999.73. That's down from 4,471 gallons in February 2024.
•Approved the payment of claims totaling \$25,730.87. Clerk-treasurer Lori Phillips noted that the claims amount was higher than usual because

of the purchases of new electrical equipment and lawnmowers. The new constant current regulator for the airport's electrical system has been installed, Tavzel said. The previous equipment, which had problems that led to the airport being shut down for a few nights in September.
•Learned Tavzel will share information about the airport at the April 19 Portland Rotary Club meeting.

Attacks ...

Continued from page 1
While air defenses intercepted most of the drones, 10 people were hurt and several buildings were damaged in the central city of Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine's

Emergency Service said on Telegram.
Russia downed 132 Ukrainian drones, the Defense Ministry in Moscow said on Telegram, including 54 that targeted the Saratov region

The mutual drone assaults continued after the leaders of Ukraine and Russia said they're willing to abide by a 30-day truce preventing strikes on each other's power infrastructure.

Felony courts

Drug possession
An Ohio woman was sentenced to prison for a year and a half after pleading guilty to possession of methamphetamine.

Tonya N. Malinovsky, 52, 211 South Main St. Box 87, West Manchester, pleaded guilty in Jay Superior Court to the Level 6 felony. She was sentenced to 545 days in Indiana Department of Correction and given 20 days credit for time served. Malinovsky was fined \$1, assessed \$189 in court costs and ordered to pay a \$200 drug abuse, prosecution, interdiction and correction fee.

As part of her plea agreement, a Level 6 felony for possession of a narcotic drug was dismissed.

SERVICES

Saturday

Elzey, Jerry: 10 a.m., Baird-Freeman Funeral Home, 221 N. Meridian St., Portland.

Louck, Joyce: 1 p.m., MJS Mortuaries, 109 S. Meridian St., Redkey.

Haynes, Vicki: 3 p.m., W.H. Dick & Sons - Hellwarth Funeral Home, 218 W. Market St., Celina, Ohio.

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Felony arrests

Methamphetamine
Two Portland residents were arrested Wednesday for possession of methamphetamine and related charges.

Abbie S. Affolder, 39, and Mark A. Reinhart, 61, both of 1152 W. Collett Drive, were each preliminarily charged with a Level 6 felony for possession of methamphetamine, a Level 6 felony for maintaining a common nuisance and a Class A misdemeanor for possession of paraphernalia.

Affolder was being held on a \$4,500 bond in Jay County Jail. Reinhart was released from Jay County Jail on a \$4,500 bond.

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*Ads must run in April

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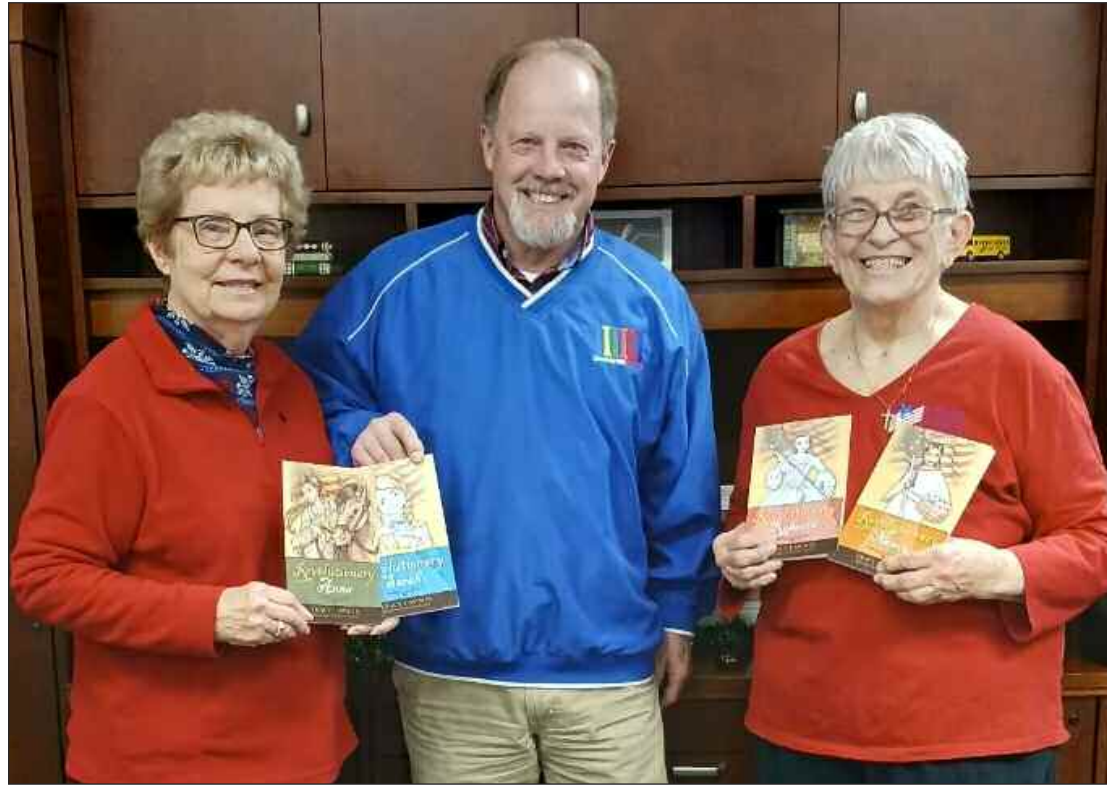


Photo provided

Liberty Belles

The Mississinewa Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution recently donated sets of "Liberty Belles" books to all Jay County elementary schools, Jay County Christian Academy and Jay County Public Library. Pictured, Mississinewa Chapter registrar and chaplain Maria Hiatt (left) and treasurer Judy Crull present the books — they were donated through a grant to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026 — to Jay School Corporation assistant superintendent Trent Paxson.

Husband leaves wife at lone table

DEAR ABBY: My husband puts everyone first before me.

An example: We were invited to his aunt Diana's 50th wedding anniversary. His father was their best man but couldn't make it due to illness. So, at the last minute, my husband was asked to sit at the head table with his aunt and her husband. I was not invited to do that, and my husband didn't ask if I could sit with them. The room was full and there were no other seats for me, so the event coordinator set up a table for me in the hall, by myself, next to the washrooms. The only time I saw anyone was when they used the facilities. My husband came to use the washroom and asked me if I wanted anything. I told him I'd like a drink, but he didn't come back until he needed to use the washroom again. I told him to take me home and he could return to the event. It was a 15-minute drive. When I talked to him the next day and explained how hurt and embarrassed I was, he thought it was selfish on MY part since it was such a special event for his aunt Diana. I was supportive of him taking part, but if it had been the reverse, I would have ensured he was seated at the main table, or at least close by. What are your thoughts? — CAST OUT IN FLORIDA

Dear Abby



Under the circumstances, your hurt feelings are understandable. You owe no one an apology for feeling rightfully offended.

DEAR ABBY: Am I a crank, or is it OK these days for waiters to become involved in diners' conversations and actually take over the conversation? At dinner last night, our waiter interrupted us three times and stayed at our table for more than five minutes taking over our conversation. It had nothing to do with the restaurant or our food — it was about his travels and all the countries he's been to and worked in. The last time he interrupted, we had finished eating and were talking. He talked for about 10 minutes. When he finally stopped to take a breath, I quickly said, "Well, let's get going!" It wasn't late and the restaurant was more than half empty. I had given him a 50% tip because it was a holiday, but after I thought about the intrusive service, I was sorry I did it. Any suggestions? — BACK OFF OR YOUR TIP WILL SUFFER

DEAR CAST OUT: What happened at your husband's aunt's anniversary celebration was an embarrassment for everybody. If you and your husband were invited as a couple, there should have been an assigned seat for you at one of the tables. You should not have been seated alone next to a bathroom. The event coordinator has plenty to apologize for, and so does your thoughtless, self-centered husband.

DEAR BACK OFF: Many people would have enjoyed that server's sharing. However, because you didn't, when his patter became intrusive, you should have politely said, "Excuse me, we are trying to have a private conversation. Could you please take our order?" (That you tipped so generously would have softened the blow.)

Kindergarten enrollment to start

Kindergarten enrollment is about to begin.

Jay School Corporation will host its Kindergarten Round-Up events April 3 at elementary schools. The schedule is as follows: 8:30 a.m. at Bloomfield Elementary, 4 p.m. at East Elementary, 5:30 p.m. at West Jay Elementary and 6 p.m. at Redkey Elementary.

Parents may fill out pre-registration forms by visiting jayschoolcorp.org or stopping by Jay School Corporation

Taking Note

administration office, 414 Floral Ave., or by visiting one of the schools.

Sip and stretch

Sip, stretch and unwind at

the fairgrounds in Portland this weekend.

Jay County Fairgrounds is hosting a wine and yoga event at 11 a.m. Saturday in the women's building. Participants will be offered mimosas before and after moving through poses with Zokawa Yoga of Muncie. Yoga mats are available for participants if needed.

Tickets are \$10. They're available at bit.ly/sipandstretch2025 or by visiting Jay County Fair's website.

Community Calendar

Notices will appear in Community Calendar as space is available. To submit an item, email news@thecr.com.

Today

DUNKIRK HISTORICAL SOCIETY — Is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the first and third Friday of each month in the former W.E. Gaunt Jewelry building, 113 S. Main St., Dunkirk.

PAST RECOVERY SERVICES — Peer Addiction Support Team recovery support group meets at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. each Friday at the Jay County Drug Prevention Coalition office at 100 N. Meridian St., Portland. For more information, call (260) 251-3259.

CINCINNATUS LEAGUE — Will hold its next meeting at noon Friday, March 21, at Harmony Cafe in Portland.

Saturday

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 10 a.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland. For more information, call (260) 251-3336 or (260) 729-7000.

Sunday

A BETTER LIFE - BRANNA'S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for all kinds of addictions, will meet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. each Sunday at Fellowship Baptist Church, 289 S. 200 West, Portland. Come early for a meal. For more information, call (260) 766-2006.

Monday

PORTLAND BREAKFAST OPTIMISTS — Will meet at 7 a.m. for breakfast at Richards Restaurant.

PING PONG — Will be played from 9 a.m. to noon

each Monday at Jay Community Center.

EUCHRE — Will be played starting at 1 p.m. each Monday at West Jay Community Center, 125 Hoover St., Dunkirk.

TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY (TOPS) — Will meet for weigh-in at 4:30 p.m., with the meeting at 5 p.m., at Trinity United Methodist Church, 323 S. Meridian St., Portland. New members welcome. For more information, call (260) 726-5924.

PREGNANCY CARE CENTER — Free pregnancy testing with ongoing support during and after pregnancy. The center is located at 216 S. Meridian St., Portland. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (260) 726-8636. Walk-ins accepted.

BREAD OF LIFE COMMUNITY FAMILY MEAL — Will be served from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Asbury United Methodist Church, 204 E. Arch St. in Portland. Everyone is welcome.

PORTLAND EVENING OPTIMIST CLUB — Will meet at 6 p.m. the second and fourth Monday of each month at Richards Restaurant.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 6:30

p.m. each Monday at A Second Chance At Life Ministries, 228 S. Meridian St. in Portland. For more information, call Brenda Eads at (260) 726-9625 or Dave Keen at (260) 251-8792.

Tuesday

JAY COUNTY PASTORS AND CHAPLAINS — Meet at 8 a.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Richard's Restaurant.

COMPASSIONATE CONNECTIONS RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP — A group for anyone with a substance use disorder that helps individuals find connections as they develop long-term recovery meets at noon each Tuesday in the IU Health Jay Outpatient Behavioral Health Center, Entrance C, 510 W. Votaw St., Portland.

BRYANT COMMUNITY CENTER EUCHRE — Will be played at 1 p.m. each Tuesday. The public is welcome.

A BETTER LIFE - BRANNA'S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for substance abuse. Meal starts at 6 p.m. and the meeting is from 6:30 to 8 p.m. every Tuesday at the Nazarene Fellowship Building across from the Nazarene church, 249 E. Center St., Dunkirk.

Sudoku

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

Level: Advanced

Thursday's Solution

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

The objective is to fill a nine-by-nine grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine three-by-three boxes (also called blocks or regions) contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time each.

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The Commercial Review

Pre-authorization: Keep it, with reforms

To the editor:
If you or someone you know has ever experienced the frustration of a delayed medical procedure or a denied prescription due to prior authorization, you're not alone.

Letters to the Editor

That's why Indiana lawmakers are considering changes. House Bill 1003 offers targeted, common-sense reforms that streamline prior authorization and improve transparency, while Senate Bill 480 would significantly limit its effectiveness — and increase healthcare costs.

Prior authorization is one of the few tools to keep healthcare costs in check, ensuring that treatments are medically necessary and cost-effective. It can direct patients toward clinically proven, lower-cost medications, reducing prescription costs by as much as 80%. It also ensures that MRIs and CT scans are obtained at facilities offering the best patient value.

The financial implications of limiting prior authorization are consider-

able. According to a 2024 report, Indiana's employer-sponsored health plans could see costs increase by up to \$241 million annually, potentially leading to raised premiums or reduced benefits. Similarly, Indiana's Medicaid program could face an additional \$395 million in costs each year, putting a strain on the state budget and diverting resources from other essential services.

Patients deserve faster, fairer, more transparent medical care. Lawmakers can achieve that by fixing prior authorization with HB 1003.

David Ober
Senior vice president of business operations and finance
Indiana Chamber of Commerce



Go after the criminals

By **PATRICIA LOPEZ**
Bloomberg Opinion
Tribune News Service

Border Czar Tom Homan was hand-picked by President Donald Trump to carry out the mass deportations that were central to Trump's winning campaign. Since his appointment, Homan has sown fear among immigrant communities, blustered on television about prosecuting mayors of blue cities who don't comply, and staged photo ops of shackled migrants being flown out of the U.S.

But large-scale removals have yet to materialize. Increasingly, it seems Trump's promise of "mass deportations" is simply a reprise of his first-term pledge to "build the wall" — an unattainable objective that serves only to grab attention and drive outrage.

Consider Trump's goal of ejecting 11 million undocumented immigrants, some of whom have lived here for decades. Achieving that number would require a mind-boggling 229,000 removals per month over the course of his term. The full court press Homan and ICE have been waging has netted only a fraction of that. With some ICE agents reportedly working six days a week, Homan has managed to push arrests to about 20,000 for all of February.

Many of these have been rounded up in relatively small raids. A week-long operation in Houston detained 646 undocumented immigrants, including what ICE said were over 500 criminal migrants and gang members. More typical has been a recent incident in Duluth, Minnesota, where ICE agents swarmed a location where workers were installing a new roof, nabbing five. ICE picked up another seven at a manufacturing facility in St. Louis Park, a suburb of Minneapolis.

To be sure, Trump's obsessive energy on immigration has resulted in some clear progress on this part of his agenda. Border crossings have fallen to historic lows, in part because Trump shut down the asylum process that had refugees camping out at the southern border.

The refugee program had gotten out of control due to President Joe Biden's well-intentioned belief that the U.S. should have more generous policies for admitting

Patricia Lopez



refugees. Shuttering it without warning was an unnecessarily brutal measure that surely endangered some refugees' lives. At the same time, Americans' tolerance for mushrooming clusters of refugees was wearing thin as newcomers strained resources.

And the new administration's focus on "worst first," as Homan calls it, is a smart use of resources. Aiming squarely at removing criminal migrants may not result in large numbers — since most undocumented immigrants don't commit crimes — but is one that most U.S. residents would support. To show how necessary that measure was, ICE in 2024 identified 626,000 undocumented immigrants with criminal histories who were on the "non-detained docket," meaning they were awaiting deportation but not in custody. Of those, 435,000 had criminal convictions, while another 226,000 faced pending charges.

Still, even if ICE deports all those people, that will be just 5.7% of Trump's 11 million goal. So the pressure from Trump, who reportedly checks in weekly with Homan on the need to produce bigger numbers, continues to build.

The administration would do better to abandon the 11 million goal. If Homan does further ramp up his efforts, it will ripple out to nearly all facets of American life, including businesses, local governments and families.

Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock Inc., the world's largest asset manager, warned that Trump's plan for large-scale deportations could have severe impacts on agriculture and construction, triggering a labor shortage and higher prices, which in turn could further fuel inflation. Fink said leaders in the agriculture sector have said up to 70% of their workers are migrants.

It's no secret where the undocumented immigrants are. Go to any meatpacking plant, farm,

Aiming squarely at removing criminal migrants may not result in large numbers — since most undocumented immigrants don't commit crimes — but is one that most U.S. residents would support.

restaurant or large-scale construction site and agents would find hundreds of potential arrestees. Heck, go to any Home Depot parking lot, where immigrants congregate waiting to be hired as day labor.

Homan knows this. But he lacks the resources to tackle the size of the operation Trump wants. That's why Homan is going after mayors. He needs their resources and cooperation. Their jails can add detention space and their police officers can provide tip-offs and aid.

But, like his boss, Homan is inclined to demand, not to ask. Informed that the Boston police commissioner would not be cooperating with federal agents (a right protected by the 10th amendment) Homan responded by saying, "I'm coming to Boston. I'm bringing hell with me."

Homan would be better advised to pursue the achievable goals of deporting criminal migrants and revamping the refugee process in a way that maintains border security. And to try collaborating with cities instead of making them adversaries. It's worked in the past.

Chasing down millions of undocumented immigrants who mostly work, pay taxes and keep to themselves is both foolish and self-defeating.

Lopez is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering politics and policy.

Government is there to protect

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

The courts have said no to Kroger's \$25 billion offer to buy/merge with Albertsons grocery stores.

It doesn't matter that Kroger is not available in many Indiana towns and Albertsons is non-existent in Indiana. This has national implications according to the courts and experts on monopoly practices.

To the courts and the experts, Kroger and Albertsons, if I might use fewer keyboard strikes, are traditional grocery stores.

The judgements were made on that basis.

It's a good basis if you look at the published data. The latest numbers I found showed the top 20 grocery chains had two-thirds (66.6%) of U.S. grocery sales in 2016, up from two-fifths (39.2%) in 1992.

That brings us to the question: "What is a grocery store?"

I've bought bookcases and tables from Aldi's. I got mushrooms, meat and ice cream from Walmart and a camping stool from Albertson's many years ago.

Costco is an adventure in shopping with patio furniture, pants, fresh fish, bagels and booze. Costco is the store where finding what you want is made exciting by a staff that moves products around frequently, forcing you to pass inviting items not on your shopping list. Alternatively, without explanation, a staple in your fridge is no longer available.

Once upon a time, you carried a list of desired products to the grocer's where a clerk gathered your items and asked about your attractive daughter. Today, you visit Whole Foods, Fresh Market or Fresh Thyme, places where choices are "curated" for the discerning, well-heeled shopper. No one knows you or your indecisive daughter/son.

Eye on the Pie



Kroger and Albertsons is not to be until a new set of judges, legislators and administrators in Washington reconsider the anti-trust laws.

That could be tomorrow.

The world has changed and will continue to do so. It does not mean the concept of monopoly is wrong. It does mean its definition and contemporary examples must be restated.

Or we can just leave it all alone and let the businesses take care of themselves. Kroger sells alcoholic products in Indiana, but not in all states in which it operates. In some places, CVS, the drug chain, also offers beer, wine and hard liquor for those "medicinal needs" ordinary pharmaceuticals may not ameliorate.

Kroger is the go-to place for flowers when the anniversary is remembered on the day of occurrence. Amazon and Kroger both offer delivery to your home just as did the bicycle-riding youth from that 19th-century grocer.

Successful businesses grow, often too big for their managerial britches. They try to adapt to consumer changes and the changes of their competitors, but those adaptations can fail.

Government is there to protect consumers and workers.

We'll see if this current administration believes a Kroger and Albertsons merger is consistent with the public interest.

Marcus is an economist formerly with Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. Email him at mortonjmarcus@gmail.com.

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—Thomas Jefferson

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Tribune News Service/Getty Images/AFP/Alfredo Estrella

Corn producer Laura Flores harvests corn on a communal land in San Miguel Xicalco neighborhood, in Mexico City, on Oct. 4, 2022. Last week, Mexico declared native corn “an element of national identity” and banned the planting of genetically modified seeds.

Purdue, Kearney announce partnership

Goal is more collaboration between academia and agriculture

By MEIR KAHTAN and ERIN ROBINSON
Purdue Ag News

Kearney’s agriculture and food team and Purdue University’s Center for Food and Agricultural Business have established a partnership to bridge the gap and enhance collaboration between academia and industry.

The goal of the partnership is to enhance agricultural research, strengthen industry engagement, and build connections with corporate clients and industry partners across the agriculture and food value chain. Key objectives include developing industry-relevant research, providing thought leadership and preparing students to become future industry leaders through experiential learning opportunities.

Initial discussions have focused on corporate partnerships, grower engagement, and expanding career pathways for undergraduate and graduate students through awareness initiatives and internships.

“This partnership between Purdue and Kearney represents an exciting opportunity to bring industry and academia together to tackle the real challenges agribusiness professionals face today,” said Scott Downey, professor of agricultural economics and director of the Center for Food and Agricultural Business. “Kearney’s deep industry knowledge, combined with Purdue’s research expertise and global reputation, allows us to develop practical insights that help agribusiness leaders make better decisions and meaningful learning experiences that help prepare the next generation of industry leaders.”

“We are so excited to realize the potential of this partnership,” said Rob Dongoski, partner and food and agribusiness leader at Kearney. “Purdue’s history of leadership in agricultural education dates back to 1869, and Kearney will turn 100 years old next year,” Dongoski said. “While a robust legacy demonstrates a tenured track record, this partnership is about creating lasting change and codesigning the future of agriculture and food. Both Purdue and Kearney have anchored their success in developing pragmatic tools and insights to affect real change. Purdue’s deep research coupled with Kearney’s focus on impactful change for our clients creates a combination that will benefit corporate clients and introduce outstanding young people to the world of agriculture and food consulting.”

Mexico bans GMO corn

By KATE LINTHICUM
Los Angeles Times
Tribune News Service

MEXICO CITY — There’s a popular saying in Mexico, where corn is as central to national mythology as it is gastronomy.

Sin maíz, no hay país. Without corn, there is no country.

Last week, Mexico’s leaders voted to enshrine that concept in the Constitution, declaring native corn “an element of national identity” and banning the planting of genetically modified seeds.

The measure, which aims to protect Mexico’s thousands of varieties of heirloom corn from engineered versions sold by American companies, has become a nationalist rallying cry. Support for the reform has only grown in recent months as Mexico has fended off insults, threats of tariffs and even the specter of U.S. military intervention from President Donald Trump.

“Corn is Mexico,” President Claudia Sheinbaum said recently, describing the reform as a way to secure Mexico’s sovereignty. “We have to protect it for biodiversity but also culturally, because corn is what intrinsically links us to our origins, to the resistance of Indigenous peoples.”

The amendment to the Constitution comes after the defeat in December of a related effort that sought to phase out all imports of genetically modified corn. Former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador issued a presidential decree in 2023 banning the use of genetically engineered corn in dough and tortillas and for animal feed and industrial use, but a trade dispute panel ruled that it violated the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

Mexico agreed to abide by the panel’s ruling and this week’s action targets seeds, not all products.

The amendment received the last approval needed from Congress on Wednesday and it has been sent to Sheinbaum for her

Support for reform has grown in recent months

signature. It was also approved by a majority of state legislatures.

Every year the U.S. sells Mexico about \$5 billion of genetically modified corn, which has been designed to resist pests and tolerate herbicides. Most of that corn is used to feed livestock.

Even before the constitutional reform, it was mostly illegal to plant modified corn in Mexico thanks to a 2013 lawsuit brought by farmer activists. But experts say it still happens. And they say the presence of engineered seeds and corn in Mexico threatens the vast diversity of maize crops here, which span from burnt orange to purple and pink and which have been adapted over centuries to be grown at different altitudes and climates.

“There’s a disturbing level of contamination of native maize with genetically modified traits,” said Timothy Wise, a researcher at the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University. Some ancestral varieties of Mexican corn have already gone extinct, he said, “the product of illegal plantings and uncontrolled and undetected cross-pollination.”

That alarms many in Mexico, where corn has become not just a staple of the diet but a symbol of Mexico itself.

Corn was born here about 9,000 years ago, when Mesoamerican farmers first started to domesticate the wild grass known as teosinte.

It has been revered here ever since, with sculptors carving images of Centeot, the Aztec deity of corn, into pre-Hispanic

temples and artists such as Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo prominently featuring corn husks, corn fields and corn dishes in their paintings.

The poet Octavio Paz was just one of many to extol the plant’s virtues, saying, “the invention of corn by Mexicans is only comparable to man’s invention of fire.”

Probably no people in the world get a larger share of their calories from corn than Mexicans, with researchers estimating that the average person here eats one to two pounds per day.

It is mashed into masa and cooked into tortillas, tamales and tlayocoy. Its kernels are soaked in fragrant pozole and brewed into a hearty breakfast drink known as atole.

“It’s at the root of our culture, giving us strength and identity,” said María Elena Álvarez-Buylla, a researcher in molecular genetics at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. “It’s our staple. Losing sovereignty over a fundamental aspect of our life and health is very risky.”

Álvarez-Buylla led Mexico’s National Council of Humanities, Science and Technology until last year, and has published studies claiming risks to health and the environment from genetically modified corn and the herbicides that are associated with it.

She says U.S. corn is less nutritious than the Mexican version and is linked to liver disease and other problems. Her research found that nine in 10 tortilla samples from several cities in Mexico had traces of genetically modified corn.

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Test your play

1. You are declarer with the West hand at Three Notrump. North leads the seven of hearts, on which South plays the ten. How would you play the hand?

WEST: ♠ Q 8 2, ♥ K J 8, ♦ Q J 10, ♣ A 10 6 3

EAST: ♠ A K 3, ♥ 6 2, ♦ A 9 5, ♣ K J 9 7 4

2. This is a double-dummy problem. South is declarer, clubs are trump, and West leads the king of hearts. How can declarer win six of the seven remaining tricks, assuming best defense by East-West?

NORTH: ♠ —, ♥ J 9 3, ♦ K 10 6 4, ♣ —

WEST: ♠ —, ♥ K Q 7, ♦ A 5 3 2, ♣ —

EAST: ♠ 10, ♥ 8 6 5 4 2, ♦ J, ♣ —

SOUTH: ♠ 3, ♥ —, ♦ Q 9 8, ♣ J 10 5

1. There is no way to be certain of the location of the missing queen of clubs, but it is easy to assure the contract by exercising reasonable care. All you have to do is to win the first trick with the heart jack and lead a low club to dummy's king, planning to take a club finesse through South next. If the finesse wins, you are certain of 10 tricks. If it loses, you are still sure of nine tricks, whatever North returns. South is the defender you can't afford to have on lead, since he might be able to do you in with a heart return through your K-8. You therefore play the clubs so that if you do lose a trick to the queen, North, who cannot hurt you, will wind up on lead.

2. South ruffs the heart lead and returns the queen of diamonds. West cannot afford to take the ace, which would greatly simplify declarer's task, so he plays low. South overtakes the queen with the king, ruffs the nine of hearts in his hand and leads the nine of diamonds. Again, West must play low, whereupon South overtakes the nine with the ten and ruffs dummy's last heart. Now South leads the eight of diamonds. West has the A-5 of diamonds at this point, while dummy has the 6-4. Whatever West does, declarer wins one more diamond trick to attain his goal.

Tomorrow: A 90% solution.
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Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals G

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Plopped down
4 Auction signals
8 Conked out
12 "So frustrating!"
13 Mayberry tyke
14 Pennsylvania port
15 Believing in a god
17 Twain's Huck
18 Hertz rival
19 Like a dryer trap
20 Provide food for
22 Picnic spoiler
24 Spanish cheers
25 Pea soup
29 Blemish
30 — Rica
31 Resistance unit
32 Twice-baked Italian cookies
34 Party cheese

DOWN

1 Pvt.'s
2 Sound of relief
3 Cinemas
4 Polite denial
5 Makes a choice
6 Cato's
7 Moment
8 Give meaning to
9 Ireland
10 "— She Sweet"
11 Contradict

Solution time: 25 mins.

S	P	A	S	C	U	T	A	S	I	S
C	A	R	L	A	R	I	L	C	D	S
A	L	O	E	U	L	T	I	R	A	N
M	O	N	I	E	S	A	B	B	A	
B	A	T	H	E	R	I	T	G	E	O
O	U	R	S	P	I	C	S	L	A	M
R	D	A	N	Y	C	S	T	I	L	E
G	I	V	E	I	T	A	T	R		
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B	E	A	D	S	A	S	S	O	A	P

Yesterday's answer 3-21

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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Sports

Playoff atmosphere

Cubs fall to L.A. in front of electric Tokyo crowd

By MEGHAN MONTEMURRO

Chicago Tribune
Tribune News Service

TOKYO — Murmurs rippled through the packed Tokyo Dome when the velocity flashed onto the scoreboard.

Los Angeles Dodgers phenom Roki Sasaki hit 101 mph on his first pitch in the first inning Wednesday to Chicago Cubs designated hitter Seiya Suzuki in a matchup between the Japanese stars. Every time Sasaki hit triple digits in his major-league debut — five times in his three-inning start — the 42,367 fans comprised largely of Dodgers supporters reacted with a sense of awe.

Cubs fans again didn't have much to cheer for in a 6-3 loss, getting swept in the Tokyo Series. The Dodgers took a two-run lead in the second and were in command the rest of the game. When the Cubs scored, putting up a run in the third through fifth innings, the Dodgers had a knack for responding.

"Obviously he was a little amped up at home, throwing pretty hard," said Cubs second baseman Jon Berti, who went 3 for 4. "We just stayed patient with it, and unfortunately, we just couldn't get the big hit at the big time."

Shohei Ohtani's solo home run to right-center field generated the loudest pop in the stadium during the series. A replay review, which showed potential fan interference, determined the call stood.

Left-hander Justin Steele surrendered five hits and five runs in four innings. Home runs from Tommy Edman (a two-out solo homer in the third) and Enrique Hernández (two-run homer in the fourth) proved to be costly.

"My body felt good, felt good overall, made a few mistakes, got punished for it," Steele said. "The home runs kind of hurt me tonight, but overall, felt pretty good. Felt really cool to pitch here in Tokyo and it's something I'll never forget."

The Cubs had a chance for a big inning against Sasaki in the third when the right-hander lost command.

Sasaki walked three consecutive hitters following Berti's one-out single. Although they cut the Dodgers' lead to 3-1,



Tribune News Service/Chicago Tribune/John J. Kim

Cubs starting pitcher Justin Steele heads to the dugout after throwing against the Dodgers in the third inning at the Tokyo Dome on March 19, 2025, in Tokyo. Cubs fans didn't have much to cheer for in a 6-3 loss, getting swept in the Tokyo Series.

Sasaki struck out Michael Busch looking and got Matt Shaw to whiff at a slider near the dirt to end the Cubs' threat. The Cubs went 1 for 7 with runners in scoring position and left 11 on base in the loss.

"We did put pressure on him that we needed to, but he made pitches, especially in the third inning when they we had bases loaded and one out, there was a real opportunity there just to get him out of the game, the next hit might get him out of the game," manager Craig Counsell said. "And he made pitches there so give him credit."

"The stuff is really good, but I thought we did a good job executing our game plan."

The big moments kept finding Shaw, who was 1 for 5 with two strikeouts and stranded three on base with two outs. He collected his first big-league hit on an infield single off the pitcher's mitt.

"I don't think he swung the bat well this series," Counsell said. "I thought it was an important day defensively to come back and make some plays. Look, it's two games, it is what it is. I think the defense is an important thing for him to show us and improve on. And today was a good step in that direction."

The Cubs left for Arizona after the game to complete the rest of their spring training slate, featuring five games

leading up to their domestic opener March 27 at the Arizona Diamondbacks.

It creates a bit of a wonky schedule. The Cubs are off Thursday and regulars aren't expected to play in Friday's Cactus League game against the San Diego Padres. Pitchers regressing is a concern with just four games scheduled in a week's span, but there isn't much the Cubs can do to combat that.

The Cubs will face a gauntlet with their April schedule, which features seven games against the Diamondbacks, six versus the San Diego Padres, five against the Dodgers and three versus the Athletics, Texas Rangers and Philadel-

phia Phillies. The Cubs will need to grind through that stretch and not dig themselves too much of a hole.

Their focus remains on returning to the playoffs. The Tokyo Series provided a glimpse of what that type of environment might entail for the less experienced players on the Cubs roster.

"These are great experiences, period, and they're fun experiences. They're different, they are," Counsell said. "They do resemble the playoffs. The pregame especially resembled the playoffs, I thought. And so that's a great experience for our young players. And hopefully, we'll get that experience again in October."

Lions proposed NFL rule changes

Team calls for modifying playoff seeds

By NOLAN BIANCHI
The Detroit News
Tribune News Service

DETROIT — Although the Detroit Lions haven't been very active in free agency this offseason, the franchise still has been quite busy.

According to an announcement from the NFL, the Lions were

responsible for proposing two amendments to league bylaws and one playing rule change, all of which will be voted on in two weeks at the NFL's league meetings in Palm Beach, Fla.

The first bylaw proposal seeks to amend the current playoff-seeding format, something that was a hot topic of conversation entering the winner-take-all finale between the Lions and Minnesota Vikings in Week 18 in which the NFC North title and No. 1 seed in the conference were on the line.

See Proposed page 7



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