

Inflation overall is down, but there's an exception

Costs to rent and own homes still rising, making homeownership harder to reach. **In Money**

With his musical reach, is it possible to mute Diddy?

Amid arrest and federal sex crimes case, it can be tricky to avoid his hits for other stars. **In Life**

NFL Week 6: Baltimore among standouts

With a third of the season wrapped up, winners emerging include Ravens running back Derrick Henry, who has been a key addition. **In Sports**

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E2

Urgency builds for rape kit reform

USA TODAY report brings calls for accountability

Tricia L. Nadolny, Nick Penzenstadler, Jayme Fraser and Gina Barton
USA TODAY

Agencies across the country that received federal money to address neglected sexual assault kits need to do a better job of following up on test results, including supporting survivors and catching predators, according to U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee.

Lee is among lawmakers, victims' rights advocates and law enforcement officials who called for increased accountability after a USA TODAY investigation into the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, a grant program operated by the Justice Department.



PROVIDED BY IKE HAYMAN

"This is a matter of priorities – we have to send a message that we want justice for survivors. And we have to act that way as well. There is no room for mistakes to continue happening."

Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif.

Since 2015, the program has doled out nearly \$350 million to state and local agencies with the goal of testing old rape kits, investigating cases and bringing closure to survivors. But in an investigation published last month, USA TODAY found grant sites have left kits untested for a second time, given cases only a cursory review after testing and all but abandoned the idea of providing survivors answers about what happened to their kits.

Lee, a California Democrat, called the results "unacceptable" and pledged to use her position on the House Appropriations Committee to increase funding so that "every kit is tested, every case thoroughly reviewed, and every survivor kept informed."

"This is a matter of priorities – we have to send a message that we want justice for survivors," she said in a statement. "And we have to act that way as well."

In Austin, where USA TODAY found police botched an investigation into a suspected serial rapist, newly installed police chief Lisa Davis said she is focused on building trust with survivors. "There is no room for mistakes to continue happening," she said in a statement.

And in Wichita, Kansas, where police tested roughly 1,050 backlogged rape kits but attempted to tell just 17 victims of the results, the city's police chief directed his staff to partner with local advocacy organizations to develop a new victim notification policy. Andrew Ford, the Wichita Police

See RAPE KITS, Page 5A



42
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Border Patrol Agent José Gil says he has witnessed the deaths of migrants in the desert. "It takes a toll on us, all the agents, because we're not used to it," he says. PHOTOS BY OMAR ORNELAS/USA TODAY NETWORK

Border Patrol duties taxing mental health

Agency tries to help as a surge in migrant deaths takes toll on agents

Lauren Villagran
USA TODAY

SANTA TERESA, N.M. – Hours before it happened, Border Patrol Agent José Gil knew someone was going to die.

A sensor on the border was tripped and Gil, responding to a potential illegal crossing, had come face to face with a smuggler through the steel border fence, as migrants scattered into the Mexican dunes to hide. "Look, don't bring them across," Gil warned the smuggler, known as a coyote. "You are going to kill them. We've been finding people here, dying."

Migrant deaths have surged for a second year along this stretch of U.S.-Mexico border in West Texas and southern New Mexico. The personal and economic toll on migrant families of losing their loved one – often the breadwinner – is immense.

But there is a hidden toll, too, on the border agents who find the

See BORDER PATROL, Page 2A



Dona Ana County Fire and Rescue Services workers help transport the body of a dead migrant found in the desert in New Mexico about 2 miles north of the international boundary with Mexico last year.

CAMPAIGN WHISPERERS JOSH SHAPIRO

Pa. governor opens playbook for Harris

Onetime contender to be her running mate shares keys to must-win swing state

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This story is part of USA TODAY's occasional series Campaign Whisperers. The series takes an in-depth look at the aspiring presidential candidates, lawmakers and officials President Joe Biden and now Vice President Kamala Harris' reelection team have chosen to act as surrogates for the 2024 campaign, working to address dissent, smooth out tensions, and, ultimately, get swing voters to cast a ballot for the Democratic ticket.



Gov. Josh Shapiro expresses his support for Kamala Harris at a rally at Temple University in Philadelphia on Aug. 6. CHRIS LACHALL/USA TODAY NETWORK

Francesca Chambers
USA TODAY

PHILADELPHIA — The crowd was electric. Its roar intoxicating. It was almost as if Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro had not been passed over by Vice President Kamala Harris to join her ticket hours earlier.

Shapiro stepped up to the microphone. He delivered one of the fiercest speeches of his career and pledged to work his tail off to elect Harris.

Harris is a friend of two decades, he said. A former state attorney general like him, she's courtroom tough, he added, and ready to face former Republican President Donald Trump.

"Let me tell you something. I ain't going back. I am not going back. I am not, and neither do you want to go back,"

See SHAPIRO, Page 6A