

“All the News  
That’s Fit to Print”

# The New York Times

**THE WEATHER**  
Today, early snow and rain, cloudy in the afternoon, high 39. **Tonight**, clouds and fog early, clearing late, low 36. **Tomorrow**, sunny, windy, high 43. Weather map, Page A22.

VOL. CLXXV . . . . No. 60,742

© 2025 The New York Times Company

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2025

Prices in Canada may be higher

\$4.00



CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Four Centuries of Korean Pottery in Japan**  
Kazuteru Osako working in Kagoshima, Japan, at Chin Jukan, his family company that stretches back 15 generations. Page A9.

## As Clinics Shut, Abortion Foes Seize Moment

**By CAROLINE KITCHENER and ASHLEY CAI**  
AMES, Iowa — Tamra Call recognized an opportunity for her Christian-based clinic to reach more women than ever before. For months, Ms. Call had been hearing news reports of Planned Parenthoods closing across the country — forced to shutter amid funding cuts from the Trump administration.

Now, the closures had reached her hometown, Ames, Iowa. In just a few days, the Planned Parenthood one block from Iowa State University would close, leaving thousands of students in Ames with few options for reproductive health care. Obria Medical Clinic — providing care Ms. Call describes as “Christ-centered” and “life-affirming” — was ready to step in. About 50 of Planned Parenthood’s nearly 600 clinics have shut down this year, largely because of Republican moves to cut the organization off from government money — fulfilling a long-held conservative dream to defund the nation’s largest abortion provider. Already prohibited from using federal funds for abortions, Planned Parenthood had relied on government dollars to provide other reproductive services for some two million patients a year, many of whom are low-income and use the clinics as a health care provider of last resort.

As Planned Parenthood closures mount, a different kind of organization is seeking to fill the void: anti-abortion pregnancy centers. While the typically Christian-based centers have long provided pregnancy tests and counseling for women facing unexpected pregnancies, some have expanded to offer a range of medical services. The founder of the national Obria network, of which the Ames clinic is a member, described Obria as a “medical brand” intended to “attract women out of Planned Parenthood.”

But because the Obria in Ames does not advertise its faith-based approach, patients may struggle to identify the key differences between Planned Parenthood and the Christian-based clinic. Instead of prescribing birth control, Obria nurses teach patients how to monitor fertility by tracking their menstrual cycles. Instead of perform-

Continued on Page A18

## To New Middle Class, Nothing Seems Affordable

**By SABRINA TAVERNISE**  
A nerdy economics essay recently went viral. It asserted that the federal measure for the poverty line was woefully outdated and that for a family of four, the income needed today to function in American society was \$140,000. The essay, by Michael Green, a financial market strategist, struck a nerve and set off another round of debate about affordability, focused this time on whether people with six-figure incomes should feel strapped. Economists derided the essay. They pointed out that the typical middle-class family today is actually much richer than its counter-

### House? Children? All Feel Out of Reach as Pessimism Sets In.

part in the 1960s, when the poverty measure came about. And, they added, most Americans eat out, have smartphones and take flights, unimaginable luxuries generations ago. President Trump has tried to dismiss the issue of affordability, saying in a speech this month that it was “a hoax” and “you don’t need 37 dolls for your daughter.” Last week, he returned to the

topic, defending his record and asserting that gas and drug prices had come down. But in interviews with Americans in their 20s and 30s, they said that the raw numbers did not come close to capturing the reality of their lives. They were all what economists regard as middle class, some making well over \$63,360, the median for full-time, year-round workers. They knew they were not poor. They could afford to buy eggs. But they were contending with an economy that had grown increasingly unequal in recent decades. They described feeling that the basics of a middle-class life —

Continued on Page A16



REBECCA S. GRATZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Justy Riggs-Panther in the bedroom of her son Zach, who died in 2024 working at a Nebraska farm.

## Mysterious Death of a Teenager at a Hog Farm

**By YANQI XU**  
ST. EDWARD, Neb. — Zach Panther hadn’t yet figured out his future: whether to pursue college, or find a job in a nearby city. To put away some money, his mother encouraged him to work at a hog farm outside his hometown, St. Edward, Neb. Pulling early morning shifts, the 17-year-old helped with maintenance at Beaver Valley Pork, one of the nearly 100 farms owned by Pillen Family Farms, the larg-

### OSHA and an Autopsy Provide No Answers

est pork producer in the state. The company was founded in 1993 by Jim Pillen, now the governor of Nebraska. On April 1, 2024, just six weeks into the job, Zach used spray foam to seal up cracks in a barn, then did inventory in a maintenance room. When he didn’t show up for

lunch, his supervisor went looking for him — and found him collapsed on the floor. None of the dozen or so other employees witnessed his death, according to a report by the Boone County Sheriff’s Office, and there was no evidence of foul play. Monthslong inquiries by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, a federal agency, and the county coroner’s office did not determine how Zach died. Those investigations, however,

Continued on Page A12

## Brennan Asks To Keep Judge Out of Inquiry

### Ex-C.I.A. Chief May Be a Justice Dept. Focus

**By CHARLIE SAVAGE**  
WASHINGTON — John O. Brennan, the former C.I.A. director, sought on Monday to prevent the Justice Department from steering a sprawling investigation into political adversaries of President Trump to a judge in Florida who issued rulings favorable to Mr. Trump during his classified documents case. The request, addressed to Chief Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga of the Federal District Court for the Southern District of Florida, was extraordinary. It would be highly unusual for a chief judge to block a colleague from overseeing an investigation. But a lawyer for Mr. Brennan argued that under the circumstances, she had the authority and a duty to do so. In a 16-page letter, the lawyer, Kenneth L. Wainstein, asserted that the Justice Department, in what he portrayed as a violation of prosecutorial ethics, appeared to be planning to “manipulate grand jury and case assignment procedures” to put the investigation into Mr. Trump’s perceived foes under Judge Aileen M. Cannon.

Citing a pattern of the judge’s rulings in the documents case as indicating bias, Mr. Wainstein wrote, “We urge your honor to exercise your supervisory authority as chief judge to ensure the United States attorney does not steer this matter to the Fort Pierce division and to the courtroom of Judge Aileen Cannon.” Judge Altonaga and Judge Cannon declined to comment through the district’s clerk of the court. The Justice Department did not respond to a request for comment. The letter by Mr. Wainstein, who served in the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Joseph R. Biden Jr., also amounted to a public pushback on what he described as a “concocted case” and “politically motivated and fact-free criminal investigation.” Mr. Wainstein said he was making his request public “as a means of shedding light on the government’s course of action in this matter.” Prosecutors loyal to Mr. Trump, he wrote, had been “taking advantage of the secrecy around the grand jury process to undertake irregular activity outside of public view.” Officials working on the investigation, led by the U.S. attorney in Miami, Jason A. Reding Quiñones, have already sent subpoenas to former officials involved in a January 2017 intelligence assessment

Continued on Page A17

## PRESIDENT HALTS FIVE WIND FARMS WORTH BILLIONS

### STIFLING THE INDUSTRY

### U.S., Without Specifying, Cites Security Risk of East Coast Projects

**By MAXINE JOSELOW and LISA FRIEDMAN**  
WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Monday said it would pause leases for five wind farms under construction off the East Coast, essentially gutting the country’s nascent offshore wind industry in a sharp escalation of President Trump’s crusade against the renewable energy source. The decision injected uncertainty into \$25 billion worth of projects that were expected to power more than 2.5 million homes and businesses across the Eastern United States, according to Turn Forward, an offshore wind advocacy group. The five wind farms were projected together to create together about 10,000 jobs. The move left intact just two operational wind farms in U.S. coastal waters — one small project off Rhode Island that began running in 2016 and a larger project off New York that has been fully operational since 2023.

The five wind farms targeted on Monday had obtained leases from the Biden administration. Citing unspecified national security concerns, the Trump administration said it would freeze those leases, effectively blocking construction or operations and jeopardizing billions of dollars that had already been invested. One project, Vineyard Wind 1 off Massachusetts, is already partly running, with about half of the project’s 62 turbines sending power to the electric grid. In announcing the pause, Doug Burgum, the secretary of the interior, said in a statement that “the prime duty of the United States government is to protect the American people.” He said the decision addressed emerging national security risks as well as “vulnerabilities created by large-scale offshore wind projects with proximity near our East Coast population centers.” In a letter to the wind farm developers, Matthew Giacona, the acting director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, declined to explain the national security concern but wrote that suspending the projects was the only way to avert the danger. Mr. Trump has repeatedly

Continued on Page A13

## Beak of an Urban Bird Evolved When Humans Stayed Home

**By EMILY ANTHERS**  
About two decades ago, the dark-eyed junco, a forest-dwelling sparrow, began to colonize urban Los Angeles. The birds proved to be remarkably successful in the city, making themselves at home on the bustling campus of the University of California, Los Angeles. They also rapidly diverged from wildland counterparts, adopting different breeding behaviors and showing different physical traits, including shorter wings. The urban juncos also developed shorter, stubbier beaks, a shift that may have been driven by a change in diet. But when U.C.L.A.’s campus shut down during the Covid-19 pandemic, something remarkable happened: The beaks of juncos born on campus reverted to their wildland shape. Several years later, after the pandemic-related restrictions had been lifted, the dis-



SIERRA GLASSMAN

In Los Angeles, dark-eyed juncos developed longer beaks during the Covid-19 pandemic.

inctive urban beak shape returned, researchers reported in a new study on Monday. For ecologists, the pandemic represented a remarkable natural experiment, an opportunity to study what wild animals did when humans stayed home, en masse.

Continued on Page A17



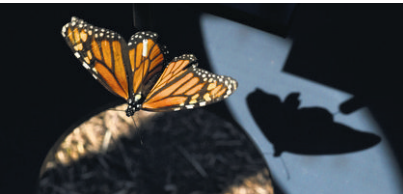
**NATIONAL A10-19, 22**  
**A Gamble on Holiday Markets**  
The booths at the festive fairs in New York City are expensive to rent, and the payoffs aren’t guaranteed. PAGE A10

**Challenging G.O.P. on Bigotry**  
Vivek Ramaswamy, a Republican candidate for Ohio governor, called out intolerance in the party. PAGE A14

**INTERNATIONAL A4-9**  
**Argentina Opens Up to Trade**  
President Javier Milei is eliminating barriers to what had been a closed-off economy, moving in the opposite direction of President Trump. PAGE A6

**Gunman’s Hometown in India**  
The attacker killed at a Hanukkah celebration in Australia came from an area known for migration. PAGE A4

**SPORTS B6-9**  
**Stretching His Prime Time**  
Now in his 13th N.H.L. season, the Avalanche’s Nathan MacKinnon focuses on improvement and longevity. PAGE B6



**SCIENCE TIMES D1-8**  
**Guided by a Hidden Compass**  
Butterflies are helping scientists figure out how a magnetic sensitivity helps animals navigate the planet. PAGE D1

**Some Real Head-Scratchers**  
The top puzzles from a design contest show how mathematics and “devilish ideas” can take physical form. PAGE D1

**BUSINESS B1-5**  
**War of Christmas Trees**  
Fake or real? Tree farmers and the marketing group that supports them want more Americans to buy live-cut trees. A new Home Depot ad gave them holiday hope. PAGE B1

**Dodging Rare-Earth Shortage**  
America’s ability to make precision-guided missiles has been threatened during President Trump’s tariff war. But experienced players have rescued the supply chain, for now. PAGE B1

**OPINION A20-21**  
**Michelle Cottle** PAGE A20



**ARTS C1-6**  
**Climate Confusion**  
Singers, dancers and soap bubbles convey an ambivalent message on art making people pay attention in “The Seasons,” a Vivaldi pastiche. PAGE C1

