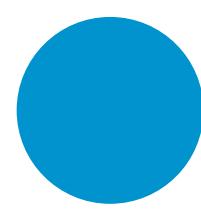


## 2026 Honda Prelude falls short honoring its roots

Pretty and distinctive but not a sports car like previous versions, reviewer says. **In Money**

## Time for commissioner to fix NBA's tanking crisis

Column: If board doesn't act, more teams will look to manipulate outcomes. **In Sports**



# USA TODAY

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ETIENNE LAURENT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Lady Gaga reveals her favorite Pokémon

Singer is among celebs marking 30th anniversary of the Japanese media franchise. She shares why she loves this character with "sweet eyes." **In Life**

### CARING FOR KIN



Rochelle prays with her grandson, Jayden, before he eats in her home in San Antonio, Texas, on Aug. 24.

LORIANNE WILLETT FOR USA TODAY

## Grandkids' caregiving fight taken to court

Relatives are not guaranteed a voice

**Jayne Fraser**  
USA TODAY

Baby Briana's arms twitched and her legs flopped against the cold concrete. She stopped breathing.

The 16-month-old needed an ambulance to arrive within minutes and someone to pump air into her lungs with infant CPR until it got there. Briana's life depended on who was with her when a hidden health condition stole her breath.

A few weeks ago, it wasn't clear who that would be.

Texas child welfare workers removed the girl and her brother – both under age 2 – from their parents' home in January 2025. Their nana Rochelle

cared for them for months until, one day last September, a state official took the children from day care without notice or explanation. Eventually, the kids were driven 170 miles to live with strangers.

Afraid she'd never see Briana and Jayden again, Rochelle decided to fight to bring them home. It would only happen if she could assert her voice in a court where she had, so far, felt voiceless.

"I am doing everything I can to keep our family together," Rochelle, who is in her 50s, said. "I hope in the end, like my chaplain said, I don't make any mistakes that can't be undone."

She was not, technically, part of the court case that will decide her grandkids' future. She was the relative who cared for the kids a few days each week since birth, did so full-time for seven months as a kinship foster parent and committed in writing to be their permanent caregiver should the court terminate parental rights for her son and his partner. But in the eyes of the children's court, she was only a grandmother.

Associate Judge Raul Perales, who oversees the case involving Rochelle's grandchildren in Bexar County, said rules of court that "intimidate" and "confuse" many relatives are

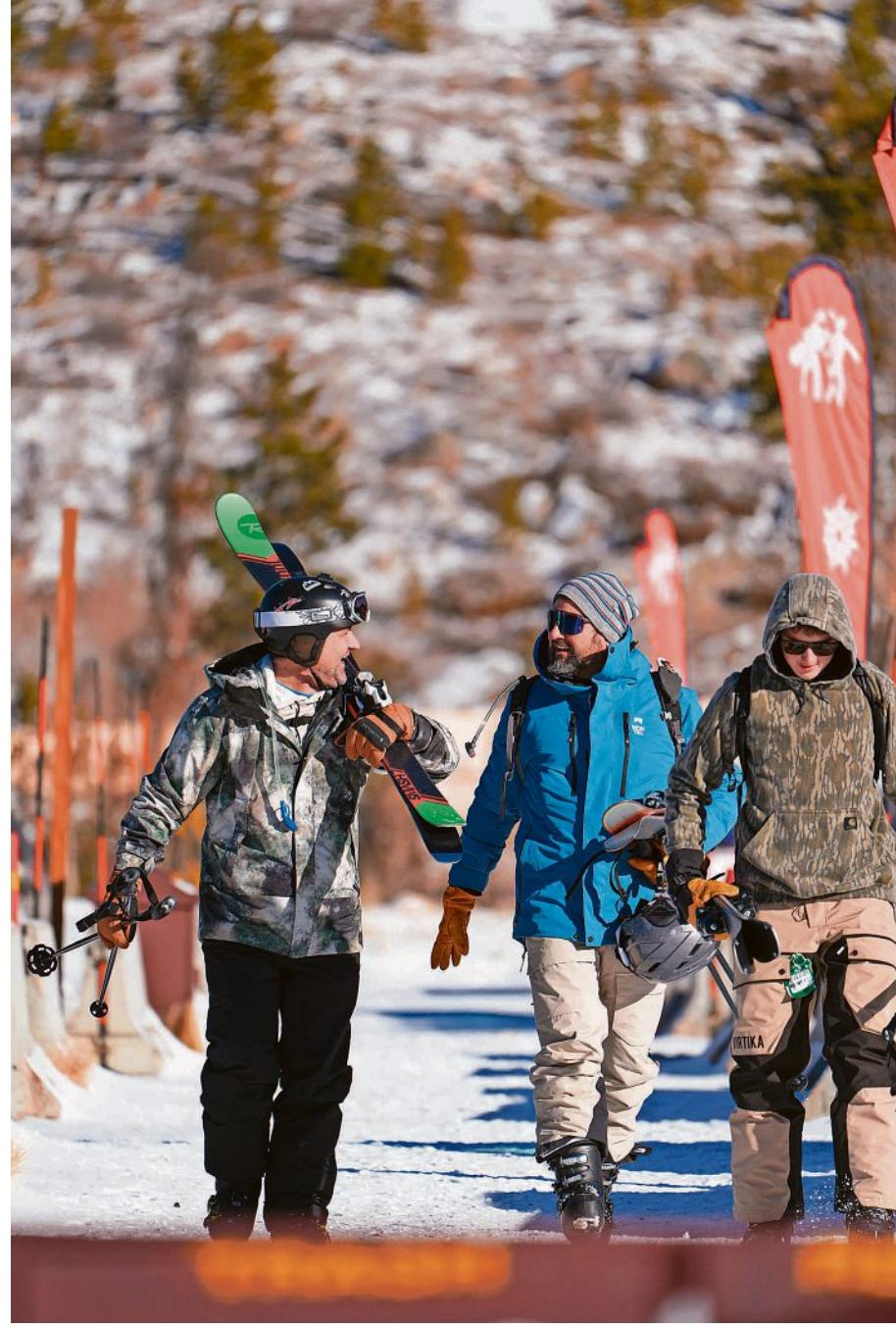
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## West's mild winter is threatening water supplies, ecosystems, more



Skiers and snowboarders faced low snow conditions Feb. 4 at Colorado's Keystone Resort, which relied on extensive snowmaking to keep slopes open. Statewide, the snowpack is about 50% of normal. **TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY**

## Concerns rise as snowpack levels lagging

**Doyle Rice** USA TODAY

While the East may have been plunged into a snowy deep freeze this winter, weather data shows something perhaps more notable is happening in the West, where snowpack has been low and temperatures high. • In fact, much of the West is on track for one of its mildest winters on record, according to a recent report from Weather.com. • For example, people in normally snowy Salt Lake City have barely seen a flake of snow and Phoenix is sweltering through its warmest winter since records began, according to AccuWeather meteorologist Paul Pastelok. • And overall, despite the eastern chill, amazingly it's the fifth-warmest start to winter since 1981 when the entire country is figured in, Washington Post meteorologist Ben Noll said on X.

### 'Consequential economic impacts' already underway

Mountainous snow is vital for ski tourism and as a source of water, so the lack of snow in the West is worrisome, experts said.

"Snowpack is of critical economic and ecological importance to Western communities," according to a recent report from the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "Consequential economic impacts have already occurred, especially for the recreation sector and the communities that rely on it. Water supply concerns continue to increase, impacting key economic sectors like agriculture, recreation, and energy."

See WEST'S WINTER, Page 5A

**"Snowpack is of critical economic and ecological importance to Western communities."**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

## Federal workers find new purpose

Laid-off employees take skills to state, local level

**Sarah D. Wire**  
USA TODAY

Meghan Burns was busy at work for the Department of Education in March 2025 when her computer restarted at exactly 5 p.m. When it turned back on, she learned her job as a civil rights attorney had been terminated.

In a heartbeat, she and colleagues in seven of the department's 10 civil rights offices were locked out and no longer federal employees.

Public service was the only career Burns had ever had. She wasn't ready for it to be over.

"When I graduated law school, I specifically moved to DC because I knew I wanted to do public service and civil-rights-based work. That has been all I've done," she said.

More than 317,000 employees stopped working for the federal government in 2025, according to the Office of Personnel Management, as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping efforts to downsize the government.

See PURPOSE, Page 2A



Maxim Naumov's parents were killed in the crash of American Airlines Flight 5342 near Washington, DC, in January 2025. **JEFF CURRY/IMAGN IMAGES**

## U.S. skater's path to Olympics paved with love, loss, resilience

**Jordan Mendoza**  
USA TODAY

MILAN – After Maxim Naumov finished in fourth place at the 2025 U.S. figure skating championships for the third straight year, his father, Vadim, wanted to game-plan.

Vadim and Maxim's mother, Evgenia Shishkova, were two-time Olympic pair skaters for Russia, and they knew Maxim's upcoming year was crucial with the 2026 Winter Olympics on the horizon.

The patriarch laid out the plan for the rest of the season. It was time to change the mindset and approach, get more consistent and be resilient. He

See NAUMOV, Page 5A

### Follow updates online

Read about Maxim Naumov's emotional short program performance at [usatoday.com/sports/olympics](http://usatoday.com/sports/olympics).

### IN SPORTS

#### More from Milan

Ben Ogden ends USA's cross-country drought, and snowboarder Chloe Kim looks to continue Olympic magic.