

In Webisode 57DHYAFX **1** Health and Medicine Eyesight The Best and Worst Habits for Eyesight Are carrots good? Is blue light bad? **2** Health and Medicine Fitness 8 Fitness Myths That Drive Experts Crazy Running is bad for your knees The heavier the weight the better Ice baths **3** Health and Medicine 10 Gut Myths Corrected **4** Iowa Democrat Wins State Senate Seat Fending Off GOP Supermajority By holding a left leaning seat in suburban Des Moines Democrats ensured that Republicans would not have a supermajority in the State Senate **5** Massachusetts Health and Medicine Tatiana Schlossberg of the Kennedy Family Dies at 35 **6** RFK Junior Lack of Knowledge of Science and Medicine ACCV Meetings only on Teams not on Youtube Who is Up For Some Explosive Statutorily Required Policy Advisory Meeting Action? **7** RFK Junior Lack of Knowledge of Science and Medicine This Is the Damage RFK Junior Has Done in Less Than a Year After claiming without presenting a shred of proof that Covid vaccines played a role in the death of 10 children top officials at the agency have proposed a roster of new requirements for the shots including several that critics say would be logistically impossible and could leave us with no FDA approved Covid or flu vaccines **8** Trump family business delays launch of 499 dollar gold smartphone US made device planned by end of year after hit by recent government shutdown affecting shipments **9** Trump ended funding including to the EPA and science research **10** Trump pulled funding of National Public Radio NPR CEO Was a Right Wing Target Then the Real Trouble Started **11** Virginia Health and Medicine Decades of abuse by a Virginia doctor are finally addressed in court **12** United Kingdom Artificial Intelligence used to subvert elections although the motive may be more financial than political China based interference **13** United Kingdom Scotland The Shetland Islands Archipelago Lerwick Wood burning tradition The wood burning in Lerwick contributes to climate change with the emission of Carbon Dioxide and PM 2 point 5 and creates air pollution that harms human life and shortens human lives Some traditions are so stupid they should not be honored and the old bad traditions of the past should not be reenacted **15** Europe and United Kingdom Mass Transit interrupted Eurostar Cancels All Trains After Power Failure in Channel Tunnel **16** Ukraine Bogus Claim that Ukraine attacked near a Putin Residence aims to push Trump toward supporting Russia over Ukraine **17** Ukraine Attack on global food security as Russia hits wheat ships and ports US has verified as fake the claimed attack on Putin residence says Zelenskyy **18** South Africa Solar Energy from China Cheap Solar Is Transforming Lives and Economies Across Africa Main Content

**1** Health and Medicine Eyesight The Best and Worst Habits for Eyesight Are carrots good? Is blue light bad? Experts weigh in on common beliefs Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times January 31 2025 If you were ever scolded as a child for reading in the dark or if you have used blue light blocking glasses when working on a computer you might have incorrect ideas about eye health About four in 10 adults in the United States are at high risk for vision loss according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention But many eye conditions are treatable or preventable said an assistant professor of ophthalmology and visual sciences at the University of Michigan Here are nine common beliefs people have about eye health and what experts have to say about them Reading a book or looking at an electronic device up close is bad for your eyes True Our eyes are not meant to focus on objects close to our face for long periods of time When we do especially as children it encourages the eyeball to lengthen which over time can cause nearsightedness or myopia To help reduce the strain on your eyes it is recommended that you follow the 20 20 20 rule After every 20 minutes of close reading look at something at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds Reading in the dark can worsen your eyesight False However if the lighting is so dim that you need to hold your book or tablet close to your face that can increase the risks mentioned above and create

eyestrain which can cause soreness around the eyes and temples headache and difficulty concentrating But these are usually temporary symptoms **Spending more time outside helps eyesight True** Some research mostly focused on children suggests that outdoor time can reduce the risk of developing myopia Experts do not fully understand why this is but some research suggests that bright sunlight may encourage the retina to produce dopamine which discourages eye lengthening though these experiments have mostly been conducted with animals **Too much ultraviolet light can harm eyesight True** There is a reason experts say not to stare at the sun Too much exposure to ultraviolet A and B rays in sunlight can cause irreversible damage to the retina This can also increase your risk of developing cataracts Too much UV light exposure can also increase the risk for developing cancers in the eye though this risk is low Wearing sunglasses glasses or contacts that block UV rays can offer protection Taking a break from wearing glasses can prevent your eyesight from getting worse False Some patients who need glasses one eye doctor that they do not wear their glasses all the time because they think it will make their condition worse That is not true he said If you need glasses you should wear them Even a little blue light from screens is damaging to your eyes False While some research has found that exposure to blue light can damage the retina and potentially cause vision problems over time no solid evidence has confirmed that this happens with typical exposures in humans There is also no evidence that wearing blue light blocking glasses will improve eye health But screens can be bad for eyesight in the other ways described above including by causing dry eyes When we stare at a screen we just do not blink as often as we should she said and that can cause eyestrain and temporary blurred vision **Smoking is bad for eye health True** A 2011 CDC study linked smoking with age related eye diseases in older adults including cataracts and age related macular degeneration a disease where part of the retina breaks down and blurs your vision Toxic chemicals in cigarettes enter your bloodstream and damage sensitive tissues in the eyes including the retina lens and macula **Carrots are good for your eyes True** While a diet full of carrots will not give you perfect vision some evidence suggests that the nutrients in them are good for eye health One large clinical trial found that antioxidants like beta carotene and vitamins C and E could slow the progression of age related macular degeneration Following an antioxidant rich diet will not necessarily prevent an eye disease from occurring but it can be helpful particularly for people with early macular degeneration Worsening eyesight is an inevitable part of aging for everyone False Many of us can expect that our eyesight will deteriorate at least a little bit with age But quite a few causes of declining eyesight in adulthood including age related macular degeneration cataracts and glaucoma are preventable or treatable if you catch them early If your vision is starting to wane do not dismiss it as just aging Seeing an optometrist or ophthalmologist right away or regularly every year will give you the best chance of staving off these conditions

**2** Health and Medicine 8 Fitness Myths That Drive Experts Crazy Running is bad for your knees The heavier the weight the better Ice baths **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization** The New York Times June 20 2024 When done right exercise can be a veritable miracle drug But follow the wrong advice and you can easily set yourself up for injury Take the sit up It can make low back pain worse Myth 1 You should stretch before you work out Stretching a muscle for more than 90 seconds temporarily diminishes its strength If you really enjoy the feeling of stretching before physical activity do not hold the stretch for long Save your stretching for a separate time I like to tell people to do it before bed since it gives your muscles time to recover before moving again Myth 2 You need to lift heavy weights to build muscle Not true Lifting relatively light weights for say 30 repetitions is just as effective at building muscle and strength as lifting weights that feel heavier for five to 12 reps But do not avoid heavy weights for fear that they will make you bulk up It does not just happen with typical strength training Myth 3 Running destroys your knees In fact not moving increases your risk of developing osteoarthritis For years experts thought that our knees were like tires and when you drive the car a lot you burn through your tire tread That is not true Our joints can regenerate themselves especially when we are regularly active That said running can definitely lead to knee pain or injury if you train too

aggressively by running too fast or too far too soon If you start to feel knee pain get it checked out by a sports medicine expert Myth 4 Walking is enough to keep you fit as you age Myth 6 Runners and cyclists do not need to strength train their lower body Pounding the pavement or pushing pedals does strengthen your lower body but not enough to stimulate significant muscle growth A strength training regimen that includes squats lunges glute bridges and pointers can improve bone density and lower your risk of injury and make you a stronger runner or cyclist too Myth 7 You need 10 thousand steps a day to be healthy No Exercise scientists debunked this one years ago but many Americans still see it as a benchmark of good health The myth traces back to the 1960s when a Japanese clock manufacturer mass produced a pedometer with a name that translated to 10 thousand steps meter There is nothing magical about that goal The health benefits of walking plateau at around 7 thousand 500 steps but even as few as 4 thousand steps per day can reduce the risk of dying from any cause

3 Health and Medicine 10 Gut Myths Corrected Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times January 22 2025 Myth 4 Stress can cause ulcers Doctors used to think that peptic ulcers open sores in the stomach's lining or the first section of the small intestine were caused by stress or other lifestyle factors like eating spicy foods That thinking was overturned in the 1980s when scientists discovered that Helicobacter pylori a bacterium that bores into the protective lining of the stomach caused many peptic ulcers Frequent use of nonsteroidal drugs against inflammation like aspirin ibuprofen and naproxen can also cause them Failing to treat the root cause of ulcers with antibiotics if they are caused by H pylori or by reducing the use of NSAIDS if they are the culprit for example can allow them to recur Recurrent ulcers can increase the risk of bleeding or a blockage or a hole forming in the stomach or small intestine Untreated H pylori infections can also increase the risk of stomach cancer Myth 6 Colorectal cancer mainly affects older people In medical school in the early 2 thousands doctors were taught that colorectal cancer was a disease of older adults But its rates have climbed in younger people and it is now the leading cause of cancer related deaths among men under 50 and the second most common among women in that age group Today medical students are told that when adults have changes in their bowel habits unexplained weight loss or blood in their stool colorectal cancer should be on their list to rule out Because the early stages of colorectal cancer often do not have symptoms everyone should get screened with a colonoscopy or an at home stool test starting at age 45 or sooner if you have certain risk factors Myth 7 Diverticulitis is caused by eating nuts and popcorn Diverticulitis occurs when small pouches in the wall of the colon become inflamed causing abdominal pain nausea vomiting constipation cramping or fever Doctors used to say that if you are prone to diverticulitis you should avoid eating nuts seeds and popcorn thinking they might get stuck in the colon wall and cause inflammation But that turned out to be wrong Doctor Ahuja said These foods such as nuts and fiber contain fiber which is associated with a reduced risk of diverticulitis Myth 9 IBS is all in your head Abdominal pain bloating diarrhea constipation the symptoms of IBS are real and can be debilitating But the condition has historically come with some stigma in part because it does not have a diagnostic test scientists do not fully understand its cause and certain mental health conditions like anxiety and depression can worsen it Even today some health providers may not take the condition seriously leaving many patients feeling dismissed as crazy IBS is a disorder of the gut brain interaction Some nerves in the gut such as those that sense pain for example can be extra sensitive which can cause even normal digestive functions to cause feelings of pain Even though mental health can play a role in IBS that does not make the condition any less real or worth treating Myth 10 Everyone should take probiotics for gut health Thousands of microbial species live in your gut so it is unlikely that a small capsule containing just one or a few living strains would do much to improve it And for some people probiotics can make symptoms worse Consume fermented foods like yogurt kefir kimchi or sauerkraut in addition to a variety of plant based foods

4 Iowa Democrat Wins State Senate Seat Fending Off GOP Supermajority By holding a left leaning seat in suburban Des Moines Democrats ensured that Republicans would not have a supermajority in the

State Senate Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times

December 30 2025 The Democrat Renee Hardman a member of the West Des Moines City Council held a left leaning suburban seat for her party continuing a string of encouraging off year election results for Iowa Democrats Ms Hardman defeated the Republican nominee Lucas Loftin This year Democrats flipped two Republican leaning Iowa Senate seats in special elections breaking a two thirds supermajority that had allowed Republican lawmakers to confirm the governor's appointees without support from Democrats Republicans could have regained a supermajority with a victory on Tuesday Iowa Democrats who have seen their support erode in recent years hope their success in special elections could signal momentum for the 2026 midterms

5 Massachusetts Health and Medicine Tatiana Schlossberg of the Kennedy Family Dies at 35 Tatiana Schlossberg an environmental journalist and daughter of Caroline Kennedy passed away after suffering from leukemia Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization New York Times

December 31 2025 Tatiana Schlossberg an environmental journalist and a daughter of Caroline Kennedy and granddaughter of President John F Kennedy whose harrowing essay about her rare and aggressive blood cancer published in The New Yorker magazine in November drew worldwide sympathy and praise for the courage and raw honesty of Ms Schlossburg died on Tuesday She was 35 Before her illness she had been preparing to begin reporting for her second book focused on climate change and the oceans of the world She learned that one of her chemotherapy drugs cytarabine was derived from a type of sea sponge first synthesized by scientists at the University of California Berkeley in 1959 Those scientists she wrote almost certainly relied on government funding which her cousin RFK Junior had cut

6 RFK Junior Lack of Knowledge of Science and Medicine ACCV Meetings only on Teams not on Youtube Who is Up For Some Explosive Statutorily Required Policy Advisory Meeting Action? Ring in the new year with all of the 2025 legally mandated Advisory Commission on Childhood Vaccines ACCV meetings in one thrilling afternoon RAWSEP Top Excerpts Vaccine injuries are rare but they do happen and we cannot eliminate them Having a no fault injury compensation program like VICP is necessary to make sure that everyone is supported people who are injured can get fair restitution and vaccine manufacturing remains commercially viable RFK Junior hates vaccines so I have a pretty good idea what he means by fixing the vaccine court He means demolition But stripping the VICP for parts will fix very little besides appeasing the RFK Junior personal yearning for mass death from vaccine preventable disease Retaining a functioning VICP is absolutely critical to ensuring continued vaccine access for millions of children RFK Junior cannot just remake the VICP to suit his vision He cannot just change the Vaccine Injury Table or close down the VICP He has to have four ACCV meetings per year He is limited by the law much more so than in other parts of HHS where he has more unilateral authority However he could give the ACCV the old ACIP treatment and replace the current members with those who would be more likely to follow marching orders Since the ACCV can make recommendations to change the Vaccine Injury Table on their own RFK Junior may try to install loyalists who will unquestioningly propose and vote on adding autism to the Table It will be critical to watch this closely going forward and raise hell if RFK Junior decides to ACIP the ACCV Excerpts edited by

RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization Doctor Rasmussen Newsletter December 30 2025

Those of you following the ongoing collapse of American public health know that a lot of the action goes down at various advisory committee meetings The crown jewel of these is the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices ACIP which is currently populated by the crème de la crème of the extended MAHA grifter universe against vaccines US Health and Human Services Secretary RFK Junior has successfully stocked ACIP with enough people who are either uncritical yes men or crazed conspiracy theorists Both of these groups are also completely inept far less intellectually insightful than they think they are and entirely serve The RFK Junior agenda of taking out as many vaccines as humanly possible

So far they have successfully recommended against multi dose flu vaccines containing thimerosal the measles mumps rubella varicella MMRV combination vaccine and the birth dose of the hepatitis B vaccine. ACIP recommendations carry significant weight and their move toward so called shared clinical decision making which basically means optional will have profound effects on vaccine uptake. Although the ACIP has been quite successful in chipping away at herd immunity to preventable diseases they cannot really do much about one of The RFK Junior most hated institutions supporting vaccination the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program VICP sometimes also called vaccine court. The VICP is a no fault forum for compensating vaccine injury claims. RFK Junior is an attorney and vaccine injury litigation has been extremely lucrative for him. He really hates the VICP because it limits damages and liability from big vaccine manufacturers. If the VICP were not there he and his ambulance chasing comrades in the vaccine injury lawsuit industry would be able to make a lot more money. And if the VICP were not there a lot of vaccine manufacturers would pull out of the market altogether. One way to get rid of the VICP is to make it go bankrupt. There is about 4 billion dollars in the VICP trust for compensating injury claims which is funded by a 0 point 75 dollar excise tax on each vaccine. If autism is added to the Vaccine Injury Table list of eligible vaccine injury claims it enables an estimated 1 hundred billion dollars in claims. The VICP would go bankrupt overnight. As the avowed enemy of immunization this prospect seems to appeal greatly to RFK Junior. However he does not have the authority to just end the VICP. The HHS Secretary is required by law to consult with the Advisory Committee on Childhood Vaccines ACCV before making any changes to the Vaccine Injury Table. The ACCV is the ACIP of the VICP. ACCV votes on recommendations for the VICP. If RFK Junior wants to add autism to the Vaccine Injury Table then he has to go through ACCV to do it. If ACCV voted to recommend that autism is an eligible VICP claim then goodbye VICP. The ACCV is required by law to meet four times per year. They did not meet at all this year. So they scheduled all four meetings for today. Four 30 minute meetings back to back supposedly for discussion only. Fortunately the ACCV membership has not really changed as far as I can tell so they did not suddenly reveal themselves to be MAHA operatives against vaccines out to tank the VICP. I watched this yesterday so you do not have to since you may have to wait for an online Youtube recording to become available. Unlike ACIP which livestreams its meetings on YouTube this meeting is on Microsoft Teams! The meeting was convened by Rear Admiral Krista Pedley from the Health Resources and Services Administration HRSA which is an agency within HHS that oversees VICP. There were multiple presentations on the ACCV and the VICP including a review of how it works data on VICP performance scientific and legal standards. Although I know a lot about vaccines including a lot about vaccine policy I am not a legal expert. The most commonly repeated public comment was alarm and frustration that the meetings were announced with such short notice in the Federal Register since they were clearly scheduled to meet statutory requirements and nothing more. The majority of the comments expressed concerns that ACCV will not continue to adhere to established processes going forward and that they will recommend adding autism to the Vaccine Injury Table. I seriously doubt that ACCV in its current form would add autism to the Table. All of the people who presented today were serious government scientists or lawyers who gave straightforward factual presentations. They presented either background information or evidence. It was not dramatic. None of the ACCV members appeared to have an agenda. They all seem like serious professional people who are carrying out their duties. By contrast ACIP meetings these days are completely wild. Previous meetings have been dominated by the extreme contingent against vaccines demonstrating both their surplus of bad faith and complete dearth of any relevant expertise. Watching the ACIP clown car roll into Atlanta once a trimester is usually a stressful experience. No such silliness was evident at the ACCV meeting. It was pretty uneventful. That seems encouraging and it is for now. But time will tell if it will stay that way. If you want vaccines you must have VICP. The VICP and the ACCV were established by the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act NCVIA in 1986 because vaccine manufacturers were going to stop making vaccines due to safety issues with the pertussis component of the diphtheria pertussis tetanus DPT vaccine. The legal costs were too oppressive and childhood vaccines are not profitable products to manufacture. People only get them a

couple times in their lives at most. Contrary to what people against vaccines will tell you, vaccines do not make big money for pharmaceutical companies. There is a reason why Merck advertises Shingrix vaccine for preventing shingles in adults but not Vari Vax vaccine for preventing chickenpox in kids. There is a huge market for Shingrix but many do not know they might benefit from it and it is covered by Medicare. Shingrix provides significant benefits in that it greatly reduces the risk of shingles in older people who already had chickenpox. However, this benefit is largely confined to those people. When people are infected with varicella zoster virus (VZV), they get varicella chickenpox. Like all herpesviruses, VZV can establish latency. Its stable DNA genome can basically hang out for decades in the neurons of the dorsal root ganglia, a nerve bundle at the base of the spine. The infection can be reactivated by stress, aging, nutrition, co-infection, lack of sleep, or any other number of poorly understood triggers. VZV reactivation causes herpes zoster shingles, which is usually much more painful than the original chickenpox. Shingles can be extremely severe and can kill people. Boosting existing immunity against VZV with Shingrix decreases the likelihood that the latent infection will reactivate. Shingrix works great for preventing shingles but it does not clear the latent VZV infection, so people may need boosters. Shingrix does not benefit people who have never had VZV; if they received Vari Vax because the varicella vaccine, whether alone or in combination with the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine, prevents VZV from establishing latency in the first place. The people immunized with two doses of Vari Vax on the childhood schedule will never get chickenpox, so they will never get shingles. So Merck focuses its marketing resources on raising awareness of the untapped adult market that might benefit from Shingrix and can produce a meaningful return for the corporation, not the unchanging two-time pool of children who automatically get Vari Vax. Merck is able to profit as vaccine manufacturers must do, being businesses in a capitalist economy. Older people benefit from a vaccine that reduces their risk of a painful and life-threatening disease, and children still get vaccines that spare them from facing the same fate decades down the road. Some vaccines can be profitable, but the stalwarts of the vaccine schedule, like the MMR, are not. The government does not manufacture vaccines. They rely on pharmaceutical companies with the facilities and expertise required to do it. Pharmaceutical companies are businesses that need to make money to sustain the business. If the government considers it a public benefit to immunize its population, then it needs to subsidize it. One way of subsidizing vaccines is to incentivize manufacturers to make them, so there is a steady, affordable supply by ensuring they are protected from catastrophic liability. Although the benefits of vaccination demonstrably outweigh the risks, vaccine injuries can and do occur very infrequently, so manufacturers can never eliminate this risk completely. You cannot cure unexpected anaphylaxis, undetected immune deficiencies, or undiagnosed genetic disorders that increase the risk of a vaccine injury. And if the cost of litigation drives up the cost of making a vaccine to the point that the manufacturer's solvency is at risk, that manufacturer might stop making that vaccine. The NCVIA was passed because manufacturers were going to pull out of the market altogether to avoid more potentially business-destroying pertussis vaccine injury claims. By creating the VICP, the NCVIA incentivized Merck, GSK, and Sanofi, manufacturers of most of the childhood vaccines on the schedule, to accept the liability and lack of windfall profits that comes with making these essential medicines. Vaccine injuries are rare, but they do happen, and we cannot eliminate them. Having a no-fault injury compensation program like VICP is necessary to make sure that everyone is supported; people who are injured can get fair restitution, and vaccine manufacturing remains commercially viable. VICP squad. While the VICP remains intact for now, RFK Junior has not exactly been discreet about his intentions for it. He has repeatedly stated his intention to fix it. I am always deeply suspicious of people with no other qualifications besides unearned confidence who claim they can fix something that might need some work but is not irreparably broken. If you are not a licensed and bonded plumber, then I do not want to hear any of your empty assurances about fixing my clogged toilet. RFK Junior hates vaccines, so I have a pretty good idea what he means by fixing the vaccine court. He means demolition. But stripping the VICP for parts will fix very little, besides appeasing RFK Junior's personal yearning for mass death from vaccine-preventable disease. Retaining a functioning VICP is absolutely critical to ensuring continued

vaccine access for millions of children Because it was the result of the NCVIA and is bound by its statutory constraints RFK Junior cannot just remake the VICP to suit his vision He cannot just change the Vaccine Injury Table or close down the VICP He has to have four ACCV meetings per year He is limited by the law much more so than in other parts of HHS where he has more unilateral authority However he could give the ACCV the old ACIP treatment and replace the current members with those who would be more likely to follow marching orders Since the ACCV can make recommendations to change the Vaccine Injury Table on their own RFK Junior may try to install loyalists who will unquestioningly propose and vote on adding autism to the Table It will be critical to watch this closely going forward and raise hell if RFK Junior decides to ACIP the ACCV

7 RFK Junior Lack of Knowledge of Science and Medicine This Is the Damage RFK Junior Has Done in Less Than a Year RAWSEP Top Excerpts After claiming without presenting a shred of proof that Covid vaccines played a role in the death of 10 children top officials at the agency have proposed a roster of new requirements for the shots including several that critics say would be logistically impossible and could leave us with no FDA approved Covid or flu vaccines Decades of research has debunked the assertion that vaccines cause autism But RFK Junior and his supporters have proved astoundingly impervious to that evidence Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times December 30 2025 In the days before Christmas as measles whooping cough and influenza continued to spread and surge across the country the Department of Health and Human Services came perilously close to scrapping the US longstanding list of recommended childhood vaccines The HHS agency plan was to go with a shorter list along the lines of what Denmark recommends That plan was jettisoned at the last minute over legal and political concerns Sources in and around the department have since suggested that something far worse may still be in the offing They could still move to align us with a country like Denmark said Doctor DD a former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention respiratory disease division He resigned in August in protest of the HHS politicization of vaccine policy But they could also just scrap the list altogether so that there are no official recommendations only vague suggestions The CDC list also known as the childhood vaccine schedule helps determine which vaccines are covered by insurance which are included in the Vaccines for Children Program that supplies crucial shots to the un- and underinsured and which are protected from certain liabilities that might otherwise drive vaccine makers from the US market Altering those recommendations or downgrading them to shared clinical decision making would upend those protocols and could make it nearly impossible for millions of families to receive certain lifesaving vaccines even if they still want them However neither move would be surprising In the 11 months since he was confirmed as health secretary RFK Junior has wreaked steady havoc on the US vaccination policies and programs He canceled hundreds of millions of dollars in federal investment for mRNA vaccines including ones that would have improved our ability to fight the next flu pandemic He chased away doctors and scientists at the Food and Drug Administration and the CDC who oversaw federal vaccine policy for decades Perhaps worst of all he fired the entire 17 member Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices known as ACIP The group is responsible for advising the CDC on which vaccines to recommend for whom It now consists of a mix of ideologues and incompetents handpicked by RFK Junior himself Already this new Potemkin group has Rescinded recommendations for any flu shots containing thimerosal a preservative that keeps multidose vaccine bottles free of bacteria and other contamination It has been in use for nearly a century and has data over decades validating its safety Revoked a longstanding recommendation of the measles mumps rubella and chickenpox or MMRV combination vaccine for children younger than 4 The policy change is not based on any valid medical or scientific concern Stopped recommending Covid 19 vaccines for healthy people younger than 65 unless they talk to a health care provider a move that makes it harder for people who want or need those shots to get them Changed the recommendations for hepatitis B vaccination from saying that all newborns should have this shot to new mothers who test negative should decide for themselves

whether to have their babies vaccinated at birth but might consider waiting. None of these changes are evidence based. All of them run counter to what the CDC own experts and most of the leading medical groups in the US have advised. And all are likely to sow confusion undermine public trust and ultimately drive the US vaccination rates down. We are already hearing about pregnant women who test positive for Hep B deciding not to get the shot said Doctor PO. Because the message they are getting from that recommendation is that the vaccine itself is dangerous. Proponents of the push to align US recommendations with those of so called peer nations such as Denmark Japan and Germany all of which recommend fewer shots than the United States have billed it as a common sense corrective. But as innumerable doctors and scientists have explained when it comes to public health countries with fewer shots on their must have list are not actually our peers. In Denmark to take the Trump and RFK Junior favorite example prenatal care is free and universal. More than 95 percent of pregnant women are screened for hepatitis B and those who test positive are promptly treated and duly monitored. In Japan and in most European nations primary care systems have the capacity to find and vaccinate children who face a higher risk for vaccine preventable diseases and in many of those countries paid sick leave also helps minimize the spread of contagions through schools and offices. None of this is true in the United States. Here nearly a quarter of pregnant women lack adequate prenatal care and those who face the highest risk of contracting and spreading vaccine preventable diseases are often the least likely to have access to doctors or pharmacies. When US health officials tried to stamp out hepatitis B through vaccination programs aimed at high risk groups they failed miserably. It was not until they carried out a universal at birth vaccination policy in 1991 that hepatitis B infections finally plummeted by about 99 percent. In fact if the US public health system has one thing going for it relative to other nations it is probably vaccines. As the CDC own data indicates routine childhood vaccination has prevented hundreds of millions of illnesses and tens of millions of hospitalizations here. It has also saved half a trillion dollars in medical costs a figure that jumps into the multitrillions once you factor in indirect societal costs like lost productivity and lost wages. The United States tends to have higher rates of measles vaccination than Europe and fewer measles cases as a result. Compared with Denmark we also tend to have lower hospitalization rates for rotavirus or RSV. The reason for those disparities is not in dispute. We vaccinate routinely against both viruses. Denmark does not. RFK Junior and his supporters have said repeatedly that parents should be able to decide for themselves whether to vaccinate their children. But the Trump actions have put the nation on course for a future where even those who want vaccines may not be able to get them. Anytime you move away from a clear universal recommendation implementation becomes more difficult said Doctor FH a vaccine expert who resigned from the CDC in protest in June. Does insurance still have to cover a shot that falls under shared clinical decision making? Maybe. Can you still get it at the pharmacy? Not necessarily. For now health insurers have promised to continue covering vaccines regardless of what the CDC does or says presumably because they understand that vaccinating people is far cheaper than letting them get sick. But consumers would have no obvious recourse if those insurers eventually changed their minds and in any case that promise applies only to families that have commercial health insurance to begin with. About half of all American children rely instead on the federally funded Vaccines for Children Program and that program falls squarely within the jurisdiction of RFK Junior our chief US person against vaccinations. If the CDC does change the childhood schedule to resemble that of Denmark or scraps that schedule altogether and if the health secretary decides to adjust the Vaccines for Children Program accordingly about half of all American families could suddenly find themselves with no clear way to get essential vaccines their best possible protection against a roster of devastating diseases including rotavirus RSV and hepatitis B. In the meantime the Food and Drug Administration is angling to make an even bigger and more enduring impact on access to vaccines for Americans. After claiming without presenting a shred of proof that Covid vaccines played a role in the death of 10 children top officials at the agency have proposed a roster of new requirements for the shots including several that critics say would be logistically impossible and could leave us with no FDA approved Covid or flu vaccines. That loss of

approval would be disastrous Doctor DD Doctor FH and others say Changes to the federal Vaccine Injury Compensation Program could also seriously undermine vaccine access The program which compensates people who suffer rare side effects from certain vaccines was established in 1988 after a tidal wave of lawsuits threatened to drive vaccine makers from the American market If RFK Junior decides to exempt any shot that falls under the fuzzy rubric of shared clinical decision making from this program and if nobody stops him vaccine makers may once again threaten to leave the US market RFK Junior could also drive those companies away by adding autism to the list of conditions for which they are potentially liable **Decades of research has debunked the assertion that vaccines cause autism But**

**RFK Junior and his supporters have proved astoundingly impervious to that evidence** They will stop selling vaccines here Doctor FH said Vaccines are a triumph of human ingenuity modern medicine and public health With them we have beaten back smallpox chickenpox yellow fever polio measles mumps rubella hepatitis B Covid meningitis and more If RFK Junior continues to force the nation down the course he has now set we will be left to explain to future generations how we came to abandon them

**8** Trump family business delays launch of 499 dollar gold smartphone US made device planned by end of year after hit by recent government shutdown affecting shipments **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization**

The Guardian December 31 2025 Trump Mobile the phone company launched by the Trump family business has pushed back plans to deliver a 499 dollar equals to 371 pounds gold colored smartphone by the end of the year The Trump Organization licensed its name to launch a mobile service and the device in June in the latest monetization of his presidency by a family business empire now run by the Trump sons In the latest setback for the project Trump Mobile said there was a strong possibility the handset would not be delivered this month because the recent government shutdown had disrupted shipments The T1 smartphone described by the company as proudly American was initially promoted as a US made rival to devices from Apple and Samsung Almost all smartphones sold in the US are made overseas primarily in China and South Korea but also increasingly in India and Vietnam The gold colored phone was initially promised in August and the website still states it will be released later this year Customers are required to pay a 100 dollar payment to order the device The mobile service joins Trump branded watches footwear and Bibles as products capitalizing on his political brand The venture will operate through licensing deals that generated more than 8 million dollars for the president in 2024 The move into phones also raises questions about conflicts of interest as the Trump family business operates in a sector that is heavily regulated by federal agencies over which Trump wields executive power

**9** Trump ended funding including to the EPA and science research Trump Upended the Federal Government The Full Scope of the Impact Is Still Unclear President Trump achieved his goal of shrinking the work force But many current and former officials say the government is less dependable and efficient than it was a year ago The Environmental Protection Agency which has lost about 25 percent of its work force had 28 billion dollars in grants terminated under the Trump administration **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization**

The New York Times December 30 2025 In his first year back in office President Trump has made unparalleled changes to the federal government shrinking its footprint both in the services it provides and the size of its work force The extent of the effect on the public so far is unclear Some of the White House moves are stalled by a mountain of litigation more than 200 lawsuits have been filed challenging the firings of federal workers and the freezing of grants and elimination of programs a vast majority of which are still pending And agencies have not fully detailed the number of staff members and services that have been cut making it difficult to discern the full scope of the difference between the federal government today and the one from a year ago Trump pledged in February to make the government smaller more efficient more effective and a lot less expensive By one specific standard Trump can claim a degree of success The work force is definitely smaller The number of civilian federal employees declined by about 10 percent

this year according to government data After weathering months of threats and anxiety many federal workers resigned or took early retirement Others were laid off In all there are now about 249 thousand fewer people on the government payroll than there were in the beginning of the year However there are indications that the Trump other goals have not yet been achieved Even after the Elon Musk bureaucracy shrinking initiative upended agencies across the government DOGE misstated its claims of large savings and failed to reduce federal spending And many current and former officials and people who routinely interact with the federal government say that it is far less efficient and less dependable in the services it provides to the American public Still the public generally wants the government to cover some basic needs In an April survey Pew Research Center found that nearly all Americans felt the federal government had a responsibility to provide a strong military a secure border **clean air and water** and national parks Smaller majorities said it had a duty to provide high quality education health insurance and an adequate standard of living Even some supporters of a leaner government say the Trump approach has not been effective Spending continues to outpace economic growth Most federal funds go to Medicare and Social Security two programs that neither political party has the will to substantially change That is also the case for another big ticket item paying interest on the debt A lot of the spending reductions that I have observed coming from the administration have been less focused on cutting big budget items Indeed inside the government federal workers said the focus on freezing initiatives related to climate change and environmental justice had overwhelmed other mandates Among the top concerns about the drastic cuts to scientific research The consequences may not be immediately apparent And if more people are being diagnosed with cancer in 15 years it will be difficult to point to the termination of specific grants as the reason scientists note The administration distributed about 13 billion dollars in National Institutes of Health grants from February to June of this year which is about 8 billion dollars less than it did during the same time period a year earlier according to the Government Accountability Office This includes grants for cancer research cuts that have been described as the Trump America retreat from the war on the disease Another agency that has been hard hit is the Environmental Protection Agency which lost about 25 percent of its work force EPA is a skeleton of what it once was which was an agency that cared about the air that people breathe the water they drink the land on which they live Former EPA officials led the effort to ensure that research was transparent objective and credible before it went out the door A large part of the job of one former EPA official was talking to researchers who raised concerns about their data being manipulated Not long after Trump returned to the Oval Office that former EPA official stopped hearing from employees My phone literally stopped ringing period she said adding that people were afraid of raising a concern and facing retribution The EPA also had 28 billion dollars in grants terminated according to a count by the website Grant Witness a project run by data scientists tracking some government grants MM the former FDA official was fired in February and is headed to Austria to begin a new research job with other American scientists part of a larger European effort to take advantage of the Trump dismissal of top scientists Is our government there for the public good? Or is it in fact there for the interests of the leaders of the day? That is a question one former government official never thought he would pose in his lifetime

**10** Trump pulled funding of National Public Radio NPR CEO Was a Right Wing Target Then the Real Trouble Started Katherine Maher has taken an unyielding approach to the NPR biggest battles which has sometimes put her at odds with her colleagues in public media Katherine Maher the chief executive of NPR has dealt with plenty of criticism this year Did she consider quitting? I really do not like bullies she said **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization** The New York Times December 30 2025 Katherine Maher knew that running NPR was going to be difficult Congress stripped more than 500 million dollars in annual funding from public media While web traffic to NPR dot org has declined this year a spokeswoman for NPR said the NPR total digital reach was up factoring in platforms like

YouTube where the NPR Tiny Desk concerts are popular And the NPR broadcast audience has increased roughly 8 percent this year according to Radio Research Consortium

**11** Virginia Health and Medicine Decades of abuse by a Virginia doctor are finally addressed in court Hundreds Sue Virginia Hospital and Executives Over Unneeded Surgeries More than 500 women claimed that they had received unnecessary operations Hospital leaders said they were not aware of the misconduct of a doctor Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times December 29 2025 More than 5 hundred women sued a Virginia health system and its senior executives on Monday for negligence claiming that for nearly a decade one doctor performed medically unjustified operations including unnecessary C sections and sterilizations without consent The 510 plaintiffs are seeking 10 million dollars each from the Chesapeake Regional Medical Center which employed the doctor The former gynecologist Javaid Perwaiz already is serving a 59 year prison sentence for Medicaid fraud stemming from the unnecessary operations His medical license expired in 2020 Around 2008 the neonatology group of the Chesapeake Regional Medical Center raised concerns about the Perwaiz routine delivery of babies early through elective induction or C section for no medical reason The need for intensive neonatal care for the babies Perwaiz delivered early was so common that CRMC neonatologists referred to it as the Perwaiz special the lawsuit said Nurses complained to hospital officials that consent forms were being altered for the Perwaiz patients after they were under anesthesia so that he could perform more invasive surgeries and that patients often lacked knowledge about their planned surgeries according to the lawsuit The plaintiffs also allege Perwaiz also routinely misclassified inpatient surgeries as outpatient procedures to evade the heightened scrutiny of inpatient procedures Although there were complaints about abuses by the doctor in 2014 and 2015 according to the suit the internal metrics of the medical center identified him as a top ten performer a single surgeon who did more procedures each year than some group practices did

**12** United Kingdom Artificial Intelligence used to subvert elections although the motive may be more financial than political China based interference Did Labor Prime Minister Keir Starmer Impose a Curfew in the UK? No It is a Fake TikTok Video AI has made it easy to put words in the mouths of people and Prime Minister Keir Starmer of Britain has become a favorite target The motive experts say is not political but financial Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times December 30 2025 The 61 second video of Prime Minister Keir Starmer of Britain would be shocking if it were true The United Kingdom is set to introduce a nationwide curfew beginning at 11 p m each night he appears to say on one of thousands of TikTok videos of him posted in the last six months Starmer never made any such policy or announcement But thanks to rapidly advancing AI technology the prime minister in the short video sounded eerily like the real one with his nasal lilt The fake video attracted more than 430 thousand views and inspired similar posts on X and Facebook That video and other similar ones appears to have been taken down by the Chinese owned social media company which officially prohibits fake authoritative sources or crisis events or falsely shows public figures in certain contexts But the clip was just one of 6 thousand and 42 such videos most featuring Starmer identified by News Guard a company that tracks online misinformation between May and December 2025 In a recent report the company said the videos were posted by accounts with names of fake British sounding news organizations like BBB UK News and Daily Britain News Together the accounts had more than 1 million followers when the report was issued In the immediate days after News Guard published its report on December 9 many of the videos of Starmer remained available on TikTok By December 19 most appeared to have been removed from the platform But the use of artificial intelligence in politics is increasing rapidly especially as a way for political consultants and campaign managers to test out how issues will play with the public These are how bad actors learn We know it is internationally pervasive now he said Four of every five elections around the world now have AI generated political junk that is unattributed and clearly misleading

13 United Kingdom Scotland The Shetland Islands Archipelago Lerwick Wood burning tradition **RAWSEP View** The wood burning in Lerwick contributes to climate change with the emission of Carbon Dioxide and PM 2 point 5 and creates air pollution that harms human life and shortens human lives Some traditions are so stupid they should not be honored and the old bad traditions of the past should not be reenacted Will exposing the stupidity of this tradition deter people from participating? Will exposing the stupidity of this tradition drive stupid people who may practice unnecessary indoor residential wood burning at home to make the trek to a remote island to burn even more wood unnecessarily thus exposing themselves to the air pollution at close range and increasing their risk of unnecessarily developing illnesses and early deaths? **From the article headline** It is bigger than Hogmanay The Shetland Up Helly Aa Viking fire festival The raucous celebration of the new year and the Nordic heritage of the Shetland Islands culminates in the ritual burning of a longship and much drinking **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization** The Guardian December 31 2025 In Lerwick the capital of the Shetland Islands archipelago the locals honor the Scandinavian influences on Shetland Vikings in homemade costumes brandish axes and round shields They carry turquoise standards bearing the flag of Haraldr Ólafsson the 13th century king of Mann and the Isles and sing battle songs of raven flags flying in distant lands of blazing torches and Vikings ruling over oceans vast A blue longship with a dragon prow emerges pulled on ropes by a team dozens strong This beautiful galley will be paraded through the streets of Lerwick today before being ritualistically set ablaze as the center piece of Up Helly Aa the Shetland riotous fire festival There is nothing else do around here all winter Hogmanay is dying in Shetland Up Helly Aa is the biggest thing of the year The Up Helly Aa is a series of fire festivals setting the archipelago alight between January and March timed to mark the end of the pre Christian winter festival of Yule These are the modern incarnation of the original tar barreling squads who have nowadays swapped brawling in the streets for touring venues across Lerwick on Up Helly Aa night The procession files into a play park in the center of town where the galley ship lies waiting doused in paraffin The Jarl Squad throw their lit torches into the boat and it is engulfed in flames as a crowd watches The fire dies down and the spectators file away It is almost painful to think of the energy and care that went into the creation of the galley ship only for it to go up in flames Up Helly Aa 2026 will take place on January 27 2026 in Lerwick Shetland

15 Europe and United Kingdom Mass Transit interrupted Eurostar Cancels All Trains After Power Failure in Channel Tunnel The high speed train service connecting Britain and continental Europe was paralyzed on Tuesday during one of the busiest travel weeks of the year **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization** The New York Times December 30 2025 Eurostar the high speed train service connecting Britain and continental Europe said all of its trains were canceled until further notice after a major power failure inside the Channel Tunnel The disruption caused by a fault in the overhead power supply and the subsequent breakdown of a train within the 31 mile tunnel left passengers stranded for hours The Eurostar terminal in London St Pancras International station was jammed with passengers trying to rearrange their plans

16 Ukraine Bogus Claim that Ukraine attacked near a Putin Residence aims to push Trump toward supporting Russia over Ukraine How Russia and Ukraine Are Fighting to Shape the Trump View of the War Off the battlefield Each side is trying to influence the Trump perception of the military conflict as they look to negotiate a peace settlement in their favor **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization** The New York Times December 30 2025 As President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine traveled back from Florida on Monday he could breathe a sigh of relief His meeting with President Trump to discuss a peace plan seemed to have passed without drama The American leader had neither berated him nor echoed Kremlin talking points at least publicly By the standards of past encounters that counted as progress But while Zelensky was on route home Putin was on the phone

with Trump introducing a new twist Putin claimed that a Ukrainian drone attack had targeted one of his residences in Russia overnight I do not like it Trump later told reporters as he recounted the call It is not the right time to do any of that I was very angry about it The accusation was just the sort that could derail the Ukraine diplomatic effort Zelensky swiftly denied it describing the claim on social media as a complete fabrication designed to undermine all achievements of our shared diplomatic efforts with the Trump team He reinforced the denial in a voice message to reporters in an online chat group and his foreign minister also weighed in Meanwhile several Russian officials relayed the accusation publicly saying Moscow would toughen its stance in the negotiations as a response The Ukraine negotiating position includes a financial package to support the Ukraine postwar reconstruction and American involvement Zelensky has said that it would include the entry of American business special conditions for the Ukraine development and reconstruction and the development of a free trade agreement with the United States On Sunday as he greeted Zelensky at his Mar a Lago resort in Florida Trump marveled at the money that could be made from rebuilding Ukraine There is a lot of wealth to be had he said

**17** Ukraine Attack on global food security as Russia hits wheat ships and ports US has verified as fake the claimed attack on Putin residence says Zelensky Leaders of the allies of Ukraine to meet in France next week What we know on day 1 thousand 407? Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The Guardian December 30 2025 Russia launched waves of drones to attack the Black Sea ports of Pivdennyi and Chornomorsk with two civilian ships hit as they arrived to load wheat the Ukrainian navy and government officials said The Panama flagged civilian vessels Emmakris III and Captain Karam were struck said the navy adding that the attacks on Tuesday threaten the lives of civilians and undermine global food security Targeted strikes on civilian objects are a deliberate war crime Ukraine is a major agricultural producer and exporter Oil storage tanks were also hit said Oleksiy Kuleba the Ukrainian deputy prime minister who added that both ports continued to operate The Russia continued and intensifying strikes on Ukraine are an act of defiance against the US plan to end the Ukraine war a French presidential source said on Tuesday Additionally the Moscow allegations of a Ukrainian drone attack against a residence of Vladimir Putin are not backed by any solid proof including after cross checking information with our partners the source said The Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky said Regarding the attack on the Putin residence at Valdai our negotiating team connected with the American team they went through the details and we understand that it is fake And of course our partners can always verify thanks to their technical capabilities that it was fake

**18** South Africa Solar Energy from China Cheap Solar Is Transforming Lives and Economies Across Africa Chinese panels are now so affordable that businesses and families are snapping them up slashing their bills and challenging utilities What is happening in suburban Cape Town is being repeated at factories shopping malls dentist offices gold mines and other businesses Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times December 30 2025 For IB a dentist in Cape Town patients showed up for appointments only to find the power had gone out No power meant no X rays no fillings no root canals I just could not work IB the dentist said South Africans like IB the dentist have found a remedy for power cuts that have plagued people in the developing world for years Thanks to swiftly falling prices of Chinese made solar panels and batteries they now draw their power from the sun These are not the tiny old school solar lanterns that once powered a light bulb or TV in rural communities Today solar and battery systems are deployed across a variety of businesses such as auto factories and wineries gold mines and shopping malls And they are changing everyday life trade and industry in the biggest economy in Africa This has happened at startling speed Solar has risen from almost nothing in 2019 to roughly 10 percent of the electricity generating capacity of South Africa Power Moves Inside The China drive to dominate clean energy There is a Race to Power the Future China Is Pulling Away Beijing is selling clean energy to the world Washington is pushing oil and gas Both are driven by national security No longer do South Africans depend entirely on giant coal burning

plants that have defined how people worldwide got their electricity for more than a century. What is happening in South Africa is repeating across the continent. Key to this shift is the ambition of China to lead the world in clean energy. Over the past decade while the United States ramped up fossil fuel exports, China has focused on dominating renewables. Today Chinese companies make so many of the solar panels, electric vehicles, and batteries of the world that they are slashing prices and scrambling to find buyers. Tariffs have thwarted them somewhat in the United States and Europe but they are finding enormous new markets in Africa where around 600 million people lack reliable electricity. Across the continent, solar imports from China rose 50 percent in the first 10 months of 2025, continuing a trend according to a review of Chinese export data by Ember, a British energy tracking group. South Africa was the largest destination for Chinese solar but not the only one. Sierra Leone imported the equivalent of more than half its total current electricity generating capacity, and Chad nearly half. State-owned Power China is also building utility-scale solar farms in South Africa, as in other developing economies. And now China is bidding on contracts from the state-owned utility Eskom to add 14 thousand kilometers, about 8 thousand 700 miles of transmission lines that South Africa desperately needs to move its increasing supply of solar power around the country. Chinese firms hold similar build-operate contracts in countries including Brazil and the Philippines. The solar surge does little to address the most pressing social and economic problems of developing countries like South Africa: the need to generate new jobs for millions of young citizens. Installation labor is local but the panels and batteries are almost all made in China. Jobs are created elsewhere. South Africa consumes advanced green technologies without capturing the industrial benefits. Every kilowatt generated by privately owned solar installations is a hit to its bottom line. The Eskom coal-burning plants, which provide most of power in South Africa, are old and in poor shape. Power cuts have subsided recently but it was not long ago that Eskom had to turn off electricity to some areas for hours at a time, a practice called load shedding that hurt the economy and fed public anger. During the worst days of load shedding, the latest of which came in early 2024, even Ms. GM, the deputy electricity minister, installed a solar system in her home. Her energy bill, she said, fell by two thirds. Multiply her hack by the thousands, and you have what South Africans call the Eskom death spiral. Well-off customers lower their bills with solar, which causes Eskom to lose money, which in turn forces Eskom to raise prices and encourages more people to install solar. It does not help that some people tap power lines to draw electricity illegally without paying for it, or that Eskom has suffered years of mismanagement. In the past five years alone, South Africans installed solar panels representing more than seven gigawatts, or about a tenth of the total installed capacity of 55 gigawatts. Most is privately owned. Now unable to beat solar, Eskom is joining solar. The utility has removed onerous licensing requirements on private installations. It has allowed people to sell power to the grid. And it has tweaked its rates so that customers pay a fixed charge in addition to the cost of any power they consume. Essentially, people pay simply to be connected to the grid, a standard feature in other nations that is new in South Africa. South Africa lacks policies to require local manufacturing. But creating them would drive up costs. The prices of made-in-China panels are by far the lowest in the world. The South Africa rapid pivot to Chinese solar gear, as affordable as it is, also does not resolve a basic problem: The poorest citizens in South Africa still cannot afford to put up their own panels. They lack the money to buy the gear outright and the ability to get it. China overtook the US as the biggest trading partner of South Africa in 2008. With its trade gap rising to more than 9 billion dollars in 2023, compared with barely 1 billion dollars in 2000, there are increasing calls to make South African trade relations with China less unequal. The difference between the South Africa trade ties with China and with the US is stark. President Trump has imposed a 30 percent tariff on South African goods and excluded the government from participating in an international summit of the 20 biggest economies of the world. Trump has also reversed a Biden administration plan to help the country accelerate its planned closures of its oldest, dirtiest coal plants. As relations with the United States have become increasingly strained, Beijing has positioned itself as a reliable and sympathetic partner.