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[1A](#) United States Helpful Free Medical Email Newsletters 1 MedPage Today 2 KFF Health News 3 Inside Medicine 4 TAKING SHOTS with Dr Angela Rasmussen and Jessica Malaty Rivera [1B](#) Hegseth states that Flu Vaccine is Optional [Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization](#) US Department of War Newsletter April 21 2026 Annual influenza vaccines are no longer mandatory said Secretary of War Pete Hegseth in a video posted today on social media Effective immediately the annual influenza vaccine is voluntary for all active and reserve component service members and War Department civilian personnel The new mandate follows similar department efforts regarding the COVID 19 vaccine Between August 24 2021 and January 10 2023 the department required service members to receive the COVID 19 vaccine Over Eight Thousand service members were involuntarily discharged from the military for refusing the vaccine Hegseth said that will not happen again Those decisions posed no threat to our military readiness Hegseth said [1C](#) United States Presidential Restraint [Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization](#) The Atlantic April 20 2026 The presidential temperament While searching for an airman missing in Iran over the weekend aides kept the president out of the room as they got minute by minute updates because they believed his impatience would not be helpful During a national security crisis top advisers decided the presence of the commander in chief was a liability This incident is only the latest example of how The Trump aides have been trying to keep him in the dark and build a protective bubble around him A president whom aides do not view as reliable and steady is a danger in any situation but the war in Iran has brought many of these issues to the fore In the lead up to the war which Trump launched without consulting Congress making a case to the American people or assembling allies many of his aides believed that Trump was not taking seriously the risks and tradeoffs involved The fact that these aides have voiced none of these concerns publicly but said enough privately that the comments leaked later does not speak well for the judgment or courage of his Cabinet Once the war began Trump received updates that were screened and bowdlerized for him He has long been inattentive to briefings early in his first term aides realized that he liked maps and graphics and would glaze over if given much information in text but he has reportedly been starting his day off with a sizzle reel of stunning explosions rather than with hard info These clips which show the real prowess of the American military did not convey the ways that the US was losing the war on a strategic level Trump was reportedly shocked at how easily Iran seized control of the Strait of Hormuz even though the military had warned of the possibility Although The Trump erratic and horrifying social media posts have absorbed much of the attention of media lately Trump live appearances have not done a lot to assure the public of his steadiness either He unconvincingly told reporters that he had believed that a picture that depicted him as Christlike actually showed him as a doctor Trump has never excelled at reading from a teleprompter often coming off as stiff and bored but his delivery has been especially rough in recent weeks If the president is not up to the task of governing the public might understandably wonder if the person they elected is really in charge or if unelected aides are in effect running the country Trump has mostly stopped holding the rallies that he had used as a barometer of his base Many people who are not reporters have access to the phone number of the president And Trump has always been susceptible to misinformation gravitating to sources that are conspiratorial or tell him what he wants to hear rather than what is true But if the president cannot handle reality the problem is ultimately with him not with the information he is receiving Desire of Aides to

keep Trump in the dark is understandable but it is also an affront to the constitutional system **1D** United States The Onion Has a New Plan to Take Over Infowars A new deal which would allow The Onion to use the Infowars name and website address must be approved by a Texas judge The Onion a satirical news outlet wants to convert the right wing Infowars site into a parody of itself **Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization** The New York Times April 20 2026

When Infowars the website founded by the right wing conspiracist Alex Jones came up for sale two years ago an unlikely suitor stepped up The Onion a satirical news outlet planned to convert the site into a parody of itself That sale was scuttled by a bankruptcy court Now The Onion has emerged again with a new plan licensing the website from Gregory Milligan the court appointed manager of the site On Monday Milligan asked Maya Guerra Gamble a judge in Texas in Travis County District Court overseeing the disposition of Infowars to approve that licensing agreement in a court filing Under the terms The parent company of the Onion Global Tetrahedron would pay Eighty one thousand dollars a month to license Infowars .com and its associated intellectual property such as its name for an initial six months with an option to renew for another six months The licensing deal has been agreed to by The Onion and the court appointed administrator But it is not effective until Judge Guerra Gamble approves it and Jones could appeal any ruling That means the fate of Infowars remains in limbo until the court rules probably sometime in the next two weeks Jones continues to operate Infowars .com and host its weekday program The Alex Jones Show The battle over Infowars has been a long and fraught saga and Jones a notorious peddler of lies and invective has used his bully pulpit for more than a year to crusade against the efforts of the Onion to take over the platform The site is in limbo because of a series of defamation lawsuits against Jones filed by families of victims of the mass shooting in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut which Jones falsely claimed was a hoax People who believed his lies that the shooting was staged subjected the families to years of online abuse harassment and death threats In 2018 the families of two Sandy Hook victims sued Jones for defamation in Texas where Infowars is based and relatives of eight other victims sued him in Connecticut In 2022 a jury in Texas awarded the parents of one victim fifty million dollars Jones declared bankruptcy later that year A trial pitting him against the parents of a second victim was delayed indefinitely by that move Later that year a jury awarded the families and a former law enforcement official who sued Jones in Connecticut a total of one point four billion dollars Jones appealed the Connecticut verdict the largest defamation award in history all the way to the US Supreme Court In October 2025 the justices declined to hear the case To help satisfy the debts of Jones to the Sandy Hook families and other creditors Judge Christopher Lopez of US Bankruptcy Court ordered in the middle of 2024 that a court appointed trustee sell off equipment intellectual property and other assets owned by the Infowars parent company called Free Speech Systems In late 2024 a sealed bid silent auction drew only two contenders The parent of the Onion and a company associated with Jones The trustee and the families chose The Onion bid despite its potential to yield less cash than that of the rival company associated with Jones Lawyers for Jones and Jones himself cried foul and Judge Lopez intervened saying that the process was opaque and that The Onion bid was not obviously superior He rejected plans for a do over of the auction instead directing the families to seek a liquidation through the court of Judge Guerra Gamble in Texas where the first defamation case was heard and won In August Judge Guerra Gamble ruled that a court appointed administrator would take over and sell the assets of Infowars **reopening the door to The Onion** We are working on it Ben Collins the chief executive of Global Tetrahedron wrote on social media on the same day as the ruling of Judge Guerra Gamble The proposal of the Onion worth Four Hundred Eighty Six thousand dollars in its initial six month term does little to satisfy the enormous damages awarded to the Sandy Hook families The families have been fighting to collect since Jones filed for personal and business bankruptcy Jones is expected to lose access to his studio and equipment as part of the deal Collins said **The Onion plans to turn Infowars into a comedy site with satirical echoes of the fringe conspiracy theories that Jones is known for** Tim Heidecker one of the comedians behind Tim and Eric Awesome Show Great Job! on Adult Swim on the Cartoon Network has been hired to serve as creative director of Infowars He said he initially planned to parody the whole modus operandi of Jones Heidecker has been working on his impression of Jones But **eventually when that joke gets old Heidecker hopes to turn Infowars into a destination for independent and experimental comedy he said I just thought it would be just a beautiful joke if we could take this pretty toxic negative destructive force of Infowars and rebrand it as this beautiful place for**

our creativity Heidecker said in an interview During a recent trip to Philadelphia he traveled to the Liberty Bell to film a video in character as the new creative director of Infowars The goal for the families we represent has always been to prevent Alex Jones from being able to cause harm at scale the way he did against them said Chris Mattei the lawyer who argued the case in court for the Connecticut families The deal with The Onion promises to significantly degrade his power to do that The Onion also plans to sell merchandise and share the proceeds with the Sandy Hook families We are excited to lie constantly for cold hard cash but this time in a cool way and we will make sure some of it gets back to the families Collins said While broadcast programming is out of my lane Mattei said satire and humor can be universal If their programming can be of interest to the former audience of Alex Jones and help bring them out of the dark that would be wonderful In the meantime the company has been filming satirical videos in anticipation of the ruling of the court One of them features a fictional anchor from the satirical Onion News Network Jim Haggerty who defects from the mainstream media to become a conspiracy monger He will be played by the actor Brad Holbrook For 35 years I was part of the problem Haggerty intoned in a dramatic trailer released by The Onion But now I am free of my corporate shackles and my only business is freedom 1E United States RFK Junior is in the middle of an unusually packed week on Capitol Hill with seven congressional hearings in seven days He completed three last week and will testify four more times this week on Tuesday and Wednesday ending in front of the Senate HELP Committee which is the same committee that confirmed him last year This is happening as part of the annual budget process Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times April 21 2026 Each year cabinet secretaries go before multiple committees in both the House and the Senate to defend their proposed budgets and answer questions about how they are running their agencies But these hearings are also giving lawmakers an opportunity to question RFK Junior on the direction of his policies and the real-world impact they are having on public health The Budget The Trump 2027 budget proposal would cut HHS discretionary spending by roughly Twelve point Five Percent or nearly Sixteen billion dollars Within that the NIH would lose Five Billion Dollars The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program LHEAP which helps low-income families cover utility bills would be cut by Four billion dollars Congress ultimately controls federal appropriations and last year Congress largely rejected the Trump proposed cuts to scientific research Trump is now trying again but some Republicans have already expressed concerns about the new proposal particularly the cuts to the National Institutes of Health NIH The budget however is only part of what these hearings have been about The First Three Hearings There were several memorable moments across the three hearings last week and I did response videos to a couple of them already But overall what was most obvious was a clear and coordinated effort by RFK Junior to redirect the conversation toward a specific set of issues and away from others When pressed on vaccines his responses were often brief qualified and quickly moved past He described the measles vaccine as safe and effective for most people which is a big shift from his confirmation hearings when he would not say unequivocally that the MMR vaccine does not cause autism He also agreed the measles vaccine was safer than getting measles and acknowledged that it may have saved the lives of the two unvaccinated children who died of measles in Texas earlier this year When he had the chance he seemed to focus on safer topics like chronic disease nutrition food policy and fraud in healthcare programs This is not surprising Several reports have indicated that RFK Junior has been told to move away from vaccine messaging and focus on safer issues that tend to resonate more broadly with voters heading into the midterms Throughout the hearings the RFK Junior answers often shifted from controlled messaging to deflection contradiction and claims that simply did not align with either the law or the scientific evidence What to Watch This Week Four more hearings remain with the most significant being the Wednesday appearance before the Senate HELP Committee A few things are worth watching First whether more Republican lawmakers join the few already expressing concern about the proposed NIH cuts Last year the administration proposed cuts of approximately Forty Percent to federal science funding and Congress rejected most of them The hope is that the same resistance holds this year Second whether RFK Junior can stay on the messaging plan the White House has laid out for him So far he has repeatedly been pulled off script whenever members press The Senate HELP Committee which includes members with significant public health expertise will have both the time and the knowledge to press harder Third and the one I will be watching most closely whether the committee that confirmed RFK Junior last year has any reconsideration to

offer about what they confirmed. Given the deeply concerning leadership we have seen so far and the far-reaching consequences already unfolding for science and public health they certainly should

2 California How the California Race for Governor Is Changing Post Swalwell. Xavier Becerra who once struggled to gain traction has found growing support. **Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization**. The New York Times. April 20 2026. In the 10 days since Eric Swalwell dropped out of the race for California governor Xavier Becerra a former California attorney general has drawn a surge of support in multiple polls. Becerra whose polling numbers had languished for months has jumped into the top tier of Democratic candidates since the Swalwell campaign imploded amid accusations of sexual assault. Four polls in the last week have shown Becerra as receiving at least 10 percent support at least twice what he previously had putting him in contention in a sprawling field of candidates. Becerra who served as health and human services secretary under President Biden has roughly the same level of support as two other Democrats Tom Steyer a billionaire former hedge fund manager and Katie Porter a former congresswoman. Many voters remain undecided two weeks before Californians begin receiving ballots by mail for the June 2 election. The California nonpartisan primary rules have added extra intrigue to the race to succeed Governor Gavin Newsom a Democrat who must leave office in January because of term limits. In this deeply Democratic state no Democrat has dominated and two Republicans Steve Hilton a former Fox News host who has been endorsed by President Trump and Chad Bianco the sheriff of Riverside County have been among the front runners. In California primaries all candidates run on the same ballot and the two who get the most votes advance to the general election regardless of their party. With a gubernatorial field that once included eight prominent Democrats polls suggested that two best known Republicans might take the top two spots because the minority party had far fewer candidates to split its votes. Such a scenario would block Democrats from the general election and hand the office of California governor of the largest blue state in the nation to a Republican. To prevent that possibility the chairman of the California Democratic Party has been encouraging Democrats to drop out if their campaigns did not seem viable. He released the results of a poll that the California Democratic Party commissioned in an effort to thin the field. The poll was one of four that have demonstrated momentum for Becerra since Swalwell dropped out. Becerra hired a new social media strategist last week a former digital communications director for current Governor Newsom and the Becerra online presence has since boomed. A campaign event for Becerra in Los Angeles on Saturday drew a large crowd. Other Democrats are also positioning themselves as the candidate who can best lead the California fight against the Trump administration. Steyer has run on a liberal platform and received an endorsement on Monday from Our Revolution which was founded by Senator Bernie Sanders independent of Vermont. It was a notable endorsement of a billionaire by a group established to fight what it calls the billionaire class. Katie Porter a former Democratic congresswoman from Orange County was endorsed Monday by Representative Robert Garcia a California Democrat and a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. She already had support from Senator Elizabeth Warren Democrat of Massachusetts. Matt Mahan the mayor of San Jose Calif. has received millions of dollars in support from Silicon Valley executives this month. Supporters believe that Mahan a moderate Democrat has an opportunity to win over former backers of Swalwell and other voters who are undecided though he has faced criticism that he is too aligned with California billionaires and he has not made big gains in polls over the past week.

3A Virginia A Governor Who Stressed Pragmatism Is Hounded by Politics. Governor Abigail Spanberger of Virginia has emphasized practical governance as her brand but the political fight over redistricting has dominated her term so far. **Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization**. The New York Times. April 21 2026. On the night of her resounding win in the election last fall for Virginia governor Abigail Spanberger told her supporters that they had sent a message to the world. Virginia she said in the opening lines of her victory speech chose pragmatism over partisanship. But even then it was clear that the first big issue of her term would be as partisan as it gets a proposed amendment by her fellow Democrats to allow them to gerrymander the 11 congressional districts of Virginia. The push to redraw the Virginia map was another salvo in a barrage of redistricting spurred by President Trump in a bid to keep Republicans in control of the House in the November 2026 midterm elections. Virginians vote on Tuesday on whether to adopt the proposed map and if the Yes vote wins Democrats could end up with as

many as 10 seats up from the six they hold now. The redistricting battles of the last year would end up in something of a draw with gains for Democrats in California and Virginia offsetting gains for Republicans in Texas, Missouri and North Carolina unless Florida lawmakers decide in the coming weeks to draw a new more Republican friendly map. Today Virginians go to the polls to vote on an amendment that would adopt new congressional maps giving Democrats the possibility of winning as many as four more seats. The amendment came after a flurry of redistricting around the country set off by President Trump who sought to engineer a Republican advantage in the midterms. The new governor of Virginia, Abigail Spanberger, a Democrat, **has campaigned in support of the amendment** which was introduced by Democratic lawmakers in the final weeks of her campaign. She has never branded herself as a partisan warrior but as a centrist. Now Republicans accuse her of going back on her pledges to govern beyond partisanship while **some Democrats say she has not championed the amendment as forcefully as they had hoped**. **3B** Virginia Voting Today on Map That Could Hand 4 House Seats to Democrats. Republicans have built a small advantage from the gerrymandering clash so far but Virginia voters could change that. **Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization**. The New York Times, April 21, 2026. Republicans have built a small structural advantage in the monthslong redistricting war being waged across the country as both parties seek an edge in their efforts to win control of Congress in the midterm elections. An important election on Tuesday in Virginia could upend that advantage. The state is holding a Democratic backed referendum on whether to redraw its congressional map to give the party as many as four House seats that are now held by Republicans. Democrats now occupy six of the eleven seats in Virginia; the new map could give Democrats 10. The Virginia vote is the latest chapter of a rare middle of decade cartographic arms race that Texas Republicans started last year when urged on by President Trump they drew a map intended to yield five more Republican seats. The fight soon spread to a range of red and blue states including California which overwhelmingly passed a statewide ballot measure meant to eliminate five Republican seats. Florida is the last remaining state with potential plans to redraw its map this spring. Democratic leaders in Virginia warned that some percentage of their voters would oppose the referendum on good government grounds: they oppose political gerrymandering regardless of who is doing it. They also worried that other voters could be confused by the Republican messaging. Can Republicans drive Election Day turnout? The only time Virginia Republicans have won a statewide race since 2009 was when Glenn Youngkin was running for governor in 2021. That year a late surge and huge Election Day turnout drove Youngkin and fellow Republicans to victory. But while Republicans are energized in opposition to the referendum, the political environment is far different now from what it was when Youngkin won. In 2021 President Biden had grown unpopular and was fighting with Democrats about his domestic agenda. With Trump in office Democrats require little effort to fire up their voters. For Republicans to defeat the referendum they will need a huge number of their voters to turn out on Tuesday to cast ballots against it.

4 United Kingdom, England, Salford. **Measles Took My Daughter. This Is What I Want Everyone to Know**. **Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization**. The New York Times, April 21, 2026. The essayist is a mother in Salford, England. Her daughter died of a complication of measles in 2023. When my daughter, my firstborn, was 5 months old she spiked a fever. By that evening she was having trouble breathing; the color was gone from her face and I could see her skin tugging in around her ribs. At the hospital the doctors noted the red spots on her body and diagnosed her with measles. This was 2013 and Manchester, England, where we lived was experiencing a measles outbreak that resulted in more than one thousand suspected cases. A 1998 study by a British doctor, Andrew Wakefield, linking the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine to autism had caused vaccination rates to plummet. The study was later retracted and Wakefield stripped of his medical license but the damage had been done. In 2013 most of the cases were among school age children whose parents had refused to give them the vaccine, which is not compulsory in Britain or among babies too young to be vaccinated like my daughter. The first measles vaccine is usually given at 1 year of age. While I was concerned about my daughter I was not panicked by the diagnosis. At the time I thought of measles as being like chickenpox. And I knew she was in the right place in the hospital. Doctors were able to stabilize her breathing quickly and her fever was responding to Tylenol. Renae would feel poorly for a bit and then get better. Within a week she seemed back to normal. What I did not know was that measles can cause long term complications. A child

can seem fine while the virus slowly replicates in her brain poised to exact a terrible toll years later. Because both Britain and the United States are confronting outbreaks I am sharing my story. Parents should know just how dangerous this disease is. My daughter was early to talk and speaking in full sentences well before she turned 2. She could write her name at 3. When she was 8 she was so proud when she brought home her report card which said she read at the level of a teenager. It was in the spring and summer of 2023 when my daughter was 10 that we got the first hints that something might be wrong. Her handwriting which had always been exceptionally neat got a bit wobbly. Renae was never an athletic kid but when I attended Sports Day at her school she was not participating at all. She seemed a bit off balance. She was growing up quickly. She had just started her period. The school had called to say she was holding hands with a boy in her class. So when her personality changed and she became more snappish I did not think much of it at first. In the middle of June I got a call from her teacher. Renae had had a seizure could I come straightaway? By the time we got her to the hospital she was pretty much back to herself. Oh my God did it happen at school!? she asked mortified. We were referred to an epilepsy clinic. A week after that she had another seizure. And then several days later while lying in bed with a friend another one. She was admitted to the hospital where she received an MRI that showed mild brain swelling. The doctors told us that this can happen sometimes that maybe she had a recent infection and it often resolves on its own. They started her on an antiseizure medication and since it seemed that she was getting better released her. But toward the end of the summer she told us she saw things that were not there. I wondered if it could be a side effect of the medication but she had also started moving very slowly almost robotically and often seemed confused. We took her back to the hospital where another MRI showed the swelling in her brain had become much worse. The doctors put her on an antibiotic drip. They did lumbar punctures collecting cerebrospinal fluid from between her vertebrae. They hooked her to a machine that took the blood out of her body cleaned it and put it back in. She was rapidly slipping away. The nurses tested her strength each day and each day she was getting weaker. When she tried to get out of a bath she fell. After that we started using a wheelchair. My daughter would ask me What could it be? I told her once the doctors figured it out they could make her better. Her voice got weaker and she started sleeping more and more. Within a couple weeks my daughter had stopped talking and eating. She was transferred to the intensive care unit and given a breathing tube. Though she could not speak to me she still squeezed my hand when I talked to her. I worried she could overhear us talking about her condition and wondered how scared and confused she must be. We got the diagnosis when one of the tests of her spinal fluid had come back from London. **My daughter had subacute sclerosing panencephalitis a rare complication of measles.** The doctors told me it was fatal and there was nothing else they could do. That last weekend in the hospital watching my daughter die was so traumatic. We turned off the machines on a Friday. My family and I stayed in the room that weekend. On Monday morning September 25 2023 my daughter took her last breath. It was nine days before her 11th birthday. **In January of this year Britain lost its measles elimination status. Our national MMR vaccination rate hovers at 84 percent far below the 95 percent target set by the World Health Organization.** In the United States where schoolchildren are required to be vaccinated against measles the national vaccination rate is **92 percent.** Many states also allow for exemptions to vaccine requirements and as a result **US vaccination rates are uneven.** **Last year the United States saw its highest rate of measles cases in more than three decades and the country may soon lose its measles elimination status as well.** **Despite this Health Secretary RFK Junior said he does not think the government should be mandating vaccines and that they should be a matter of personal choice. Parents must realize that refusing vaccinations does not just put your own child at risk. It puts other children at risk.** I do not know where Renae picked up measles. It is one of the most contagious viruses that exists and it could have been from anywhere. That is why **herd immunity is so important.** If there had not been an outbreak when my daughter was a baby I do not think she would have contracted it. **She was eligible for the vaccine just seven months later and I gave it to her but it was too late.** For a long time after my daughter died I could not really believe she was not coming back. It has only been in these past several months that it is started to really sink in. My youngest child who was born less than two weeks before the death of my daughter has glasses just like her older sister and many of her mannerisms. It is hard to tell the story of my daughter but I can hear her saying Go on Mom. It is the only thing I can do.