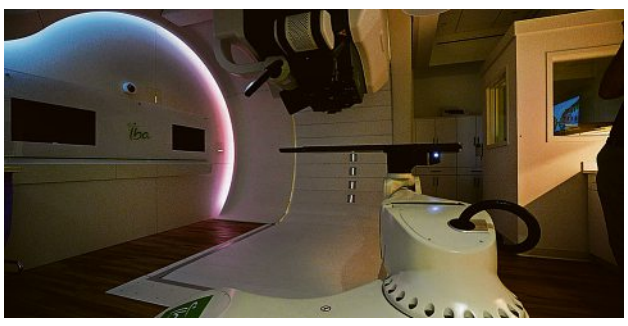

Pricing plan to impact proton therapy

INSIDE, 5A

TIMES RECORD

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2026 | SWTIMES.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Nicotine is the primary driver of tobacco addiction in the form of cigarettes, vapes and most other forms of commercial tobacco. The greatest health risks arise when tobacco is burned, which generates thousands of toxic substances.
PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

Movement touts addictive drug as beneficial, but dangers persist

Hasmeena Kathuria
University of Wisconsin-Madison
THE CONVERSATION

An ironic development emerging alongside the "Make America Healthy Again" movement is the portrayal of nicotine as a wellness and performance-enhancing product. Across social media, podcasts, wellness communities and tech startups, prominent wellness personalities and other influencers are portraying nicotine as a misunderstood compound whose potential benefits have been overshadowed by its negative association with cigarette smoking.

As a result, nicotine is being repositioned from an addictive substance linked to tobacco use to a natural product that can be used for everything from improving focus to protecting against cognitive decline. This trend includes use of nicotine

See NICOTINE, Page 2A

Nicotine, in products such as nicotine pouches, is being repositioned from an addictive substance linked to tobacco use to a natural product that can be used for everything from improving focus to protecting against cognitive decline.

ANALYSIS

AI pricing suit raises antitrust questions

Plaintiff says McDonald's used tech to set prices

Mike Scarcella
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – A federal antitrust lawsuit against McDonald's filed last week claims the fast-food giant is using AI-powered tools to fix menu prices, marking the latest case to allege companies are relying on new technologies to collude and harm consumers.

Plaintiffs have sued companies in industries ranging from hotels and real estate to health insurance, and now, hamburgers. The claims are pending in class-action lawsuits around the country, with mixed outcomes so far.

The McDonald's case hinges in part on the company's franchise model, in which most of its 14,000 U.S. restaurants are independently owned. It says restaurant owners should be competing freely but are pressured by McDonald's to use its "pricing engine" or risk losing their franchise status, driving up the cost of Big Macs, fries and other menu items for millions of customers.

McDonald's told Reuters that its franchisees set prices individually, and that "AI does not set the price of a Big Mac or any other menu item."

The lawsuit followed a Reuters report detailing how McDonald's is using AI to guide menu prices. The proposed class action in Chicago federal court says the company leverages its technology "to nickel-and-dime consumers down to the last French fry."

See LAWSUIT, Page 2A

Green-card program targeted by Trump

Major tech companies suspended from PERM

Deborah Mary Sophia and Jaspreet Singh
REUTERS

The U.S. government said on Oct. 8 that it is suspending some major global tech and IT firms, including Microsoft and Cognizant, from a key green-card program that allows skilled foreign workers to gain permanent residency through their employment.

Senior U.S. officials cited alleged fraud as the reason behind the move, saying companies have been using the program to replace American workers with cheaper foreign workers. It comes as the latest step in the Trump administration's crackdown on skilled foreign labor.

What is under suspension?

The suspension is targeting a key employer-sponsorship mechanism, called the Permanent Labor Certification or PERM, which is used by major technology companies and outsourcing firms. The U.S. government said that for certain companies, it would not accept any new PERM applications or process

See TRUMP, Page 3A

Vice President JD Vance on Oct. 8 announced new findings of alleged abuse and fraud in the H-1B temporary work visa and Permanent Labor Certification programs.
ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

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