

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

RE V1 V2 V3 V4



Partly sunny 61/46 • Tomorrow: Mostly cloudy 62/48 **B18**

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2025 • \$4

Prices for ACA health insurance to rise 30%

Largest spike in years comes during shutdown over expiring subsidies

BY PAIGE WINFIELD CUNNINGHAM

Premiums for the most popular types of plans sold on the federal health insurance marketplace Healthcare.gov will spike on average by 30 percent next year, according to final rates approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and shown in documents reviewed by The Washington Post.

The higher prices — affecting up to 17 million Americans who buy coverage on the federal marketplace — reflect the largest annual premium increases by far in recent years. The higher premiums, along with the likely expiration of pandemic-era subsidies, mean millions of people will see their health insurance payments double or even triple in 2026.

The premium spikes, mirroring the rising cost of private-employer-sponsored plans, arrive during a protracted and bitter congressional battle over health insurance costs that prompted a government shutdown Oct. 1. Democrats have urged an extension of enhanced subsidies for plans sold through the Affordable Care Act to soften the blow of rising insurance costs, while Republicans have said the additional assistance was never meant to be permanent.

The spike in premiums will become visible to more Americans on Monday, when the Trump administration is expected to open Healthcare.gov for window shopping to browse the price of plans ahead of the Nov. 1 start to

SEE **HEALTH CARE** ON **A15**



JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

“I will not be deterred,” New York Attorney General Letitia James told supporters outside the courthouse in Norfolk.

A defiant James pleads not guilty

BY SALVADOR RIZZO, SHAYNA JACOBS AND JEREMY ROEBUCK

NORFOLK — New York Attorney General Letitia James pleaded not guilty Friday to charges of mortgage fraud brought by the Justice Department amid President Donald Trump’s push to prosecute those who have investigated him.

James, the highest-ranking Democrat to be indicted as part of Trump’s effort, entered her plea during a brief arraignment in Norfolk federal court. U.S. District Judge Jamar K. Walker set a trial date of Jan. 26, saying he expected the matter to take

She calls justice system ‘weaponized’ in fraud case pushed by Trump

about five days.

“We want the speediest trial we can possibly get,” James’s attorney Abbe Lowell said. James, standing next to him at the defense table, entered her plea.

“Not guilty, judge,” she said, “to both counts.”

James turned to face family members and supporters seated in the courtroom gallery as the hearing concluded, smiling

and touching her hand to her chest.

She emerged from the courthouse afterward, greeted by cheers from dozens of demonstrators who had gathered outside. Some carried signs reading “Defend Democracy” and “Suppression of Opposition” as a speaker blasted Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power.”

“This is not about me. This is about all of us and a justice system which has been weaponized,” James said, addressing the crowd. “A justice system which has been used as a tool of revenge and a weapon against those individuals who simply did their job and who stood up for the rule of law.”

SEE **JAMES** ON **A5**

Carrier ordered to Latin America

MAJOR ESCALATION IN CARTEL CAMPAIGN

U.S. buildup suggests land strikes may be next

BY DAN LAMOTHE

The Pentagon on Friday signaled a major expansion of its military campaign against “Transnational Criminal Organizations” in Latin America, saying Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has ordered the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford and its associated warships to the region in coming days.

Sean Parnell, a spokesman, said in a statement that the expanded military presence aims not only to “disrupt narcotics trafficking” throughout the Western Hemisphere but to “degrade and dismantle” criminal groups that operate there.

The deployment is a remarkable escalation in President Donald Trump’s campaign of violence against alleged drug cartel members, and is likely to almost double the number of U.S. troops in the region.

In addition to the deployment of advanced F-35 fighter jets to military facilities in Puerto Rico, about 6,000 personnel are spread across eight warships in the Caribbean Sea, said U.S. defense officials familiar with the military movements. The Ford Carrier Strike Group, which is transiting to the region from Europe, departed its home port in Virginia in June carrying about 4,500 sailors.

SEE **VENEZUELA** ON **A10**

10th known U.S. strike: More than 40 have now been killed at sea. **A10**

‘No plan B,’ Rubio warns as Gaza truce shows strain

BY SHIRA RUBIN

TEL AVIV — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday that the United States continued to support Israel and was committed to the ceasefire in Gaza, even as the deal has continued to face hurdles and Israelis have questioned how exactly the deal will be sustained and how much the U.S. administration will dictate Israeli military actions.

American officials have expressed confidence the ceasefire will hold — despite the violence on Sunday that imperiled it — and domestic Israeli opposition to the U.S. involvement has grown.

Asked at a news conference Friday whether Israel should “apply for permission from the Trump administration” to renew fighting if Hamas militants were attacking or rearming, Rubio replied: “I wouldn’t phrase it that way. . . . The bottom line is that there’s no nation on Earth that’s contributed more to help Israel and its security.”

He added that the U.S. was also committed to Israel’s long-term security, including ensuring that Hamas was demilitarized, and that there was “no plan B,” saying the ceasefire deal brokered by

SEE **RUBIO** ON **A11**



TODD KIRKLAND/GETTY IMAGES

UGA XI lives in Savannah but makes the four-hour trip to Athens for Georgia football games.

For live college mascots, the work has perks

BY GLYNN A. HILL

Taylor Stratton’s heart was beating out of her chest just before she opened the gate. She had done this before, but the moment last month was the culmination of a year-long search and months of training, and there was no guarantee how it would go.

Stratton’s pursuit led her to ranches around Colorado as she sought a young bison to succeed the University of Colorado’s live mascot, Ralphie VI. She had met several dead ends, including a

Representing a school requires training with plenty of head rubs and sweet treats

man who said she could have a bison from his herd if she came to the ranch and essentially caught it herself. That wasn’t ideal, but eventually she found a family on a ranch about 150 miles west of Boulder that vaccinated, weaned and carefully managed its herd. After months of training — and the August retirement of Ralphie VI — her successor was ready at the gate for her debut, where she would race ahead of the Bufaloes onto the field before the kickoff of their Sept. 20 home

SEE **MASCOTS** ON **A6**

Inflation edges up to 3 percent, report shows

The consumer price index rises to highest rate since January

BY ANDREW ACKERMAN

New data released Friday showed inflation heated up in September to a pace not seen since January, according to the first dataset to be released during the government shutdown.

The September consumer price index showed prices rising at a 3 percent annual rate — up slightly from 2.9 percent in August and above April’s post-pandemic low of 2.3 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Gasoline prices, which edged down over the past year — providing some relief to consumers — nonetheless jumped 4.1 percent in September and were the largest factor in a 0.3 percent monthly increase.

Core inflation, which excludes food and energy and is seen as a steadier gauge of underlying pressures, eased slightly to a 3 percent annual rate.

The report offers the only official glimpse of the economy this month amid the government shutdown, highlighting the continuing impact of President Donald Trump’s tariffs on consumers,

some of which began to take effect in August.

Though the 3 percent pace was slightly below economists’ expectations, Friday’s report is the latest to demonstrate that inflation hasn’t gone away and remains stubbornly above pre-pandemic norms. The long stretch of above-average increases has left the cost of everyday goods and services about 25 percent higher than before the pandemic.

Some categories with exposure to tariffs, such as apparel and furniture, notched gains. Other goods prices showed increases, particularly for food, which rose 0.2 percent in September and was up 3.1 percent since last year.

Broadly though, tariffs don’t fully explain the rise in inflation, which is still largely driven by a 3.6 percent annual rise in the prices of services such as housing, fuel and utilities, according to Joe Brusuelas, chief economist at RSM. Though shelter price inflation slowed in September, it was up 3.6 percent for the year.

Michael Pearce, deputy chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, said in a research note that September’s smaller-than-expected rise in consumer prices gives the green light for the Federal Reserve to cut rates at its policy meeting next week. But he expected the Fed would slow the pace of future cuts as long as

SEE **INFLATION** ON **A15**

IN THE NEWS

Trade talks scuttled President Donald Trump said negotiations with Canada were off over an anti-tariff advertisement paid for by the government of Ontario. **A8**

Carbon ‘hoofprint’ New research shows that what Americans eat, and where they eat it, has a significant environmental impact. **A2**

THE NATION

A lawsuit is challenging a Michigan law on end-of-life choices for pregnant women. **A3**
Hakeem Jeffries gave his endorsement for New York mayor to Zohran Mamdani. **A4**

THE WORLD

Brazilian authorities are investigating cases of liquor tainted with a deadly toxin. **A9**
A former oligarch in Russia says direct pressure is key in dealing with Vladimir Putin. **A11**

THE ECONOMY

Social Security recipients will see a 2.8 percent cost-of-living increase in their checks next year. **A15**
More and more people are using AI. But others dare to say no, citing concerns about accuracy, privacy or undermining their own skills. **A18**

STYLE

Among Gen Alpha, “six-seven” has become a catchphrase that means, well, nothing. **B1**

SPORTS

What felt like a dream opening week for the NBA got a rude awakening with news of a gambling scandal, Candace Buckner writes. **B7**

THE REGION

A judge heard arguments in D.C.’s lawsuit to halt Trump’s National Guard deployment. **B13**
A D.C. man is suing after being detained for trailing National Guard members in the District while playing “The Imperial March” from the Star Wars saga. **B13**

BUSINESS NEWS.....A18
COMICS.....B4
OBITUARIES.....B15
OPINION PAGES.....A16
TELEVISION.....B6
WORLD NEWS.....A9

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