

Treatment of hearing loss with hearing aids may delay cognitive decline.\*



Recent studies have found that treating hearing loss can support healthy aging and reduce the risk of cognitive decline by 48% over three years.<sup>1</sup>

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of the latest hearing aid technology<sup>2</sup>  
Offer expires 02/28/26

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\*Source: Sarant et al 2023 <https://healthsciences.unimelb.edu.au/research-groups/audiology-and-speech-pathology-research/hearing-and-cognition-research-program/research/remediation-hearing-aids/>; Lin, F, et al. (2023, July 17). Hearing intervention versus health education control to reduce cognitive decline in older adults with hearing loss in the USA (ACHEVE): a multicentre, randomised controlled trial. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01406-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01406-X)  
<sup>2</sup>Certain types of hearing loss may require a hearing instrument model that is not appropriate for the trial. Hearing evaluation required. See clinic for details. Only available for selected hearing instruments. Offer expires 02/28/26.

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# The Augusta Chronicle

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2026 | AUGUSTACHRONICLE.COM K1

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## Freight rail industry dirtier than coal power plants



Railroad locomotive pollution causes an estimated \$48 billion in health care costs and 3,100 premature deaths annually in the United States, according to the EPA's Co-Benefits Risk Assessment tool. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

### Aging locomotives, pushback on regulation contribute to pollution problem

**Tim McLaughlin**  
REUTERS

BNSF Railway, one of the crown jewels of Warren Buffett's sprawling Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate, calls itself an environmental leader in the U.S. rail industry with the cleanest locomotive fleet in North America.

"When you see our orange locomotives and freight cars' steel wheels moving on steel rails, think green," BNSF says in its latest sustainability overview.

But the company is the largest player in an industry that has a pollution problem: U.S. freight railroads are a major source of pollution, huffing out more nitrogen oxide, the primary component of smog, than all the nation's coal-fired power plants combined, according to a Reuters calculation using government data.

U.S. railroads together produced about 485,000 tons of nitrogen oxide in 2024, compared to 452,000 tons emitted by U.S. coal-fired power plants, according to a Reuters calculation of reported annual fuel consumption multiplied by the EPA's 2023 weighted-average emission rates.



Canadian National has nearly 300 of the more fuel efficient Tier 4 locomotives, making up about 27% of its total fleet. By comparison, Tier 4 locomotives make up just 5% of BNSF's total fleet. ANDREW CHIN/GETTY IMAGES

BNSF, the nation's largest freight railroad, accounts for about a third of that total, producing 161,500 tons of smog-causing nitrogen oxide in 2024, according to the data.

"We don't dispute your number.

BNSF is the biggest Class I railroad by volume," BNSF said in an email.

BNSF's position as largest in the rail industry, as well as its profitability, will

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## Senate contenders challenged over health care issues

**Mark Niese**  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Georgia Democrats blamed Republican U.S. Senate candidates for the expiration of Affordable Care Act health insurance subsidies Tuesday, an opening 2026 salvo in the critical Senate race.

The Democratic attack targeted the three Republicans in the race — U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, U.S. Rep. Mike Collins, and former football coach Derek Dooley — for opposing bills that would have renewed the subsidies and held down insurance prices. They're trying to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff in this fall's election.

Republicans said the health subsidies are an expensive cost to taxpayers that support a broken health care system.

Georgia House Minority Whip Sam Park, D-Lawrenceville, said the elimination of subsidies priced many families out of health insurance coverage. Enrollment in Georgia's health exchange declined by more than 190,000 this year, according to the Georgia Office of the Commissioner of Insurance.

"Republicans like Buddy Carter and Mike Collins voted to end the tax credits that made health care coverage affordable, and every single day they fail to restore those credits, more Georgians are losing access to life-saving health care because they can't afford it," said Park during a press conference at the state Democratic Party headquarters.

Average monthly premium costs rose \$862, to a total of \$1,307, in Georgia for a 60-year-old with a \$62,800 income on a benchmark plan, according to the health research organization KFF.

Georgia Republican Party Chairman Josh McKoon said Democrats approved temporary health insurance subsidies during the COVID-19 pandemic without a long-term plan.

"The subsidies are financially unsustainable and point to how broken Obamacare has been from the beginning," McKoon said. "President Trump and Republicans have offered sustainable solutions to increase access and affordability for all Americans, but Democrats would rather play politics."

The Democrats' attack accompanied billboards purchased by the

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## AU nursing program among best in Georgia

**Jennifer Miller**  
Augusta Chronicle  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Augusta University's nursing program has been named one of the top psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner programs in Georgia by RegisteredNursing.org.

AU's program ranked fourth in the state behind Georgia College & State,

Emory, and Mercer universities, according to a news release from RegisteredNursing.org.

The ranking includes AU's Post-Master's Certificate and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs.

Georgia faces a significant mental health workforce shortage, according to the release, particularly in rural areas and in underserved urban areas such as Augusta and other larger cities

in the state. These specialized nurses "are a critical part of the solution, delivering diagnostic, therapeutic, and medication management services across the lifespan," according to the release.

For more information about the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner program at Augusta University, visit [www.augusta.edu/nursing/dnp/pmhnpp.php](http://www.augusta.edu/nursing/dnp/pmhnpp.php).

### Note to readers

Due to the fast-changing winter storm, you may experience delivery changes of your printed newspaper — including early delivery of the Sunday paper, or delayed delivery of some editions until road conditions are safe. Visit us online for the latest updates on the storm's impact on our community.

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Volume 241 | No. 20  
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