



## 'Project Hail Mary' is 2026's first great movie

MOVIES, 5A

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# MALARIA FIGHT MOVES FORWARD



Vaccines approved in 2023 reduce the incidence of clinical malaria cases in vaccinated children by about 75% in the first year after receiving the primary dose, and the protection they offer fades over time. But when combined with bed nets and preventive drugs, they're already preventing thousands of deaths. PHOTOS BY HAJARAH NALWADDA/GETTY IMAGES

## Researchers closer to outsmarting world's deadliest parasite

**Kwesi Akonu Adom Mensah Forson**  
University of Virginia  
THE CONVERSATION

Every year, malaria kills more than 600,000 people worldwide. Most of them are children under 5 in sub-Saharan Africa. But the disease isn't confined to poor, rural areas – it's a global threat that travels with people across borders.

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In 2023, the World Health Organization approved two malaria vaccines for children: one called RTS,S/AS01, also known as Mosquirix, and another referred to as R21/Matrix-M.

## IL outlines mail ballot procedure

**Nida Tazeen**  
Galesburg Register-Mail  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Illinois voters who plan to use mail-in ballots for the March 17 primary election should be aware of postmarking procedures and ballot return options.

Mail-in ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and arrive within two weeks afterward, according to a community announcement.

However, ballots dropped in a mailbox or handed to a letter carrier may not receive a postmark until they are processed at a regional facility, which can take a day or two. Voters returning ballots by mail close to the primary are advised to visit a postal service retail location and have their ballot manually postmarked, according to the announcement.

Most of Illinois' 108 local election authorities offer secure drop boxes for ballot returns, allowing voters to bypass the mail system. Information on drop box availability and locations is available on the Illinois State Board of Elections website, according to the announcement.

Voters can also return their marked mail ballots in person to their local election authority's office.

Those wishing to vote by mail have until March 12 to request a ballot from their local election authority. Applications and contact information are available on the Illinois State Board of Elections website, according to the announcement.

The State Board of Elections is an independent state agency responsible for overseeing the administration of election laws in Illinois. Elections are administered locally by the state's 108 election authorities.

*This story was created by reporter Nida Tazeen, NTazeen@usatodayco.com, with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Journalists were involved in every step of the information gathering, review, editing and publishing process. Learn more at cm.usatoday.com/ethical-conduct.*

## GOP candidates vying for Dick Durbin's U.S. Senate seat

**Tom Ackerman**  
Springfield State Journal-Register  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A crowded, competitive pool of candidates for one U.S. Senate seat in Illinois includes multiple U.S. House representatives and the current Lieutenant Governor of the state.

Longtime, current U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Illinois is not seeking re-election.

The SJ-R reached out to all of the Democratic and Republican candidates ahead of the Primary Election on March 17 to ask them a series of questions that we thought readers would want to know about.

Here's what the Republican candidates said in their email responses.

We shared what the Democratic

See **U.S. SENATE**, Page 3A



From left, Pamela Long, Don Tracy, R. Cary Capparelli, are three of the Republican candidates running for the U.S. Senate being vacated by Dick Durbin.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PAMELA LONG, DON TRACY, R. CARY CAPPARELLI



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