



Analysis: From 'buy America' to 'bye America'

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Foster hometown pride to grow civic engagement



Regular community events, from farmers markets to fireworks, build emotional ties to a place. GETTY IMAGES

Local patriotism one cure for sour feelings about politics

Sean Richey

Georgia State University | THE CONVERSATION

Eileen Higgins won a historic victory in December. She became the first woman ever elected mayor of Miami, as well as its first Democratic mayor since 1997. Although the stakes in the city's Dec. 9, runoff election were high, interest was not - 4 in 5 registered voters stayed home.

Low turnout is common in municipal elections across the country. While much of the nation's political attention stays focused on Washington, the leaders who control the nation's streets, schools and neighborhoods are typically chosen by a small fraction of citizens.

Although many Americans can identify their U.S. senators or members of Congress, far fewer can name even one of their local elected officials, such as a city council member. To cite one example, a North Carolina study found that 86% of state residents could not identify their own elected leaders, including local government officials.

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Turnout in local elections regularly falls below 20%, often leaving critical decisions in the hands of small, unrepresentative groups, creating an electorate that's disproportionately White, elderly and affluent.

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People who loved their town were more likely to attend city council meetings, contact local officials, volunteer for campaigns and discuss local issues with friends. The same pattern held for civic participation - from volunteering with community groups to organizing neighborhood cleanups.

Bill would add flexibility to U.S. family leave law

Olivia Montes

Delaware News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A newly proposed bipartisan bill would make federal family and medical leave more flexible for American workers.

The Flexible Leave Act, introduced Feb. 11 by Rep. Sarah McBride, D-Delaware, and Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Florida, would modernize the federal Family and Medical Leave Act to better

reflect how working people manage caregiving and welcoming a new child.

"No one should have to choose between their paycheck and their family, between their purpose and their health," McBride said.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act currently allows qualified employees "to take unpaid, job-protected leave" for up to 12 work weeks for spec-



McBride



Luna

ified family and medical reasons, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

That includes taking time to care for and bond with a new child, whether it be through birth, adoption or foster care placement.

Critics, however, say the law places

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MERCURY

EPA to weaken limits from coal plants

Administration says move will help with rising electricity demand

Valerie Volcovici

REUTERS

WASHINGTON - The Trump administration announced on Feb. 20 it will roll back air regulations for power plants that limited mercury and hazardous air toxics, a move it says will boost baseload energy but that public health groups say will harm public health for America's most vulnerable groups.

President Donald Trump's EPA has said that easing the pollution standards for coal plants would alleviate costs for utilities that run older coal plants at a time when demand for power is soaring amid the expansion of data centers used for artificial intelligence.

But environmental groups have said that weakening standards for mercury, a neurotoxin that can impair babies' brain development, and other air toxins will lead to higher health-related costs.

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