



WEIRDEST
ENDING
EVER?

THE LIONS SUFFERED A MAJOR BLOW TO THEIR PLAYOFF HOPES SUNDAY IN A CONFUSING LOSS TO STEELERS THAT SNAPPED THEIR 15-GAME WIN STREAK. **B1**

ANALYSIS

Paradise found? The bible business is booming.



Among bestselling bibles are an economy version of the English Standard Bible — the top seller, according to Circana — the Adventure Bible for kids and the She Reads Truth Bible, named for an online community of Bible-reading women. *Shutterstock*

While publishers can track how many Bibles are sold, they don’t have demographic details of the buyers.

Bob Smietana Religion News Service

Many Americans may have lost faith in organized religion, but according to recent data, they still love the Good Book.

As of September, Bible sales were up 11% this year over 2024, part of a continuing boom in Bible sales. That includes 2.4 million sold in September 2025 as part of a surge that coincided with the death of conservative Christian activist Charlie Kirk, according to data from Circana, a company that tracks book sales. All told, more than 18 million Bibles have been sold so far this year.

“Sales for Bibles have been steadily growing in the U.S. since 2021 and have set unprecedented annual sales records since 2022,” Brenna Connor, an industry analyst at Circana BookScan, told RNS in an email. “2024 marked a 20-year high for Bible sales in the U.S., and 2025 is on track to surpass these levels, underscoring the growing interest in religious content among U.S. consumers.”

Among the bestsellers are an economy version of the English Standard Bible — the top seller, according to Circana— the Adventure Bible for kids and the She Reads Truth Bible, named for an online community of Bible-reading women. A pink, giant-print King James Version gift Bible has been a bestseller for years. And President Donald Trump earned more than \$1.3 million last

“Part of me wonders if people are just looking for something to kind of settle themselves — that spiritual looking for peace, whatever you want to call it.”

Tim Wildsmith, a former college campus minister turned author and Bible YouTuber

year for endorsing a patriotic Bible named for country singer Lee Greenwood’s song “God Bless the USA.”

While publishers can track how many Bibles are sold, they don’t have demographic details of the buyers. But Tim Wildsmith, a former college campus minister turned author and Bible YouTuber, wonders if the tumult of the past five years, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the current political polarization, is playing a role. With the world going crazy, he said, folks may be looking for something they can rely on.

“Part of me wonders if people are just looking for something to kind of settle themselves — that spiritual looking for peace, whatever you want to call it,” he said.

At the Christian Connection bookstore in Sycamore, Illinois, a town west of Chicago, the most popular version of the Bible is the

New Living Translation, especially its editions that pair with a new app from Tyn-dale, the NLT’s publisher. That translation is easy to read, and the app, known as Filament, makes it easy for readers to access study materials to help understand the text, said Kelli Malm, who runs the store with her mother.

“People want the readability, especially if they’re new Christians, and if they’re younger, they can use an app,” she said. “It’s kind of a no-brainer situation for people — they’ve got a Bible and carry it around with them, and they don’t have to necessarily grab the big study Bible.”

The store has seen an uptick in sales since September, and at least one buyer said Kirk’s death prompted them to go back to church, Malm said.

She said that before September, she had no idea who Kirk was, but that God can take something terrible and redeem it. While most people who buy Bibles at the store are older, she has also seen an uptick in customers in their 30s and 40s.

“They’ve just found their faith, or they’re coming back to it,” she said.

FOR REFERENCE

Colton Burkhart, a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, is on his third Bible, a MacArthur Study Bible he bought last year after wearing out a previous edition. He has it filled with colored tabs to help him find different topics, and he carries a color-coded chart for easy reference.

Burkhart said he tried to read the Bible on his phone but found it too distracting.

“I need something I can really read,” he said, adding that he likes to write notes in his Bible and highlight verses he has read.

SEE ANALYSIS, A3

BALLOT INITIATIVE

Ranked choice voting campaign suspends 2026 effort

Opponents of the measure celebrated the news.

Michael Kransz mkransz@mlive.com

LANSING — Michigan voters might not decide next fall whether to switch the state’s elections to a ranked choice voting system.

Organizers trying to get the ranked choice voting question on the November 2026 ballot said Thursday that they’ve suspended signature collection efforts to be on the ballot. That ballot committee is called Rank MI Vote.

“Rank MI Vote has paused its statewide signature gathering as it builds momentum toward an eventual statewide win for ranked choice voting in Michigan,” said Pat Zabawa, executive director of Rank MI Vote. “However, we are leaving all options on the table for the future of our movement.”

Organizers say there may be further attempts to make the 2026 ballot. Rank MI Vote needs to collect at least 446,198 valid signatures to get the proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot.

The news was first reported by Bridge Michigan, which also reported that Rank MI Vote officials told volunteers in an email last week the group was preparing a relaunch in April 2027 to make the 2028 ballot. Organizers did not confirm that to MLive.

Ranked choice voting allows voters to rank candidate choices on ballots in order of preference.

The lowest vote-getters are eliminated and those votes are then transferred to voters’ next choice. That process continues until there’s a winner with at least 50% of the votes.

If the Rank MI Vote question was passed, Michigan voters would be able to rank candidates for most federal and statewide elections. That would include presidential elections and the race for governor, secretary of state and attorney general, among others.

SEE BALLOT INITIATIVE, A3



Michigan voters might not decide next fall whether to switch the state’s elections to a ranked choice voting system. (MLive file photo)

Michigan users won’t much notice marijuana reclassification

The federal move could transform cannabis banking.

Gus Burns fburns@mlive.com

Marijuana soon may no longer be a Schedule I drug, but the shift isn’t expected to significantly affect residents of Michigan, where marijuana is already legal.

President Donald Trump on Thursday issued a directive ordering that marijuana be reclassified as a Schedule III drug under federal law.

Since creation of the Controlled Substances Act in 1970, the government has classified marijuana along with street drugs such as LSD, heroin and Ecstasy, which are considered to have a “high

potential for abuse” and “no currently accepted medical use.”

Schedule III drugs are defined as having a “moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence” and include prescription drugs, like ketamine, certain barbiturates and some opiate-based painkillers.

According to statements made by White House staff, the intent is not to federally legalize marijuana for recreational use but to expand research into medical use and health effects, internet news site The Hill reported.

The Michigan Cannabis Regulatory Agency, which oversees the state’s mari-

juana market, has previously submitted comments to the DEA calling for federal policy to “reflect the realities of state-regulated markets like Michigan’s, where hundreds of thousands of patients and adult-use consumers rely on cannabis safely and responsibly.”

The state agency said it is still assessing the details of the Trump order.

“This development has the potential to move the federal marijuana policy debate forward after years of advocacy by patients, businesses and states across the country,” the agency said.

Many expect the rescheduling to reduce

SEE SCHEDULE III, A3