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Muskegon Chronicle



BIG TEN IS BEST

THE BIG TEN HAS WON THREE STRAIGHT COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF TITLES. NO. 16-RANKED MICHIGAN IS AMONG EIGHT LEAGUE TEAMS IN THE AP PRESEASON TOP 25 POLL. **G1**



Kindergarten vaccine exemptions reach another record high

For the fourth consecutive year, the national average vaccine exemption rate has reached a record, and the vast majority are parents withholding shots for nonmedical reasons. *Adobe Stock*

4.2% of children are exempted from vaccine requirements, up from 3.6% the previous year.

Mike Stobbe Associated Press

U.S. kindergarten vaccination rates inched down again last year and the share of children with exemptions rose to an all-time high, according to federal data posted this week.

The fraction of kids exempted from vaccine requirements rose to 4.2%, up from 3.6% the year before. That’s an estimated 155,000 children nationally during the 2025-26 school year.

It’s the fourth consecutive year that the national average exemption rate has reached a record, and the vast majority are parents withholding shots for nonmedical reasons.

Exemptions increased in 41 states and the District of Columbia.

Experts point to turmoil caused by federal health officials.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was a leading voice in the antivaccine movement before President Donald Trump put him in charge of federal health agencies. In the past 18 months, Kennedy and other federal officials have repeatedly tried to revise and reduce childhood vaccination guidance.

Earlier this month, Trump called for revamped childhood vaccination recommendations that promote his discredited theory that childhood shots should be spaced out into separate medical visits.

“The root cause of this is primarily because there’s so much chaos and confusion in vaccination recommendation systems in the last year or so,” said Dr. James Campbell, of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

VACCINATION RATES FELL FOR MANY DISEASES

The CDC reported that 92.4% of 2025-26 kindergartners got their required measles-mumps-rubella shots, down slightly from the previous year. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the vaccination rate was 95% — the level that makes it unlikely that a single infection will spark a disease

cluster or outbreak.

Vaccination rates also fell for polio, for the combination shot against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, and for the first dose of the vaccine against chickenpox.

The rate held steady for protection against hepatitis B.

But that’s a vaccine given shortly after birth, and it will take a few years before recent federal efforts to upend infant hepatitis B vaccine recommendations would appear in the vaccination rates of kindergartners, Campbell said.

The vaccination numbers were posted as the U.S. experiences its worst year for measles since 1991.

The numbers indicate more than a quarter of a million children entering kindergarten are susceptible to measles, said Campbell, a University of Maryland researcher who is chair of the AAP’s infectious diseases committee.

Those at-risk kids are not evenly distributed — concentrations of unvaccinated children are higher in some places than others, which helps explain why measles waves vary in intensity.

SEE HEALTH, A3

GREAT LAKES

Young carp now closer than ever to Lake Michigan

Several hundred juveniles of the invasive species were discovered.

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The invasive carp threat has moved closer to Lake Michigan.

“Several hundred” juvenile silver carp were found in the Marseilles Pool of the Illinois River during routine monitoring, an apparent spawning event discovered while work remains halted on an upstream federal barrier intended to stop their advance.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources said the fish were removed Aug. 13 and 14 from the river pool, which is 80 miles downstream of Lake Michigan. The fish ranged in size from 4 to 6 inches.

It’s the farthest upriver silver carp that small have been found during 16 years of monitoring. “The location indicates a spawning event may have occurred further upriver or in one of the tributaries that feed into the Illinois River,” the agency said last week.

SEE GREAT LAKES, A3

TRUMP’S PRESIDENCY

Appeals court again rejects voter data appeal

The most recent ruling means the state is still not obligated to release personal information of registered voters.

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LANSING — A federal appeals court has denied the U.S. Department of Justice’s request for a rehearing in a case seeking Michigan’s full electronic voter list — including personal information.

The Aug. 14 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit upholds a previous appeals court ruling and the decision of a lower federal court in Michigan.

The most recent ruling means the state is still not obligated to release personal information of registered voters, including birth dates, addresses, driver’s license numbers and partial Social Security numbers.

The DOJ under President Donald Trump sought disclosure of Michigan’s unredacted electronic voter registration list in July 2025, asking for the personal

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