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PREVIEW OF SUPER BOWL

Coverage for Sunday's game. **SPORTS, B1-B3**

CONCORD MONITOR

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2026

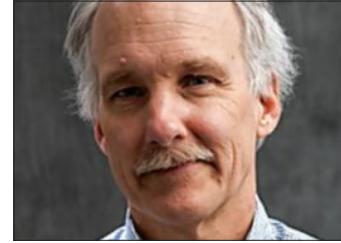
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Concord, New Hampshire

\$2

What has led to birth dearth?



DAVID BROOKS

Granite Geek

People all over the world (including NH) having fewer kids

If you want to start a debate, wonder out loud why human beings all over the world are growing less enthusiastic about having children. People definitely have opinions.

You will be told that the fall in fertility rates seen in most of the countries of the world, including the U.S., is the result of high housing costs. Or

cultural changes. Or pollution reducing sperm counts. Or human psychology in a neoliberal world. Or the distraction of social media. Or despair about climate. Or all those things and more.

The thing you'll really learn is that nobody knows.

New Hampshire has been facing this reality for a long time. Despite the occasional blip – it rose slightly this year – the number of births in the state has been falling steadily for three decades, from 14,000 a year in

the 1990s to 12,000 now. Various fixes have been tried to stem the tide, such as tweaking taxes and fees or creating the stay-work-play program to lure younger and presumably more fecund people, but so far without success.

When thinking about that problem, I wondered if one cause might be a decline in Granite State marriages. So I took a look at statistics from the state Vital Records office.

SEE **GRANITE GEEK** A3

PROTESTERS SEEING RED

Run on magenta colored yard for knitting hats to protest federal immigration enforcement



Oak Sepe collects what's left of the red yarn in a bowl at the center of the store. The yarn shop sold as many as 40 skeins, or bundles, of red yarn in a single day last week, and has sold hundreds since the caps gained popularity.

CATHERINE MC LAUGHLIN
Monitor



The crowd packs the City Plaza in front of the State House during a ICE protest on Saturday.

GEOFF FORESTER / For the Monitor

By **CATHERINE MC LAUGHLIN**
Concord Monitor

A salad-bowl-sized basket offered all the available red yarn for sale at the Elegant Ewe.

"This is pretty much what we have left," employee Oak Sepe said from behind the register. "You can look around the store and see big gaps where there used to be red."

The downtown Concord yarn store has sold hundreds of red bundles in the last two weeks.

The run on red is tied to resistance against federal immigration enforcement, in

Minnesota and elsewhere, and the shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. With a folded bottom, peaked top and braided tassel, the knit or crocheted beanies, now dubbed "Melt the ICE" caps, first appeared at protests in Minneapolis but have now spread to related assemblies in other states, including New Hampshire.

Sepe spent last week "manically knitting" their own cap ahead of protests in Concord over the weekend. Sepe wasn't alone – red beanies dotted the crowd at a protest in Concord on Saturday.

The cap has its roots in a revival of an anti-Nazi symbol from 1940s Norway. It's

bright color was meant to bring cheeriness and hope as resistance in a dark time, a Norwegian resistance historian told NPR. The "nissehue," roughly translated as a Santa Hat, was eventually outlawed by the Nazis.

A pattern for the caps was created by Needle & Skein, a yarn store in Minneapolis, and posted on Ravelry, a knitting and crochet enthusiasts' site. At five dollars each, the store has pledged to send proceeds from the template, totaling so far in the hundreds of thousands, to immigrant aid agencies.

SEE **YARN** A5

TRANSPARENCY

Limiting public records to residents

By **EMILIA WISNIEWSKI**
Concord Monitor

Fulfilling a Right-to-Know request can sometimes be tedious and time-consuming. From time to time, the person requesting the public records never arrives to pick them up at town hall.

With AI, some requests seek massive data sets, like detailed information on every property in town.

Sen. William Gannon wants to give towns, cities and school districts a reprieve. He sponsored Senate Bill 626

SEE **TRANSPARENCY** A5



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