



## Fed minutes show officials dealing with policy split

BUSINESS, 7A

# PUBLIC OPINION

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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

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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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## Bodies of all 9 skiers found after avalanche

Jonathan Limehouse  
USA TODAY

The bodies of all nine missing skiers have been recovered after being caught in an avalanche in California's Sierra Nevada mountain range, according to the Nevada County Sheriff's Office.

During a news conference, Lt. Dennis Haack with the sheriff's office said California Highway Patrol and the California National Guard assisted in recovering the remaining ninth skier, whose body was found the morning of Feb. 21.

It is believed to be the deadliest avalanche in the United States in the past four decades.

On Feb. 18, California search-and-rescue crews had recovered eight skiers who were trapped in the powerful avalanche near Lake Tahoe, USA TODAY previously reported.

The thunderous avalanche struck the group of skiers – nine women and six men, ages 30 to 55 – late in the morning of Feb. 17 near Castle Peak, north of Truckee, California, amid dangerous winter conditions that had dramatically increased the risk of avalanches across the region.

Officials said several skiers were initially buried by the slide, prompting a large-scale rescue operation involving Black Hawk helicopters, ground search teams and avalanche dogs.

According to Haack, California Highway Patrol arrived at the avalanche site to recover the ninth skier early Feb. 21, but due to heavy winds they were unable to complete any hoists. However, the California National Guard continued the hoist operation and recovered the final skier, he added.

Six members of the group – four men and two women – survived the avalanche and were rescued after crews battled harsh weather for hours to reach them on Feb. 17. Two were taken to hospitals with injuries, the sheriff's office said. Initially, 10 people were believed to be missing, but authorities later updated the number to nine.

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## Pennsylvania's Trail of the Year named: What it means for the region



Brian Whipkey

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If you are looking for a new trail to explore this year, you may want to head to Lycoming and Tioga counties.

The 62-mile Pine Creek Rail Trail has been named Pennsylvania's 2026 Trail of the Year by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

"This designation will raise awareness about the wealth of outdoor experiences

in the Pennsylvania Wilds — including the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon and the recently improved visitor center at Leonard Harrison State Park — while strengthening support for local businesses and generating lasting economic, environmental, and social benefits for the region," DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn said in a news release.

### History of the trail

The trail traces a historic corridor first used by the Iroquois Nation and later developed as a railroad in the late 19th

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The Pine Creek Rail Trail in Lycoming and Tioga counties has been named Pennsylvania's 2026 Trail of the Year. PROVIDED BY DCNR

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