

THE MORNING CALL

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Trump pivots to tout affordability

Proposals come as views on handling of economy sink

By Alan Rappeport
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Lower prices for coffee and fruit. A 50-year mortgage to reduce monthly home payments. Direct checks of \$2,000

to many Americans. And a new willingness to welcome skilled foreign labor into the United States.

The Trump administration has floated a series of ideas over the past several weeks as it confronts the cold reality that its economic policies are not helping many Americans who continue to struggle with elevated prices and a sense

of economic pessimism.

Last week's elections made clear that affordability was top of mind for many Americans. Voters in New York propelled Zohran Mamdani, the democratic socialist with an ambitious agenda to lower the cost of living, to victory in the mayoral race. Democratic wins in New Jersey and Virginia were built on prom-

ises to address the high cost of living in those states.

Only 30% of voters believe President Donald Trump has lived up to their expectations for tackling inflation and the cost of living, according to a recent NBC News poll. That was his lowest mark for any issue respondents were asked about. And a meager 27% of voters in a CNN poll in late

October said Trump's policies had improved the country's economic conditions — less than half of those who thought he had made matters worse.

In the wake of those results, the administration has begun rolling out new policies and recasting its economic messaging to try to show they are serious about combating the

nation's affordability crisis.

That includes a watering-down of some policies, such as tariffs, that the administration insisted for months were not causing prices to rise for American consumers.

On Friday afternoon, Trump signed an executive order to get rid of tariffs on a

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APRIL GAMIZ/THE MORNING CALL PHOTOS

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

Illumination opens at Coca-Cola Park

The Illumination holiday lights display is back for a second year at Coca-Cola Park in Allentown. The event opened to the public Friday, a day after the Lehigh Valley IronPigs hosted a media preview night. The event features a carousel, hayrides with Mrs. Claus, curling lanes, a lighting display, and food and drink.



Top left: The carousel glows Thursday during a media preview night of the Lehigh Valley IronPigs' Illumination holiday lights display at Coca-Cola Park in Allentown. The event opened to the public Friday.

Bottom left: Seasonal-themed displays shine during the media preview night.

Right: People walk through the illuminated holiday displays.



Leapfrog again gives St. Luke's, LVHN high marks

15 area hospitals get A's in safety survey

By Leif Greiss
The Morning Call

Lehigh Valley and St. Luke's University health network hospitals once again earned high marks for safety and quality in a recent national survey.

The nonprofit Leapfrog Group releases its Hospital Safety Grade reports in the fall and spring each year. Hospitals are graded from A to F based on multiple factors, such as how well they prevent medical errors, accidents and infections. The newest batch of grades was released Thursday for thousands of hospitals nationwide.

All 11 of St. Luke's campuses — St. Luke's University Hospital in Fountain Hill, St. Luke's Hospital-Allentown, St. Luke's Hospital-Anderson Campus, St. Luke's-Carbon, St. Luke's-Easton, St. Luke's-Monroe, St. Luke's-Miners, St. Luke's-Sacred Heart, St. Luke's-Upper Bucks, St. Luke's-Warren and Geisinger St. Luke's Hospital — earned A's.

St. Luke's also was recently recognized alongside Texas-based Houston Methodist and the Mayo Clinic by the Agency for

Healthcare Research and Quality as the nation's three highest-performing health systems for safety and quality.

"You know St. Luke's is truly awesome because everyone is saying it. This month it's Leapfrog giving St. Luke's A grades," said Donna Sabol, senior vice president and chief quality officer.

Grand View Hospital in Bucks County, which was not operated by St. Luke's for the period of time that Leapfrog has data from, earned a B.

LVHN, part of Jefferson Health, performed comparably to last spring, earning its fourth consecutive A grade for LVH-Pocono in East Stroudsburg and its second consecutive A for LVH-Dickson City and LVH-Schuylkill. LVH-Hazleton moved up to an A from a B rating last spring.

LVH-Cedar Crest and LVH-Muhlenberg earned B's. For the first time in about two years, LVH-Hecktown Oaks dropped down to a B. LVH-Carbon retained a C ranking.

"Jefferson Health's mission is fundamen-

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The former Allentown State Hospital is seen prior to its closure in 2010. The abandoned facility was later demolished. ROB KANDEL/THE MORNING CALL

Cuts, lawsuits, fear derailed Pa.'s plan to close state hospitals

By Danielle Ohl
Spotlight PA

The state's core program to close its psychiatric hospitals and shift care to less-restrictive community programs — the centerpiece of its legal obligation to people with severe mental illness — has instead been used for the past decade to do the opposite, a Spotlight PA investigation has found.

SPOTLIGHT PA

Created more than 30 years ago, the Community Hospital Integration Project Program was designed to get people and dollars out of restrictive and expensive state-run psychiatric hospitals and into more effective, community-based care.

The money saved by clos-

ing hospital beds would be sent to counties. Former state officials told Spotlight PA the local funds were intended to be sacred — a permanent investment in the care promised not only to the people leaving state hospitals, but to future generations who would need it. CHIPPA was never intended to be the full funder of all things, said Sherry Snyder, a former official in the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

But it was supposed to be "like the mortar between the bricks," she said.

For a time, the program worked.

But since 2015, the state has stopped closing most vacant hospital

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