



Grading candidates to be Titans’ coach

SPORTS, 1B

The Jackson Sun

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1, 2026 | JACKSONSUN.COM | JACKSON, TENN.

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



There is no print edition of the paper today, but you can find today’s puzzles, comics, national news and sports here in the eNewspaper.



Physicians who authored a New England Journal of Medicine article found that the WISeR program could cause “considerable suffering for patients,” citing as an example a person with excruciating pain caused by spinal stenosis who is denied access to lumbar decompression. PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

AI to review Medicare claims in pilot program

Profit incentive raises concerns over restrictions of care

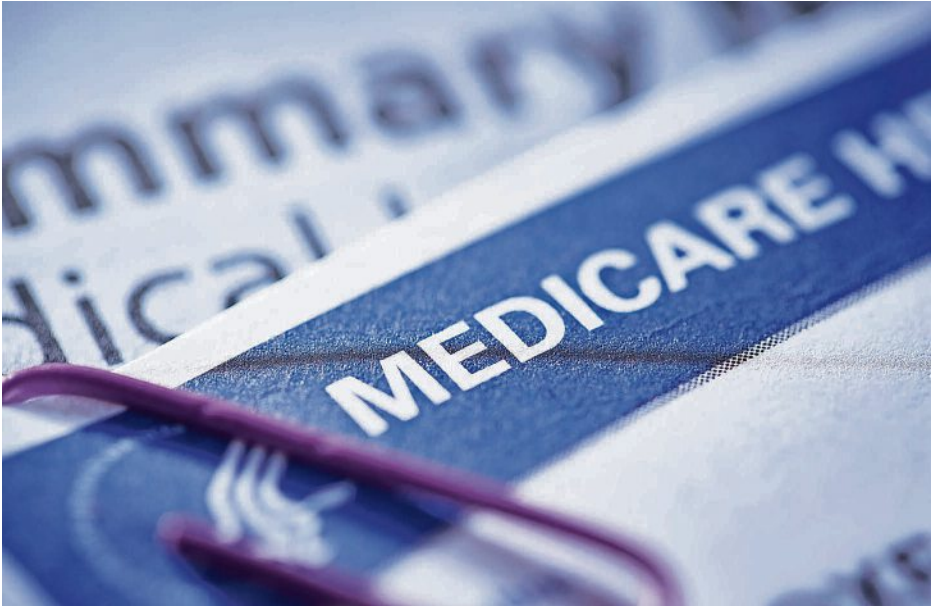
Stephanie Innes
Arizona Republic
USA TODAY NETWORK

A new Medicare program that uses artificial intelligence to review medical claims is set to launch in six states. Critics worry it will lead to patients being denied necessary care and more red tape for providers.

The controversial new six-year pilot program, set to begin Jan. 1, is a model that makes use of “leveraging enhanced technologies” operated by private, for-profit companies to authorize – and possibly deny – certain medical care for people enrolled in traditional Medicare, often also known as original Medicare. The enhanced technologies include AI.

Some providers and a group of Democrats in Congress have tried to put a stop to the federal pilot program, which is called WISeR (Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction), but their efforts have not been successful.

Sen. Mark Kelly, a Democrat from Arizona, criticized WISeR on the social



The Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction, or WISeR, will use “enhanced technologies” operated by private, for-profit companies to authorize – and possibly deny – certain medical care for people enrolled in traditional Medicare.

media platform X, characterizing it as a way for AI companies to profit off of denying care to seniors.

Officials with the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services say the program is designed to protect taxpayers. They say it will cut down on wasteful spending in Medicare, which is primarily for ages 65 and over, as well as some who are younger with certain

See AI, Page 2A

TN economy slows as spending stays solid

Experts say tariff war dampened momentum

Stuart Dyos
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Tennessee’s economy edged upward in 2025, but at a slower pace than in recent years. Leading state economists attributed the shift in momentum to President Donald Trump’s trade policy.

The Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville presented that and other findings in its newly released 2026 economic report to Gov. Bill Lee.

In total, the state’s inflation-adjusted gross domestic product, also known as real GDP, grew 1.7% this year, compared to 2024 and 2023, which saw that number expand 2.7% and 3.2%, respectively.

In the first quarter of 2025, Tennessee’s real GDP crept higher by 0.3% but then accelerated by 3.1% into the second quarter as consumers and businesses increased spending prior to Trump’s sweeping tariff policy.

“This was driven by tariff-induced changes in spending patterns, as businesses and households front loaded their purchases of foreign goods in an effort to get ahead of tariff-driven price increases,” the report states.

The state’s real GDP is expected to advance at “a slightly stronger rate” in 2026, increasing to 2%, according to the report.

What will Tennessee’s economy look like in 2026?

“I would characterize our outlook as precariously positive,” said Larry Kessler, research associate professor at the Boyd Center and project director. “The labor market has cooled, and downside risks are elevated, but consumer spending in Tennessee has remained firm.”

Will Tennessee hiring rise or fall in 2026?

As the state’s real GDP cooled in 2025, so will its labor market, the report forecasted.

Ahead of the pandemic, Tennessee created approximately 60,000 jobs annually from 2014 to 2019, and in 2023 the state added more than 80,000 workers. But employment gains began to sputter the following year.

See ECONOMY, Page 2A

Can you catch a cold from wet hair and chilly feet?

Katie Nixon
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Winter is here, and the whispers started before it even began. You’ve heard them all your life - from

your mom, your auntie, even that overzealous stranger at the supermarket.

“Don’t go outside with wet hair, or you’ll catch a cold!” “Put on a jacket or you’ll catch your death!” “Don’t walk around the house barefoot!”

Yada, yada.

Kids, teens and even the occasional Tennessean reporter approaching her 30s have all been told once or twice not to go outside with wet hair in the cold. But is there any truth to this claim? How about the others?

Let’s see.

Can you catch a cold from wet hair?

The short answer? No, absolutely not.

“That’s a very common concept

See COLD, Page 6A

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to jacksonsun.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!

- Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/jacksonsun
- Follow us on Twitter @JSunNews or twitter.com/JSunNews



Volume 178 | No. 1
Subscribe 800-244-3225
©2026 \$3.00

