

Adults delay health care due to skyrocketing costs

Some are waiting until Medicare kicks in before getting tests and procedures done. **In Money**

Arsenio Hall talks comedy, 'Coming to America' fight

Comic recalls classic moments from late-night show and shares why he wrote memoir. **In Life**

UConn's Strong rises to reluctant stardom

As Huskies chase another NCAA championship, forward has been the driving force behind team's unbeaten 38-0 run. **In Sports**

USA TODAY

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ELSA/GETTY IMAGES



Dry West begins to restrict water use

Climatologists warn of dangerous drought

Trevor Hughes
USA TODAY

FRISCO, CO – Stretching out in their beach chairs as the temperature climbed toward 70 degrees, Seth and Renee McLaughlin watched their three kids play in the sand on what was supposed to be a family ski trip.

Booked last November, their spring break vacation to Colorado's mountains required a hard shift in plans following a historically warm and dry winter: Instead of zipping down the slopes, the couple watched their kids sift sand into colorful toy buckets on the shores of Lake Dillon.

"It's obviously frustrating. You want to go skiing, and usually we ski until May, and instead we're at the beach," said Seth McLaughlin, 44, a nonprofit consultant. "I feel bad for the folks who spent tens of thousands of dollars to come on vacation here."



Kayaks stored for winter sit far from the waterline of Lake Dillon in Frisco, Colorado, on March 26. Low snowfall is raising concerns about summer drought. TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY

The McLaughlins' ruined vacation is a harbinger of what climatologists say will be a dangerously dry summer across the West. In many areas, all-important snowfall has been half of normal, with even hotter, drier temperatures expected in the coming months.

Much of the nation is in a drought already, but the headwaters of the Colorado River are among the driest places, along with south Texas and all of Florida. Alarmed civic officials across the West have already begun ordering restrictions on watering lawns, cleaning cars and even whether restaurant patrons get served glasses of water.

"We are already assuming our yard is going to be dead this year," said Renee McLaughlin, 44, a physician assistant. "And we're talking to the kids about taking five-minute showers."

The McLaughlins live in a Colorado city that has not yet ordered water restrictions, but many neighboring communities have already begun implementing them. Some ski areas are also closing early due to the heat and lack of snow.

Longtime Western water expert Brad Udall said it's hard to put into words just how bad things are. He said the early ski area closures will likely be followed by ranchers selling off cattle, and then skies darkened by wildfire smoke as dry vegetation burns.

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IRAN WAR ONE MONTH LATER



For some, war can't end quickly enough

Americans from a sphere of viewpoints blame conflict for tighter economic pinch



Brenna Boyde, top, and Justin Thaemert come from different political perspectives but agree that the sooner the Iran war ends, the better.

PROVIDED BY BRENNA BOYDE;
MIKE KNAAK/USA TODAY

Terry Collins USA TODAY

It's been a month since the United States and Israel jointly began the Iran war, and Brenna Boyde believes the president's repeated promises to end it have fallen flat.

Boyde is one of a trio of Americans, of different political affiliations, whom USA TODAY asked about how their lives have changed since the onset of the conflict. All three largely believe the war caused the high gas and grocery prices that are crippling the nation's economy. Their views align with the majority of Americans queried in a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll and other surveys.

"I don't think it will ever be over," said Boyde, a declared independent voter who works as an administrator in Darlington Township, Pennsylvania. "I'm not inclined to believe there is a permanent resolution."

The president initially said the military "excursion" against Iran would last four to five weeks. He later expanded his projection, saying he'd need several weeks to achieve his objectives.

The end can't come soon enough for Justin Thaemert, a registered Republican from central Minnesota who voted for President Donald Trump but has become doubtful the president will deliver on his promise of a quick turnaround.

"I'll believe it when I see it," Thaemert said.

See **IRAN WAR**, Page 3A

A man sifts through rubble March 29 at the site of a U.S.-Israeli strike on a commercial district in Tehran, Iran. As the war against Iran enters its fourth week, many Americans say it has come at a steep cost at home. MAJID SAEEDI/GETTY IMAGES

Trump dials up pressure

Even as he praises talks, president threatens Iran's power, water. 2A

Hospitals sue patients over unpaid bills

Virginia medical providers file over 1 million lawsuits

Ken Alltucker
USA TODAY

A few months after Waynesboro, Virginia, resident Kanise Marshall delivered a baby boy on New Year's Day 2023, the hospital bills rolled in.

Marshall's insurance paid Martha Jefferson Hospital more than \$24,000, and she set up a payment plan for the remaining balance.

She thought she paid the full amount billed by the Charlottesville, Virginia, hospital until a process server showed up to her home in November 2025 – nearly three years later. Martha Jefferson Hospital, owned by Sentara Health, was suing Marshall for \$2,366 in unpaid bills she said she didn't know existed.

The nonprofit Sentara Health initiated more than 96,000 lawsuits in Virginia from 2010 through 2024, routinely suing patients who've struggled to pay their bills, according to a report by researchers from Stanford University, George Washington University and Patient

Rights Advocate, a nonprofit that pushes for price transparency in health care.

While Sentara filed the most lawsuits of any Virginia hospital or medical provider to collect medical debt over the 15-year period, the Virginia-based chain was by no means alone. Virginia hospitals, doctors and medical providers brought 1.15 million lawsuits to collect \$1.4 billion in medical debt from consumers.

Hospital billing experts say aggressive medical debt collection tactics can soon turn to financial ruin for families.

See **MEDICAL DEBT**, Page 6A