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May 19th, 2017



## Will it really be built?

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## NATIONAL

## As Trump seeks billions for wall, US still paying for fence

HOUSTON, Texas (AP)

Before the wall, there was the fence. And the U.S. is still paying for it. As President Donald Trump tries to persuade a skeptical Congress to fund his proposed multibillion-dollar wall on the Mexican border, government lawyers are still settling claims with Texas landowners over a border fence approved more than a decade ago. Two settlements were completed just this week.

The legal battles over a stop-and-start fence that covers just a portion of the border have outlasted two presidents. If the Trump administration presses ahead with plans to build some version of the towering, impenetrable wall the president has promised, the government may have to take hundreds more landowners to court, perhaps even some of the same ones.

The Secure Fence Act, which President George W. Bush signed into law in 2006 with the support of many Democratic lawmakers, set aside money for fencing to cover one-third of the roughly 2,000-mile (3,200-kilometer) border between the U.S. and Mexico.



In this March 22, 2017, file photo, Antonio Reyes of Brownsville, Texas, stands by the U.S.-Mexico border fence near his home.

About 650 miles of fence were eventually built, just 100 miles of them in Texas, which has the longest border of any state with Mexico. The uneven course of the Rio Grande, rough terrain and private land ownership created a host of engineering and legal obstacles and required hundreds of deals with individual property owners for some of their land.

In the Rio Grande Valley, the southern-

most point of Texas where most migrants are arrested, sections of the 18-foot-tall metal fencing stop and start in neighborhoods and on farmland.

The U.S. government can use the power of eminent domain to seize private property for a public purpose as long as it pays the landowner what the Constitution calls “just compensation,” but that process can take years if a landowner contests the seizure. The Justice Department eventually filed around 400 claims against landowners under the Secure Fence Act, though the government didn’t build on all the land it claimed.

Some landowners who have successfully resisted the fence for a decade received letters in recent months making them a new offer to settle, raising questions of whether the fence cases would pave the way for a wall. The Justice Department says it hasn’t started any cases related to a new wall and remains committed to settling around 90 cases still pending.

Those cases have been bedeviled by complications and delays and have left many landowners wary of what’s coming next.

One settlement completed this week was for \$137,500 for about 1½ acres (about 6,000 square meters) next to the Rio Grande west of Brownsville, near a golf resort. The U.S. didn’t build fencing on the resort but did so on much of the land nearby. It then took nearly a decade to agree on compensation.

“It is exceedingly frustrating to the landowner to have to wait nine years to resolve a case and to have the government come in and take possession of it that long before he receives so much as a single dollar,” said Ken McKay, a lawyer who represented the family partnership that owned the land.

Rudy Cavazos was paid \$7,000 last month for the less than a half-acre (about 2,000 square meters) taken from his property in San Benito, Texas. The government had already built a fence along a Rio Grande levee with the permission of the local water district, which was believed to own the land, only to find out that the tract actually belonged to Cavazos and about 20 other property owners.

After several years of inaction on his case, Cavazos decided late last year to settle because he was tired of meeting government lawyers and going to court.

“They paid me my peanuts,” he said. “It’s the bureaucracy 10 times over. They got a guy that comes over here every so often and talks to me, and hell, you expend that in your labor coming to talk to me.”

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STATE

# Nuke waste debate: Turn it into glass or encase in cement?

SPOKANE, Washington (AP)

Congress should consider authorizing the U.S. Department of Energy to study encasing much of the nuclear waste at the nation's largest waste repository in a cement-like mixture instead of turning it into glass logs, according to a new report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Doing so before burying the waste would be less expensive than a process called vitrification to turn the waste into the glass logs, said the report issued Wednesday.

The process called grouting might also allow waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in a remote part of south-central Washington state to be treated more quickly, the report said.

The waste is left over from plutonium production for nuclear weapons, including the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan that led to the end of World War II.

The Energy Department replied that it agreed with the office's recommendations



In this July 9, 2014, file photo, a sign informs visitors of prohibited items on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, Washington.

but Washington state officials still believe the best way to safely deal with the waste and protect the environment is by turning it into glass.

"We remain firm in our conviction that vitrification, or glass, is the superior process," said Alex Smith, manager for the state's Department of Ecology's Nuclear

Waste Program.

There have been numerous delays in treating the waste stored in tanks at Hanford. Smith said state officials fear a study on a different way to deal with the waste could "redirect critical funding away from the ongoing work to get treatment processes up and running by 2023."

U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, a Washington Democrat, also voiced concerns that launching a new study could delay the work.

"We can't afford to get distracted from the job at hand," Cantwell said.

Hanford has about 56 million gallons (211 million liters) of waste stored in underground tanks until it can be treated for permanent disposal. Some tanks date back to World War II and are leaking.

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# FINANCIAL LITERACY

## Saving money during this grilling season

Summer hasn't officially begun, but for many Americans, the summer grilling season starts as soon as spring starts to bring out the sunshine and higher temperatures not requiring a jacket. And why not? Grilling food is delicious and a pastime many spend with family and friends on a backyard patio or a sunny afternoon at the local park. Unfortunately, if you're not careful, your backyard barbecue can burn your budget! Here are some hot tips on how to save on this summer's cookouts.



**Pick the right grill for you.** The age old debate, gas versus charcoal grilling. Which type of grill will taste better and save you the most money? This depends on your personal needs. In general, a basic gas grill can cost \$70+ more than a basic charcoal grill. If you only barbecue once or twice a year, it may better suit your needs to go with a charcoal grill based on the lower initial cost. On the other hand, gas grills are cheaper to operate due to the lower fuel costs. Cooking with gas cost around \$1 per hour of grilling, and charcoal costs around \$1.70 per cookout. If you use your grill on a weekly basis, gas might be the better choice.

**Stop wasting fuel.** Whichever method you choose, you can cut costs by not wasting fuel. For gas, once you've brought your grill to the right temperature, use only the burners you need to maintain that temperature, and keep the lid shut to prevent heat loss. In fact, many grill recipes suggest indirect rather than direct cooking, and you'll need to switch off one or more burners once you reach the desired temperature for your grilling. For charcoal, don't fill your chimney starter to the brim and keep the lid closed.

**Only use the necessities.** Do you

honestly need all the bells and whistles you see on TV and in the shopping aisles? You can usually find the tools and gear for grilling in your kitchen drawers. Avoiding these extras grilling accessories will not only save you cash, but drawer space as well. Another thing you must think about is if you will really use these extra accessories or do you just want them as a bonus? Most of us really only need a good pair of tongs and a meat thermometer. The rest is unnecessary clutter.

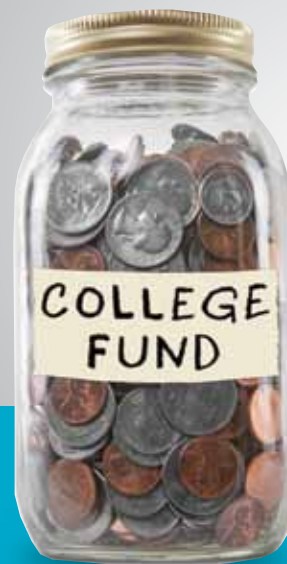
**Stick to the basics and choose cheaper meats.** The hamburger and hotdog are the foundation of grilling. The reason being is they are not only tasty, but they are also affordable. There are many ways to prepare these items and a plethora of condiments you can sprinkle on top if you choose to do so. Consider looking up new recipes for these originals if you are looking to spice up these traditional meats. If you do decide to go with a different meat, avoid high priced meats that offer little portions and shop around before buying the first meats you see. Chicken legs and thighs are much cheaper than chicken breasts.

You can also buy a whole chicken and cut it up for large gatherings or freeze and save parts for future

barbecues. Also, T-bone steaks and ribeye can be more expensive so consider cheaper cuts such as flank steak, tri-tip, and skirt. These not only can taste just as delicious but are perfect for grilling as well. Look up recipes online or visit your local butcher shop for more ideas and recipes.

**Invite friends/family and make extra.** Barbecues are always more enjoyable when you're with family and friends. This can also lessen the burden and cost that you dish out for food. Ask everyone to bring a side and/or beverages. Always plan to make a little extra just in case more people show up than expected. By doing this you'll also most likely have leftovers for work for the upcoming week.

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## POLITICS

**Report: Trump shared secret information with Russians**

WASHINGTON (AP)

President Donald Trump revealed highly classified information about Islamic State militants to Russian officials during a meeting last week, The Washington Post reported Monday, prompting strong condemnation from both Democrats and Republicans.

Three White House officials who were in the May 10 meeting strongly denounced the story, saying no intelligence sources and methods were discussed — but they didn't deny that classified information was disclosed.

Citing current and former U.S. officials, the Post said Trump shared details about an Islamic State terror threat related to the use of laptop computers on aircraft with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak.

The anonymous officials told the Post that the information Trump relayed during the Oval Office meeting had been provided by a U.S. partner through an intelligence-sharing arrangement. They said it

was considered so sensitive that details have been withheld from allies and tightly restricted even within the U.S. government.

"I was in the room, it didn't happen," H.R. McMaster, Trump's national security adviser, told reporters outside the White House late Monday.

"The president and the foreign minister reviewed a range of common threats to our two countries including threats to civil aviation," McMaster said. "At no time, at no time were intelligence sources or methods discussed and the president did not disclose any military operations that were not already publicly known."

He said Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Dina Powell, deputy national security adviser for strategy, remember the meeting the same way. "Their on-the-record accounts should outweigh those of anonymous sources" in the news report, he said.

Tillerson said Trump discussed a range



From left to right, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. President Donald Trump, and Russian Ambassador to the United States Sergey Kislyak talk during a meeting in the Oval Office at the White House on Wednesday, May 10, 2017.

of subjects, including "common efforts and threats regarding counter-terrorism." He said that during that exchange the nature of specific threats were discussed, but they did not discuss sources, methods or military operations.

Powell said: "This story is false. The president only discussed the common threats that both countries faced."

The Post story — which was later con-

firmed by The New York Times and BuzzFeed News — does not claim that Trump revealed any specific information about how the intelligence was gathered. Still, it will only heighten Trump's strained relations with intelligence workers and former officials, who view Russia as an adversary.

Even before he was inaugurated, intelligence professionals worried about sharing classified information with Trump, who often shoots from the hip.

If true, the breach was ill-timed, coming a day after Trump fired former FBI Director James Comey, who was leading an investigation into Russian meddling in the presidential election.

The Post said the intelligence partner had not given the United States permission to share the material with Russian officials. By doing so, Trump would have jeopardized cooperation from an ally familiar with the inner workings of the Islamic State group, and make other allies — or even U.S. intelligence officials — wary about sharing future top secret details with the president.

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EDUCATION

**Bellevue College breaks ground on student housing facility**

BELLEVUE, Washington

The Bellevue College community and local leaders celebrated the groundbreaking of the new student housing facility last week. Slated for occupancy in the fall of 2018, the project—designed to be highly sustainable—accommodates 350 beds in a mixture of units.

“Today we follow in the footsteps of the College’s first groundbreaking in 1966, by breaking ground on our first student housing facility,” said Dr. Jill Wakefield, interim president of Bellevue College. “We recognize how far this campus has come, and look to a future where students will have new opportunities, and spaces, to live, learn, and thrive.”

“We’ve long recognized Bellevue College’s value to our community,” said Mayor John Stokes. “Through our vision priorities, the City Council made a firm commitment to support the College’s efforts to develop student housing. This latest enhancement to Bellevue College will only improve the academic experience for

those seeking higher education in our city.”

Currently under construction, the first phase of Bellevue College’s new student housing development will deliver a 147 unit residential community, transforming the campus into a living, breathing 24/7 neighborhood that offers a sense of security, and promotes the well-being and academic achievement of students.

The building will house apartment style units with studios, 2-bedroom studios and 4-bedroom apartments. It will also offer community spaces where students can collaborate and socialize. Sustainability is a primary component of the design, with the goal to achieve LEED Gold Certification status.



Workers from Walsh Construction Co. (in yellow hard hats) join the groundbreaking ceremony with Bellevue College staff members on Friday, May 12, 2017, in Bellevue, Washington.

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## NATIONAL

## Cuts put spotlight on student race questions on school forms

LOS ANGELES, California (AP)

After volunteering at her children's Los Angeles middle school for nearly a decade, Carol Convey was told the number of teachers suddenly would be cut.

The problem? The school now had too many white students.

To Convey, the diverse, multiethnic community looked no different from before, so she began to wonder whether her neighbors had changed, or only how they identified on paper.

The question has sparked a lively debate in the country's second-largest school district, which under a decades-old court settlement aimed at desegregation provides additional staffing when more than 70 percent of students hailing from the surrounding neighborhood are not white.

Across the country, school districts have long grappled with desegregation and pursued a range of policies including changing boundaries, opening magnet schools and focusing resources on campuses with nonwhite students.

In Los Angeles, parents were shocked earlier this year when they learned Walter Reed Middle School — known for its honors program, specialized learning academies and diverse student body of 1,600 — would no longer qualify for the additional staffing due to an uptick in its white student enrollment.

District officials could not pinpoint a reason for the demographic shift, which dates back two years.

But some parents doubt there is much change, adding they have friends who didn't put down their children's heritage on school forms fearing they could be labeled English learners and subjected to additional testing.

Now, these parents are being encouraged to change how they answered questions about their children's race and ethnicity to more fully reflect their background — and Convey said more than a dozen people have voiced interest in doing so.

"They have a perception that maybe I need to skirt it, hide it, not share it,



In this Wednesday, May 3, 2017 photo, students arrive at Walter Reed Middle School in Los Angeles, California.

because it may work against me in some way," said Convey, founder of a parent group that supports the school. "We have had to educate and say, 'No, no, no people. Our funding depends on us being so different, so let's write it down. Let's tell everyone. Let's celebrate this.'"

The discussion underscores the critical role race plays in education decisions even though the questionnaires used to determine identity often feel inadequate or confusing to those filling them out.

It also suggests some parents may answer the forms based on what they think will most help their children, choosing to focus on or de-emphasize parts of their identity.

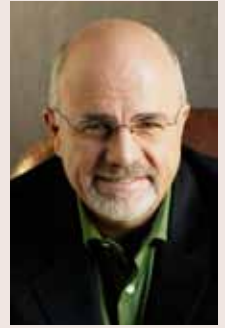
Thomas A. Saenz, president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said he does not know parents who deliberately skew their answers on enrollment forms, but the incentive to do so exists in the Los Angeles Unified School District since white students have a better shot at getting into some magnet schools aimed at desegregation.

## Dave Says

## Bad advice from a bad friend

Dear Dave,

My husband and I are currently in Baby Step 2, and paying off all our debt except for our home. A friend recently told us to pay off everything except for the credit card debt. She says we can then settle for a far less amount and not have so much money going out the door. This feels a little unethical to me. What are your thoughts? — Jennifer



Dear Jennifer,

There's a good reason this idea feel unethical to you — it is unethical! Would a good friend, a smart friend, encourage you to do something as dishonorable as not pay a bill you're morally and legally obligated to pay? I don't think so.

If you're able to pay your bills, you pay your bills. It's as simple as that. Now, if you honestly can't pay the bill, and you have to settle upon a mutually agreed upon amount with the creditor or collector, then it's okay at that point to try and reach a settlement.

Otherwise, it's a simple question of ethics. Pay the bill! — Dave

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