



# You decide



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## Unfazed by danger

*A cardinal keeps up the fight for migrants and the poor > 15*



**STATE:** Drought declared due to low snowpack > 14



**NATIONAL:** Immigrants help stave off a recession > 11



**HEALTH:** US measles cases are up in 2024 > 10

## LATIN AMERICA

## Unfazed by danger and power, Guatemalan cardinal keeps up fight for migrants and the poor

HUEHUETENANGO, Guatemala (AP)

As more than 100 men carrying an elaborate float of Jesus halted before him, Cardinal Álvaro Ramazzini lost no time in calling for social justice — the hallmark of the Catholic bishop's decades-long frontline ministry.

“Let's hope that this procession may revive in the heart the willingness to discover Jesus Christ present in the person who suffers,” Ramazzini said in an impromptu speech, pointing to the dozens of elderly and disabled lining a street in Guatemala City's oldest neighborhood. “If we don't have that ability, don't tell me you're Christian — I won't believe that.”

Elevated by Pope Francis to the top hierarchy of the Catholic Church, Ramazzini has continued his unflinching focus on the poor, the Indigenous and the migrant. That has garnered him



Cardinal Alvaro Ramazzini and a Catholic volunteer walk past a sawdust carpet on Saturday, March 23, 2024, in Guatemala City.

great affection from the marginalized and many threats of violence, including rumors of an arrest warrant, as his native Guatemala struggles through political turmoil and remains a hotspot of migration to the United States.

At the procession during the Easter season, he didn't mince words for Gua-

temala's government. He denounced the lack of social security provisions for the elderly that left many feeling like “indigent beggars,” before placing on the float a plaque honoring the eldercare volunteers at whose invitation he had driven six hours from his diocese.

Many of the elderly whom volunteers had taken in their wheelchairs and walkers to the processional route could hardly believe their eyes when they saw the 76-year-old cardinal saunter down the street to mingle with them, said group organizer Teresita Samayoa Bautista.

“This is to evangelize with actions,” she said. “To me, he was the voice of a people who can't speak and are suffering. Just like Jesus would do. This is what you call commitment to a people, no matter if they're religious or not.”

In a recent interview with The Associated Press in his modest office in Huehuetenango, Ramazzini said experiencing Guatemala's challenges, from the civil war onward, cemented his commitment to translating faith into action.

“Here's how we will be judged at life's end, right? I was hungry, you didn't give something to eat. I was thirsty, you didn't give me something to drink. I was in prison, and you didn't visit me,” Ramazzini said, quoting from the Gospel. “I try, as far as my human weaknesses and my limitations allow, to make this what guides my life.”

Out of more than 400,000 Catholic priests in the world, there are only 128 cardinal electors — the role Ramazzini assumed in 2019 — charged with serving the pope as his main counselors in governing the church, and electing the next one.

That opens doors across continents “at levels to which many Guatemalans have no access,” Ramazzini said. He tries to leverage his meetings with church and political leaders “to convey the concerns and needs of the people I serve with every day.”

### Table of Contents

- 15 LATIN AMERICA:** Unfazed by danger and power, Guatemalan cardinal keeps up fight for migrants and the poor
- 14 STATE:** Statewide drought declared due to low snowpack and dry forecast
- 13 FINANCIAL LITERACY:** Understanding the costs of pet ownership
- 11 NATIONAL:** Immigrants have helped boost job growth and stave off a recession
- 11 STATE:** Hundreds of lowland lakes around Washington open for fishing on April 27
- 10 HEALTH:** US measles cases are up in 2024
- 10 IMMIGRATION:** US records fewer arrests for illegal crossings of its southern border



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STATE

# Statewide drought declared due to low snowpack and dry forecast



File photo shows a view of Washington state's Snoqualmie Pass following recent snowfall.

OLYMPIA, Washington

With winter's snowstorms largely behind us and summer just weeks away, our state's low snowpack and forecasts for a dry and warm spring and summer have spurred the Department of Ecology to declare a drought emergency for most of Washington.

After an exceptionally dry start to the winter, Washington's snowpack made up some ground in February, March and April. But with chances for significant additions to our snowpack now diminishing, there is simply not enough water contained in mountain snow and reservoirs to prevent serious impacts for water users in the months ahead. With many watersheds already projecting low water supplies and planning for emergency water right transfers, Ecology declared a drought to make assistance available before those impacts become severe.

"As our climate continues to change, we're increasingly seeing our winters bring more rain and less snow," said Washington Gov. Jay Inslee. "We depend on that winter snowpack to meet the needs of Washington's farmers, fish, and communities during the dry summer months. And this year, it's just not at the level we're accustomed to and rely on."

Ecology is making up to \$4.5 million available in drought response grants to qualifying public entities to respond to impacts from the current drought conditions.

"By moving quickly to declare a drought, we can begin delivering financial support to water systems with drought impacts, and work with water users to find solutions to challenges before they become a crisis," said Laura Watson, Ecology's director.

Ecology is working closely with other state agencies to coordinate the drought response.

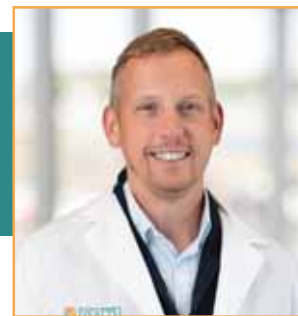
"Snowpack, rainfall, and irrigation flows from major rivers provide the necessary water supply to sustain our communities and the agriculture industry," said Washington State Department of Agriculture Director Derek Sandison. "The anticipated drought conditions this year emphasize the importance of building drought resilience into water management strategies throughout the state."

In Washington, drought is declared when there is less than 75% of normal water supply and there is the risk of undue hardship. Declaring a drought emergency allows Ecology to distribute drought response grants and to process emergency water right permits and transfers.



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## FINANCIAL LITERACY

### Understanding the costs of pet ownership



If you are looking to join the more than [70%](#) of U.S. households that own a pet this year, make sure to do your research on the cost to purchase and care for the new addition to your family.

There are currently [more dogs than cats](#) in U.S. households. Dogs typically cost more to care for than other household pets. According to [a survey of 1,000 dog owners](#) in the United States, the average cost to own a dog was \$4,512 a year. This includes the [initial cost to purchase or adopt the dog](#) as well as the ongoing expenses like vet care, food, medicine, toys, and other dog supplies.

No matter what type of pet you choose, there will be extra monthly expenses. Here are a few things to keep in mind before purchasing or adopting a new pet:

- **Make a budget:** Use a budgeting app or worksheet to track how much you earn and how much you spend to see how much extra money you have to go toward a pet. WaFd Bank offers a [free budgeting tool in the WaFd app](#) that comes with your WaFd Bank accounts.

- **Determine what kind of pet you can afford:** Based on your budget, decide what type of pet you'd like to add to your family. Consider not only the short-term expenses to purchase or adopt the pet, but what it may cost when your pet gets older and needs more medical care.

- **Decide whether to pay a breeder or adopt from an animal shelter or rescue organization:** Adopting

a pet from a shelter or rescue organization [typically costs less](#) than buying from a breeder. Whether or not you adopt or buy from a breeder, make sure to ask what's included in the price. This may include vaccinations, a microchip and/or getting the pet spayed or neutered.

- **Start an emergency savings account for your pet:** Experts recommend having enough money available to cover [three to six months of living expenses](#) for emergencies. You can do the same for your pet by having a separate savings account that has enough money to cover three to six months of *their* living expenses.

[WaFd Bank's savings account](#) requires just \$25 to open (\$10 if under age 18) and only \$100 to earn interest and avoid a monthly service fee.

Once you've done all the initial research and welcomed your new pet, you'll now have regular expenses to care for your new family member. Here are potential ways to save money on short-term and long-term pet expenses.

- **Buy in bulk:** When purchasing dog food and medicines like flea, tick, and heartworm prevention, buy larger sizes of the products to save money. Figure out the cost of food per pound when comparing prices (sometimes the cost breakdown is listed on price tags on store shelves to more easily comparison shop).

When buying preventive medicine, compare the cost of buying each month versus buying for six or 12 months. It may mean spending more money initially to buy in bulk, but could save you money

over time.

- **Consider buying pet insurance:** You cannot predict when your pet will get sick or need an expensive surgery. Investing in monthly pet insurance payments could mean you pay significantly less in the future when facing those unexpected medical bills. Do your research to figure out what's covered, the monthly cost, and whether it may be worth the monthly expenses now in preparation for the future.

- **Focus on preventive care:** Make sure to take your pet in for their annual vaccines, brush their teeth and hair (if they have any), and give them medicine so they don't get sick. You'll save money on grooming costs if you regularly brush

their hair and save on teeth cleaning services if you brush their teeth often.

- **Do it yourself.** Make your own pet treats and learn how to groom your pet and trim their nails (if needed). Trimming their nails could save \$15 to \$20 each time they need their nails trimmed. If your pet needs a monthly trim, that could save more than \$200 a year.

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## Protect yourself from Long COVID: Get Vaccinated



**Researchers estimate that millions of people have experienced Long COVID.**



**Anyone who gets COVID can develop Long COVID.**



**Studies have found that people who aren't vaccinated against COVID-19 may be more likely than others to develop Long COVID.**

Long COVID, or Post-COVID Conditions (PCC), is defined as any signs, symptoms, or conditions that continue or develop after a COVID-19 infection. [Symptoms](#) can last weeks, months or years and can include fatigue, brain fog, cough, trouble breathing or shortness of breath, aches and pains, loss of smell or change in taste, fever, trouble sleeping, mood changes and more.

Anyone, regardless of age, infected with COVID-19 can develop Long COVID. It is more common in people who did not get vaccinated, and people who have had severe COVID-19 symptoms. People who get COVID-19 multiple times may also have more health risks, including Long COVID.

You can lower your chances of developing Long COVID symptoms by staying up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations. COVID-19 vaccinations are recommended for anyone ages 6 months and over.

## NATIONAL

## Immigrants have helped boost job growth and stave off a recession

MIAMI, Florida (AP)

Having fled economic and political chaos in Venezuela, Luisana Silva now loads carpets for a South Carolina rug company. She earns enough to pay rent, buy groceries, gas up her car — and send money home to her parents.

Reaching the United States was a harrowing ordeal. Silva, 25, her husband and their then-7-year-old daughter braved the treacherous jungles of Panama's Darien Gap, traveled the length of Mexico, crossed the Rio Grande and then turned themselves in to the U.S. Border Patrol in Brownsville, Texas. Seeking asylum, they received a work permit last year and found jobs in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

"My plan is to help my family that much need the money and to grow economically here," Silva said.

Her story amounts to far more than one family's arduous quest for a better life. The millions of jobs that Silva and other new immigrant arrivals have been filling in the United States appear to solve

a riddle that has confounded economists for at least a year: How has the economy managed to prosper, adding hundreds of thousands of jobs, month after month, at a time when the Federal Reserve has aggressively raised interest rates to fight inflation — normally a recipe for a recession?

Increasingly, the answer appears to be immigrants — whether living in the United States legally or not. The influx of foreign-born adults vastly raised the supply of available workers after a U.S. labor shortage had left many companies unable to fill jobs.

More workers filling more jobs and spending more money has helped drive economic growth and create still-more job openings. The availability of immigrant workers eased the pressure on com-



Workers tend to cows in the milking parlor at the Flood Brothers Farm, on Monday, April 1, 2024, in Clinton, Maine.

panies to sharply raise wages and to then pass on their higher labor costs to their customers via higher prices that feed inflation. Though U.S. inflation remains elevated, it has plummeted from its levels of two years ago.

"There's been something of a mystery — how are we continuing to get such extraordinary strong job growth with inflation still continuing to come down?"

said Heidi Shierholz, president of the Economic Policy Institute and a former chief economist at the Labor Department. "The immigration numbers being higher than what we had thought — that really does pretty much solve that puzzle."

While helping fuel economic growth, immigrants also lie at the heart of an incendiary election-year debate over the control of the nation's Southern border. In his bid to return to the White House, Donald Trump has attacked migrants in often-degrading terms, characterizing them as "poisoning the blood" of America and

frequently invoking falsehoods about migration. Trump has vowed to finish building a border wall and to launch the "largest domestic deportation operation in American history." Whether he or President Joe Biden wins the election could determine whether the influx of immigrants, and their key role in propelling the economy, will endure.

## STATE

## Hundreds of lowland lakes around Washington open for fishing on April 27

OLYMPIA, Washington

Anglers can look forward to trout fishing in hundreds of lowland lakes throughout the state beginning April 27— and perhaps winning one of more than 800 trout derby prizes along with their catch.

The annual trout derby kick-off coincides with the lowland lakes season opener. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) stocks millions of trout in lakes throughout the year, and opening day marks the first time people can fish many of those lakes for the catchable trout planted every winter and spring. Opening-day lakes are often stocked shortly before the start of their six-month season. Anglers can visit WDFW's website to see which lakes have been stocked in recent weeks and can sort by county or waterbody to find a nearby stocked lake.

WDFW planted over 14.5 million trout and kokanee across Washington in the

past year. The catchable-size trout averages 2.5 fish per pound, or 12 to 14 inches. There are also nearly 143,000 jumbo trout that measure more than 14 inches, averaging one to 1.5 pounds. Most jumbo trout are planted in March and April, with others saved for fall planting.

Depending on the lake, people may encounter rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, kokanee salmon, and other fish species. Visit WDFW's fish stocking webpage for information, including the 2024 statewide hatchery trout and kokanee stocking plan and recent catchable trout plant reports.

This year, the annual statewide trout derby boasts more than 800 donated prizes worth over \$42,000 in total, which anglers can claim by catching tagged trout in lakes across Washington. More than 100 lakes will feature prize fish in 2024. The derby website will be updated to include a list of lakes containing tagged



fish the week before the event begins. The derby runs through Oct. 31.

"The trout derby is a very popular activity for Washington anglers of all ages and backgrounds," said Steve Caromile, inland fish program manager with WDFW. "The hard work of fish and hatchery staff along with the generosity of our vendors has made the trout derby something anglers look forward to each

year."

To participate in the opener and the derby, Washington anglers must have a valid resident or non-resident 2024 Get Outdoors package, annual freshwater, annual Fish WA, annual combination, or temporary combination license. WDFW reminds anglers that temporary combination fishing licenses cannot be used from April 27 through May 5, 2024 for game fish; except for active-duty military personnel serving in any branch of the United States armed forces.

Licenses can be purchased online; by telephone at 360-902-2464; or at hundreds of license dealers across the state.

As always, please be respectful of fellow anglers and other recreationists, obey posted signage at all water access areas, obey all parking regulations, and have a backup plan in case your preferred destination is overcrowded.

## HEALTH

## US measles cases are up in 2024

(AP)

Measles outbreaks in the U.S. and abroad are raising health experts' concern about the preventable, once-common childhood virus.

One of the world's most contagious diseases, measles can lead to potentially serious complications. The best defense, according to experts? Get vaccinated.

Here's what to know about the year — so far — in measles.

How many measles cases has the U.S. seen this year?

Nationwide, measles cases already are nearly double the total for all of last year.

The U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention documented 113 cases as of April 5. There have been seven outbreaks and most of U.S. cases — 73% — are linked to those flare-ups.

Still, the count is lower than some recent years: 2014 saw 667 cases and 2019 had 1,274.

Why is this a big deal?

The 2019 measles epidemic was the

worst in almost three decades, and threatened the United States' status as a country that has eliminated measles by stopping the continual spread of the measles virus.

Where is measles coming from?

The disease is still common in many parts of the world, and measles reaches the U.S. through unvaccinated travelers.

According to Thursday's report, most of the recent importations involved unvaccinated Americans who got infected in the Middle East and Africa and brought measles back to the U.S.

How does measles spread?

Measles is highly contagious. It spreads when people who have it breathe, cough or sneeze and through contaminated surfaces. It also can linger in the air for two hours.



In this March 27, 2019, file photo, a woman receives a measles, mumps and rubella vaccine at the Rockland County Health Department in Pomona, New York.

Measles used to be common among kids. How bad was it?

Before a vaccine became available in 1963, there were some 3 million to 4 million cases per year, which meant nearly all American kids had it sometime during childhood, according to the CDC. Most recovered.

In the decade before the vaccine was available, 48,000 people were hospitalized per year. About 1,000 people developed dangerous brain inflammation from measles each year, and 400 to 500 died, according to the CDC.

Is the measles vaccine safe? Where do vaccination rates stand?

The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is safe and effective. It is a routine and recommended childhood vaccine that is split into two doses.

Research shows it takes a very high vaccination rate to prevent measles from spreading: 95% of the population should have immunity against the virus.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, national vaccination rates for kindergartners fell to 93% and remain there. Many pockets of the country have far lower rates than that. The drop is driven in part by record numbers of kids getting waivers.

## IMMIGRATION

## US records fewer arrests for illegal crossings of its southern border

WASHINGTON (AP)

Arrests for crossing the U.S. border illegally fell slightly in March, authorities said Friday, bucking a usual spring increase amid increased immigration enforcement in Mexico.

The Border Patrol made 137,480 arrests of people entering from Mexico, down 2.3% from 140,638 arrests in February, the first time since 2017 that arrests fell in March from the previous month. Crossings typically rise as temperatures turn warmer.

Mexico detained migrants 240,000 times in the first two months of the year, more than triple from the same period of 2023, sending many deeper south into the country to discourage them from coming to the United States. While Mexico hasn't released figures for March, U.S. officials have said Mexican enforcement is largely responsible for recent declines.

"Encounters at our southern border

are lower right now, but we remain prepared for changes, continually managing operations to respond to ever-shifting transnational criminal activities and migration patterns," said Troy Miller, acting commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The March arrest tally is one of the lowest of Joe Biden's presidency after a record high of nearly 250,000 in December. While conditions quickly change, the decline is welcome news for the White House at a time when immigration has become a top voter concern in an election year. Biden said this month that he is still considering executive action to suspend asylum at the border if crossings hit a certain threshold.

Tucson, Arizona, was again the busiest



Migrants wait between border walls separating Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, California, to apply for asylum with U.S. authorities, on Friday, April 12, 2024, seen from San Diego.

of the Border Patrol's nine sectors on the Mexican border in March, a position it has held since summer, followed by San Diego and El Paso, Texas. Texas' Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings for much of the last decade, is fifth busiest, signaling how

quickly routes are changing.

The arrest tally excludes new and expanded paths to enter the country legally under presidential powers, known as parole, which allow people to stay temporarily and apply for work permits.

U.S. authorities granted entry to 44,000 people at land crossings with Mexico in March through an online appointment system, CBP One. More than 547,000 have been allowed in the country through CBP One since it was introduced in January, led by Venezuelans, Haitians and Mexicans.

More than 400,000 people from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela have been allowed to enter the U.S. through March after applying online with a financial sponsor and arriving at an airport, paying their way.