

# [***Opinion: Super Bowl isn't the only big game***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B9K-GJN1-JBSS-S009-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Opinion by Richard Galant, CNN

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; In his 1964 best-seller, Eric Berne analyzed the "Games People Play."

"Family life and married life, as well as life in organizations of various kinds," can be viewed as a game, the [*Canadian-born psychiatrist*](https://ericberne.com/games-people-play/) wrote. But "to say that the bulk of social activity consists of playing games does not necessarily mean that it is mostly 'fun' or that the parties are not seriously engaged in the relationship."

After all, he added, even real games like football can be deadly serious: They "may not be fun at all, and the players may be intensely grim."

In 1967, two teams grimly stepped up to the line of scrimmage at the Los Angeles Coliseum for the first-ever Super Bowl. The Kansas City Chiefs, who are once again competing in today's Super Bowl LVIII in Las Vegas, lost the first big game to the Green Bay Packers, 35-10. The halftime entertainment: trumpeter Al Hirt and marching bands from the University of Arizona and Grambling College. Tickets cost about $12, or a bit more than $100 in today's dollars.

Tickets to today's match between the San Francisco 49ers and the Chiefs, with a halftime show helmed by Usher and likely fan reaction in the luxury suites by Taylor Swift, [*cost around $10,000*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/29/business/super-bowl-ticket-prices/index.html).

In Kansas City, "where the downtown is lit up red for the Chiefs, the feel-good vibes are undeniable," wrote **Mark Dent**. "As the country reels from division and pessimism, [*Kansas City may just be the most optimistic, ambitious place in the country*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/07/opinions/kansas-city-chiefs-super-bowl-dynasty-fans-dent), truly the beating 'Heart of America...'"

"That's truer than ever since the Taylor Swift era began, publicly at least, this past September," he wrote, referring to Swift's relationship with Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce. "As the pop star watched a Chiefs game against the Bears in an Arrowhead Stadium suite and rode through city streets in the passenger seat of Kelce's convertible, the phones of every Kansas City resident and every native like me who moved away but stayed connected, started pinging," Dent noted.

"Still, I didn't expect that Swift would basically have a Kansas City pied-a-terre and carry herself like a local." Swift recently went out with friends for a "'ladies night' outing at Rye, a restaurant in Leawood, Kansas, enjoying chicken and dumplings."

Sunday's game will decide whether the Chiefs, competing in their fourth Super Bowl in the past five years, can retain their championship title. But it's much more than a football game, wrote **Amy Bass**: "The addition of Taylor Swift - and the adulation, condemnation, and profit generation that follow her and her merry band of Swifties wherever she goes - to the mix has made things far more interesting than predictions about who will win on the gridiron..."

Some conservatives, she observed, "have lost their damn minds over the Swift-Kelce relationship, obviously in disbelief that a woman is capable of this much power without some kind of backing from some imaginary deep state. Their idea? Taylor Swift is a mastermind Pentagon asset and America's dominant love story is a Democratic psy-op pro-Biden election plot..."

"This woman who has released 14 (soon to be 15) albums in under two decades, reshaped the music industry, plays guitar and piano, has sold over 200 million records, has students at Harvard and Stanford studying her, and just passed the likes of Frank Sinatra, Paul Simon and Stevie Wonder for the most Album of the Year Grammy Awards? [*Let her sit with you, football fans. Respect her.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/09/opinions/taylor-swift-super-bowl-swiftie-heaven-bass/index.html)"

The Super Bowl's on-field matchup and the Taylor Swift-Travis Kelce narrative are the least of it. America's presidential campaign, the Supreme Court's encounter with ***politics*** and the implosion of the Senate border bill can all be analyzed as deadly serious games that are playing out in unpredictable ways.

For more:

**Tim Calkins**: [*The biggest Super Bowl ad winners - and losers - over the past 20 years*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/08/opinions/super-bowl-ad-winners-losers-calkins/index.html)

Biden's bittersweet exoneration

Barring a major third-party challenge, the biggest zero-sum game of 2024 is the contest between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump.

Thursday proved an epic day, with the Supreme Court hearing arguments on Colorado's decision to remove Trump from the state's ballot. Hours later, the special counsel released a 388-page report on Biden's handling of classified documents. While recommending that Biden should not be criminally charged, Robert Hur called the president's memory "significantly limited" and described him as coming across as a "well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory."

As **Peter Bergen** noted, Biden mistakenly referred to Egypt's president as the president of Mexico in a meeting with reporters aiming to rebut the special counsel's description of him. Earlier in the week, he confused the name of French President Emmanuel Macron with that of a long-dead predecessor, made a similar gaffe about a former chancellor of Germany and struggled to remember the name of the terrorist group Hamas.

"So, do Biden's memory lapses raise questions about whether he should have his finger on the nuclear trigger? I have no idea, since it is hard to determine his medical condition based on what we are seeing on TV and reading about his memory lapses in the special counsel's report, [*but it certainly seems worrisome*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/08/opinions/biden-special-counsel-report-memory-bergen/index.html)."

Justified or not, the special counsel's words were "another log on a raging fire that threatens to engulf Biden's re-election," wrote **David Axelrod**.

"Hur is a lawyer, not a medical doctor, so his assessment seemed gratuitous and out of place. [*But the most damaging stories in a presidential race are the ones that confirm negative impressions voters have already formed*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/opinions/special-counsel-report-so-damaging-biden-axelrod/index.html)."

"When a tape surfaced, showing Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney at a closed fundraiser in 2012, saying that 47% of Americans were essentially wards of the state and its entitlements who would never vote for him, it added to the portrait of Romney as a callous financier. ... The same was true in 2016 when Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, also speaking at a fundraiser. denounced Trump supporters as a 'basket of deplorables.' That off-handed statement gave her opponents more opportunity to paint her as a disdainful cultural elite."

"The negative image of Biden, pushed relentlessly by Republicans, is that the world is out of control and an aged and infirm Biden isn't in command. And that narrative has taken root."

For more on ***politics***:

**Lawrence C. Levy**: [*The furious race to succeed George Santos*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/opinions/ny-special-election-tom-suozzi-mazi-pilip-levy/index.html)

**Haroon Moghul**: [*Many Muslim voters no longer see Trump as worse than Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/05/opinions/trump-biden-muslim-voters-gaza-moghul/index.html)

**Patrick T. Brown**: [*The chaos of Nevada's primary shows the nominating process has to change*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/07/opinions/nevada-republican-primary-caucus-brown)

Trump tests the court

The rules of the Supreme Court game are simple. Nine Americans are given a lifetime job, with the power to overturn any law by majority agreement. The only catch: To prove that they are not simply an unelected super-legislature, they are supposed to decide cases only on the basis of the law, not ***politics***.

Yet on Thursday, when the court heard arguments about whether Colorado acted legally in barring Trump from the ballot, many questions were about the political implications of one state disqualifying a candidate under the 14th amendment's ban on insurrectionists holding office.

"***Politics*** are an inevitable part of what the Supreme Court does; the problem is the justices' own refusal to admit as much - which is why arguments like the one on Thursday are such fascinating counterexamples," wrote **Steve Vladeck**, a professor of law at the University of Texas.

"Ultimately, it seems likely that the court is going to keep Trump on the ballot this November by reversing the Colorado ruling as an overreach of state power, without taking a position, one way or the other, on whether his conduct ought to disqualify him from holding any federal office going forward. But the same court may also soon clear the way for the criminal prosecution of Trump for his role in the events of January 6 to go forward if it denies him a stay of the criminal trial he faces in Washington, DC. (Trump denies all wrongdoing.)"

In "what may strike many as a kind of Solomonic compromise," the court might issue two rulings in coming days: [*"clearing the way for people to vote for Trump come November with one hand, while potentially exposing reasons why they shouldn't with the other."*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/08/opinions/trump-supreme-court-colorado-vladeck/index.html)

But if the court grants Trump a stay of his criminal trial,it's very likely the prosecution will be on hold until after November's election, wrote **Michael Conway**, who served as counsel in the House Judiciary Committee's 1974 impeachment inquiry of President Richard Nixon. Or a trial might never happen, if Trump returns to the White House and orders the Justice Department to drop the case.

"Some justices might wish to avoid adjudicating this issue altogether. But it is risky to the stature of the Supreme Court and its role to pass on reviewing Trump's appeal. [*If this case about presidential accountability and the rule of law isn't important enough for Supreme Court review, what is?*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/06/opinions/trump-not-immune-opinion-conway/index.html)"

**Joshua A. Douglas**, an election law expert at the University of Kentucky, urged the court to deny any "stay request, allowing the trial to move forward so that the electorate can have a final answer on whether Trump is convicted of trying to subvert the last presidential election before they head to the polls this November to cast their ballots in the next one."

Douglas also wrote, "[*The DC Circuit's unanimous decision was abundantly clear: a former president is not immune from criminal prosecution*](https://us.cnn.com/2024/02/07/opinions/supreme-court-dont-let-trump-delay-douglas/index.html) for engaging in conduct that Congress has criminalized. As the court noted, 'For the purpose of this criminal case, former President Trump has become citizen Trump, with all of the defenses of any other criminal defendant.'"

**SE Cupp**: [*Should, could, would the Supreme Court keep Trump off the ballot?*](https://www.cnn.com/videos/opinions/2024/02/07/se-cupp-unfiltered-supreme-court-case-trump-ballot-vpx.cnn)

For more:

**Tristan Snell**: [*Congress has already disqualified Trump from the ballot*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/08/opinions/trump-supreme-court-oral-arguments-election-snell/index.html)

Border bill blowup

It is far from the first time it's happened, but the naked cynicism of ***politics*** in Washington was exposed by the House Republicans' decision to torpedo a bipartisan immigration bill that achieved many of the goals long sought by the right.

"This week, the Biden administration and Senate Democrats finally acted to fix the system along the lines Republicans have been pushing for - only to find Republicans have now changed their minds," wrote **Fareed Zakaria**.

"A new Republican argument is that there is no need for any change in laws relating to asylum and that President Joe Biden can simply use executive authority to solve the problem. This is now the view articulated by former President Donald Trump, House Speaker Mike Johnson, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, as well as Elon Musk, among other influential figures."

"[*This is a complete turnaround for Republicans.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/09/opinions/border-compromise-zakaria/index.html) In 2019, Rep. Steve Scalise explicitly argued, 'It takes congressional action; you need to change the law.' The same year, Trump also said, 'You have to change the loopholes; you have to change asylum.' Not anymore. The arch-conservative Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford, who was the Republican negotiator of the Senate bill, noted in amazement, 'A year ago they said, "We need a change in the law." ... Now the conversation is, 'Just kidding, we don't need a change in the law.'"

Trump had urged Republicans to kill the compromise, believing that any progress at the border would benefit Biden in the fall election.

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**Danielle Campoamor**: [*Playing ball on the border bill comes back to bite Democrats*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/09/opinions/border-bill-gop-democrats-immigration-campoamor/index.html)

**Julian Zelizer**: [*McConnell appears to be politically weakened. This senator may be waiting in the wings*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/07/opinions/mitch-mcconnell-senate-republicans-border-bill-zelizer/index.html)

**W. James Antle III**: [*Impeach Mayorkas for gross mismanagement*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/06/opinions/impeachment-mayorkas-immigration-border-antle/index.html)

King Charles

The British royal family, famously reticent about its members' health issues, revealed that King Charles III is being treated for an undisclosed form of cancer.

As **Jill Filipovic** wrote, "Charles' diagnosis, on a basic human level, should merit all of our sympathy - which, after all, is an unlimited resource."

"It could also be a moment for this fractured family to reckon with some of its internal misdeeds, and perhaps come back together. The most obvious fissure is that initiated by Prince Harry and Meghan Markle."

[*"Serious illnesses can remind us of our own mortality and put our lives in perspective - clarify our values and hopefully spur some soul-searching."*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/06/opinions/king-charles-cancer-diagnosis-royal-family-filipovic)

A parent found guilty

A jury found Jennifer Crumbley, the mother of a 15-year-old school shooter who killed four students in Michigan, guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

**Jennifer Tucker**, founding director of Wesleyan University's Center for the Study of Guns and Society, wrote that "the Crumbley trial and other similar cases shine a light on how a shooter rarely acts 'alone.' It's a wake-up call, alerting us to the need for a cultural shift around this complex issue if we ever hope to change our country's shameful standing when it comes to gun violence affecting children."

"This case opens the door for parents to be held legally accountable and reminds all parents of their responsibilities when it comes to gun safety. It also presents an opportunity to take a broader view of the multiple factors that contribute to the scourge of gun violence in this country. [*Everyone wants to find a single villain, but the reality is that everybody is at risk and many people are responsible*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/07/opinions/jennifer-crumbley-conviction-oxford-mass-shooting-tucker/index.html)."

Don't miss

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**Dorothy Cochrane**: [*Why we can't let go of the mystery of Amelia Earhart*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/06/opinions/amelia-earhart-lost-plane-sonar-photo-cochrane)

**David L. Nathan** and **Peter Grinspoon**: [*Does marijuana cause psychosis? The answer is complicated*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/08/opinions/marijuana-cannabis-psychosis-nathan-grinspoon)

**David A. Andelman**: [*Paris has essentially declared war on cars. But who's really winning?*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/06/opinions/paris-suv-cars-ban-andelman/index.html)

**AND...**

Valentine's Day

Will Taylor and Travis make this week's Valentine's Day one to remember? The betting action in Las Vegas isn't only on who will win the Super Bowl but also on whether an engagement is announced.

Meanwhile on planet Earth, romance is far more fraught. The New York Times profiled Hope Woodard, a 27-year comedian and influencer, who has committed to a year without sex or dating: she is going "boysober," a term she finds infinitely superior to "celibate."

As **Holly Thomas** wrote, Woodard "believes that by taking time away from sex and romance, we can 'remove the fake sense of validation that we get from dating and situationships and sleeping around, and refocus that energy' on ourselves."

[*"It's a good idea, but it sure brings up a lot off the bat*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/08/opinions/boysober-hope-woodard-dating-youtube-thomas)," Thomas observed. "It's great to see someone take the initiative to look after themselves, but declaring independence from external validation to nearly 400,000 followers seems a little contradictory..."

Still, Thomas added, "The idea that one way of life works out for everyone is demonstrably ridiculous. Just take a look at divorce rates. But finding the space to figure out what works for oneself is remarkably difficult amid the clamor of cultural pressures and an online tribalism that demands everyone declare their affinity with their chosen people. Even if you're not wholly sure what you're doing, claiming some agency over that process is reassuring."

Opinion by Richard Galant, CNN

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