

# TIME

## TRUMP'S NEXT MOVE

INSIDE HIS  
FOREIGN  
POLICY  
GAMBIT

by BRIAN BENNETT  
AND NIK POPLI



# TIME Magazine

[January 26th, 2026]

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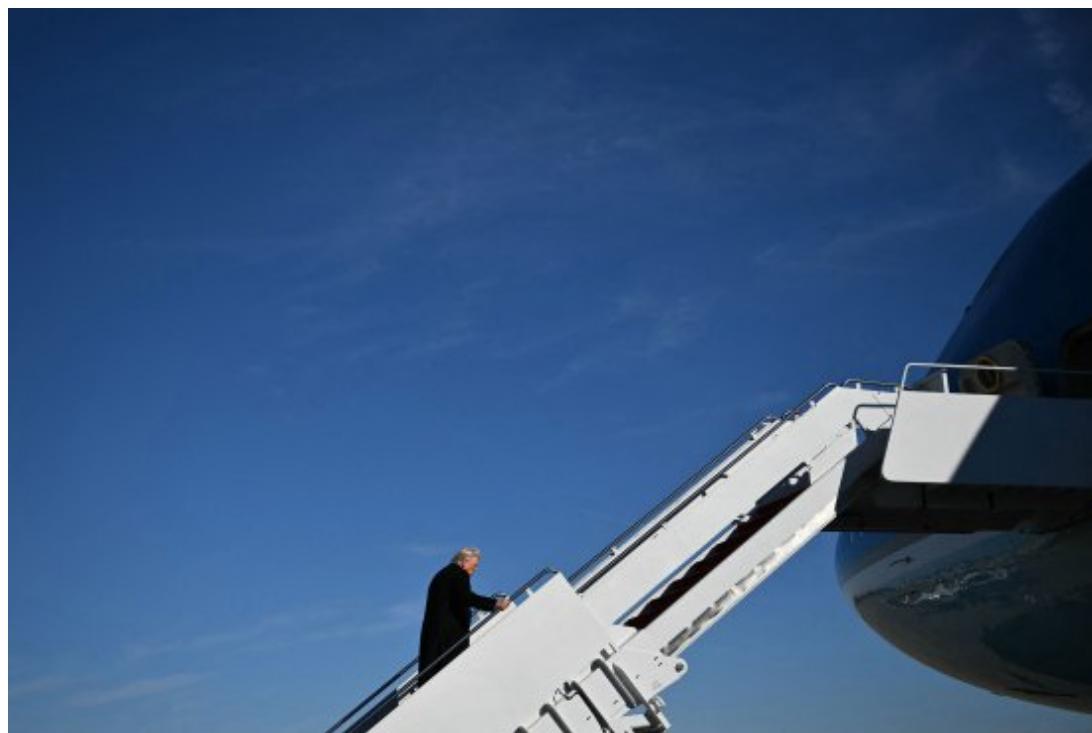
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# Trump Meets Davos: Behind TIME's 2026 World Economic Forum Issue

Jacobs is Editor in Chief at TIME, where he leads TIME's global newsroom and its journalism across all platforms. Since joining TIME in 2013, Jacobs has held a variety of senior editorial leadership positions. Previously, he was national political correspondent at Reuters, associate editor at Newsweek, and staff reporter for The Daily Beast. His writing has appeared in the Boston Globe and New York Observer.



You would be forgiven for assuming that there are few places less hospitable to President Donald Trump than [Davos](#), Switzerland—home to the World Economic Forum's annual meeting, the subject of this issue. The President gained popularity based on his ability to present himself as a foil to those

who frequent Davos: for his antagonism toward expertise and the global elite, his distaste for norms and consensus-building, his pillorying of those who privilege causes like climate and international cooperation over economic self-interest. Yet Trump, whose [Inauguration](#) took place during last year's meeting, is scheduled to appear in person this January at the conference for the first time since 2020. (If for some reason he does not attend, he will still undoubtedly be Topic A.)

It has been a very active year for Trump beyond [America's borders](#), and the annual meeting provides us an opportunity to assess Year One of the [second Trump Administration](#). As [Brian Bennett and Nik Popli write](#), though the President campaigned on America First, his actions abroad may have caused the biggest waves. American Presidents regularly turn to foreign policy in their second term. Unburdened by a future reckoning with voters and perhaps wary of the domestic forces that can grind down a leader's ambitions, they seek out the chance to leave a legacy outside of the U.S. The American record in the past 12 months is mixed, but the results are being felt everywhere. To measure one consequence, Charlie Campbell [traveled to Zambia](#) to explore how Africa is balancing mineral markets and the drawdown of U.S. foreign aid.

To the surprise of some, Trump has been an energetic actor on the world stage. The latest example: he began the New Year by [arresting the President of Venezuela](#) and promising to [“run” the Latin American country](#). Elsewhere, in 2025, he helped to [weaken an Iranian regime](#) that threatened its neighbors. In one of the two major conflicts that have dominated the world stage this decade, he architected a [cease-fire](#), with an eye toward ending major hostilities between [Israel and Hamas](#). At the time of writing, he is trying to copy this approach to solve another intractable conflict, [Russia’s invasion of Ukraine](#). Ironically, some of the very sort of behaviors that rub the traditional Davos crowd the wrong way made these achievements possible.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

WINTER 2026

# TRUMP'S NEXT MOVE

HIS FOREIGN  
POLICY  
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THE TRUTH ABOUT AI BY MARC BENIOFF | AFRICA'S NEW POWER BY CHARLIE CAMPBELL

BORGE BRENDÉ, ANDRÉ HOFFMANN, MICHAEL DELL, AMAL CLOONEY, KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA, DAVID SOLOMON, MICHELLE BACHELET, & MORE

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Trump shows no signs of getting up from the global chessboard. One place he has been particularly involved is trade. In this issue, economist Robert Lawrence writes about [why the President's tariffs haven't yet tanked trade](#), and Neale Mahoney, former special policy adviser in the White House National Economic Council, and Adam Shaw, an adviser at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, write about [why people around the world are facing an affordability squeeze](#). IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva [spoke to Justin Worland](#), and Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon spoke to Ayesha Javed about the [economic outlook for the year ahead](#)—one that cannot be considered without understanding the intentions of the White House. While we've witnessed in the past year a new kind of international consensus emerging, which carries Trump's imprint, Ian Bremmer warns that [2026 will test it](#). "This will be the year the bubble bursts on the President's vision of a Trump-dictated global trade and security order," he writes.

This year's meeting takes place under new leadership, and two of the forum's new leaders, [Borge Brende](#) and [André Hoffmann](#), discuss here how their organization is adapting to an era in which global consensus-forming is out and nationalism and populism are in. A key theme for them and everyone at Davos [will be AI](#). (Coming off our [Person of the Year](#) selection, it will be front and center for TIME in 2026 too.) Contributors to the issue, including TIME owner and Salesforce CEO [Marc Benioff](#), attorney [Amal Clooney](#), and investor [Robert F. Smith](#), write about how and what they believe AI can deliver in 2026.

Elsewhere, former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, Dell Technologies founder Michael Dell, Rockefeller Foundation president Rajiv J. Shah, McKinsey global managing partner Bob Sternfels, and WEF Young Global Leaders Angela Oduor Lungati and Hou Yifan [share solutions to problems](#) that they are focused on addressing.

Since 2018, we have partnered with the World Economic Forum to create our [Davos special issue](#). This year's was edited by Ayesha Javed. Our hope is that it proves not only a useful guide for those in attendance but also a frame for seeing what will come in 2026.

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# A Pill Version of Wegovy Hits Pharmacies

Park is a senior health correspondent at TIME. She covers the COVID-19 pandemic, new drug developments in cancer and Alzheimer's disease, mental health, HIV, CRISPR, and advances in gene therapy, among other issues in health and science. She also covers the Olympics and co-chaired TIME's inaugural TIME 100 Health Summit in 2019. Her work has won awards from the New York Press Club and recognition from the Deadline Club. In addition, she is the author of [\*The Stem Cell Hope: How Stem Cell Medicine Can Change Our Lives\*](#). Follow her on Instagram at [@aliceparktime](#).



In the last week of December, while most of the U.S. was still in holiday mode, Novo Nordisk's plant in North Carolina was operating at full capacity.

On Dec. 22, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the company's oral version of Wegovy, making it the first pill of the popular GLP-1 medications to get the green light for weight loss. People who want to lose weight and are prescribed Wegovy now have the option of taking the tablet daily, versus injecting themselves with the drug once a week. They'll lose about the same amount of weight with either version: between 16% and 17% of their starting body weight.

The plant, just outside of Raleigh, is operating around the clock to produce bottles of pills in four different doses. The bottles are bound for retail stores and online pharmacies and will be available starting on Jan. 5. "Obesity has become a consumer-oriented disease," said Novo Nordisk's CEO Mike Doustdar in an interview with TIME. "We're embracing that."

The company's entire supply of the drug, from start to finish, will be manufactured in North Carolina. Days before the launch of Wegovy pill, TIME visited the plant to watch how the first Wegovy pills are being produced, bottled, and packaged for patients.



## **It all starts with yeast**

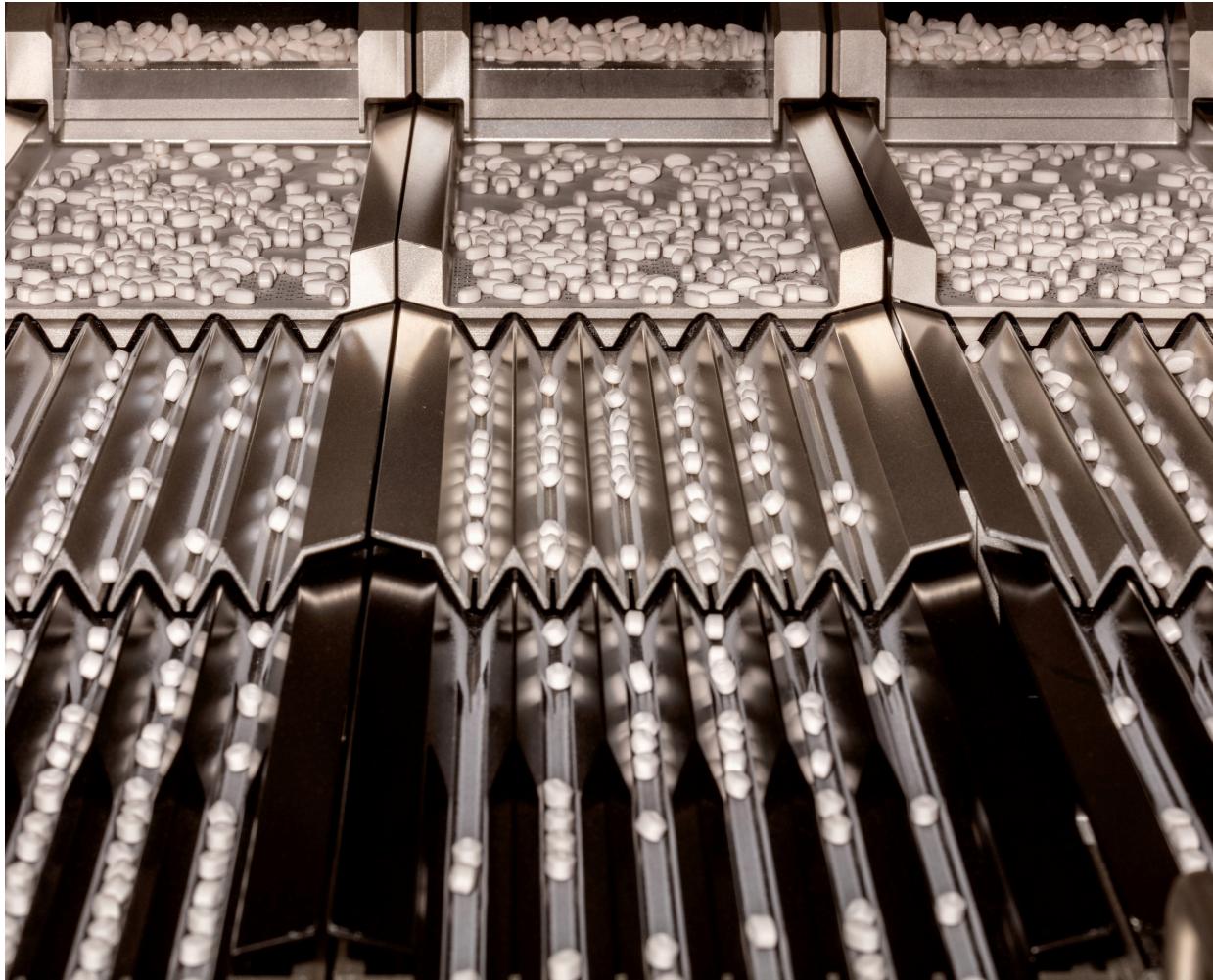
Wegovy pill begins with a fungus: specifically, the same yeast used to make bread, called *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. But instead of fermenting sugars or grains to make bread rise, the yeast cells are genetically engineered at Novo Nordisk's facility in Clayton, North Carolina to produce a protein that undergoes fermentation in several four-story tall tanks, then multiple purification steps over about a month to produce semaglutide, a compound that mimics a human hormone that regulates appetite by working in the reward center of the brain. It can help people feel full and reduce feelings of hunger.

## **Harvesting the main ingredient**

After the fermentation and purification process, semaglutide forms a beige paste with the consistency of pancake batter. In one of the few manual steps in the largely automated production, technicians scrape the paste from large funnels and freeze it at -20°C, where it keeps for up to five years. But given the popularity of Wegovy and the anticipated demand for the pill, the company currently has about a month's supply of semaglutide in its freezers.

## **Taking pill form**

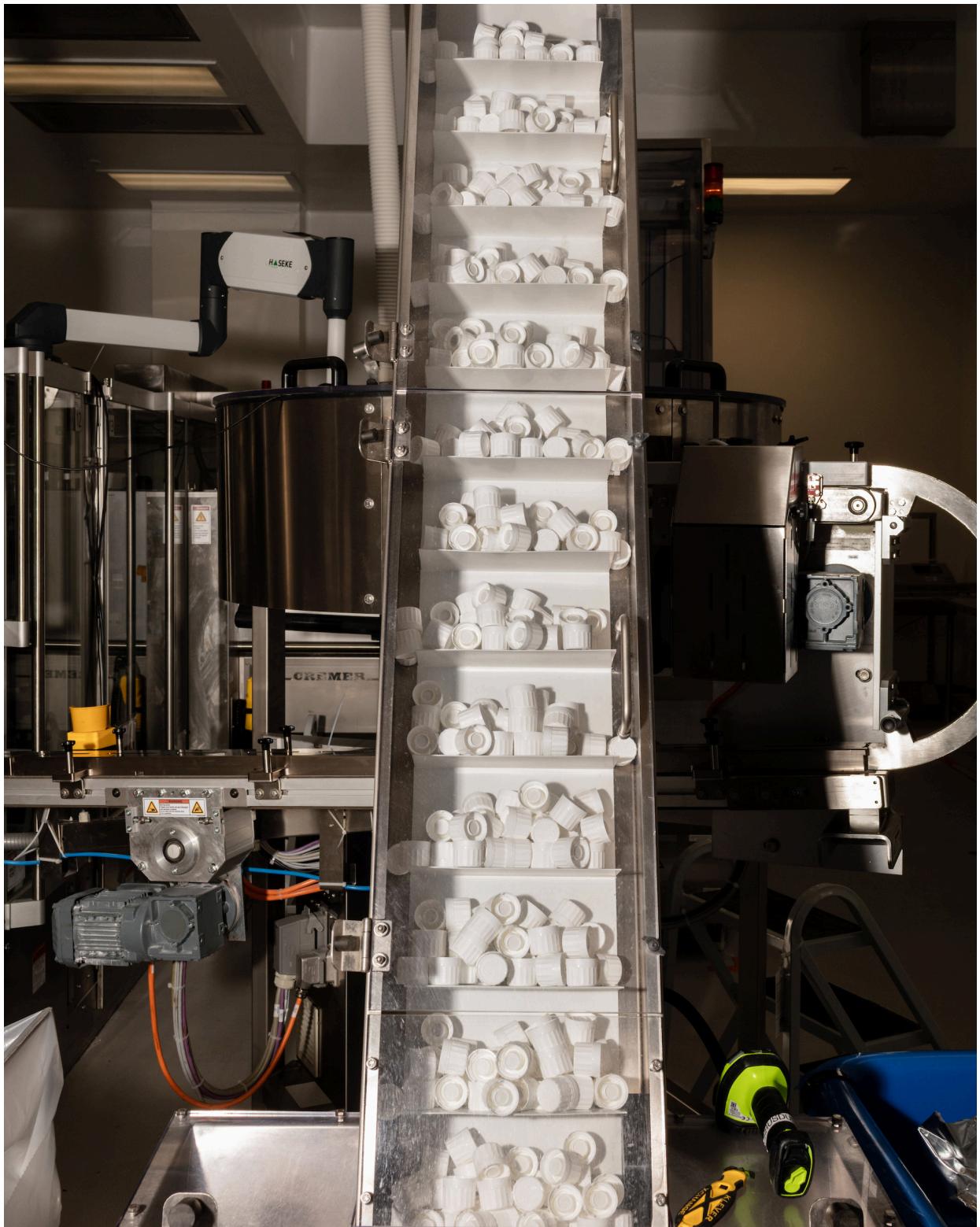
In the final step of the process, the paste is thawed and purified into a liquid at a high temperature. That heated liquid is then spray-dried into a fine white powder, similar to the way snow-making machines turn hot water into snow. That powder, collected in large bags from a funnel that extends through three floors, is then pressed into Wegovy tablets.



## A long path to the pill

While this semaglutide pill is the first to treat obesity, it isn't the first that Novo Nordisk has made. The company's scientists first became interested in semaglutide as a diabetes treatment since it can also help control blood glucose, and its first semaglutide-based therapy, Ozempic, was approved in 2017 for diabetes. Patients injected themselves once a week to control blood sugar, but to make taking the drug easier, the company also developed a pill form, called Rybelsus, which the FDA approved in 2019. Turning Ozempic into an oral pill required finding a way to protect the drug from the hostile environment of the stomach just long enough for it to be absorbed by the body. "But with a lot of these strategies, it would cause too much permeability—so things that shouldn't be absorbed, like bacteria or other things, were absorbed," says Andrea Traina, senior medical director for

obesity and liver health at Novo Nordisk. The scientists ultimately found a way to create a chemical buffer to shield the drug while it released enough semaglutide to be effective. Still, because the pill has to go through the stomach and digestive tract, it's generally not as effective as the injected Ozempic.



When diabetes patients noticed they were losing weight on semaglutide, Novo Nordisk and other companies began to study the compound for its

potential effects on obesity. Studies confirmed what those patients were experiencing, and in 2021, the FDA approved Novo Nordisk's Wegovy to treat obesity. But people still had to inject themselves with the medication to benefit from its effects. Developing the Wegovy pill became the next challenge, and the same hurdles the company faced in developing Rybelsus remained. But this time, the researchers developed a proprietary fatty acid derivative to better navigate the difficult environment of the stomach. "After you swallow the tablet, it comes in contact with the stomach lining and starts to dissolve and create a foamy microenvironment around the pill," says Traina. "Picture an Alka-Seltzer tablet dissolving in water." The reaction temporarily inhibits stomach enzymes in the area from breaking down the drug, which gives the semaglutide enough time to be absorbed. "The whole process takes about half an hour," she says, after which time "the microenvironment of the stomach goes back to normal." To maximize the pill's ability to absorb, people taking it should swallow it first thing in the morning on an empty stomach with up to half a glass of water with no food, drinks, or other medications for at least 30 minutes, the company advises, so nothing will interfere with the pill's activity.



## Stiff competition

Wegovy pill is not the only GLP-1 weight-loss pill on the horizon. Eli Lilly, which makes the injectable GLP-1 drugs Mounjaro for diabetes and Zepbound for weight loss (using the active ingredient tirzepatide) has [developed a pill called orforglipron](#). In December, the company [released positive data](#) showing its pill could help people maintain weight loss after using injected forms of GLP-1 drugs for more than a year and submitted a request to the FDA for approval. The agency [granted orforglipron a priority voucher](#) in November, meaning the FDA will conduct an expedited review so that pill can come to market much faster than the typical drug.

Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly have been locked in a GLP-1 competition for years. Some [research](#) has found that Lilly's drug Zepbound leads to greater

weight loss—up to 21% of body weight—compared to 15% on Wegovy. “The difference is very largely connected to doses,” says Doustdar; the highest dose tirzepatide is greater than that of semaglutide in Wegovy. For that reason, Novo Nordisk is developing a higher dose of Wegovy in the injectable form that produces comparable amounts of about 20% weight loss. “We will be bringing Wegovy-Plus into the market [in 2026] so it will close the gap with our competitor,” he says.



He also sees semaglutide as the company's "secret sauce" that seems to produce a number of health benefits. It's the only GLP-1 drug that the FDA

allows to claim on its label benefits for that heart disease and certain liver conditions benefit. While recent research found that the [compound did not slow Alzheimer's disease](#), as many had hoped it would, the drug's ability to reduce inflammation could lead to additional health benefits in other metabolic diseases.

Doustdar, who was appointed to head Novo Nordisk last summer as the company began losing market share in the GLP-1 space to Eli Lilly, sees Wegovy pill as a coup for the company—and a return to focusing on diabetes and obesity. “This is a big disease area. We’re talking about two billion people, and eventually, someone has to produce all the doses for them. We are sitting in the right spot right now [to do that], and still only touching a fraction of the people who are in need.”



## Options for the pill

In coming weeks, Wegovy pill will be available in four doses: a starter dose of 1.5 mg, as well as 4 mg, 9 mg, and 25 mg. As with injectable Wegovy, most patients will start with the lowest dose and gradually ramp up their dosage over a period of months until they reach the maximum dose, which they will continue to maintain their new weight.

As the company and the White House [announced](#) in November, the starter dose will cost \$149 for a month's supply for people paying out-of-pocket and using federal insurance plans. The next-highest dose will be \$149 until April 2026, after which it will increase to \$199 a month. The two highest doses will cost \$299 for a month's worth of pills. People with insurance plans that cover the pills may pay as little as \$24 for a 30-day supply.

Doustdar says the White House announcement was the result of several months of discussion to reach a mutually agreeable price plan for the drug. “For us to be able to make any deals, it has to not be a zero-sum game, but a win-win situation,” he says. “We needed to explain that the cost of operations in the U.S. is very different from the cost of operations in Europe.”

“On the other hand, we also recognize that at higher prices, we will not get access to bigger volumes,” he says—and with hundreds of millions of people around the world who could potentially benefit from a weight-loss drug, Doustdar hopes Wegovy pill will be more convenient, and accessible, for them.

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# Here Are the Key Elections to Watch Out For in 2026

Schneid is a general assignment reporter for TIME covering U.S. and global news.



After a bruising presidential election loss in 2024, this year proved decisive for a Democratic Party looking to recover from its defeats and regain momentum.

The party swept a plethora of off-season election victories across the country on Nov. 4, from [New Jersey](#) and Virginia's key gubernatorial races, to California's passage of its [redistricting plan](#), to even more local races in swing states like Pennsylvania and Georgia.

Democrats will be hoping to [capitalize](#) on their 2025 wins to take advantage of an increasingly unpopular President Donald Trump, and a nation frustrated by the economic policies of a Republican Party that currently controls the House, Senate and the White House.

**Read More:** [\*How AI Could Drive the 2026 Midterm Elections\*](#)

Democrats lead prominent [polls](#) like Ipsos and Emerson with a modest advantage in the general congressional ballot, just single-digit margins, which is consistent with the trend that the party out of power often gains ground in the midterm elections.

Heading into 2026, all 435 districts in the House of Representatives and 33 seats in the U.S. Senate are up for election in the midterms. Republicans currently have a three-seat majority in the Senate, while they hold 219 seats to Democrats' 213 in the House.

In the 2018 midterms, Democrats gained 40 seats in the House. However, recent political realignment and redistricting have created a more complicated dynamic for Democrats.

In the [partisan redistricting battle](#) sparked by President Trump's desire to retain control of the House, Republicans are likely to gain seats in Texas, North Carolina, Missouri and Ohio, while Democrats are looking to California and Utah to pick up ground.

And with historic retirements this year from people like former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, the field for many primaries is wide open.

Currently, 18 House races are ranked as a "toss-up" by the [Cook Political Report](#).

These are the key races to watch out for that will define the coming years in the Legislature.

## **Rep. Thomas Massie's Primary**

Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie, a Republican, has made an enemy of President Trump by leading the campaign for the release of the files relating to the investigation of sex offender Jeffrey [Epstein](#).

**Read More:** [\*Thomas Massie Helped Force a House Vote on the Epstein Files. He's Not Done\*](#)

Massie's break with the president has made him an outsider in the Republican Party, and although he claims his insistence on releasing the Epstein files has nothing to do with trying to target Trump, the White House lobbied intensely against their release.

The president has called Massie a “third-rate congressman,” “weak and pathetic RINO” (Republican in name only), and a “loser” for his campaign calling for the release of the files.

Trump has endorsed Republican Ed Gallrein to challenge Massie’s control of Kentucky’s 4th congressional district, which he has held since 2012.

“This is Trump Country. But while President Trump is fighting to restore America, Thomas Massie is standing in the way,” Gallrein said in his press release announcing his run. Massie responded with a statement of his own, calling Gallrein a “rubber stamp for globalist billionaires, endless debt, foreign aid, and forever wars.”

Gallrein, who previously ran unsuccessfully for the Kentucky State Senate District 7 seat in 2024, will face off against Massie in the primary on May 19, 2026.

While the race will not impact the battle for control of the House, it will nonetheless be a test of President Trump’s historically powerful endorsement.

## Arizona Governor

Democratic Governor Katie Hobbs is running for re-election in 2026 in what looks to be shaping up as a tight race between her and one of three

Republicans running. An [early favorite](#) for the Republican bid, Trump-endorsed Rep. Andy Biggs holds 59% of prospective Republican primary voters, according to Emerson polling. The same poll shows Hobbs winning a slight edge in a general election.

Currently, Governor Hobbs holds a 39% job approval rating and a 40% disapproval rating among Arizona voters, with 21% neutral.

The state, once a Republican stronghold, is a key battleground state in the Trump era. Former President Joe Biden flipped the state by a narrow 10,000 votes in 2020, before Trump took it back in 2024. The same year, however, Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego won his seat, underscoring the state's complicated politics.

Trump's second term has been defined by a shrinking of federal bureaucracy and a push toward states creating their own policies on abortion, child care, and LGBTQ+ rights, making gubernatorial races all the more important in 2026.

## Maine Senate

The Democratic primary for Maine Senate has already made headlines in recent months, as several newcomers vie to fight against Republican Susan Collins. The state, which voted for former Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election, is seen as Democrats' most viable pick-up opportunity in the Senate midterms.

The primary has turned into a battle between the party establishment and its progressive wing. Representing the former is 77-year-old Governor Janet Mills, endorsed by party elders such as Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and high-profile [governors](#) such as Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Kentucky's Andy Beshear.

Representing the latter is former veteran and oyster farmer Graham Plattner, who has been endorsed by Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders. Plattner, 41, quickly offered hope to a younger Democratic Party that is hungry to support a new generation of politicians, only to be later shrouded in

controversy over unearthed Reddit posts. The posts, which have been removed, promoted violence for political gain and included him making offensive comments about women and Black Americans.

**Read More:** [Old Reddit Posts, Tattoos, and Age Concerns: Democrats' Troubles Come Into Sharp Relief in Maine](#)

Platner has attempted to distance himself from the posts and the controversy, but [pollsters](#) are concerned that his online history will prevent him from defeating Collins.

Although Maine has voted with Democrats every election this century, the party has not won a U.S. Senate seat in the state since George Mitchell's reelection in 1988—over three decades ago.

## California Governor

As term-limited Gov. Gavin Newsom is set to leave office next year, [the race is wide open](#) for fellow Democrats looking to fill his high-profile and news-making shoes.

Several people have already joined the fray, including Rep. Eric Swalwell, a political enemy of Trump who helped coordinate the 2021 impeachment case against the president, billionaire philanthropist and climate activist [Tom Steyer](#), former California Congresswoman Katie Porter, former Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, real estate developer and billionaire Stephen Cloobeck, former state Controller Betty Yee, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, and former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

And, if those were not enough, two Republicans—former Fox News Host Steve Hilton and Sheriff Chad Bianco—have also entered the race.

While Democrats are likely to have a comfortable lead in the general election, the crowded primary, set for June 2026, is currently a free-for-all.

## Mike Lawler's Seat

Republican Mike Lawler's pivotal suburban New York congressional seat is up for grabs once again in 2026, and a host of Democrats have entered the primary to face off for District 17.

The district voted for Biden in 2020 and Harris in 2024, but Lawler maintained his seat in a comfortable re-election in 2024, defeating Democratic Rep. Mondaire Jones by six percentage points. This race remained an outlier, as Democrats flipped three other House seats in the state that year.

Among those looking to unseat Lawler are Rockland County Legislator Beth Davidson, Army veteran and former election security official Cait Conley, nonprofit leader Jessica Reinmann, progressive Effie Phillips-Staley, former broadcast journalist Mike Sacks, former FBI intelligence analyst and section chief John Sullivan, Air Force veteran John Cappello, and Briarcliff Manor Deputy Mayor Peter Chatzky.

## **Several Key Arizona Districts**

Beyond Arizona's governor, the state's 6th District is a key battleground seat for GOP Rep. Juan Ciscomani's attempt to win another term. Cook Political Report has called the seat "one of the most evenly divided districts in the country," considering Trump won it by less than a point in 2024 and lost it by less than a point in 2020.

Democrats have also focused on aiming for Rep. David Schweikert's district, District 1, since the businessman is vacating his battleground seat to run for governor.

Schweikert defeated Democrat and former state Rep. Amish Shah in the 2024 general election by just under 4%, or about 16,500 votes, suggesting the 2026 midterm election will be another close fight.

## **North Carolina Senate**

Republican U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis is not running for reelection, and the race for his replacement is already off to a heated start as former Gov. Roy

Cooper, a Democrat, has announced his intention to run.

Cooper is likely to go head-to-head with Trump-endorsed Republican National Committee Chair Michael Whatley in a high-profile battle next year. Trump had appointed Whatley as his hurricane recovery “czar” in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, which hit the state in late September 2024.

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# How Clean Is Airplane Air, Really?

Park is a senior health correspondent at TIME. She covers the COVID-19 pandemic, new drug developments in cancer and Alzheimer's disease, mental health, HIV, CRISPR, and advances in gene therapy, among other issues in health and science. She also covers the Olympics and co-chaired TIME's inaugural TIME 100 Health Summit in 2019. Her work has won awards from the New York Press Club and recognition from the Deadline Club. In addition, she is the author of [\*The Stem Cell Hope: How Stem Cell Medicine Can Change Our Lives\*](#). Follow her on Instagram at [@aliceparktime](#).



Just in time for the busy holiday travel season, researchers report on a question that will run through many people's minds as they cram into tightly packed planes: How clean is airplane air?

To find out, Erica Hartmann, associate professor in the department of civil and environmental engineering at Northwestern University, and her colleagues tested face masks worn by passengers on flights to log what kinds of bugs these products trapped. The team was also interested in the air circulating in hospitals, another public place where germs commonly spread, and tested face masks worn by hospital personnel.

The team collected 53 masks in sterile bags and cut out the outer layers to analyze just the microbes circulating in the air and not in people's respiratory passages, then extracted and analyzed DNA from them. To ensure they were detecting all the microbial DNA present, they also used an amplification process called PCR to enrich what was present on the masks.

Overall, they report in the journal *Microbiome*, they detected 407 microbial species from both the plane and hospital settings, with similar populations of bugs from each. The vast majority of these came from skin and are harmless, says Hartmann. "This is not surprising, because a lot of the microbes in buildings and in the air around us reflect us," she says. "A lot of the surfaces we touch tend to have skin-associated bugs because we are transferring bugs every time we touch something. We shed microbes everywhere we go—I and my colleagues refer to it as a microbial aura."

### **Read More:** [Are Plastic Cutting Boards Safe?](#)

The kits that the team used to extract the genetic material from the microbes were designed to collect DNA, so that meant the researchers captured primarily bacteria—not viruses, many of which have RNA as their genetic base (such as COVID-19 and influenza). While people might be more concerned about how much virus is floating around a confined space like an aircraft cabin, Hartmann says that viruses are likely to make up a smaller proportion of microbes in the air than bacteria, since people are shedding bacteria from the skin in larger amounts than they are releasing virus particles.

She notes that viruses tend to be very dependent on the right habitat in order to thrive, and once outside the body and away from cells that they can infect, they can become slightly less virulent—although there are plenty of

examples of viruses surviving on surfaces, and studies show that it only takes a small amount of virus to infect someone and make them sick.

The results of the study highlight the importance of developing better ways to monitor the air for disease-causing pathogens, including viruses, using filtration and sensing systems that could provide more real-time readings. “Imagine something like a carbon monoxide sense or a gas alarm, that, depending on the levels of microbes present, could automatically increase air exchange rates or alert people to put on masks,” says Hartmann. “Factoring in health and having the capability to make informed decisions about how to protect yourself would be amazing.”

Until then, Hartmann hopes people will remember that as the weather gets colder and more gatherings happen indoors, the air—even in tight places like a plane or hospital—may not be as full of disease-causing germs as we think. The other lesson: face masks are an effective way to protect yourself from pathogens that might be circulating in the air (as well as protecting you from spreading germs to others if you are sick).

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# Brigitte Bardot, Icon and Provocateur, Dead at 91



Some months before her death, Brigitte Bardot gave an [interview](#) with BFMTV. Eleven years had passed since she'd last appeared on screen, the journalist Steven Bellery remarked. Why step in front of a camera now? Bardot, small but stately on a sofa in her home in Saint-Tropez, replied: "I'm going to war."

Bardot, who leapt to global stardom as a nubile rebel in the 1956 film *And God Created Woman*, wanted the French government to outlaw hunting wild animals with hounds, which she called a "horror." It was a move characteristic of the latter half of the actress's life, during which the plight of

animals—from the stray dogs of Bucharest to Arctic seal pups—was often foremost in her mind. Her foundation, Fondation Brigitte Bardot, has run shelters, sterilization and adoption campaigns, and conservation efforts around the world since 1986.

But Bardot, whose death at 91 was [announced](#) by her foundation, was also a vocal proponent of far-right politics in France. She decried Muslim immigration in public letters and [in books](#), and she was repeatedly found guilty of provoking racial hatred.

Decades after her films first provoked scandal and fascination, she remained a study in contrasts.



## Career as a bombshell

Born in 1934, Brigitte Bardot was the eldest daughter of a wealthy Parisian family. She studied ballet and became a model as a young teenager,

eventually making the acquaintance of filmmaker Roger Vadim, who would become her first husband.

At the age of 18, she starred in his *And God Created Woman*, which became a global blockbuster and scandal magnet, and created her reputation as a sex symbol. She appeared in numerous films over the next two decades, including Jean-Luc Godard's New Wave film *Contempt*. She was famous for her languid stare and full-lipped smile, and for embodying a new kind of female sexual emancipation.

## Second act as an activist

Bardot's last film was *The Edifying and Joyous Story of Colinot* (1973). She publicly announced she was retiring from acting. She turned her attention to activism on behalf of animals, and, in 1977, was [photographed](#) lying on the ice in Canada with a harp seal pup as part of a Greenpeace campaign against the seal hunt.

Such stunts were far from the only work she undertook. Her foundation helped fund a plan with the mayor of Bucharest in Romania to [sterilize hundreds of thousands of stray dogs in the city](#), as an alternative to extermination.

## Far-right symbol

In 1992, Bardot married Bernard d'Ormale, a businessman and adviser to Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of France's far-right National Front. She began to [make waves](#) with public letters and statements against various groups in society, with few subjects evading her contempt; targets ranged from homosexuals to #MeToo activists to kosher butchers. Sued by civil rights groups, she was eventually convicted five times for inciting racial hatred.

After Bardot's death was announced, politician Marine Le Pen, the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, [wrote on X](#): "France has lost an exceptional woman, remarkable for her talent, courage, frankness, and beauty." Also on X, the president of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, [wrote](#) that Bardot

“embodied a life of freedom...She touched us. We mourn a legend of the century.”

In her interview with BFMTV, which [can be seen on YouTube](#), Bardot lingers on the abolition of hunting with hounds.

“Do you want the abolition to be your legacy?” the journalist asks. “What we remember about you?” “Oh! No,” she says, and smiles coyly. “Oh no, there are many things that should be remembered about me.” She chuckles and looks down, as if reflecting on her life. Then she begins to speak again of the suffering of animals.

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# Rob Reiner Did Nothing by Half Measures

Zacharek is the film critic at TIME. She is the recipient of a Newswomen's Club of New York award and was a 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist.



If you were to tease out a unifying thread through three of the signature films directed by [Rob Reiner](#)—*This Is Spinal Tap*, *The Princess Bride*, and *When Harry Met Sally...*—what you'd find is a tempered sweetness, a kind of resilient exultation informed by the knowledge that little in life ever goes as planned. The surprise twists in our lives make for more happiness over the long haul, because they can't happen unless we remain awake to the possibility of joy every minute. That would be a glistening legacy for any filmmaker, and Reiner, who was [found dead on Sunday along with his wife](#), producer Michele Singer Reiner, left us with that and more.

Reiner's mother, Estelle, was a professional singer; his father was actor, writer, and director Carl Reiner, the creator of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and a compatriot and close friend of Mel Brooks. Audiences got to know the younger Reiner from his role on the 1970s American sitcom [All in the Family](#): as Meathead—he had a name, Michael Stivic, but no one ever remembers it—he was the liberal-minded foil to his racist, bigoted father-in-law Archie Bunker, Carroll O'Connor. As an actor, Reiner's timing was always pinpoint perfect, a gift he'd inherited from his dad. And in real life, he held Michael Stivic-style ideals: he was a longtime supporter of Democratic candidates and causes, including a 1998 California ballot initiative that would fund early childhood programs with taxes collected from tobacco sales. He was also the driving force, economically and otherwise, behind a 2012 legal campaign designed to establish same-sex marriage as a constitutional right. And in a modern Hollywood that's often curiously silent on current political matters, he was an outspoken critic of Donald Trump.





Reiner has always felt, somehow, [like a person we knew](#). His debut feature, the 1984 mock documentary *This Is Spinal Tap*, didn't just wow audiences at the time; it found new fans year after year, decade after decade. Because of *Spinal Tap*, everyone knows what "these go to 11" means. Reiner's fifth feature, *When Harry Met Sally...*, released in 1989 and written by Nora Ephron, followed many of the tried-and-true rules of romantic comedy, even as it tweaked or outright broke others: this was a story not of young people meeting cute and instantly falling in love, but of slightly older characters, people who'd been knocked around a bit by life, finding their way to romance by becoming friends first. [Billy Crystal](#) and [Meg Ryan](#) give the kind of relaxed, lived-in performances that only a fully attuned director could get. Reiner had a great ear for what was funny, but an equally sterling gift for knowing how a line could pierce straight to the heart, and he could guide his actors to that bullseye every time. Think of the moment Crystal's Harry Burns says to Ryan's Sally Albright, "I came here tonight because when you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible." There's no syrup in it, only efficiency. Harry knows he's almost out of time to make the future happen, and the words pour out at a thoroughbred's clip.

Reiner is also responsible for one of those films, a spectacular one, that lots of people say they could watch anytime. *The Princess Bride* (1987) was partly a miracle of casting: Peter Falk shows up as a wheeler-dealer grandfather bent on selling the merits of fairytales—and romance—to his grandson; Peter Cook is a somber bishop presiding over a royal wedding (“Mawage is what bwings us togethah today”); the perpetually avuncular-looking Wallace Shawn plays a Sicilian baddie; and Crystal and the tiny-titan genius Carol Kane appear as mystical healers who miraculously revive the “mostly dead” romantic hero. It took 15 years for writer [William Goldman’s novel](#) to make it to the screen, but Reiner did it justice. The movie is effervescent; there’s nothing belabored about it. *The Princess Bride* is pure, breezy pleasure.

In the years following, Reiner built a career making the kind of mainstream popular entertainments that barely exist anymore, pictures like *The Bucket List* (2007), *The Story of Us* (1997), *A Few Good Men* (1992), and the Stephen King adaptation *Misery* (1990). His reach extended even further through the production company he cofounded in 1987, Castle Rock Entertainment: Castle Rock films include Richard Linklater’s *Before Sunrise*, *Before Sunset*, and *Before Midnight*, the Christopher Guest comedies *Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show*, and *A Mighty Wind*, as well as the King adaptations *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Dolores Claiborne*—though there are many more.



Reiner's last feature as a director was *Spinal Tap II: The End Continues*, a picture that, given how many people adore its predecessor, didn't seem to find the audience it deserves. The movie reunites Christopher Guest, Harry Shearer, and Michael McKean as the members of the (sadly) fictional metal band Spinal Tap, reuniting after 41 years of dormancy; Reiner appears, once again, as the (also sadly) fictional documentary filmmaker Martin di Bergi. *Spinal Tap II* is more endearing and reflective than it is laugh-out-loud funny—though maybe, as an unwitting swan song, it's pretty much perfect. We've all seen old rockers hauling out the gear to take the stage once again, reappearing, with pudgy stomachs and deeply receding hairlines, as fast-forward versions of their younger selves. They ask, as we do: how did we all get so old? But reunion shows often have a bracing, go-for-broke spirit, and *Spinal Tap II* does too. Reiner's death is tragic and sad, perhaps more so because everything about him seemed joyful and celebratory. Maybe that's what we're meant to take away. If you're going to bother with anything—writing or making a film, shaping a character, pulling funding together so someone else can make a movie—you may as well turn it up to 11. Reiner did nothing by half-measures.

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# CDC Slashes Universal Vaccine Recommendations

Jeyaretnam is a reporter at TIME, based in the Singapore bureau. She covers the Asia-Pacific region and global overnight news.



As flu cases in the U.S. are rising dramatically, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overseen by the Trump Administration's Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#), a noted [vaccine skeptic](#), announced that it is endorsing fewer routinely-recommended vaccinations for all children.

As part of the new schedule, HHS will no longer broadly recommend influenza, COVID-19, rotavirus, and other previously recommended immunizations. It now recommends 11 vaccines for all children, down from

previously recommending vaccinations to protect against 18 different diseases in 2024.

That's happening as flu cases in the U.S. have reached their highest levels since the COVID-19 pandemic, according to [new data from the CDC](#), with children and teenagers among the worst affected.

"After an exhaustive review of the evidence, we are aligning the U.S. childhood vaccine schedule with international consensus while strengthening transparency and informed consent," Kennedy said in a [press release](#). "This decision protects children, respects families, and rebuilds trust in public health."

Restoring trust in the public health system is a key reason behind the move, according to the government. A poll published last February by the [AAMC Center for Health Justice](#) found that from 2021 to 2024, public trust in institutions—including medical institutions, social services, fire departments, and others—declined. The decline in trust was sharpest for pharmacies and hospitals. Trust was lowest among members of Gen Z, adults living in rural areas, adults earning lower annual incomes, and individuals with less than a college degree.

But physicians, immunologists, and other medical experts have criticized the move as sowing distrust of vaccines and creating confusion among patients and healthcare providers. Some have argued that it may also lead healthcare providers to recommend fewer vaccinations.

"At a time when parents, pediatricians and the public are looking for clear guidance and accurate information, this ill-considered decision will sow further chaos and confusion and erode confidence in immunizations," Andrew D. Racine, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said in a [statement](#). "This is no way to make our country healthier."

## What's new?

The CDC organizes childhood immunization recommendations into three categories: recommendations for all children; recommendations for high-

risk groups; and recommendations based on “shared clinical decision-making.” The latter category requires patients to consult a healthcare provider before receiving a vaccine.

Under the new schedule, the CDC continues to recommend vaccinations for all children for chickenpox, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, polio, pneumococcal conjugate, Haemophilus influenzae type b (HiB), measles, mumps, and rubella. The schedule also recommends one dose of the human papillomavirus (HPV) shot, as compared to previously recommending two doses.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)—a common respiratory virus affecting the lungs and the [leading cause of hospitalizations for infants in the U.S.](#)—is no longer broadly endorsed for all children. Instead, it is now recommended for high-risk groups.

Immunizations for rotavirus, COVID-19, influenza, meningococcal disease, and hepatitis A and B are now based on shared clinical decision-making.

The [CDC report](#) reasons that broadly recommending fewer vaccines “allows for more flexibility and choice, with less coercion.” Senior HHS officials [reportedly](#) cited “a drop in vaccine uptake of routine vaccinations for children” as a reason for the change. That includes [plummeting measles vaccination rates](#) amid [several outbreaks](#) across the U.S. last year.

No vaccines were taken off the schedule entirely, and all of the vaccines will still be available and covered by the Affordable Care Act and other federal insurance programs.

“No family will lose access,” Dr. Mehmet Oz, the administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) said. “This framework empowers parents and physicians to make individualized decisions based on risk, while maintaining strong protection against serious disease.”

The new schedule follows a [Dec. 5 presidential memorandum](#) directing the HHS and the CDC to align the list of recommended vaccines in the U.S. with those in “peer, developed countries.” At the same time, the CDC’s

vaccine advisors [voted to narrow](#) the agency's hepatitis B recommendation for newborns.

"President Trump directed us to examine how other developed nations protect their children and to take action if they are doing better," Kennedy said.

Medical experts have criticized the method, arguing that the review took only a month and is based on consensus among peer countries rather than scientific data. The new schedule is more similar to that of Denmark, a country of just 6 million people compared with 343 million in the U.S. For example, the CDC report cites Denmark as being "the first peer nation to remove its universal recommendation of the COVID-19 vaccine for children" in 2022.

"The United States is not Denmark, and there is no reason to impose the Danish immunization schedule on America's families. America is a unique country, and Denmark's population, public health infrastructure, and disease-risk differ greatly from our own," Racine said.

"For decades, leading health experts, immunologists, and pediatricians have carefully reviewed new data and evidence as part of the immunization recommendation process, helping to keep newborns, infants, and children protected from diseases they could be exposed to in the United States as they develop and grow," Racine added. "Today's decision, which was based on a brief review of other countries' practices, upends this deliberate scientific process."

The report was led by Tracy Beth Høeg, acting director for the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, and Martin Kulldorff, a chief science and data officer at the HHS. The changes were made in consultation with experts at the CDC, Food and Drug Administration, National Institutes of Health, and CMS. It did not, however, invite formal public comment or consultation with vaccine manufacturers, officials [reportedly](#) said.

Public health nonprofit Trust for America's Health, the Big Cities Health Coalition, and the National Association of County and City Health Officials criticized the move in a [joint statement](#).

“For decades, each change to the schedule was discussed openly by experts, with both benefits and risks considered. However, today’s announcement places increased burden on parents and health providers to navigate an increasingly complex system and assure access to these life-saving products,” the statement said.

## Rising flu cases

The new recommendations come amid the first “moderately severe” influenza outbreak of the season in the U.S., according to CDC data released on Monday. The CDC assesses the severity of an outbreak within a season using data beginning from Oct. 1, when influenza activity typically begins to rise. The CDC tracks a flu season from early fall to the following late summer.

At least 11 million people have contracted the flu, 120,000 people have been hospitalized for it, and 5,000 people have died from it this season, according to the CDC. Those numbers may still increase, as the flu season typically continues till May. Last week, New York health officials [reported](#) the highest number of flu hospitalizations recorded in a single week, with more than 4,500 hospitalizations in the seven-day period ending Jan. 2.

**Read More:** [\*When Should I Go to the Doctor With Cold Symptoms?\*](#)

Children and teenagers have been hit particularly hard, with influenza being the reason for more than 20% of emergency department visits for children aged 5 to 17 and more than 18% of visits for children under the age of 4 in the last week of 2025. Nine children have died so far this season due to the flu. Last flu season, 289 children—most of whom were not fully vaccinated—died due to the flu in the highest levels of pediatric deaths recorded since mandatory tracking began in 2004.

The flu refers to an infection caused by any of four types of influenza viruses A, B, C, and D. Influenza A and B are the most common causes of seasonal outbreaks in humans. Medical experts across the board recommend annual vaccinations to ward off the flu.

Flu symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Last fall, experts told TIME that lagging vaccination rates were likely responsible for a [surge of influenza cases across Asia](#). Factors like the weather can also impact behavior such as crowding indoors, which can increase the spread of influenza, experts said.

“The key is to stay up to date with vaccinations,” Dr. Paul Tambyah, a former president of the Asia Pacific Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infection, said in October.

“There is still time to get a flu shot and remember, flu can be treated with antiviral medication if started within 48 hours of symptom onset and your doctor deems appropriate,” New York State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said in a statement.

Around 43% of the U.S. population are vaccinated against the flu, the CDC [reported](#) on Monday.

The most frequently reported cases of the flu in the U.S. this season have been due to a mutation of the H3N2 strain. Tambyah previously told TIME that because the influenza virus is able to evolve rapidly, having been previously inoculated or infected may not ensure immunity to new variants.

Nevertheless, experts broadly agree that keeping up with vaccinations is the best way to minimize the impact of the flu, including reducing the spread of influenza and protecting against severe infection or death.

“Immunizations are the most effective defense we have against a host of deadly and painful illnesses. Ensuring all children receive the vaccines they need on time stops diseases from spreading in the community and ensures healthy childhood development,” the joint statement from public health nonprofits and coalitions said. “Creating new barriers to immunizations, as today’s announcement does, will make it harder for children to have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.”

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# How TIME and Statista Determined America's Most Iconic Companies



TIME, in partnership with Statista, the leading global provider of market and consumer data and rankings, has published the first edition of the **[“America’s Most Iconic Companies”](#)**. This quantitative study aims to celebrate and recognize the enduring influence of American brands and companies on American culture, economy, and society.

## Methodology

The list of **[“America’s Most Iconic Companies 2026”](#)** is a comprehensive analysis that seeks to identify entities that have not only achieved commercial success but have also become deeply ingrained in the American identity, shaping perceptions, habits, and aspirations.

To be considered for the ranking, a company must have been founded and be headquartered in the United States, with a market presence of at least 10 years.

The study is based on an independent survey of more than 10,000 members of the U.S. general population. Respondents were invited to evaluate “iconic” companies from a longlist of relevant American companies and their brands (additional nominations were supported), resulting in the collection of over 100,000 individual assessments. The survey was conducted online during July and August 2025. Additional in-depth research was conducted to verify companies’ eligibility based on entry criteria and market presence.

The survey included the following assessment criteria:

- **High Recognition and Familiarity:** The ability to identify a company based on its visual elements, such as its logo, colors, or packaging, without explicitly seeing the company name.
- **Cultural Significance and Impact:** The extent to which a company’s actions, values, products, or presence influence the beliefs, behaviors, and social norms of a community or society.
- **Emotional Connection:** The strong feeling or bond individuals develop with a company based on positive experiences, shared values, or trust.
- **Resilience:** The company’s capacity to adapt to and overcome challenges, including market shifts, internal changes, or external disruptions.
- **Americaness:** A qualitative judgment of how strongly a company’s brand, culture, operations, and market presence reflect traits commonly associated with U.S. business identity. This criterion synthesizes signals such as origin, governance, communication style, design ethos, and public perception to gauge the company’s perceived “Americaness,” rather than relying on strict legal or geographic status.

Once the data was collected and evaluated, it was consolidated and weighted within a scoring model. The final score was calculated as follows: 80% of survey results + 20% of market presence. The process of creating

the final list included expert verification and quality checks. The 250 companies with the highest scores were ranked and featured on the **“America’s Most Iconic Companies 2026”** list by TIME and Statista.

[See the full list.](#)

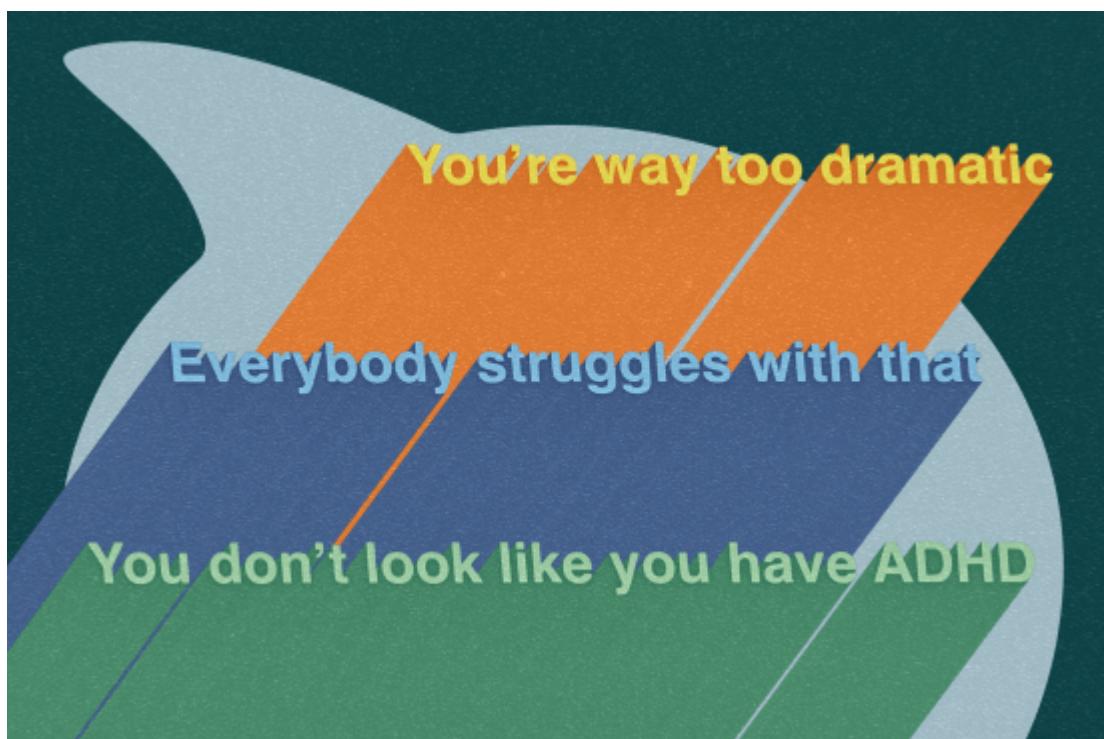
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# The Worst Thing to Say to Someone With ADHD

Haupt is a health and wellness editor at TIME. She covers happiness and actionable ways to live well.



We'll save you the trouble of wondering: Yes, people with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have considered using a planner, setting an alarm clock, and creating reminders on their phone. No, those suggestions aren't helpful.

In fact, these are among the worst things you can say to someone with ADHD, which is characterized by symptoms like having a hard time paying attention, struggling with task initiation, and feeling restless or engaging in impulsive behavior. "It's like, 'Wow, what a genius idea,'" says Bailey Pilant, a licensed mental health counselor in New York who specializes in

ADHD (and has the condition herself). Yet people dispense these well-intentioned but unsolicited tips again and again—including telling Pilant she should try writing things down. “I can write it down, and I’m still not going to remember because you can bet I’m going to lose that paper,” she says. “I’m not going to remember I wrote it down, I’m not going to remember where I wrote it down, I’m not going to be able to find it, and then just like that, it’s out of my head.”

There are other infuriating remarks, too. Here are some of them—plus what to say instead.

### **“Are you sure? You don’t look like you have ADHD.”**

When Pilant went to college, her peers looked at her strangely when she revealed she had a prescription for Adderall to help her manage her ADHD. They all said the same thing, fueled by a misunderstanding of the many ways the condition can manifest: “You don’t look like you have ADHD.” Some questioned whether she was sure she actually had it.

“It was so dismissive, and I was very insecure about it at the time,” she recalls. “I quickly learned not to talk about it, and then I shamed myself out of taking my medication because of the negativity and stigma around even disclosing I had ADHD.” It took years for her to resume the medication—and when she finally did, she was amazed at how much it helped her cope with daily challenges.

### **“You have so much potential if you just try harder.”**

When you grow up with ADHD, Pilant says, people constantly tell you that you just need to try harder, be more disciplined, and quit with the laziness already. “Trust me,” she used to think, “We’re trying really hard to be ‘normal.’”

**Read More:** [Stop Saying These 5 Things to People With Social Anxiety](#)

“These comments are so disheartening,” she says. “I can feel my heart breaking remembering all the times I’ve been told that I have so much

potential, if I just applied myself more. It hurts because that's not what's going on." She wishes more people understood that ADHD leads to trouble with executive functioning, which can feel like being at a traffic stop without any lights or signs or controllers waving cars through. "Our brain is like a free-for-all where we're constantly navigating, 'What am I supposed to do? How do I do that? How do I figure this out?'" she says. "It takes a lot of brainpower and work to be internally battling ourselves all day, every day to get through life tests."

### **"You're way too dramatic."**

People with ADHD often experience intense, overwhelming emotions, triggered by even the slightest setbacks and frustrations. That can include being especially sensitive to rejection. "They tend to feel their emotions in really vivid colors—they feel things more deeply than other people," says Billy Roberts, a therapist in Columbus, Ohio, who specializes in the condition. That's not necessarily a bad thing, he says; it can contribute to creativity and artistry, for example.

Yet friends and family members often coax those with ADHD to calm down, telling them they're being too dramatic or sensitive. That's a mistake. "It increases their shame and self-criticism, and can decrease their self-esteem and self-worth," Roberts says. "It might actually shatter their confidence and make them less assertive. It's not just one comment—it's the accumulation of feeling so misunderstood and not heard."

### **"Everybody struggles with that."**

One of the worst things you can say to someone with ADHD is that "everybody struggles with that" when referencing one of their symptoms, like always running late. Most people do, in fact, experience ADHD symptoms from time to time, says Russ Jones, an ADHD productivity coach and host of the [ADHD Big Brother](#) podcast. Forgetfulness and tardiness, for example, are both common. Yet that doesn't mean you also have ADHD, or that the other person doesn't have a "real" condition. "The degree to which we're debilitated by those symptoms is what makes the difference," he says.

Take losing your car keys, which happens to most people occasionally. Annoying? Sure. “But for an adult with ADHD, those lost keys might make them late to work, and if they’re late for work one more time, they’re going to lose their job,” Jones says. “And if they lose one more job, their spouse will leave them. That’s the ADHD difference.”

## “Can you stop fidgeting for one minute?”

It’s common for people with ADHD to feel like they’re always being barked at to sit still. Keep in mind that for many, occupying their fingers—like with small fidget toys—actually *improves* focus, because it helps regulate the nervous system, allowing them to tune out distractions.

**Read More:** [The Worst Thing to Say to Someone Who’s Depressed](#)

Yet people often confuse Jones’s fidgeting with a lack of interest. He wants them to know: “That’s me doing what I have to do to stay focused,” he says. “I have to occupy some aspect of my brain—it’s not me being like, ‘How do I get out of this? I’m a friendly guy and I care about you and I want to listen to you, but if I sit still, my brain will go everywhere all at once. Give me a fidget toy, and I can lock in.’”

## What to say instead

There are lots of ways to support loved ones with ADHD. Instead of a flippant “everyone has ADHD these days,” Pilant suggests saying: “I can see how much effort it takes you to manage this. It sounds really hard.” You could also show interest by asking: “What are the biggest challenges you deal with every day?”

“Get curious with the person,” she advises. “Instead of saying things like ‘try harder,’ ask what strategies or support help them the most.” And instead of telling them (for the umpteenth time they’ve heard it) that they ought to try using a planner, Pilant recommends asking: “Can I share something that’s worked for me and see if it might be a fit for you?” Or: “What was your experience like when you used this tool before? Can we work together to find a system that would better support you and your needs?”

## **Read More:** [What a Hyperfixation Really Is](#)

If you're in a close relationship with someone with ADHD, make it clear that you don't want to fix or change them—but rather, you enjoy helping make their life easier. You might ask your girlfriend, for example: "Hey, Jules, did you remember to grab XYZ?" If she starts berating herself for forgetting, jump in: "It's OK! I had a feeling you might forget, so I grabbed it for you."

"The best thing you can do is learn to support them and not shame them for their 'deficits,'" Pilant says. "Then also have that loving, radical acceptance and understanding that even with support and tools in place, they may not always be able to do it—and that's where we come in, with gentle reminders or just taking over and fulfilling that deficit for them."

*Wondering what to say in a tricky social situation? Email [timetotalk@time.com](mailto:timetotalk@time.com)*

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# 5 Years Since the Jan. 6 Insurrection

*Douglas Letter is the Chief Legal Officer at [Brady: United Against Gun Violence](#) and former General Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives.*



On Jan. 6, 2021, I was in the Chamber of the U.S. House of Representatives as violent insurrectionists [attacked](#) our nation's Capitol, bent on interrupting Congress in carrying out its constitutional responsibilities and doing serious harm to [Vice President Pence](#), Speaker of the House [Nancy Pelosi](#), and members of Congress.

As I reflect on this dark day for our precious—and often fragile—American democracy, I keep returning to one of the underlying forces helping to fuel the violence: Second Amendment extremism.

Second Amendment extremism comes from what legal scholars [describe](#) as the “insurrectionist” interpretation of the Second Amendment. This seriously flawed reading [believes](#) that Americans have a right under the Constitution, and even an obligation, to [take up arms](#) against the government when they disagree with its direction. At the core of this extremism is the dangerous view that the founders viewed aggrieved citizens who attack the government through armed violence as righteous patriots, rather than the enemies of the state.

This perspective that America’s founders supported insurrectionism is baseless. Take, for instance, President George Washington in 1794, who used the army and state militias to crush the Whiskey Rebellion. Or President Abraham Lincoln, who in 1865 led victory against the Confederacy and its attempt to destroy our nation through an armed rebellion designed to preserve the institution of human slavery.

Yet shockingly, this theory is [increasingly](#) embraced by many Americans today, including many of the foot soldiers in the Jan. 6 [insurrection](#), along with possibly some [Supreme Court Justices](#) and [President Donald Trump](#) himself. Further endangering our democracy is America’s uniquely powerful [gun industry](#), which promotes and profits from armed [vigilantism](#). For decades, the gun industry has used [rhetoric](#) that encourages violence against lawmakers and democratic institutions in the thoroughly mistaken name of “freedom.”

The Jan. 6 attack was therefore not an isolated riot. It was [fueled](#) in part by [gun industry](#) marketing, intensified by America’s dangerously lax gun laws, and intertwined with an ever-growing [white supremacist movement](#).

Now, after nearly a year of Trump’s second administration—with its dangerous pro-gun agenda and insurrectionist view of the Second Amendment—it terrifies me to imagine what another insurrection could do to our democracy.

Instead of taking action to prevent armed political violence, and all types of gun violence that devastate communities, the Trump Administration has decided to [ratchet up attacks on political opponents](#) and worked to [loosen](#) gun regulations.

We have continued to witness the tragic consequences of political violence and dangerous rhetoric, including the [assassination](#) of Minnesota State Representative Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark, and the attack on State Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette.

Sadly, not even the [attacks](#) directed on Trump himself or the [assassination](#) of [Charlie Kirk](#) have caused this administration to reconsider its gun-based ideology. Moreover, the [ever-increasing](#) use of firearms in suicides among youth, military veterans, and active duty troops as well as the ghastly toll of American children murdered in their [schools](#), [churches](#), and neighborhoods has somehow not caused the Trump Administration to reconsider its gun-friendly policies.

Political violence is contagious. It is deadly. And it threatens our American republic. Yet in just a single year, the Trump Administration has not only [quietly eroded](#) our nation's already weak federal gun safety laws, but also designed a uniquely dangerous tinder box in our nation's capital.

Early in his second term, the President pardoned and [restored](#) gun rights to politically violent individuals [including](#) Jan. 6 insurrectionists. Later, by the dictate of the U.S. Attorney for D.C. Jeanine Pirro, federal prosecutors [stopped pursuing felony charges](#) for the open carry of long guns and high-capacity magazines in our nation's capital.

And just last month, the Trump Department of Justice quietly [created](#) a new Second Amendment Section. Charged with "investigating" and rolling back local gun laws, one of its first actions—made just two weeks before the anniversary of the Jan. 6 insurrection—was to [challenge](#) D.C.'s assault weapons ban.

These weapons of war have absolutely no place on any street in America. [In fact](#), assault weapons and large-capacity magazines are used disproportionately in mass public shootings and killings of law enforcement officers compared with gun murders overall.

Beyond D.C., the Trump Administration has tirelessly worked to [gut](#) the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), including [slashing](#) inspections of rogue gun dealers, and [diverting](#) resources from gun

crime to immigration enforcement, and repealed funding for programs proven to reduce firearm violence. Together, these actions weaken the systems designed to have gun dealers follow the law and keep guns out of dangerous hands.

If the events of Jan. 6 were to occur today, I fear they would have been deadlier. The District's strong gun laws, including its bans on semi-automatic weapons and open carry, likely stopped some rioters from arming themselves and inflicting mass casualties. Police made many gun arrests between Jan. 5 and 7, and insurrectionists left weapons behind in Virginia because they were illegal in D.C.

Today, however, the current lack of enforcement of the District's gun safety laws threaten to make the kind of insurrection I survived five years ago even more dangerous.

This is why we must demand that state and federal lawmakers take sensible measures like passing universal background checks, bolstering extreme risk laws, banning assault weapons, and ensuring proper oversight of the gun industry.

We can prevent gun violence and political violence. But to do so, we must change course and demand a safer country.

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# Where Venezuela Goes From Here

Alex González Ormerod is the founder of [The Mexico Political Economist](#), a weekly publication covering Mexican politics and business. He has written about Latin American politics, culture, and economics for Americas Quarterly, Whitepaper, Rest of World, and Hyperallergic.



The day after Venezuela's hotly-anticipated [July 28 presidential election](#), the National Electoral Council walked an implausible tightrope. It declared that it [could not provide](#) the world with the actual results of the vote given that Venezuela has been subjected to a "foreign terrorist cyber-attack." Yet somehow it conclusively and "irrevocably" declared the autocratic Nicolás Maduro as the winner with [51.2%](#) of the vote over opposition candidate [Edmundo González Urrutia's](#) [44.2%](#).

The opposition was ready to prevent a [stolen election](#). Beyond accusing the government of committing a massive fraud, it announced that it had gathered

73.2% of the receipts printed by Venezuela's electronic voting machines. They took photos of each one of these tally sheets—compiled by their supporters at most of the country's polling stations—and published them on a [website](#) launched a day after the vote. By its calculations, González won with a stunning two-thirds majority.

As tensions boil over in Venezuela, control of the narrative and the moral high ground over the past week has been essential. While the opposition makes its case to the country and the world that it was robbed of a landslide victory, the government is arguing that its own triumph has been obfuscated by a U.S.-led “[fascist](#)” coalition. The latter is a case that no one should take seriously.



Venezuela's democracy has long been in crisis. What began as a broadly popular political movement under the [socialist President Hugo Chávez](#) in 1999 gradually slid into autocracy. Venezuela's oil-dependent economy was

unable to keep up with the generous social programs that made Chavismo popular, especially after the [2007 expropriations of foreign oil companies](#) spooked them into leaving. A major oil price slump in 2014 caused the petrostate's economy to [go into freefall](#) and Maduro, who [took office in 2013](#), increasingly shifted from redistribution to repression to hold on to power.

The opposition was under [no illusions](#) that this election would be free or fair. But they formed a coalition of anti-Chavista parties called the Democratic Unitary Platform and ran a campaign that expressed trust that the ballot box would vindicate them—while planning for the worst.

Following outrage over the official result, the Maduro government has doubled down on the baseless claim that Venezuelan democracy is under siege by shadowy foreign interventionists. (Memories of a [U.S.-linked coup](#) attempt in 2002 and outrage over ongoing U.S. sanctions remain a potent motivator among Chavistas.) The government has also cracked down on protests, with dozens killed and thousands arrested in the past week. Footage of [opposition leaders being detained](#) by security forces has also proliferated online.



How will this all unfold?

Maduro seems keen to be seen going through the motions of the democratic process—such as handing over an official complaint to the government-controlled courts to weigh in on the election result. But he has a habit of overplaying his hand. During the campaign, his government banned María Corina Machado, the opposition's first candidate, from running. This made her a political martyr and further consolidated the movement against his regime. Efforts to interrupt opposition campaign events or close the border to prevent the Venezuelan diaspora—which at 7.7 million is the region's largest exodus ever—from coming back to vote only backfired.

Maduro is also taking steps to prevent his security forces from defecting. This seems unlikely thanks to the [deep embedding of intelligence forces from Cuba](#), Venezuela's closest international ally, within the military. Yet videos circulating on [social media suggest](#) that some police and military units may already be disobeying orders to repress the mass protests across the country.



The opposition continues to ask Venezuelans to keep calm, and their preparation for a stolen vote is producing results. The U.S. has come out in support of González, calling him the election winner. The E.U., for its part, says it does not recognize Maduro's win and is [demanding independent verification](#). Even [friendlier Latin American governments](#) like Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico are pressuring him to set the record straight. Venezuela has powerful international allies like Russia and China but Maduro looks increasingly alone. An emboldened Machado and González have also come out of hiding, after officials called for their arrest, to [hold a massive protest](#) in Caracas. The country's top prosecutor has announced [a criminal probe](#) after they called on the army to abandon their support for Maduro, but the two seem undeterred.

The upshot in Venezuela remains uncertain. But the momentous past few days have been a long time in the making.

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# The Clean Energy Boom You Missed This Year

Shah is a reporter at TIME.



This year brought about a number of blows for the climate fight. In 2017, the United States, one of the world's top emitters, backpedalled on a slew of climate and clean energy goals after the inauguration of President Donald Trump. And it's become increasingly clear that governments will fail to meet the target of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees as laid out in the Paris Agreement; fossil fuel carbon emissions are projected to reach a [record high](#) by the end of the year.

But still, the world has seen a number of clean energy wins as countries make inroads in adopting clean energy. For the [first time this year](#), solar and

wind power outpaced coal as the leading source of electricity in the first half of 2025—a promising step towards reducing emissions.

“It indicates a lot of really important things about the movements within the energy sector as a whole, and that direction is clearly toward reduced emissions,” says Jonathan Elkind, senior research scholar at the Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy.

Globally solar has become more affordable and accessible—paving the way for many around the world to adopt it. In 2024, 91% of new renewable power projects commissioned were more cost-effective than any new fossil fuel alternatives, according to data from [IRENA](#), a global intergovernmental agency for energy transformation.

“If you don’t have a tariff on your renewables, which most countries outside of the U.S. don’t have, you’re looking to pay \$60 for a solar panel. Most people in the world could afford that,” says Dave Jones, chief analyst at Ember, a global energy think tank.

Pakistan stands out as one example of this trend, [with 25%](#) of its utility electricity generated from solar as of June this year—well above the global average. “Solar’s appeared on every roof, everywhere. It’s on large luxury villas and smaller, poorer residences, it’s on factories and government buildings, hospitals and universities,” says Jones. “There’s been a huge burst of solar growth and a large amount of that was funded by individuals able to access cheaper electricity than what they’ve been able to access from their grid company.”

Solar power also became the European Union’s largest source of electricity for the first time in June 2025, while some central European countries including Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have seen solar generation grow at [twice](#) the E.U. average rate since 2019.

China has also made major investments in renewable energy both domestically and outside its borders, adding [twice](#) as much solar capacity as the rest of the world combined—and the country is likely to reach peak coal generation this year, says Jones, meaning the amount of coal used in the country will begin a downward trend going forward.

Even within the United States, where the Trump Administration is pushing instead for investment in fossil fuels, renewable energy saw some growth this year—especially after the Administration announced that they would sunset much of the Biden Administration’s tax breaks for renewable energy at the end of this year. Homeowners around the U.S. have rushed to install solar panels before the tax credit expired.

Solar and wind together accounted for 88% of new U.S. electrical generating capacity added in the first eight months of 2025, according to data released by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in November.

The clean energy sector hurried to secure federal tax-credit eligibility for wind and solar projects ahead of the credits expiring. One report estimates that 76% of solar projects and 86% of wind projects that were slated to come online by the end of 2028 will receive the Biden-era tax credits.

While the Administration’s policies might mean that the country sees some pullback from the clean energy sector, Elkind says that the movement likely won’t be killed off easily in the U.S..

“There is going to be some degree of clean energy capacity that will not materialize as a consequence of the pullbacks and the policy reversals, but it would be a mistake to count out the clean energy industries, because the competitive alternatives aren’t looking that great,” he says.

Renewable energy is becoming too good to ignore. Around the globe, capacity for renewable power is set to rise by 11% in 2025, according to data from Ember. This puts the global goal to triple renewables by 2030 within reach.

“There’s lots of reason to take heart that we can actually do this,” says Elkind, “we can build a variety of zero carbon resources.”

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# Donald Trump Is Risking His MAGA Base on Venezuela

Elliott is a senior correspondent at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C., bureau, where he covers national campaigns, elections, and government. He also writes TIME's politics newsletter, [The D.C. Brief](#).



*This article is part of The D.C. Brief, TIME's politics newsletter. Sign up [here](#) to get stories like this sent to your inbox.*

Donald Trump ran for President three times [pledging to avoid](#) the type of military entanglements that unfolded on Saturday: U.S. forces had [captured](#) Venezuela's leader and his wife in a pre-dawn operation, flown them to New York, and were installing American national security [hawks](#) as open-ended stewards of the oil-rich nation.

**Read more:** [How the Elite Delta Force Raid in Caracas Unfolded](#)

It was a dramatic break from what many in Trump's MAGA coalition had imagined when they rallied a decade ago behind an isolationist, America First agenda. Trump's move in Venezuela cut directly against that creed, leaving even some allies on Capitol Hill [uneasy](#) about how little warning Congress received.

[video id=lmgDQ3rd autostart="viewable" vertical video\_text=How the World Is Reacting to the U.S. Capture of Nicolás Maduro]

The unanswered question is how Trump's core supporters will respond. They are voters who helped upend a half-century of Republican hawkish instincts and who viewed regime change as a discredited relic of a bygone era. What is clear, however, is that this is a moment of enormous reset for U.S. posture in global intervention, and one whose consequences are difficult to predict.

“We’re going to be running it,” Trump said of Venezuela from his private club in Florida. And, he hinted, Venezuela might just be his opening gambit.

**Read more:** [How the World Is Reacting to the U.S. Capture of Nicolas Maduro](#)

Trump, lured by the promise of an oil-rich nation he might control as a viceroy, saw nothing but upside for the U.S. energy sector. But what he was unsure of—even among his inner circle—was the tolerance for this type of expansionist viewpoint. While Trump’s advisers have [described](#) the policy as an extension of the Monroe Doctrine, many of his most ardent supporters have been far less comfortable with the notion that the hemisphere should fall under American political and commercial dominance. In the simplest terms, it was game on.

“As everyone knows, the oil business in Venezuela has been a bust, a total bust, for a long period of time,” Trump said. “They were pumping almost nothing, by comparison to what they could have been pumping, and what could have taken place.”

Instead, Trump adopted a colonial posture to replace that stagnation—and take the spoils of war, as the United States did not do in [Iraq](#), much to Trump's dismay. It was, in a way, the first steps at unfurling a new American empire.

“We’re going to have our very large United States oil companies, the biggest anywhere in the world, go in, spend billions of dollars, fix the badly broken infrastructure, the oil infrastructure, and start making money for the country, and we are ready to stage a second and much larger attack if we need to do so,” Trump said, hinting that the real reason for toppling the government was well beyond [narco-terrorism](#) charges.

Venezuela, a nation of 30 million people and home to the largest proven oil reserves globally, has been on the receiving end of Trump’s ire for months. The U.S. military has carried out repeated strikes against boats accused of drug trafficking much to the dismay of even his hawkish allies in Congress.

But this weekend’s mission, [dubbed](#) Operation Absolute Resolve, went far beyond those actions. It took less than three hours to extract the nation’s leader from his bedroom and involved roughly 150 aircraft swarming the skies over South America. It [ended](#) with Venezuela’s President, Nicolas Maduro, and his wife blocked from their safe room and flown toward New York to face criminal charges.

**Read more:** [\*Venezuela Isn’t Panama—No Matter How Much Trump Wishes It Were\*](#)

Trump’s rise to power was fueled by vows to end “forever wars” and limit U.S. involvement in other nations’ affairs. On the campaign trail, he promised Russia’s invasion of Ukraine would end on “Day One” and he would bring a swift end to the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. But his rhetoric has not always aligned with reality, and Trump’s ability to manifest global affairs has often fallen short. If anything, the last few days have felt like a bitter throwback to an earlier era of U.S. intervention—from Panama to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq—whose outcomes proved far messier than their architects anticipated.

The reaction from Congress was so far muted, although it was hard to ignore its potential rancor. For many conservatives, the Trump rejoinder to nation building and regime change was the main selling point to his candidacy. Trump's incursion into Venezuela, the capture of its First Family, and its about-face of campaign promises stung something bitter.

"This is what many in MAGA thought they voted to end," said Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a one-time Trump loyalist who is set to resign this week from her seat representing Georgia. "Boy were we wrong."

In an hour-long news conference explaining the strike to the American people, Trump made no concessions that he perhaps betrayed his campaign pledges. Instead, he warned that the aggression may not stop inside Venezuela. Specifically, he called out Colombian President Gustavo Petro, who condemned the operation. "[Petro] has cocaine mills. He has factories where he makes cocaine. ... He's making cocaine. They're sending it into the United States," Trump said. "So he does have to watch his ass."

Trump has similar [warnings](#) for the leaders of Cuba and Mexico. Regime change, it seems, has reached its ripe moment in this hemisphere, cycling back to a Cold War-era ethos of American might is right.

That messaging, right there, is why so much of the Washington foreign policy [blob](#) is stuck in a holding pattern to see if Trump finds the reaction to this first strike sufficient or if he wants to keep feeding this fire. In an administration dictated almost entirely by the principal's whim, the next chapter is one almost always written in pencil. It's why no one in Washington's wonk circles is leaving their phones on the coffee table right now.

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# How America Fell in Love With Soccer

Andrés Martinez is the author of the forthcoming [\*The Great Game: A Tale of Two Footballs and America's Quest to Conquer Global Sport\*](#). He is the co-director of the [Great Game Lab](#) at Arizona State University and a fellow at New America.



Back in the 1980s, around when I first moved to the U.S., Republican Congressman Jack Kemp, then one of conservatism's brightest stars who'd quarterbacked the Buffalo Bills before going into politics, [gave a speech](#) in which he said America's brand of football stood for democracy and capitalism, unlike that dodgy foreign football, which was a European socialist plot to undermine our ways. Much like socialism and the metric system, folks like Kemp [fervently believed soccer should be resisted](#) to preserve America.

And Americans were doing an excellent job resisting. To move to the U.S. as a teenager in those years was like moving behind some sporting Iron Curtain. I found myself suddenly cut off from the shared global culture of the world's default sport, in a country that insisted on playing its own games to reinforce its exceptionalism and then proclaimed their domestic league winners "world champions." To this day, we are the only country where the biggest stars in our most followed professional sport never get to represent their country in international competition. There was no soccer to be watched on American TV, efforts to establish a vibrant domestic league had failed, and I had no schoolmates with whom to talk to about Bayern Munich and Barcelona. Worse, when we had any downtime, they'd pull out a frisbee, instead of a soccer ball.

How times have changed. Rec soccer is now a staple of American youth, we have vibrant men and women's professional soccer leagues in the U.S., I can readily watch practically any other league on earth (English on NBC, Italian on Paramount, Spanish and German on ESPN, Mexican on TUDN, and so on), and more American TV viewers watched the final of the 2022 FIFA men's World Cup played in Qatar than that year's NBA Finals or World Series. This despite the fact that there were no Americans involved in that epic match pitting Leo Messi's Argentina against Kylian Mbappé's France. And many of the same interests that control U.S. sports franchises are now acquiring international soccer clubs. This season, for the first time, a majority of English Premier League clubs are U.S.-owned.

But perhaps the single most potent illustration of America's budding love affair with soccer is President Donald Trump's embrace of the 2026 men's World Cup, which the U.S. will co-host with Mexico and Canada next summer. Whereas American political leaders on the right disdained FIFA and the game the Swiss-based organization governed, you'd think Trump has given its current president Gianni Infantino keys to the White House, as he's so frequently there. Infantino has also accompanied Trump on his Middle East travels, and Trump was center stage during Infantino's inaugural Club World Cup last summer.

Trump will on Friday preside over the ceremonial World Cup draw that determines which nations play in which groups next summer. The draw was

originally expected to take place in Las Vegas (as it was for the 1994 World Cup FIFA organized in the U.S. in an earlier attempt to jumpstart the sport here) but was [moved](#) to Washington's Kennedy Center, as if to reinforce that this is now a matter of state. Among the intriguing plotlines going into Friday are whether the U.S. men will have to face [Erling Haaland's](#) Norway or [Mohamed Salah's](#) Egypt in their opening game, and whether Trump will be [awarded FIFA's first peace prize](#), improvised by Infantino for the occasion.

I can recall going to some of the 1994 World Cup matches but may not be able to afford tickets for next summer's (progress!). That '94 tournament was a big catalyst for the game in America, helping to launch Major League Soccer in its aftermath. But the vibe then was of an externally imposed affair, a plot between immigrant diasporas embedded in this country and big corporate sponsors to see if they couldn't pull the game they were both invested in into the mainstream.

Indeed, three protagonists deserve credit for boosting the sport in America: the women's game, [immigrants](#), and the global imperative of major U.S. corporations needing to brand themselves through the one sport with truly global reach.

The story of how girls and women picked up soccer in the [aftermath of Title IX](#), and turned the U.S. into the global superpower of the women's game, is well known. Less appreciated is the extent to which the 1990s cultural phenomena that are USWNT's [Mia Hamm, Julie Foudy, and Brandi Chastain](#) naturalized the sport as American. We went from Kemp's disdain in the 1980s to demographers soon coining the term "[soccer mom](#)" to describe the most mainstream, suburban, and middle class of white voters. Meanwhile, across America's cities, immigrants and changing demographics also played an obvious role in spreading the game.

And in an era of accelerating globalization, American multinationals were always going to need to align themselves with the global sport. Coca-Cola was one of FIFA's first corporate sponsor in the 1970s, and not because people in its home market cared much about the game. Electronic Arts had a huge hit on its hands when it created [Madden](#), its NFL video game, but that was only ever going to be a huge hit stateside. For a truly global hit, it

would need to create its FIFA game (since renamed [EA Sports FC](#)). Media giants with global ambitions also understand they need to be married to the global game. The case studies go on and on.

The coming together of America's and international soccer's formidable soft power will reshape global sporting culture for decades to come. So, [enjoy the show](#) at the Kennedy Center on Friday, and next summer's World Cup. Think of how far this relationship has come and imagine what might come next if the U.S. men actually do well in the tournament.

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# Learning to Fall in Roller Derby Taught Me How to Be Myself

Margot Fisher is a Reese's Book Club LitUp Fellow and the author of [\*Leave It On The Track\*](#), a young adult debut about healing, self-acceptance, and queer first love, set on a roller derby team. Margot is a roller derby athlete herself and is a part of the Rose City Rollers in Portland, Ore.



In 2018, I moved by myself from Columbus, Ohio to Portland, Ore., hoping that the moodiness of the trees and mountains might help me discover something about myself. I was working for a nonprofit and biked to work some days. On the first warm day of the year, I noticed a warehouse by the bike path had its doors open. There was an oval-shaped track inside, where a handful of people on roller skates were running into each other.

I slowed my bike and stopped, putting one foot down to watch them. I figured it was roller derby (I had of course watched [\*Whip It\*](#) shortly after realizing I was gay), but I'd never seen the real thing. The people in the warehouse were all sizes, all ability levels, and they were hitting each other *hard*. I signed up.

Roller derby is played in increments called *jams* that last up to two minutes. Each team fields five skaters per jam: four blockers and one jammer. The jammer (wearing a helmet cover with a star) is the only skater on each team who can score points. When the jam begins, the jammers fight through the pack of blockers, then race each other around the track, earning a point for every opposing blocker they pass with their hips.

I quickly learned that derby is hard. The first thing they teach you is how to fall safely, because it's not a question of *if* you'll fall. I got used to palm-sized bruises on my arms and legs, quads so sore I couldn't walk down the stairs, and the shooting pain that runs up your entire spine when your tailbone lands directly on someone's wheel.

I was immediately drawn to jamming. The position is masochistically addicting—the struggle of fighting through the pack over and over and over feels worth it in the one moment you break free.

So, I relished the challenge. I'd never been athletic growing up, but here was a warehouse full of people from all walks of life, all shapes and sizes, of all genders and sexualities, who wanted to put on skates and slam into one another a few times a week. I was not very strong, but I was fast and small, and I learned that derby is one of the only sports where any body type can play and find an advantage. I learned how to dodge larger skaters, how to duck under their hips to avoid a hit, and how to jump over their legs in the turns of the track to score points.

I started making friends. I let my armpit hair grow out and learned my moon and rising signs. I got my septum pierced and started wearing color again. I fell in love, then out of love, then in love again. I felt like I was rapidly changing, but at the same time, rapidly coming home to myself.



I came out as lesbian to my mom fast, over the phone, trying to make it sound nonchalant. When my parents first visited two months later, she cried at brunch, not because I was gay, but because she was worried that she'd said or done something that made me feel like I couldn't be gay. I pulled up the hood of my hoodie and yanked the strings so tight I couldn't see her. I knew so many people had parents who reacted way worse when they came out, who kicked them out of the house or refused to use their pronouns. I was lucky to have parents who voted blue and went to Pride. But they were seeing me, *really* seeing me, for the first time, and I hated the vulnerability.

Roller derby requires you to be vulnerable. You fall a lot, you probably look awkward on skates, and you make stupid mistakes during scrimmages that land you in the penalty box. Since I was small, I spent a lot of time on the ground or pushing fruitlessly, trying desperately to move my teammates but unable to get them to budge. I was frustrated by how hard it was, because I loved it so much. I never thought about quitting, even as it got harder and my personal life got messy (like all queer communities, derby can be incestuous). I started to crave that vulnerability.

Before roller derby, I'd always wished I could just skip coming out. It was too much attention, too many people feeling sorry for me. The person I was coming out to never seemed to know how to react, which made me feel even weirder.

But roller derby rewards struggle and vulnerability. You push an impossible, unmoving wall for two minutes and everyone sees you fail, but the next day you come back stronger. You get knocked out of bounds a million times in one scrimmage, your whole team watching, then next week, you're cleaner on the lines. Derby doesn't let you skip steps, but it does reward you for taking them.

Off skates, I saw the other people in my league allowing themselves to be messy and vulnerable and human with each other and themselves, and I realized that this was the *how* I'd been searching for all the way back in Ohio. This was how they celebrated their queerness. I started doing it, too.

The word "lesbian" doesn't scare me anymore. I write queer books. My friends and I poke fun at the Portland queer housing posts that discriminate against Capricorns. When my girlfriend and I see two other women holding hands in public, we nod at them in solidarity, because we are all part of this community that feels vibrant and safe and messy and like coming home, all at once.

Through derby, I let coming out be a celebration. It wasn't the only thing about me, but it was one of them. And I loved it about myself.

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# How Trump's Power Will Be Checked in 2026

*Ian Bremmer is a foreign affairs columnist and editor-at-large at TIME. He is the president of Eurasia Group, a political-risk consultancy, and GZERO Media, a company dedicated to providing intelligent and engaging coverage of international affairs. He teaches applied geopolitics at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and his most recent book is [The Power of Crisis](#).*



In 2025, Donald Trump [returned](#) to global center stage with big plans. In Year One of his second term, he [expanded](#) the formal and informal powers of the presidency in ways that challenge the American political system itself. In 2026, he looks set to up the ante at home. But the disruption he has [created](#) abroad is set for a sharp turn next year, as Trump discovers the limits of his (and American) power.

No one should ever use the word *revolution* lightly. It implies a fundamental change in the way a nation is governed—an effort to overthrow what exists and replace it with something new. The motives driving a revolution might be ideological, clashing ethnic or tribal identities, competition for wealth, or a combination of all these. But whatever the force that draws the battle lines, a true revolution always depends on the ability and willingness of powerful actors to seize an opportunity created by a [belief](#) across society that the existing system is broken, and therefore illegitimate. Trump has done exactly that.

His revolution is not an economic one. Yes, he has imposed the highest [tariffs](#) since the 1930s, moved to [undermine](#) the independence of the Federal Reserve, and dabbled in an American form of Chinese-style state capitalism—for example, by acquiring for the federal government [golden shares in U.S. Steel](#), a [stake](#) in technology giant Intel, and a [percentage of sales](#) by chipmakers Nvidia and AMD. But these policies are tactical changes. They don't transform how the U.S. economy functions.

Political revolution is another matter, and there is one under way in the U.S.: In 2025, the President consolidated executive authority by pushing the boundaries of the law. He [usurped](#) powers traditionally left to Congress, the courts, and the states. He launched a [sweeping purge](#) of America's professional bureaucracy and replaced career civil servants with political appointees personally loyal to the President. He weaponized the “power ministries”—the FBI, the [Justice Department](#), the [IRS](#), and many regulatory agencies—against his domestic political adversaries. He has secured [executive impunity](#) from the rulings of an independent but no longer coequal judiciary.

And yet, U.S. institutions may check the President's power in 2026. The Pentagon's [purges](#) of some high-level military officers have made headlines, but there's no evidence they have undermined the military's core operational integrity. Multiple courts have ruled against the President's expansion of powers, and they [may do so again](#) when the Supreme Court rules on his use of emergency powers to impose sweeping tariffs. U.S. governors and mayors still govern independently of Washington. Recent [election setbacks](#) for Republicans in several states have gotten the

President's attention. In short, the fate of Trump's political revolution remains uncertain.

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**The evolution in 2026** of his influence abroad is easier to predict. The President's second term began with a push to transform America's role in the world by unilaterally upending the existing global trade and security order, [halting foreign aid](#), and [ending](#) Washington's promotion of democracy abroad. The goal remains to restructure international relations into a hub-and-spoke model of U.S.-centric bilateral relations that profit America. The message to other governments was plain: Get on board or else.

But many of Trump's efforts have provoked unexpected outcomes. In particular, he expected that an effective boycott of Chinese goods would force an economically weaker Beijing to accept trade terms more favorable to the U.S. Instead, China placed [restrictions on rare earth minerals](#), which are essential ingredients for a vast array of digital-age consumer and military technologies. That move forced President Trump to back down and offer concessions in the form of Chinese access to American-made semiconductors and other technologies—a move that Trump, and President Biden before him, have been determined to restrict.

In the process, this confrontation revealed that the U.S. still needs help from its allies. In 2026, Trump will engage Xi Jinping to try to stabilize the U.S.-China relationship, but he also wants to pursue a longer-term decoupling strategy that requires consistent coordination of investment and policy with traditional U.S. partners, including the development of alternative rare earth supplies. In months to come, that means that other countries—from Japan, South Korea, and Australia to Brazil and Saudi Arabia—will have a newfound bargaining power in trade talks with Washington.

Then there's the stubbornly high cost of living. Trump secured the most extraordinary political comeback in American history in 2024 in part because a majority of voters believed he'd manage the economy and rein in inflation. But [polls](#) now show those voters' expectations have been dashed, and consumer sentiment continues to darken. That, in turn, will limit his foreign policy options—and other governments know it. The

Administration has already been forced to [back down on tariffs](#) on food imports from Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Guatemala, with other countries also positioned to benefit. These pressures on Trump will intensify if retailers raise prices to cover higher import costs. It's another reason we can expect Trump to be significantly less aggressive on trade terms in 2026 as fears grow of a [possible Democratic victory](#) in the November midterms.

Another limit on the President's power: much to his continuing consternation, Trump will also discover in 2026 that none of his threats and promises against Ukraine or Russia will end their war. His [strategy](#) for most of 2025 was to present Russia's Vladimir Putin with carrots and to threaten Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky with sticks. This early approach forced European leaders to take greater diplomatic and economic leadership on Ukraine's defense, and the result has been [more European defense spending](#), more financial support for Ukraine, and a growing appetite for the seizure of [hundreds of billions of dollars in Russian assets frozen](#) in Europe. This new reality has boosted Europe's ability to keep Ukraine in the fight in 2026 no matter what path Trump chooses next. Putin sees no advantage in making a deal, and Trump will lack the leverage to force him to compromise in 2026. Zelensky doesn't have the domestic backing necessary for a [deal that cedes territory](#).

In the Middle East, Trump's signature success has been securing a lasting [Gaza cease-fire](#)—despite intransigence from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—and Hamas' release of the remaining Israeli hostages. Arab allies had quickly vetoed Trump's stated plan in February to rebuild Gaza as the "[Riviera of the Middle East](#)" and its proposed displacement of Palestinians. As a result, Trump has learned that lasting peace will demand a multilateral approach, one that gives Gulf Arabs new negotiating leverage with the White House.

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**In short, 2025** marked the peak of unilateral Trump on the global stage. In 2026, his foreign policy tactics will need greater buy-in from other governments to achieve his election-year goals. There is downside risk here, to be sure. As the President becomes frustrated with constraints on his

power, he could lash out in areas that trigger more instability than he bargained for—against Nicolás Maduro’s Venezuela, for example. The [chaos that might follow](#) possible regime change there could send new waves of refugees flowing across the region’s borders.

No, Trump’s inability to maintain a unilateralist foreign policy won’t force him to become a liberal internationalist, talking up the indispensability of America and its alliances, cutting a new [U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade deal](#), taking leadership on the postcarbon energy transition, or paying back dues to the U.N. But this will be the year the bubble bursts on the President’s vision of a Trump-dictated global trade and security order.

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# *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms Is a Slight, Shrug-worthy Game of Thrones Filler*

Berman is the TV critic at TIME. Along with reviewing current television, she writes about the ways in which entertainment and pop culture intersect with our larger social and political realities. Her TIME essay on [Ted Lasso and modern masculinity](#) won a New York Press Club award in 2022.



*A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* is not like other [Game of Thrones](#) shows. Or, at least, it's not so much like them that you have to take it seriously. Less than five minutes into the premiere, the HBO series conspicuously adjusts the expectations of anyone who might be confused. Sword in hand, our strapping hero, Ser Duncan the Tall (Irish actor Peter Claffey, lately seen in [Bad Sisters](#)), decides to enter a tournament. As he lifts his face heavenward,

we hear *Thrones*' solemn, churning theme song, the same one that now plays at the top of [\*House of the Dragon\*](#) episodes. Suddenly, the music stops. Cut to a closeup of the knight's face as he audibly defecates. In case we still haven't gotten the message that earthy hilarity awaits, the shot widens to reveal his naked butt and what's coming out of it.

So, yes, *Seven Kingdoms*, premiering Jan. 18, explores a more playful side of Westeros. Based on [\*George R. R. Martin's Tales of Dunk and Egg\*](#) novellas—which sound like they should chronicle a national coffee chain's breakfast offerings but actually follow Duncan, a.k.a. Dunk, and his pipsqueak squire, Egg—its first season runs just six episodes of around 35 minutes apiece. (It has already been renewed for a second, as part of [\*HBO's promise\*](#) to give us new *Thrones* content every year through 2028.) Instead of juggling multiple storylines, a sprawling map, and dozens of characters, most of them nobles warring for control of a continent, it confines its attention to two humble leads in a meadow. The lowered stakes do make for a lighter watch, except towards the end of the season, which is heavy on murk and gore. But the show's anemic plot and spotty attempts at humor also raise questions about the health of the franchise. Is this really the most compelling, or even the most entertaining, story left to mine from Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* canon?



Created by the author and showrunner Ira Parker, a *House of the Dragon* veteran, *Seven Kingdoms* takes place a century before the events of the original *Game of Thrones* series. Though the Targaryens still rule Westeros, the towheaded dynasty is suffering through a dragon drought that won't end until Daenerys comes into the picture, generations in the future. This is all well above the figurative pay grade of Dunk, a simple, hulking youth who grew up squiring for Ser Arlan of Pennytree (Danny Webb). A chronically intoxicated but good-hearted master, Arlan has just died. But first, he knighted Dunk. Like his surrogate father, Dunk is a hedge knight—that is, an itinerant, often penniless and disrespected swashbuckler for hire, rather than a well-compensated, ornately armored, widely venerated defender of a noble lord. As one scornful character puts it: “There are as many hedge knights as there are hedges.”

Traveling to Ashford Meadow for the tourney with the three horses he inherited in tow, Dunk meets a stable boy who introduces himself as Egg (a precocious Dexter Sol Ansell), a fitting name seeing as he is bald. Egg is everything Dunk is not: tiny, clever, bold. He wants to be Dunk's squire, but

Dunk has doubts that mainly stem from his own insecurities; flashbacks imply that he still feels like the scared teen in need of Arlan's tutelage. He and Egg negotiate their odd-couple alliance as Dunk attempts to prove his mettle in the games and find some way forward without Arlan. It's all pretty twee, until the Targaryens, with their notoriously equal distribution of valor and madness, ride in to ratchet up the drama.



There's nothing inherently wrong with putting common people at the center of a story set in a universe that viewers have mostly seen, in previous incarnations, through the eyes of its ruling class. The angle certainly worked for the revolutionary-minded Disney+ series [Andor](#), which might be the best thing the [Star Wars franchise](#) has produced in five decades of pop-culture prominence. And *Seven Kingdoms* does meet the high technical standards of the *Thrones* brand—immersive, bloody combat, dim lighting, and all. Claffey exudes just enough charisma to make us root for Dunk without undermining the character's unpolished oafishness; he and Ansell can be very sweet together.

But unlike *Andor*, which used its relatively obscure protagonist to showcase regular citizens' resistance to the tyranny that's so integral to the *Star Wars* mythology, *Seven Kingdoms* seems to exist mostly to tide us over between *Dragon* seasons. It tries hard, especially in early episodes, to be funny. Sadly, its idea of humor is, for example, a running joke about Dunk's eternal gratitude towards Arlan for only beating him when he deserved it. Elsewhere, bodily excretions of various sorts stand in for punchlines. Crudeness is in no way new to the pseudo-medieval *Thrones* landscape, but it worked better as a counterweight to the high rhetoric of would-be sovereigns. (You could even argue that Martin's high-low mix echoed that of [Shakespeare](#) and [Chaucer](#).) Here, that balance of tones is somewhat restored in the second half of the season, after a revelation that establishes Dunk and Egg's relevance to [Westeros lore](#)—and in doing so kind of undermines the show's initial commitment to bringing the *Thrones* saga down to earth.

The show also falls prey to a few unfortunate streaming-era trends, from a [penultimate flashback episode](#) that delays the payoff of a cliffhanger by filling in backstory of questionable utility, to a scantness of plot that makes the whole short season feel like an overgrown prologue. A franchise that once set the standard for prestige television is now, in an apparent effort to keep *Thrones* fans subscribed to HBO Max indefinitely, perpetuating some of the category's moldiest clichés. Instead of the best Martin's bibliography has to offer, it seems we are now getting whatever is the most convenient to adapt. *Seven Kingdoms* may be too benign to hate, but in its debut season, it is also too meager to love.

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# **Riot Women Is the First Must-See Show of 2026**

Berman is the TV critic at TIME. Along with reviewing current television, she writes about the ways in which entertainment and pop culture intersect with our larger social and political realities. Her TIME essay on [Ted Lasso and modern masculinity](#) won a New York Press Club award in 2022.



In the early 1990s, a groundswell of young women raised on second-wave feminism but marginalized within the supposedly progressive realm of punk music rose up to make themselves heard, in a movement known as riot grrrl. Bands like [Bikini Kill](#) and Bratmobile aimed wrathful lyrics and gallows humor at a culture of misogyny that plagued their daily lives, from condescending male musicians to abusive fathers. Three decades later, those

Gen X artists are in their 50s. And while sexism persists, older women feel it in different ways.

*Riot Women*, a revelatory series from the feminist-minded *Happy Valley* and *Gentleman Jack* creator Sally Wainwright that comes to the U.S. via BritBox on Jan. 14, casts an empathetic eye on these rarely acknowledged struggles: loneliness, invisibility, menopause and the stigma that surrounds it, caretaking fatigue. That might make it sound like a downer. In fact, this six-episode series about women of a certain age who form a punk band to compete in a local talent competition—and accidentally change their lives in the process—is totally gripping. Raucous, insightful, and darkly witty, it's a portrait of belated liberation sure to invigorate viewers at any stage of life.



Another writer might have reduced the *Riot Women* to caricatures of small-town English naughtiness à la *The Full Monty*. But Wainwright never gives us the chance to perceive them as quaint, which would just be a form of objectification. When the series opens, Beth (*Slow Horses*' Joanna Scanlan),

a divorced teacher who feels abandoned by a married son in thrall to his snobby in-laws, is about to hang herself. Then the phone rings. “Do you wanna be in me rock band?” asks a pub owner pal, Jess (Lorraine Ashbourne). The all-female group they assemble includes Holly, a cop on the verge of retirement (Tamsin Greig); the younger colleague (Taj Atwal) she tries, perhaps naively, to defend against sexual harassment from a cruel male officer; and Holly’s midwife sister (Amelia Bullmore). Left to care for dementia-stricken parents and blamed by their kids for the sins of absent or philandering exes, their problems are real. Instead of covering ABBA, as they’d intended, they pour these experiences into original punk anthems.

The band finds its literal voice when Beth hears Kitty—an angry, near-feral lush fleeing a harrowing past, played with tenderness by theater star Rosalie Craig—belting out *Hole*’s lacerating “*Violet*” at a karaoke bar. Wainwright and the uniformly excellent cast bring depth to every female character. (The men can be a bit flat in their socially sanctioned self-centeredness, which might not be an accident.) Yet *Riot Women* truly, er, sings in its depiction of the friendship that develops between Kitty and Beth, two very different but inextricably connected individuals who might be uniquely qualified to save each other from the self-destructive urges they share.

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# No Other Choice Fails to Capture the Downsides of Downsizing

Zacharek is the film critic at TIME. She is the recipient of a Newswomen's Club of New York award and was a 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist.



There's no better time than now for an adaptation of Donald E. Westlake's unsparing 1997 novel *The Ax*, an acutely observed book about downsizing as a form of dehumanization. The bad news is that *No Other Choice*, the *Ax* adaptation Korean master [Park Chan-wook](#) has been waiting years to make, isn't the picture Westlake's cold, glittering shiv of a novel deserves. We know that movies and books are distinct creatures, and the pleasures we find in reading are never going to be identical to those we get from the screen. But sometimes our knowledge of a book plants expectations that we can't shake. And as fine a filmmaker as Park is—his 2003 *Oldboy* is a chilly, operatic masterpiece—*No Other Choice* is both too dully observed

and too aggressively slapsticky to hit its mark. It's a missed opportunity dressed up with proficient filmmaking.

Park takes Westlake's essential premise—a laid-off paper-mill executive methodically and with increasing detachment proceeds to kill off the four men who are most qualified for a job he feels he deserves—and twists and tweaks it so the focus is more on the symphony of mishaps that allow the movie's protagonist, Lee Byung-hun's Man-su, to get away with one crime after another. It's summertime as the movie opens, and Man-su stands at the barbecue grill in the yard of his elegant, modern house, cooking up some eels that have been sent, as a gift of gratitude, by the paper mill to which he's been loyal for 25 years. He's surrounded by his wife, Mi-ri (Son Ye-jin), his children, teenage son Si-one (Woo Seung Kim) and younger daughter Ri-one (So Yul Choi), and two charming, fluffy golden dogs, to whom Ri-one, neurodivergent and a gifted cellist, is particularly attached. In this moment, secure in his middle-class, middle-aged state, Man-su feels he's got everything he ever wanted in life.

**Read more:** [Park Chan-wook on the Long Journey to No Other Choice](#)

But soon he'll learn that the expensive eels are really a sick consolation prize: his company is terminating him. He's left to job-hunt, but given his age and level of experience, there's nothing for him. Ever practical, Mi-ri has made deep cuts to the household expenses. She's sent the dogs off to live elsewhere, and she proposes selling the family house, which is the very one in which Man-su grew up: it had been sold out from under him previously, and he'd worked hard to buy it back. And then Man-su finally gets an interview with a company he'd like to work for. Not only does it go badly, but he's later humiliated by the former subordinate, Park Hee-soon's arrogant Sun-chul, who would have been his boss. Out of desperation he hatches a scheme. He'll eliminate the two chief candidates for the job he so desperately wants, gentle, earnest Sijo (Cha Seung-won), who's marking time working as a shoe salesman, and Bummo (Lee Sung-min), a down-on-his-luck engineer who spends his days getting sozzled. And he'll figure out how to do away with Sun-chul, too.

Man-su's first attempt at murder goes comically—too comically—awry; the second one is chillingly efficient. But the aggressive wackiness of that first

killing, which involves much slipping in mud, an errant snakebite, and a frustrated, angry woman with a gun (Yeom Hye-ran), sets the movie spinning on a wobbly axis from which it never recovers. Lee—who may be best known for *Squid Game*, though he also appeared in Park’s 2000 breakthrough hit *Joint Security Area*—is solid in the movie’s early scenes, as a man unmoored by circumstances. He attends a counseling session packed with other middle-aged men in his exact situation, all of them left to reckon with feelings of humiliation and emasculation. This is what the greed of capitalism—likely to be fueled even further by the [proliferation of AI](#)—will do to a person.

Yet that’s barely the focus of *No Other Choice*; the movie’s increasingly convoluted plot only detracts from the story’s crushing emotional potential. Shot by Kim Woo-hyung, the movie has a crisp, elegant look, and [Park](#) has some fun with cleverly tilted camera angles and visually sophisticated dissolves. But where’s the poetry? If you’re familiar with Park’s work—not just with *Oldboy*, but also with his gorgeous, erotic reverie [\*The Handmaiden\*](#) (2016), or 2023’s graceful neo-noir [\*Decision to Leave\*](#)—you’ll know that he’s capable of so much more, particularly at this juncture, where fake intelligence threatens the very meaning of dignified human work.

In 1997, Westlake put these words in the mouth of his narrator and protagonist, the suddenly out-of-work Burke Devore, a decent man who’s driven to murder by his feelings of uselessness. Devore reflects on the way the “automated future was always presented as a good thing, a boon to mankind, but I remember, even as a child, wondering what was supposed to happen to the people who didn’t work at the dull stupefying jobs any more. They’d have to work somewhere, wouldn’t they? Or how would they eat? If the machines took all their jobs, what would they do to support themselves?” *No Other Choice* doesn’t come close to capturing the texture of Devore’s desperation, and it barely scratches the surface of Westlake’s fears for the future. Now that future is here, and *No Other Choice* reflects on its dangers not with a cry of anguish or even a dry shot of grim humor. Instead, all we get is an overcalculated, mischievous wink. It’s not nearly enough.

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# Chloe Kim on Going for Her Third Olympic Gold, Her Pet Snake, and Her NFL Boyfriend

Gregory is a senior sports correspondent at TIME. His work has been cited in the annual Best American Sports Writing anthology nine times. His stories have won awards from the U.S. Basketball Writers Association and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, and his work was named a finalist for Deadline Club and Mirror awards for excellence in magazine writing and reporting on media, respectively.



Since American snowboarding superstar [Chloe Kim](#) won her second Olympic gold medal at the 2022 Beijing Olympics, she's kept up her dominant ways. She won back-to-back X Games gold medals, in 2024 and 2025, plus the 2025 World Championship, her third world title.

In December, Kim set aside a few minutes to talk to TIME about expectations for the Milano Cortina Olympics, why she took a mental-health break and went to therapy after Beijing, and her pets. She's had a whirlwind couple of days, taking a red-eye flight from Los Angeles to Cleveland to surprise her boyfriend, Browns defensive lineman [Myles Garrett](#), for his game against the Buffalo Bills, then flying back the next morning to continue her prep for Italy.

"I sleep really well on planes," says Kim, whose Olympic halfpipe final—appointment viewing—takes place on Feb. 12. "So I actually feel very rested."

*(This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity).*

### **What's the state of Chloe Kim these days?**

I have no complaints. I'm happier than ever. People are always asking me how I'm preparing for the Olympics. I like to just keep things the same. Consistency is the key here. So no stress on my end.

### **Why are you happier than ever?**

I've just been doing my thing. I've really just been enjoying finding my routine. What else? I think there's been a lot of fun new additions into my life. I got a horse a couple years ago. I just got a pet snake. My dog is so spirited, even though she's 9. So I just feel like everyone in my life is doing well, and everything's looking really good. So I have nothing to worry about.

**Read More:** [Inside Lindsey Vonn's Unprecedented Attempt at an Olympic Comeback](#)

### **I've got to ask about the horse and the pet snake. What kind of horse is it? Do you ride it a lot?**

He's an Arabian. He's very sweet. He's a chestnut. He's just such a cutie patootie. I used to board him near my house, but I ended up moving him, actually, back to the people I got him from. They had moved from Arizona to Temecula. So I have him there. I rode him quite a bit when I first got him,

but I got a pretty young horse, so he was a bit unpredictable. So when I got a bit closer to this season, I decided to not ride him as much. So nothing stupid happens.

**I'm sure your coaches and agent and sponsors appreciate that.**

Yeah, my trainer was like, "You are absolutely not riding that horse until you're done with the Olympics."

**And the pet snake, how did you get him or her and what is his or her name? What kind of snake is it?**

Her name is Jelly Bean. She's a ball python. I actually got her from my friend. She came over with a bunch of baby snakes and was kind of telling me that she was rehoming them. She had gotten them from someone who didn't want them anymore. I never thought I'd get a snake. But I felt little Jelly Bean, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, I feel this connection with this snake." Which is like the craziest thing ever.

**Where do you keep the snake?**

She's in this massive enclosure, in this tank.

**In your house?**

Yes.

**Has it ever escaped from its big enclosure?**

Yeah, she has gotten out, but they typically will just go to another dark, warm area. So I found her right under her enclosure.

**More news that your agent, sponsors, and fans are happy to hear.**

Yes.

**Read More:** [The Shibutanis Left Competitive Ice Dancing for 7 Years. Now They're Aiming for the Olympics](#)

**In the past, [we've talked about](#) the struggles you faced after winning your first gold medal in [PyeongChang](#) when you were 17. You won a second snowboarding gold medal at the Beijing Games— and had a tough time mentally after those Games too. What was difficult for you about that time?**

Beijing was just challenging in itself. It was [during COVID](#). It wasn't like the most ideal circumstances. Family couldn't be there. Friends couldn't be there. No one could be there. By the time I came back home, I had already kind of experienced all the waves of emotion, and I spiraled into another depression. It's really hard to describe and explain. We are so focused on this one thing for such an extended period of time. When it's over, it's very strange.



**You have [mentioned doing intensive therapy](#) after those Olympics. How did that help you get to a place where you're now happier than ever?**

There was just a lot of unresolved trauma that I was dealing with. There was just a lot that I was holding on to. So it was nice to kind of let it out. You

kind of have to go back to the root of all the things. The reason why I wanted to go to therapy initially was because I didn't necessarily like the person I was becoming. I didn't like the way I started treating people, the way I viewed some of my relationships. I just felt a little ashamed of who I'd become. That's such a terrible feeling, especially when I should feel like I'm on top of the world. The way I've been able to support and show up for people I care about, that kind of started to go away after a while. And I didn't like that.

### **How were you treating people?**

I felt so judged since I was young, and I dealt with so much criticism growing up that I think I started to project that onto others for no reason. That's something I'm still working on actively. I think that I have become so much happier once I started to also create space for myself and set boundaries and say no to a lot of things.

I love playing video games. I love just hanging and chilling with my friends, cooking with friends, watching movies with friends. I already travel so much for my sport and have other obligations that when I would come home and I had more stuff to do, whether it would be shoots or endorsements or whatever, I had such little time for myself. And that's what made me such an angry person.

### **You've accomplished so much in your sport. You're already the only female snowboarder to ever win back-to-back Olympic gold medals in the halfpipe. What keeps you coming back?**

There's so much more I want to do. And I'll be honest, I really didn't like my performance in Beijing. I didn't think I did a good job. And I'm very appreciative of the judges for thinking I did OK. I did have a really good run and it makes sense that I won that event. But also, I wouldn't have been surprised if I didn't.

I'm really happy with the way that I'm riding. I'm really happy that I decided to keep going for it and seeing how far I could go. Last season, I landed a double cork for the first time in competition. [A *double cork* is two off-axis flips combined with spins. It's a complex aerial maneuver.] That was

a trick that I never thought I'd be able to do. It's kind of surreal being able to do those things. I thought I had completely maxed out. Turns out I didn't. There's so much that I could still achieve and do. Those are some of the reasons why I keep coming back. I keep surprising myself.

**So is the goal this time to win without any doubt? What's your ideal performance in Italy?**

I don't think I'm thinking about winning so much. Not to humblebrag, but I'm quite satisfied with the two golds that I have already. There's so much amazing emerging talent, it'll just be such an honor to compete with the next generation. I just want to be satisfied with the way I'm riding. I just wasn't satisfied in Beijing. I never want to feel that again. I hate that feeling. It felt terrible. I'm looking at my gold medal, and I feel like I don't deserve it because I didn't do a good job.



**Do you still feel that way when you look at it?**

I'm not like, "Oh my gosh, I'm amazing." My first gold medal, I was like, "Oh my gosh, this is so cool. I really earned this." I don't have the same feelings towards the second one. So I'm hoping that going into my third, regardless of the outcome, I can just look back and be really proud of myself.

**You're only 25, but do you feel different aches and pains that you might not have felt when you were 17 going into the PyeongChang Olympics?**

I feel pain now. When I was like 17, I would take the most disgusting fall and be totally fine and just get back up and do it again. Even the fall I took in Copper [*Kim injured herself before a competition at Copper Mountain, in Colorado, in mid-December and sat it out*], if I did that at 17, I probably would have been fine. But now it's, "Oh, man, I don't think my shoulder was at a good angle for it to hit that way. And my ribs are sore." Yeah, I feel like I got hit by a truck.

**Have you been to Italy before?**

I went once to go shopping. I think it was right after PyeongChang. That was as crazy as I got over there.

**So this will be your first time competing in Italy?**

I mean, I was competing with the other people in the store for a purse.

**What about Italy are you most looking forward to experiencing?**

Italian cuisine is one of my favorite foods. I love pizza, pasta, I love all of that. So I think I'll be eating good out there. That's for sure.

**Do you like red wine, the Italian wines? Or do you stay away from that stuff?**

I don't know if that's where my youth is showing, but I'm not a big wine person yet.

**A few weeks back, in late November, you and your boyfriend, Cleveland Browns defensive end Myles Garrett, shared a kiss in front of the**

**cameras before a game. You and he had made a few public appearances, but that moment sort of officially confirmed that the two of you were dating. Did you guys plan on intentionally going public that day? Or did it sort of just happen?**

I've never really been in a public relationship. So I think I've always been a little scared of it. But I did not know that that was going to happen. I think it was a really sweet thing. No one's mad about it. Which is a good start. I don't think we were trying super hard to keep it private. But it wasn't something we wanted to blast publicly.

We just did our thing. We didn't really think too much about it, but now that it's out, it's whatever. Nothing is going to change. We're very happy. We're just going to keep supporting each other.

**You were just in Cleveland for one of his games. What is that experience like?**

He was so surprised. That was my first time successfully surprising him. Me and his mom were scheming for a couple of weeks. So it was really fun, awesome to see it all come to life. I wasn't necessarily a football fan before, but now I'm all about it. And, man, the fans in Cleveland are so wonderful. They're just so supportive, and they love it. It's always fun to be around that type of energy.

**Is he planning on coming to Italy? The Browns can't make the Super Bowl, to be fair.**

Yes. He's planning to come. Now it's his turn to support me. I've been there for him all fall and some of winter. Now it's his turn. [Laughs].

**Well, he could do worse than going to an Italian resort town in February, though I heard it will be cold.**

I just bought him some snow boots, which was a challenge in itself, to find a men's size-16 snow boot. But I managed to do it.

**When it comes to these specific Olympics, what are you most excited about?**

A lot of things. I love Italy, I love the culture, I love the food. I think it'll be really nice to be in that environment. I'm also staying with my family this time around. I think that'll be really fun. And I feel really chill going into it. I know what to expect now going into my third Games. So I feel really good.

### **Any new tricks we should expect?**

I do have a couple new tricks up my sleeve that I won't be sharing. That's never going to change. So you'll have to tune in to see them.

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