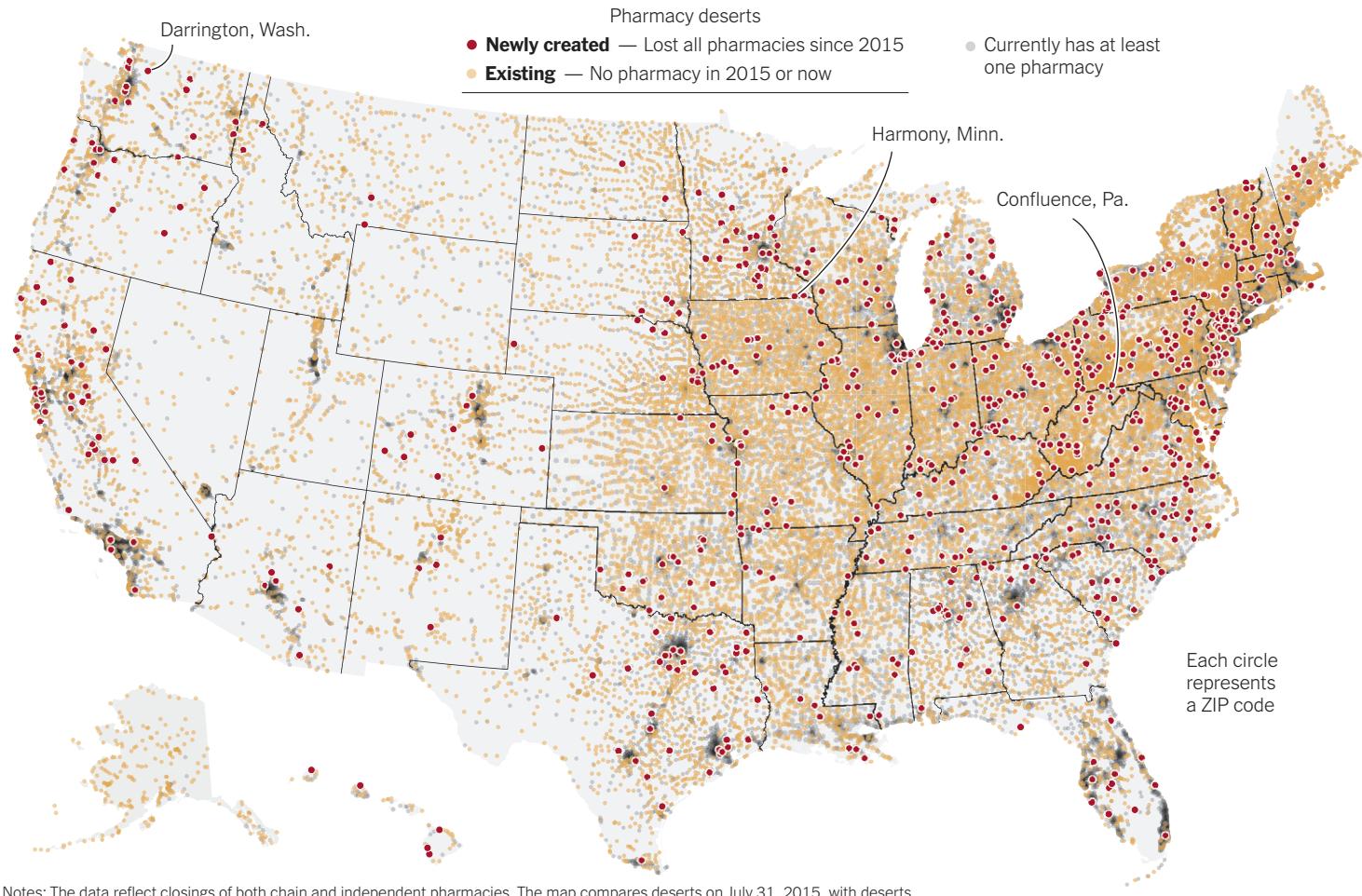


Newly Created Pharmacy Deserts

Nearly 800 ZIP codes that had at least one pharmacy in 2015 now have none.



ON THE RUN, HURT, YET EVER DEFIANT

Quest for Sinwar Ended in Long Stare-Down

This article is by **Mark Mazzetti, Natan Odenheimer, Aaron Boxer, Ronen Bergman and Adam Goldman**.

At the end, the fearsome militant leader who had helped unleash a vicious war seemed barely a threat.

In video captured by an Israeli drone, a man sat alone, badly wounded and caked in dust amid the ruins of a building in the Gaza Strip, wrapped in a kaffiyeh and staring directly into the camera. The man, Israeli officials say, was Yahya Sinwar, the chief of Hamas.

The stare-down lasted some 20 seconds. Then the man limply but defiantly hurled a broken piece of wood toward the drone. Not long afterward, officials say, an Israeli soldier shot him in the head, and a tank shell flattened part of the building.

So ended the long hunt for one of the world's most wanted men. It began hours after the brutal Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that Mr. Sinwar helped orchestrate, and concluded amid the destruction of a Rafah neighborhood resembling so many parts of Gaza, leveled by the Israeli military in the year since.

The manhunt involved Israeli commandos and spies, as well as a special unit established inside the headquarters of Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence service, and at the Central Intelligence Agency. It used a sophisticated electronic surveillance dragnet and ground-penetrating radar provided by the United States.

New details about Mr. Sinwar's movements over the past year have emerged since his death, including the fact that Israeli intelligence officers had seen mounting evidence since August that Mr. Sinwar, or possibly other top Hamas leaders, might be in Rafah's Tel al-Sultan neighborhood.

They observed people there moving about with their faces covered, sometimes apparently surrounded by guards, suggesting

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Powerful Firms Driving Out Local Pharmacies

By REED ABELSON
and REBECCA ROBBINS

CONFLUENCE, Pa. — The small-town drugstore closed for the last time on a clear and chilly afternoon in February. Jon Jacobs, who owned Yough Valley Pharmacy, hugged his employees

THE MIDDLEMEN Facing a Stacked Deck

goodbye. He cleared the shelves and packed pill bottles into plastic bins.

Mr. Jacobs, a 70-year-old pharmacist, had spent more than half his life building his drugstore into a bedrock of Confluence, Pa., a rural community of roughly 1,000 people. Now the town was losing its only health care provider.

Obscure but powerful health care middlemen — companies known as pharmacy benefit managers

Smaller Drugstores Are Vastly Underpaid by Benefit Managers

agers, or P.B.M.s — had destroyed his business.

This has been happening all over the country, a New York Times investigation found. P.B.M.s, which employers and government programs hire to oversee prescription-drug benefits, have been systematically underpaying small pharmacies, helping to drive hundreds out of business.

The pattern is benefiting the largest P.B.M.s, whose parent companies run their own competing pharmacies. When local drugstores fold, the P.B.M.s often scoop up their customers, according to dozens of patients and pharmacists.

The P.B.M.s determine how much drugstores are reimbursed for medications that they provide to patients, and they have powerful incentives to set those rates as low as possible. A key reason: The benefit managers make money in part by charging employers more for certain drugs than what the P.B.M.s pay pharmacies for them.

In some cases, the P.B.M.s pay their own pharmacies more than what they pay local drugstores for the same medications. Independent pharmacies are powerless to fight back.

The companies "chopped us off at the knees," Mr. Jacobs said.

In every state, The Times identified at least one example since 2022 in which an independent drugstore closed and the pharmacist blamed P.B.M.s. In some states, like Pennsylvania, such closings have become routine.

They have disproportionately affected rural and low-income com-

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Record Drought in South America

The Amazon system, which sustains 30 million people across eight countries, is drying up. Page 8.

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Trump Banks On Migration As Main Issue

Certain 2016 Strategy Will Work Again

This article is by **Jonathan Swan, Maggie Haberman and Ruth Igiel-nik**.

Donald J. Trump turned his back to the crowd and stared up at the screen. Ominous music rang out. For the next minute and a half, the former president and his audience in Atlanta stood and silently watched clips of news reports of undocumented immigrants committing horrific crimes.

When the montage ended, Mr. Trump said out loud what he has been telling his advisers in private for weeks: that, in his view, immigration is the "No. 1" issue in the 2024 election.

"That beats out the economy. That beats it all out to me, it's not even close," Mr. Trump said of the immigration issue, after playing the video on Tuesday night. "The United States is now an occupied country. But on Nov. 5, 2024, that will be liberation day in America."

In the final weeks of a campaign that the former president has been waging more or less since his first year out of office, Mr. Trump is going with his gut, doubling down on the rhetoric that he believes won him the 2016 election and using immigration and the border to form the core of his closing message to voters.

Those instincts are at odds with the data, and with some of his advisers.

Mr. Trump has told aides that he beat Hillary Clinton in 2016 with the border but that in 2020 the border was "fixed" — illegal crossings had dropped to a dramatic low in part because of the coronavirus pandemic — so he could not use it as an issue against Joseph R. Biden Jr. He thinks immigration is more potent than ever as a political message, after the record levels of border crossings under the Biden-Harris administration and after he helped kill a bipartisan border security bill that the administration tried to pass.

But neither public nor private surveys support Mr. Trump's theory. Voters frequently rank the economy and the high cost of living as their most important issue.

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SUPER PAC PLACES \$700 MILLION BET ON HARRIS'S BID

ANALYTICS DRIVING ADS

Some in Party Say Group Is Insular and Has a Narrow Vision

By THEODORE SCHLEIFER and SHANE GOLDMACHER

The biggest super PAC in American politics is in the middle of an unparalleled spending spree, unleashing more money on television advertising in the closing weeks of the 2024 race than the campaigns of Donald J. Trump and Kamala Harris combined.

The group, known as Future Forward, has ascended to the pinnacle of the Democratic political universe with remarkable speed, winning over some of the world's richest people with grand promises of a "Moneyball" method to political advertising that it has pitched as the most sophisticated ever undertaken.

The group is, in some ways, an ad-making laboratory masquerading as a super PAC, testing thousands of messages, social media posts and ads in the 2024 race, ranking them in order of effectiveness and approving only those that resonate with voters. Ad makers produce roughly 20 potential commercials for every spot that ever airs. And Future Forward has conducted nearly four million voter surveys since Ms. Harris entered the race — and more than 10 million since January.

"They're probably the most analytics- and evidence-driven PAC I've ever seen," said David Nickerson, a political scientist who ran the experiments division of Barack Obama's 2012 presidential campaign.

Publicly, Ms. Harris and Democratic leaders are appreciative of the group's work. But Future Forward's insular approach to spending the staggering \$700 million it has raised in combination with its affiliated nonprofit group has led to suspicion and second-guessing, including inside Ms. Harris's headquarters.

The story of Future Forward's

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She's Still Running for President, No Matter Who Asks Her to Stop

By MATT FLEGELHEIMER

Jill Stein, the Green Party's serial presidential candidate, has heard the pleading from strangers.

"How does it feel to be personally responsible for actually bringing Donald Trump into power?" Ms. Stein recalled being asked this year by a man in New York — another heckler accusing Ms. Stein of tipping the 2016 election.

She has absorbed the glowering across her anxious blue neighborhood outside Boston.

"When people are being propagandized," Ms. Stein said, "they won't be especially friendly on the street, put it that way."

And as she weighed another campaign this time, she found resistance in the most intimate constituency: her own family.

"For her political activities, she does not have the support of the family," one of Ms. Stein's adult sons said in an interview, asking not to be identified by name to avoid any personal or profes-

sional repercussions from associating with her. "When she told us she was going to run again back in October 2023, we asked her not to."

Ms. Stein has ignored them all. Now, strategists in both parties agree, her decision might well echo again through history — by helping a man whose values she nominally abhors.

Ms. Stein is back on the ballot almost everywhere that matters, returning to the campaign fore in an ostensible coin-flip race between Mr. Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. Democrats see Ms. Stein's bid as a direct threat in a year when even relatively small voter pools might carry near-existent stakes.

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'Life Is Complicated'

Natalia Morari once reported on corruption in Moldova. Now, she has a son with a tycoon accused of corruption, and is running for president. PAGE 4

SPECIAL SECTION

Modern Love at 20

Reflections on The Times's Modern Love column, which for two decades has published readers' accounts of the intricacies of romance and heartbreak.

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Capitalism's Sharpest Teeth

For 15 years, the ABC show "Shark Tank" has turned business negotiation into entertainment. What lessons does it offer about the U.S. economy? PAGE 8

ARTS & LEISURE

Hugh Grant's Villainous Turn

The seemingly droll and breezy actor is enjoying his recent darker roles, including a part in the new religious-horror movie "Heretic." PAGE 10

SUNDAY OPINION

Michelle Goldberg

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