

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Arlington Heights Senior Center
Current Events Discussion Group (since 09/07/89)
Session 1694, May 2, 2024 (Janet McDonnell, Moderator)
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The meeting will begin with an open discussion on any topic not on the agenda.

At plastics treaty talks in Canada, sharp disagreements on whether to limit plastic production, AP News, 4/30/24

<https://tinyurl.com/3y3hmv23>

Nations made progress on a treaty to end plastic pollution amid sharp disagreements about whether to put global limits on plastic production. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution agreed to keep working on the treaty before its final meeting later this year. Members of the International Council of Chemical Associations want a treaty that focuses on recycling plastic and reuse. They don't want a cap on plastic production and think chemicals should not be regulated through this agreement. Dozens of scientists from the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty came to the meeting to provide research on plastic pollution to negotiators and to dispel misinformation. Many people came from communities affected by plastic manufacturing and pollution. "This is the best option we have to see change in our communities. They're so captured by corporations. I can't go to the parish government," said a woman from Louisiana. Members of an Indigenous Peoples' Caucus held a news conference to say microplastics are contaminating their food supply and the pollution threatens their communities and ways of life. "Indigenous ways can lead the way," one said. "What we're doing now clearly is not working."

Questions: Should there be global limits on plastic production? Is recycling and reuse enough?

Jack Smith's odds of putting Trump on trial this year are sinking, Politico, 4/25/24

<https://tinyurl.com/2av42dj7>

The likelihood that Donald Trump will face a criminal trial brought by special counsel Jack Smith before the 2024 election appeared to dwindle further Thursday in the face of scrutiny from the Supreme Court's conservative majority. The court's six Republican-appointed justices took whacks at Smith's effort to quickly and cleanly reject Trump's claim of immunity from criminal prosecution over his attempt to subvert the 2020 election. They repeatedly emphasized the repercussions of their decision for the future of the republic, counseling a slower approach that is almost certain to push a potential trial into 2025 — and potentially foreclose it altogether if Trump wins the election and unravels the case. The conservatives on the court insisted they were not opining on the specific charges against Trump or even particularly concerned about it. The court's liberals repeatedly challenged Trump's attorney on his claim that Trump's efforts to assemble false slates of electors or pressure state officials to help his reelection could be construed as "official acts" of a president rather than the "private" conduct of a political candidate. They warned that giving Trump broad protection from prosecution would serve as a green light to future presidents to break the law with abandon.

Questions: Did you follow the arguments? Is the Supreme Court handling this case properly?

Three questions about politics and the campus protests, NY Times, 4/26/24

<https://tinyurl.com/bdv8kjc>

(You will need to enter AHML username and password to access the full article.)

Do the protests represent a broad disaffection that will hurt Democrats? The students demonstrating on college campuses across the nation are a physical embodiment of the way that the Democratic base has been divided by the war in Gaza. They have drawn renewed attention to the disappointment many young and progressive voters feel about the Biden administration's support of Israel in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians. Many Democrats believe that when confronted with a choice between Biden and Trump, young voters and those upset over Gaza will choose Biden. How are Republicans trying to use the protests to their advantage? Some Republican figures have slammed the protests as an image of chaos and a font of antisemitism. House Speaker Mike Johnson urged the Columbia's president to resign. Where does it go from here? The antiwar demonstrations of 1968, which were driven in part by opposition to the draft, grew far larger than the current protests have, becoming an inescapable part of American life. And they culminated in the enormous protests at the Democratic convention in Chicago. Many Democrats are steeling themselves for this year's convention, which will be held in the same city. The next test for Biden and college campuses may come next month, when he gives a series of commencement addresses.

Questions: What do you think the political fallout of the student protests will be? What do you think of the responses to the protests so far?

Bears stadium costs? Add another \$1.2 billion, Chicago Sun Times, 4/26/24

<https://tinyurl.com/49rafhp7>

The Bears' pitch for a new domed lakefront stadium came with a \$4.7 billion price tag. In reality, Chicago and Illinois taxpayers would end up paying \$5.9 billion to help the Bears build and finance the stadium and retire existing debt used to renovate Soldier Field and Guaranteed Rate Field. Add to that the \$1 billion already paid to revamp those stadiums, and the overall cost to taxpayers is \$6.9 billion, says the executive director of the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority. "They're asking to keep all of the revenue from other events that might take place at the stadium," Gov. J.B. Pritzker. "There are aspects of this that are probably non-starters." Under the existing Soldier Field lease, the Bears pay roughly \$7 million in annual rent and pocket all game-day revenue from tickets, concessions, merchandise and 4,250 parking spaces. The park district collects on the remainder of nearly 8,000 parking spots. On non-game days, including concerts, soccer matches and college football games, the talent pays a fee to use the stadium but keeps ticket revenue and the park district gets all food and beverage and parking revenue. "If you strip away the second leading source of revenue for the park district, you couldn't make capital improvements to the parks. You couldn't even operate without raising taxes through the roof. You would devastate the park district," said one source.

Questions: Are you in favor of the lakefront stadium? Should Illinois taxpayers help pay for a new Bears stadium?

