

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Arlington Heights Senior Center
Current Events Discussion Group (since 09/07/89)
Session 1738, May 1, 2025 (Jessica Meyer, Moderator)
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Antisemitism reaches 45-year high in US. It's 'the canary in the coal mine.', Christian Science Monitor, 4/25/2025

<https://tinyurl.com/3233fw4v>

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

Antisemitism in the United States is rising to its highest level since 1979, according to a report by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which recorded an average of 25 incidents per day over the past year. Although Jews make up about 2% of the US population, they are victims in over two-thirds of religious hate crimes. Rabbis and experts observe a rise in antisemitism from both political extremes, expressing frustration that each side believes the other is more responsible for the issue. The ADL reported a 20% increase in assaults and vandalism, with many incidents now tied to Israel and Zionism. Rabbi Moshe Hauer, executive vice president of Orthodox Union says he trusts Trump administration officials' "genuine desire" to stop antisemitism and believes he is motivating change. Other Jewish leaders, including Rabbis Moshe Hauer and Jacobs, expressed concern over the government's response to antisemitism, arguing that actions such as visa cancellations and student deportations are not effective- and may in fact foment antisemitism. They advocate for education and community involvement instead of government intervention. Rabbi Brous cautioned against labeling all criticism of Israel as antisemitism. "When you call everything antisemitic, it makes it impossible to deal responsibly with the things that are antisemitic," she says. Concerns were also raised about administration leaders associating with Holocaust deniers and the censorship of Holocaust-related books.

Questions: What are your thoughts on this article? How do we ensure Jewish safety and uphold democratic values? To what extent is the administration combatting antisemitism vs labeling everything as antisemitic?

Carney pushes for 'unity' in face of Trump threats, BBC, 4/29/2025

<https://tinyurl.com/3ev99kph>

Mark Carney's Liberals are expected to lead Canada's next government, marking a surprising comeback for a party that seemed to be imploding just a few months ago. However, they have not gained a clear majority in parliament, which means uniting Canadians will be essential, especially amid tariffs and threats from US President Donald Trump. In his victory speech, Carney, who previously had no political experience, positioned himself as a seasoned leader ready to face challenges. He emphasized the government's duty to prepare for tough times, highlighting Trump's attempts to weaken Canada, and using the US president as a unifying villain to rally against. Carney's rival, Pierre Poilievre, also lost his seat, further complicating the Conservative party's situation. Conservative supporters expressed disappointment about the results. Poilievre had campaigned on promises of change amid rising living costs and had been leading in polls until recently when Trudeau stepped down amid economic discontent and Trump ignited a pro-Canada wave that revived the Liberal party. Carney's campaign focused on strengthening Canada and building relationships with other nations while addressing issues like inflation and housing. In contrast, Poilievre's efforts to steer away from Trump's influence appeared to falter, affecting both the Conservatives and smaller parties.

Questions: Trump played a significant role in solidifying a Liberal party victory this week in Canada. Should we be concerned about our souring relationship with our neighbor Canada, and if so, how can the US rebuild trust?

The Russian Military Moves That Have Europe on Edge, Wall Street Journal, 4/27/2025

<https://tinyurl.com/z4csa6wp>

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

As world leaders focus on the war in Ukraine, some Europeans are worried about Russian military activities near other borders. In Petrozavodsk, Russia, army bases are being expanded to prepare for troops that may confront NATO. 100 miles away, Finland, now in NATO, is boosting its border defenses in response. Other NATO nations are fortifying their borders against tanks, digging trenches and installing pyramid-shaped obstacles known as dragon's teeth. Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have withdrawn from an international treaty banning antipersonnel mines. Trump has downplayed concerns about Russian goals beyond Ukraine, but experts tracking Russian military expansion warn of preparation for possible NATO clashes. As Russia increases its military presence along NATO's eastern flank, Putin has ordered the military to expand its ranks to as many as 1.5 million troops, up from around one million before the Ukraine invasion. Increased Russian military spending has also led to higher weapon production. In a February report, the Danish intelligence agency warned that Russia could launch a large-scale war in Europe within five years if it perceived NATO to be weak. A cease-fire in Ukraine would allow Russia's military to be ready even faster, Western military officials warn. Russia seems to be reorganizing its military to focus more sharply on the West, and investments are being made in infrastructure and barracks to support this. Recruitment is rising due to attractive bonuses, with reports of up to 40,000 new soldiers joining monthly. Russia is also adapting its military plans and preparing for large-scale exercises to showcase its capabilities and assert its position in Europe.

Question: What role, if any, do you think the US should play in this evolving threat to Europe and NATO?

Bankruptcies at senior homes costing residents: People have collectively lost millions of dollars in entrance fees at suburban facilities, Chicago Tribune, 4/15/2025

<https://tinyurl.com/34m5ctfs>

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

A recent bankruptcy filing by a group of senior living facilities in Illinois and Indiana has raised worries for residents who pay large entry fees to retirement communities that have limited government protections. In February, a non-profit that runs several long-term care facilities, including Lutheran Home, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy to manage its debt while still operating. This follows other bankruptcies, including Friendship Village and The Oaks at Bartlett. While these facilities continue to serve residents, many at Friendship Village (now Encore) and The Oaks have lost significant amounts in entry fees. Encore Village shifted to a rental-only model and reports improved financial health. However, some families are upset with low entrance fee refunds, as only \$2 million is available for about 100 families. Illinois law requires life care facilities to maintain escrow for six months of payments but does not enforce saving enough to repay entrance fees. Although lawmakers considered enforcing repayment of deposits, they backed away due to concerns from community operators. A new 2024 law does, however, require facilities to inform prospective residents about the status of entrance fee refunds, including refund timelines. The long-term care industry, which serves more medically compromised patients, faces the biggest financial challenges, worsened by the COVID pandemic, which lowered occupancy and led to temporary closures. Despite government support during the pandemic, inflation and labor shortages have hindered recovery. A survey indicated many long-term care facilities are losing money, leading to numerous closures in Illinois since 2019. Because many life plan communities include a long-term care setting, this greatly impacts their bottom line.

Questions: Do you feel this article paints a fair picture of the situation at local life plan communities? Do the recent bankruptcies affect your feelings about retirement communities?