

Horror authors pick books that scared them the most

10 writers share their favorites, which include tomes by Stephen King and Peter Straub. **In Life**

Companies are hiring less, asking workers to do more

Some employees expand skill sets but are irked doing multiple jobs without pay raises. **In Money**

NBA MVP favorites to keep eye on this season

Up-and-comers who could make a difference include Pelicans forward Zion Williamson, left, and Kings guard De'Aaron Fox. **In Sports**

USA TODAY

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ELECTION 2024



Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester, D-Del., who is one of three Black women running for the U.S. Senate this year, speaks during the third day of the Democratic National Convention at the United Center in Chicago on Aug. 21. JASPER COLT/USA TODAY

Birth control hindered by myths

Major medical groups debunk abortion claims

Elizabeth Weise
USA TODAY

There's a battle being waged across the country between people who see birth control as essential for women's health, self-determination and to avoid abortions – and those who claim some forms of contraception cause abortions and should not be funded by taxpayers.

Birth control remains legal in all 50 states and can be purchased over the counter with no age limit. But lawmakers in at least seven states have attempted to cut off funding or scuttle bills that ensure access to some popular forms of birth control.

Major medical groups and 10 health researchers interviewed by USA TODAY say there is no evidence that any of the popular forms of birth control end human lives.

Some groups that oppose abortion still support the wide availability of birth control to help prevent unwanted pregnancies.

But opposition to birth control has made contraception harder to access in many places and, experts say, unnecessarily scared women away from safe, effective methods for preventing pregnancy.

"There's no question that there's a war on contraceptives," said Dr. Dan Grossman, a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and director of the school's Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health program.

"There's been a lot of rhetoric and misinformation coming from anti-abortion groups alleging that contraceptive methods do cause abortions, which seem to be an attempt to set them up for further restriction," he said.

On Monday the White House proposed new rules under the Affordable Care Act that would require private insurers to cover the cost of over-the-counter birth control – including emergency contraception pills, non-prescription birth control pills, spermicides and condoms – without additional cost to patients.

The proposed rule, which comes two weeks before the election, requires a 60-day comment period. If finalized, it would bring free birth control to 52 million American women who have private health care insurance.

"At a time when contraception access is under attack, Vice President Harris and I are resolute in our commitment to expanding access to

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Black women vying for US Senate history

Two or more have never served at the same time

Deborah Barfield Berry and Riley Beggin
USA TODAY

WILMINGTON, Del. – Lisa Blunt Rochester adjusted the plastic white helmet on her head, then leaned over to pick up a shovel, scoop up some dirt and toss it toward the television cameras set up on the tarmac of Wilmington's regional airport.

Even with the cameras turned off, Delaware's lone congresswoman beamed one recent morning as Sen. Tom Carper held tight to her hand.

"I urged everyone within the sound of my voice and across the state to support Lisa," Carper, who is retiring from his post as one of the state's U.S. senators, told a reporter.

He said young girls will study Blunt Rochester's bid to become the first woman and first African American to represent Delaware in the Senate. "She's going to inspire a lot of other young girls," he said.

It was a full circle moment for the Delaware congresswoman. Years ago, while working for Carper, then a congressman, she helped write grants asking for money to expand the airport. Now, she stood under a white tent touting the \$5.6 million for the expansion and campaigning for Carper's Senate seat.

"Going to an event like that and seeing folks that I worked with for many, many years – it's like we're really doing it, you know, not just talking about it," Blunt Rochester said later that afternoon.

In neighboring Maryland a couple of days



Senate candidate Angela Alsobrooks, center, poses for photos with students at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne, Md., on Oct. 2. MEGAN SMITH/USA TODAY

later, Angela Alsobrooks hopped on stage in the Student Services Center at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore campus, addressing about two dozen students at the historically Black school.

Alsobrooks, 53, ticked off her history as the state's first domestic violence prosecutor and as the executive of Prince George's County, a suburban community just outside of Washington.

She went on.

There are no women representing

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Biologists see signs of hope for right whale population

"I feel like people need to hear some good news about right whales. ... The reality is we still are in a position where there are too many mortalities and there are too many injuries."

Heather Pettis
New England Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life



A right whale is spotted with a newborn calf off Florida on Dec. 31. PROVIDED BY FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Slight increase brings optimism but concern it could be temporary

Dinah Voyles Pulver
USA TODAY

With pregnant North Atlantic right whales weeks away from their winter migration southward to give birth, biologists who track the endangered marine mammals say 2024 has been a roller-coaster ride.

They've seen highs – the birth of 20 calves last winter. But they've seen plenty of lows, including the likely deaths of four of the calves, the confirmed deaths of one other calf and four adult whales, and the entanglement of more than a half-dozen whales in fishing gear off the coasts of Canada and the U.S.

As a result, a slight increase in the population

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