

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Arlington Heights Senior Center
Current Events Discussion Group (since 09/07/89)
Session 1707, August 22, 2024 (Mary Jo Lepo, Moderator)
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The meeting will begin with an open discussion on any topic not on the agenda.

Zelensky Says Push Into Russia Shows the West's Red Lines Are 'Naïve', NY Times, 8/20/24

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

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

For more than two years, Washington has prevented Ukraine from using the weapons it supplied to strike into Russia, citing fears of an escalating conflict between Moscow and the West. After months of Ukrainian lobbying, the US and other NATO countries adjusted their policies and granted permission for Ukraine to do that. But the Biden administration said that Ukraine could only use American weapons to strike military targets a short distance into Russia. Zelensky confirmed in a speech that Ukraine had kept its allies in the dark when preparing for the recent incursion, aware that some partners would object. But Moscow's faltering response to Kyiv's offensive should signal to the world that Russia is not the fearsome superpower it once appeared to be, Zelensky noted. "It is the time when the world is shedding its last and very naïve illusions about Russia," he said. Ukraine has managed to quickly capture several settlements and one town in Russia. But so far, it appears to have failed to fulfill one of its other goals: drawing Russian units from hot spots of the battlefield in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine has also had to draw on its own reserves for the cross-border attack, meaning it could be more difficult for Kyiv to respond to Russian assaults on the eastern front, analysts say.

Questions: Are the West's red lines "naïve"? What do you think of Ukraine's strategy?

Kamala Harris Addresses Economy In Speech—Here's What To Know About Her Policy

Agenda, Forbes, 8/16/24

<https://tinyurl.com/2eydn6bn>

Harris unveiled more details about her economic agenda in a speech with an eye on bolstering the middle class. Harris said she would work in her first 100 days to give the FTC authority to go after companies they determine price gouge. Harris wants to provide \$25,000 in down payment assistance for first-time home buyers and is calling for the creation of three million new housing units within the next four years, proposing a tax credit for developers who build starter homes and investing \$40 million in an innovation fund to tackle the housing crisis. Harris is calling on Congress to pass legislation that would stop predatory investors who buy up rental homes and collude with each other to raise rents. Harris proposed giving families a \$6,000 tax credit for newborns in their first year of life, and restore a pandemic-era tax credit of \$3,600 per child for middle and lower-class families. Harris also wants to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit for workers in lower-income jobs. Harris has separately endorsed a plan to get rid of taxes on tips for hospitality and service workers, echoing a proposal by Trump. Harris proposed a \$35 cap on insulin and capping out-of-pocket expenses on prescription drugs at \$2,000.

Questions: What do you think of these economic plans? Will they bolster the middle class?

Trump is visiting battleground states this week as he struggles to adjust to Harris as his new rival, AP News, 8/19/24

<https://tinyurl.com/4ata7k7s>

He is holding daily events in battleground states tied to subjects where Republicans think they hold an advantage, including the economy, crime and safety, national security and the border. In the weeks since Biden dropped his reelection bid, Trump has appeared at times in denial and has launched a series of deeply personal attacks on Harris. He has lied about her crowds by claiming images of them were generated by AI, talked about her looks, and played on racist tropes by questioning her racial identity. The outbursts have raised concerns among allies that Trump is damaging his chance in what they believe is an eminently winnable race. "If you have a policy debate for president, he wins. Donald Trump the provocateur, the showman, may not win this election," Lindsey Graham said. Others have urged him to ramp up his schedule and to pivot away from rallies, where large crowds of his most ardent supporters cheer on his most incendiary rhetoric. But even at events billed as policy speeches, Trump often gets sidetracked and undercuts his own message with remarks that drown out anything else. He gave Democrats new fodder when he hosted an event about antisemitism with billionaire Republican donor Miriam Adelson. He said receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom was "much better" than receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor, because recipients of the nation's highest military honor are often badly injured or dead.

Questions: Do you think Trump is damaging his chances with his rhetoric? Will he pivot to more policy speeches?

A New Problem With Four-Year Degrees: The Surge in College Closures, Wall Street Journal, 8/19/24

<https://tinyurl.com/59fbttw5>

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

Over 500 private, nonprofit four-year institutions have closed in the last 10 years, according to the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association. That is three times what it was in the decade prior. An estimated 1.25 million students were affected by these closures. The reasons for a stark rise in closures are myriad, but the rising cost of higher education is playing a role. The number of college-bound students has declined since 2011 with colleges often buckling under the strain of tuition losses. The pace of closures is expected to continue as federal Covid-19 funding dries up and applications drop due to a reduced birthrate, according to analysts and educators. Most at risk of closing are rural liberal arts schools with fewer than 1,000 students. Students are often drawn to their niche programs, tiny class sizes and defined sense of community. The uptick in college closures has brought on more skepticism about the cost and value of a four-year degree. Less than half of the students whose schools closed between 2004 and 2020 continued their education, according to a SHEEO study. Students whose institutions closed abruptly were even less likely to re-enroll.

Questions: Are you concerned about the number of college closures? Is the cost of a four-year degree worth it?