

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Arlington Heights Senior Center
Current Events Discussion Group (since 09/07/89)
Session 1711, September 19, 2024 (Katie Myers, Moderator)
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The meeting will begin with an open discussion on any topic not on the agenda.

Second Apparent Assassination Attempt on Trump Prompts Alarm Abroad: News analysis, New York Times, 9/17/24

<https://tinyurl.com/yrsa7y69>

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

In the nine years since Donald J. Trump entered American politics, the global perception of the United States has been shaken by the image of a fractured, unpredictable nation. First one, then a second apparent attempt on the former president's life, have accentuated international concerns, raising fears of violent turmoil. In the U.S., Trump has cast doubt on the upcoming November election's credibility, and used inflammatory rhetoric that calls for conflict and insults toward immigrants. Democrats have characterized Trump as a significant threat to democracy, warning of his authoritarian tendencies, and some media outlets have drawn extreme comparisons, suggesting that a second Trump term could lead to tyranny. In contrast, some European lawmakers, like Andrea Di Giuseppe from Italy, view the attempts to counter Trump—such as legal actions and public fear campaigns—as misguided. They argue that these efforts to undermine him have failed and have led to extreme outcomes.

Questions: Do you agree with this analysis? What are your concerns about the upcoming election outcome?

Report on forced labor, child labor raises tough questions in green energy transition, The Hill, 9/17/24

<https://tinyurl.com/3zmjt7ez>

A recent report by the Department of Labor reveals troubling links between forced and child labor and the production of key minerals used in climate-friendly technologies such as electric vehicles and solar panels. The report highlights that minerals crucial for these technologies may be produced under unethical labor conditions, including cobalt and copper mined using child labor in Congo and Zambia, and other minerals linked to forced labor in countries like China and Indonesia. The findings underscore a significant ethical dilemma in the energy transition away from fossil fuels: while addressing climate change is vital for vulnerable populations, the methods used to obtain essential materials for green technologies may be exploitative. The report includes suggestions like investing in supply chain auditing and implementing tariffs on materials produced with unethical labor practices. Experts contend that while the transition to clean energy is crucial, it must be pursued alongside efforts to address these labor issues to ensure sustainable technology does not come at the expense of human rights.

Questions: What strategies should be adopted to address environmental and labor concerns? What role should consumers play in addressing labor exploitation in supply chains?

Biden poured money into public works. But will that help Harris in Michigan?, Christian Science Monitor, 9/14/24

<https://tinyurl.com/3spj9258>

The construction of a new lock in the Soo Locks complex in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, is underway, funded by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which allocates \$1.2 trillion to infrastructure projects across the U.S. This includes \$700 million specifically for the Soo Locks, crucial for allowing large cargo ships to navigate the St. Marys River. Despite the significant federal investment aimed at revitalizing infrastructure after decades of neglect, there is little political gain for Democrats in swing states like Michigan, as voters are more focused on immediate concerns like inflation. "These two bills would be a landmark achievement for any president, so your instinct is to campaign on it," says Adie Tomer, a senior fellow at Brookings Metro and an expert on infrastructure policy. "But it runs head first into cold, hard political realities." While the infrastructure bill has bipartisan support among the public, its political backing in Congress remains divided. Some Republicans oppose it, even as some attend ribbon-cutting ceremonies for projects in their districts. Local leaders recognize the benefits of the funding, with initiatives like electric school buses reducing costs for rural districts. However, the perception of infrastructure as a local issue often diminishes its visibility in political campaigns. Critics argue that such extensive spending could lead to waste and increased federal debt. Although the successful completion of projects like the new Soo Lock is crucial for maintaining U.S. steel production and supporting the local economy, their long-term nature and benefit to the economy may take time to materialize.

Questions: What do you think of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law? Will it provide a political boost to the Democratic party in Michigan?

A Decade After 'Lean In,' Progress for Women Isn't Trickling Down, Wall Street Journal, 9/17/24

<https://tinyurl.com/ypzy49rp>

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

A recent 10-year study by McKinsey and LeanIn.Org reveals that while women have made notable strides in holding top jobs in companies, they still lag behind men when it comes to early promotions into management, which limits their advancement to higher executive roles. The study, based on data from over 1,000 companies, highlights that the percentage of women in entry-level and middle management positions has seen only modest increases. Efforts to advance gender diversity in the workplace have faced setbacks, with a decrease in companies prioritizing gender diversity and a drop in gender-focused recruiting and sponsorship programs. The research indicates that women are less likely to receive early promotions compared to men, and women of color face even greater challenges. This disparity contributes to a slower rate of income growth for women compared to men, with recent data showing a decline in the female-to-male earnings ratio. A big difference could be the advancement of women to operating roles as soon as possible in their careers, with General Motors as a case in point. Under Mary Barra, who became the first woman to run a global automaker in 2014, about 36% of GM's top managers are now women, including its executive chief engineer for battery electric trucks, head of trucks for North America and global system safety director.

Questions: What do you view as any potential long-term consequences of this trend? Why does it matter? How can companies address these barriers?