

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

I have two children and three pets and too many things to do, so naturally I have been spending my meager free time learning to [monoprint](#) with a [gel plate](#). It's a whole thing, but the end result is paper prints, which are beautiful if you're talented and mostly weird/borderline ugly if you're me. Occasionally, though, I produce a gem, which is just enough of a dopamine hit to keep me going.

Don't worry if you don't relate to this story. You'll understand it better once you read today's newsletter, which I would describe as a lot of weirdness with what I hope is just the right amount of good stuff sprinkled in.



The Big Takeaway

The news was much less of a mixed bag for George Santos, a New York Republican who became a former member of Congress Friday after a bipartisan coalition of House lawmakers [voted](#) to remove him from office, [our D.C. bureau reported](#). The expulsion — only the sixth in the chamber's history — capped months of drama that began when reporters uncovered [discrepancies in Santos' biography](#) and grew to include a [23-count federal indictment](#), a damning 56-page [Ethics Committee report](#) and plenty of fodder for late-night comedians.



Things you will not find in this photo: A star volleyball player, a Baruch College alumnus, a Goldman Sachs banker, a current member of Congress.

(Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

Because it was all just so *ludicrous*. Santos lied about his career ([never worked](#) for Wall Street firms Goldman Sachs or Citigroup), his education (did not attend [Baruch College](#)), his athletic prowess (not a [“star” volleyball player](#)), his tenants ([not a landlord](#)), his grandparents (did not [“flee Hitler” during the Holocaust](#)), and his mother’s whereabouts on 9/11 ([nowhere near](#) the World Trade Center). He is also (less amusingly) accused of lying to obtain [unemployment benefits](#), defrauding campaign donors (including at least one member of Congress [and that lawmaker’s mom](#)), spending campaign donations on [Botox, pornography and designer clothing](#), filing fraudulent finance reports with the Federal Election Commission, among (many) other things.

Santos [pleaded not guilty](#) to all charges, which he has dismissed as a [“witch hunt”](#) that [“makes no sense,”](#) particularly while President Joe Biden is just walking around not being indicted even one time! His mood remained unapologetic/unhinged throughout his final days in the House, during which he [anointed himself](#) the “Mary Magdalene of the United States Congress,” [accused fellow lawmakers](#) of “getting drunk every night with the next lobbyist they’re

gonna screw and pretend like none of us know what's going on, and sell off the American people,” and vowed to wear his imminent expulsion as a [“badge of honor.”](#)

Despite ... all of that, expulsion wasn't a given in the ever-chaotic House. Republican leaders, including House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.), were loath to winnow the party's already razor-thin majority, while far-right lawmakers opposed removing from office a lawmaker who had not been convicted of a crime. This, according to such luminaries as Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), would set a dangerous precedent that could lead to expulsions based solely on political motivations.

“I rise not to defend George Santos, whoever he is, but to defend the very precedent that my colleagues are willing to shatter,” Gaetz said before urging his colleagues to expel Rep. Jamaal Bowman, a New York Democrat who pleaded guilty to pulling a fire alarm in a House office building.



“Santos, OUT.”

(Photo by Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images)

Voters will select a replacement for Santos in a special election in New York's 3rd District, which covers parts of Nassau County, Queens and Long Island. Santos

clinched his first term there in November 2022 by roughly 20,000 votes. His term, which lasted 11 months, concluded with one final statement to reporters.

“As unofficially already no longer a member of Congress,” Santos said before his car pulled away from the U.S. Capitol, “I no longer have to answer a single question.”

No such luck for Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey, who said he expects to eliminate a backlog of public records requests from 2022 by the end of 2023, allowing staffers to begin 2024 by working through the [300-some pending requests](#) submitted in 2023. This, according to Bailey, is some top-notch government service.

“I’m proud of the thorough and expeditious work we’ve done to get Missourians the records they have requested,” Bailey [told the Missouri Independent](#).



“A transcript of this speech may be available by next summer.”

(Photo via the Missouri Independent)

Transparency advocates are, obviously, less enthused. The pending requests – even the simple ones – are expected to take a minimum of six months once staffers begin working on them, which is *a really long time* to wait, particularly when you’ve already been waiting for a year or more. It’s not a good look for the

AG's office, which proclaims proudly on its website that the Sunshine Law embodies "Missouri's commitment to openness in government," said Bernie Rhodes, a First Amendment attorney who has represented numerous media outlets, including the Independent, in court.

"It's not called the historical records preservation act, so that when we write the biography of Andrew Bailey 20 years from now, we know what he was doing," he said. "It exists so we know what he's doing today so that when he comes up for election, we know whether to vote for him or not."

To be fair (and transparent, which will not take me six months), Bailey inherited the backlog — 224 unfulfilled requests — from his predecessor Eric Schmitt. But it [grew bigger under his watch](#), which is how it will probably stay for the duration of his tenure, provided he keeps in place a nonsensical policy requiring staff to work through requests in the order they're submitted, regardless of size. If larger submissions are clogging up the queue — which they are, because reporters — simple, easy inquiries can languish for months. As of now, for example, a request for copies of Bailey's official schedule on Nov. 6 — a quick pull that should take maybe a day at most — wouldn't be available until next May, by which point a person will have forgotten why they possibly ever cared what Bailey was doing on Nov. 6.

Bailey, who probably also does not care what he did on Nov. 6, has [defended the policy](#) as a necessary safeguard against the perception that his office is "picking winners and losers" from the request pile (as opposed to the current system, in which everyone loses). He's also attempted to demonstrate his commitment to government transparency by highlighting the fact that his office doesn't charge fees for processing public records requests, which might be a more persuasive argument if they were ... actually processing public records requests.

(A spokesperson also noted that the office has held a record-high 56 Sunshine Law trainings this year, for "thousands" of people, which honestly just left me with more questions. What did these people learn? Who taught them? Might this time have been better spent processing requests to *comply* with the law? IDK. Ask me in May, except don't, because I will for sure have no idea what you're talking about.)



*“Did I request this? Why would I have done that?”
(Photo by fizkes/Adobe Stock)*

Elsewhere in the “why” files, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and California Gov. Gavin Newsom traded barbs Thursday in a live debate “moderated” by Sean Hannity on Fox News. There was little point to this stunt beyond the stunt itself, which pitted a Republican presidential hopeful with [flagging poll numbers](#) against a blue-state governor with [flagging poll numbers](#) with nothing on the line and nothing to root for. To that end, it went as planned, [per the Florida Phoenix](#).

DeSantis and Newsom debated the obvious national issues (immigration, education, the economy), the obvious because-we’re-on-Fox-News issues (free speech, homelessness, whether non-cisgender people should be able to exist), and issues that cannot possibly have appealed to anyone at this point in 2023 (handling of the pandemic). Newsom touted Biden’s accomplishments; DeSantis accused him of running a “shadow campaign.” Newsom slammed DeSantis’ censorship; DeSantis defended himself by brandishing photos from books he’d banned. They acted modern-day presidential, by which I mean they yelled, flung insults and talked over each other.

Hannity had billed the “Great Red vs. Blue State Debate” as a rare opportunity for voters to compare and contrast governing styles in real-time, which I guess it

did. Mostly, though, it offered a glimpse of a weird alternate reality where Donald Trump never became president but DeSantis is, somehow, still the way that he is. You'd think that would be a net positive, but honestly, it felt pretty much the same. Polarized. Tiring. Too much yelling. And way too much Fox News.

Fair and balanced: [Georgia GOP lawmakers push revised political maps toward passage to meet court's looming deadline](#) ... [Republican presidential candidates take on 'parental rights,' LGBTQ+ issues in Iowa](#) ... [More candidates file to run for Kentucky's congressional seats and General Assembly](#) ... [Louisiana father and son arrested for Jan. 6 breach of U.S. Capitol](#) ... [Businessman Sandy Pensler joins jammed GOP field for Michigan U.S. Senate seat](#) ... [Lawyer who 'ran point' on fake electors reportedly participating with Nevada investigation](#) ... [Ohio Sec. of State LaRose concedes he politicked out of building where he moved his state office](#) ... [Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine addresses subpoena in bribery scandal civil case, until AG Yost stops him](#) ... [Youngstown State trustees donated more than \\$86,000 to U.S. Rep. Bill Johnson's \(R-Ohio\) congressional campaign](#) ... [Tax cuts, teacher pension increases at stake after misinformation-led challenge to 2023 election in Texas](#) ... [Republicans, fair maps advocates debate future of Wisconsin maps after redistricting lawsuit](#)



Also Trending

Here's the good stuff: A group of doctors in Rhode Island have committed to providing medical care to patients who make their homes in encampments and makeshift shelters. The program, the first street medicine initiative in the state, began last December with a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation and has since grown to include 20 doctors from various specialties, [per the Rhode Island Current](#).



Doctors, outside.

(Photo by Michael Salerno/Rhode Island Current)

The goal is simple: Removing the barriers that traditionally prevent homeless people from accessing health care. Those hurdles include things that seem basic, like making and keeping an appointment, which is easy when you have reliable transportation and a safe place to store your belongings but becomes complicated without those safeguards. Once patients miss appointments, they're often penalized or booted off waiting lists, erecting yet another barrier for people who may already be hesitant to set foot in a clinical setting.

"When your life is just in a constant state of crisis, keeping an appointment time often doesn't work well," said Sara Melucci, director of outreach at House of Hope. "For many of our folks, the health care system is ... a place where you feel powerless again."

Treating patients in the streets changes the entire dynamic, leaving providers more time to build trust with each person. There are no clinical trappings; nothing to separate doctor from patient, said Dr. Rebecca Karb, an emergency medicine doctor and head of the street medicine program.

"When you're outside and you meet people — you're wearing regular clothes,

they're wearing regular clothes. It's in their space," Karb said. "It just feels like all of those barriers are kind of taken away, and you get to just talk to people as people."

More good news: [EPA proposes plan to replace 100% of lead service lines within 10 years ... \(Minnesota\)](#) [Shoplifting is declining in the Twin Cities, latest data show ...](#) [Summer EBT program will now be permanent, as long as Nevada applies ...](#) [USDA grows solar power in rural Oregon despite limited transmission, assistance ...](#) [Washington lawmakers look at shielding people from surprise ambulance costs](#)



From The Newsrooms

- [Survivor: Maryland's Key School 'groomed' her and other students in sexual culture](#)
- [More information about federal Indian boarding schools out in January, including 43 in New Mexico](#)
- [PrEP has revolutionized the war on HIV — but in North Carolina, barriers to access remain](#)
- [A few streams are freed from low head dams, but many more remain in Kentucky](#)
- [Sandra Day O'Connor, who made history as the first woman on the Supreme Court, dies at 93](#)



One Last Thing

Penguin parents with newborn chicks sleep for only a few seconds at a time to ensure “hypervigilance” amid potential danger, according to research [published Thursday](#). These so-called “microsleeps” total roughly 11 hours per day and are apparently enough to keep the penguins going for weeks at a time, which feels deeply relatable and also deeply dependent on your definition of “enough.”

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