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Buffalo School Board Turmoil Deepens: Independent Investigation Begins as Resignation Fuels Questions Over Leadership and Transparency

By: Staff Reports

The Buffalo Board of Education now faces one of the most turbulent periods in its recent history after formally launching an outside investigation into allegations against one of its own members. The announcement came just days after a board member resigned, citing deep concerns over transparency, accountability and the direction of the district's leadership.

The latest developments continue a controversy that has steadily intensified throughout June, beginning with complaints that board leadership waited days before informing fellow board members about allegations involving one of their colleagues. Since then, public criticism has mounted, one board member has resigned, another has openly questioned the

(Cont. on pg. 6)

EXCLUSION ISLAND Grand Island's Bitter Legal War Against Seneca Nation Exposes a Dark Pattern of Suburbia Chasing Out People of Color



By: John Watson

Just when you thought local government overreach couldn't get any more shameless, the Town of Grand Island says, "hold my beer." In a staggering display of bureaucratic hubris

and suburban panic, Grand Island officials have officially filed a federal lawsuit against the United States government.

Their target? The sovereign rights of the
(Cont. on pg. 7)

The Plan, The Cooperative, and The Check

How the Niagara Municipal
Power Cooperative Works,
Why It Keeps Value Local,
and Why Every Resident
Gets a Quarterly Check
Starting in Month
Twenty-Four

By: John Karcz

Part Three: A Special Report by the Niagara Falls
Economic Reinvention Project

This is the third article in a four-part series. Part One diagnosed the history of economic failure in Niagara Falls, NY. Part Two examined the global AI data center boom and the Quincy, Washington precedent. Part Four maps the full execution timeline and the case for acting now.

Every previous attempt to revive Niagara Falls shared the same fatal flaw: outside money came in, profits went out, and the city's residents were left holding service-sector jobs and a shrinking tax base. The Niagara Municipal Power Cooperative (NMPC) is designed from the ground up to break that pattern — keeping value local, building resident equity, and mailing a quarterly dividend check to every person who stayed. Here is exactly how it works.
THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEM WITH EVERY PREVIOUS PLAN
Why tax abatements, casino compacts, and tourism pushes all failed the same way

There is a standard playbook for economic development in distressed American cities, and Niagara Falls has run every play in it. Tax increment financing districts. Payment in lieu of taxes agreements. Gaming compacts with revenue-sharing provisions that got litigated for years. Tourism investment zones. Federal enterprise zone designations. State-funded infrastructure improvements designed to attract private development. The city has tried all of it, across multiple administrations, with support from both Albany and Washington, and the results have been, at best, marginal.

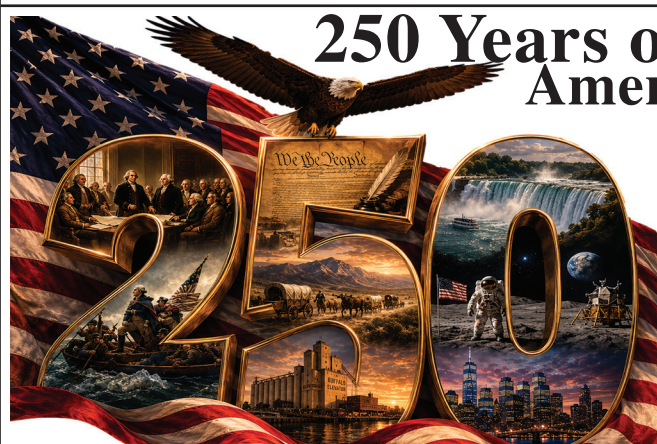
The reason is structural, and it is consistent across all of these instruments: they are tools for attracting outside capital,

(Cont. on pgs. 3)

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250 Years of the Great American Experiment



By: Sumit Majumdar

Most of you probably remember learning how our country was formed way back in grade school. You might recall George Washington crossing the Delaware, or a vaguely stressful test on the branches of government. But let's be honest — it's always a good time for a refresher! You might even find out about a few things you never knew. At 250

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NIAGARA TOURISM

The Beauty of Niagara Falls: A Key Element of America's National Pride

Staff Reports

Tucked away at the edge of the United States, Niagara Falls stands tall as one of the most stunning natural wonders that has captivated countless visitors with its incredible beauty. More than just a spectacular view, it holds an essential place in American culture, forming part of the rich tapestry that created our nation's identity.

Emerging from the very core of the American-Canadian border, Niagara Falls have captivated human imagination since the first Native Americans settled in the area thousands of years ago. Today, it serves as a striking reminder of the United States' historical journey and, consequently, forms a unique aspect of the national identity.

Much like the national character, the majestic falls emanates strength, power, and resilience, inviting millions of travelers annually. Its formidable power has played a significant role in America's industrialization story, with the harnessing of hydroelectric power giving a significant boost to American industrial growth.

Its historical significance and immense beauty aside, the spectacular falls bear the unmistakable seal of quintes-

sential American iconography, a source of artistic inspiration for centuries. The cascading waters have served as a canvas for countless American painters, photographers, filmmakers, poets, and novelists, thereby rooting it firmly in American art and culture. Geology

Many iconic scenes in American literature and film, from Nathaniel Hawthorne's novels to Marilyn Monroe's film 'Niagara,' feature this legendary waterfall. The diverse range of references and portrayals not only elevates it beyond mere spectacle but also helps generate a shared cultural consciousness and identity.

In the American context, the evocative image of Niagara Falls also holds political importance. Throughout history, the Falls has been a place for famous speeches, demonstrations, and symbolisms for unity, epitomizing America's collective struggle and triumphs.

On a more intimate level, the site has also emerged as a prime destination for life's momentous occasions. The falls has witnessed countless wedding proposals, family trips, honeymoons, and even tight-rope walkers, thus becoming embedded in the personal stories of many Americans.

More than just a geographical fea-



ture, Niagara Falls has etched itself deep within the American cultural psyche, inspiring a sense of wonder and a surge of national pride in those who bear witness to its magnificence. In its enduring maj-

esty, it epitomizes America's strength and resilience, and its importance as a part of America's heritage and identity continues to grow.

United States Presidents and Their Memorable Visits to Niagara Falls

Staff Reports

Niagara Falls has always been a popular destination attracting tourists and dignitaries from around the world. In fact, several U.S. presidents have visited Niagara Falls throughout history.

1. Theodore Roosevelt: President Theodore Roosevelt visited Niagara Falls in 1903 during a presidential tour. He was known for his love of nature and conservation efforts, and his visit to Niagara Falls highlighted his commitment to preserving America's natural wonders.

2. Franklin D. Roosevelt: President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Niagara Falls multiple times during his presidency. One notable visit was in 1935 when he attended the dedication ceremony for the Niagara Power Project, a major hydroelectric power generation facility that harnessed the power of the falls.

3. Richard Nixon: President Richard Nixon visited Niagara Falls in 1972 as part of his re-election campaign. During his visit, he gave a speech at Prospect Point, near the falls, where he discussed various policy issues.

4. Bill Clinton: President Bill Clinton visited Niagara Falls in 1999 during his time in office. He participated in the dedication ceremony for the Niagara Falls State Park Visitor Center, highlighting the importance of preserving and promoting the natural beauty of the falls.



5. Jimmy Carter: Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn traveled to Niagara Falls, CANADA (aka the Honeymoon Capital of the World) in July of 1996 to celebrate their golden '50th' anniversary. The Carters played tourist while here, enjoying the Maid of the Mist, Journey behind the Falls, and even the Butterfly Conservatory. To cap off their Niagara Falls adventure, they spent time at Niagara-on-the-Lake which included wine tasting.

Although these are just a few examples of publicized visits to Niagara Falls, other presidents might have made unofficial trips to the area as well.

Two Centuries of Love: Celebrating Niagara Falls as the Honeymoon Capital of the World

Staff Reports

For over 220 years Niagara Falls has proudly held the title of 'Honeymoon Capital of the world'. The origins of which can be traced back to the early 19th century. NiagaraFalls dining

In the summer of 1801, Joseph and Theodosia Alston embarked on their honeymoon adventure from Albany to Niagara Falls. Theodosia was the daughter of future U.S. Vice President Aaron Burr. Accompanied by a retinue of servants and a small entourage of horses, they departed on a journey that would forever be etched in their memories. As they made their way through Buffalo their anticipation grew and, finally, they arrived at the awe-inspiring natural wonder of the falls.

A few years later in 1804 another notable couple chose Niagara Falls as their romantic haven. Jerome Bonaparte, brother of the renowned Napoleon Bonaparte, and his bride Elizabeth Patterson also sought the enchantment of the falls during their honeymoon getaway.

Initially, honeymooning in Niagara Falls was a privilege reserved for the wealthy elite symbolizing their status and prosperity. However, the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 brought about a

significant transformation. The accessibility of the Niagara Frontier increased, allowing more people to experience the splendor of the falls. The introduction of railways further facilitated the influx of newlyweds making Niagara Falls a daily destination for couples seeking a romantic escape. Geology

The allure of Niagara Falls as a honeymoon destination quickly spread across the nation. In 1841, the song 'My Niagara Falls Honeymoon' became a sensation solidifying the falls' reputation as the ultimate romantic getaway.

Today, Niagara Falls continues to captivate couples from all corners of the globe with its natural beauty and romantic ambiance. Breathtaking views of the falls, combined with a plethora of activities and attractions on both the USA and Canada sides of the border, make it a perfect destination for newlyweds in search of an unforgettable honeymoon experience.

Whether it's embarking on a romantic boat ride to feel the mist on their faces, strolling hand in hand along the picturesque nature trails, or a romantic dinner with a mesmerizing view of the cascading waters, Niagara Falls offers endless opportunities for romance and enchantment.



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LOCAL NEWS

NIAGARA FALLS

Operation Powerhouse Part 3: The Plan, The Cooperative, and The Check

How the Niagara Municipal Power Cooperative Works, Why It Keeps Value Local, and Why Every Resident Gets a Quarterly Check Starting in Month Twenty-Four (Cont. from cover)

A Four-part Series / Part Three of Four

John Karcz

and attracting outside capital is not the same thing as building community wealth. When a developer receives a ten-year tax abatement in exchange for building a hotel, the city gets the hotel, gets some construction jobs, gets some hospitality employment, and then — at the end of the abatement period — gets the property tax revenue that the hotel generates. The developer gets a decade of tax-free profits on an asset that the city's natural resource made valuable in the first place.

This is not a bad deal for a city that has nothing. It is a bad deal for a city that is sitting on a power source worth billions of dollars. The asymmetry of value capture — the falls and the power make the investment worth making; the outside investor captures the return; the city captures the tax — is the core dysfunction. It is why Niagara Falls has hosted casino investment and tourism infrastructure for decades without building the kind of middle-class wealth base that a city of its natural endowments should have.

The Niagara Municipal Power Cooperative is designed to fix this asymmetry. Not to reject outside investment — the plan absolutely requires outside capital from hyperscale data center operators — but to restructure the terms on which it arrives, so that the city is a partner and equity holder rather than a grateful host collecting table scraps.

This distinction sounds simple, but it is the difference between a city that hosts an industry and a city that owns a stake in one. It is the difference between a workforce that works at the plant and a community that profits from it. It is, ultimately, the difference between Niagara Falls as it has been — a city whose spectacular natural gift has enriched everyone except the people who live next to it — and Niagara Falls as it could be.

To understand why the NMPC is structurally different from everything that has come before, it helps to look honestly at the specific mechanisms by which prior strategies failed — not in their intentions, which were often genuinely well-meant, but in their architecture. Tax abatements transfer value from the public to the private sector for a defined period and in exchange for a commitment of investment. The commitment is real; the abatement is real; but the asymmetry is also real. The developer earns a market return on capital; the city earns a below-market return on its subsidy. That trade can be worth making when the alternative is an empty lot. It is a terrible trade when the alternative is a partnership structured to capture a share of the revenue that the city's own resources generate.

The casino compact experience in Niagara Falls is even more instructive, because the compact was explicitly designed to provide revenue sharing — a percentage of gaming revenues flowing back to the city and the state in exchange for the gaming license. The revenues were real; the payments were made; and yet the economic transformation that was promised when the casino opened never materialized, because the revenues that flowed back were small relative to the total value generated, the employment it created was predominantly low-wage, and the casino's gravitational pull did not catalyze the surrounding commercial development that boosters had projected. Revenue sharing is better than no revenue sharing. It is not the same thing as equity.

The NMPC is, at its foundation, an equity structure. The city is not sharing in someone else's revenue as a fee for the privilege of hosting them. The city is contributing assets — land and power access — that are genuinely scarce and genuinely valuable, and receiving in return a partnership stake whose value grows as the investment grows. That is a fundamentally different relationship, and it is the only kind

of relationship that has ever built durable community wealth in places that started with nothing but a natural resource.

"A tax abatement is the city saying: 'Please come here, and we'll give you a decade of profits to prove we mean it.' The NMPC says something different: 'We have something you cannot find anywhere else. Let's talk about what you're going to give us.'"

WHAT THE NIAGARA MUNICIPAL POWER COOPERATIVE IS

The legal structure, the mandate, and the reason it works where everything else has failed

The Niagara Municipal Power Cooperative is proposed as a public benefit corporation created by the City of Niagara Falls under New York State's Not-for-Profit Corporation Law or a special legislative authorization, depending on the specific structure chosen by the city's legal team. It is not a city department. It is not a standard economic development agency. It is a purpose-built intermediary with specific powers and specific obligations.

Its powers are three: to hold and manage a municipal allocation of NYPA hydroelectric power, to own and lease city-owned land for data center development, and to negotiate and execute partnership agreements with data center operators on terms that include revenue sharing and equity participation. These powers require specific authorization — from the NYPA for the power allocation, from the city council for the land authority, and from the state if special enabling legislation is needed. None of these authorizations are unprecedented. Each has analogues in existing New York State law and practice.

Its obligations are equally specific: to maximize the long-term economic benefit to the residents of Niagara Falls, to maintain transparency in its financial operations through annual public reporting, to distribute a defined share of its net revenue to resident dividends, and to prioritize local hiring in all partnership agreements. The NMPC is not permitted to distribute profits to private shareholders — it is a public benefit entity, and its surplus flows either to the Citizens' Dividend or to reinvestment in city infrastructure, including the fiber network described below.

The governance structure matters enormously, and it is worth being specific. The NMPC board should have seven members: two appointed by the mayor, two elected by the city council, two appointed by a community advisory board composed of neighborhood representatives — ensuring that the communities that have historically been most harmed by extractive development have a direct voice — and one independent expert in energy finance or infrastructure development. This structure prevents the NMPC from being captured by any single political interest while ensuring that it has the technical expertise to negotiate effectively with counterparties who are some of the most sophisticated corporate actors in the world.

The independence of the NMPC from direct city government control is not a bug; it is the most important feature. Economic development authorities that operate as city departments are subject to the full range of political pressures that city departments face — budget cycles, personnel politics, mayoral priorities that shift with each election, and the constant temptation to use the entity's resources for short-term political purposes rather than long-term strategic ones. The NMPC must be insulated from this by design: governed by a board with staggered terms, funded by its own revenue rather than city appropriations, and subject to public accountability through annual reporting and a mandated audit rather than through day-to-day political oversight.

This does not mean the NMPC is unaccountable. The community advisory board representatives, the city council appointees,



The Robert Moses Niagara Hydroelectric Power Station in Lewiston, NY.

and the annual public financial reporting create multiple layers of accountability. But the accountability is structured to run to the residents of Niagara Falls — through transparency, through the Citizens' Dividend mechanism, and through the community advisory board — rather than to the political class. That distinction is essential, because the political class is precisely the constituency that has managed Niagara Falls' economic development for the past several decades with the results that this series has documented.

Comparable structures that already exist

The NMPC is novel in its specific application, but the legal and organizational forms it draws on are well-established. New York State's municipal electric utilities — including the Long Island Power Authority and various municipal utility districts — already operate as public benefit entities managing power infrastructure for community benefit.

The Tennessee Valley Authority operates as a federal public benefit corporation managing power generation and economic development across a multi-state region.

Chattanooga's EPB — the public electric utility that built the nation's first municipal gigabit fiber network — is a city-owned utility operating under a public benefit mandate, generating surplus revenue that is returned to the city.

Bilbao Ría 2000, the Spanish public company created to manage the regeneration of Bilbao's industrial waterfront, operated as a public benefit entity with the specific mandate of capturing land value appreciation for public reinvestment — and used that captured value to build the Guggenheim Bilbao and transform the city without relying on conventional public budgets.

The NMPC synthesizes elements of all of these models into a structure appropriate for Niagara Falls' specific circumstances.

THE NYPA POWER ALLOCATION — THE FIRST MOVE

How the city secures the asset that makes everything else possible

The foundational action of the entire plan is the NYPA power allocation. Without it, the NMPC has nothing to offer that distinguishes Niagara Falls from any other mid-sized city in the northeastern United States. With it, Niagara Falls has something that companies spending tens of billions of dollars on infrastructure are actively and urgently seeking.

The New York Power Authority has a well-established policy of allocating preferential-rate hydroelectric power from the Niagara and St. Lawrence River projects to businesses within the 30-mile service territory through a program called Replacement Power and Expansion

Power. Companies in the region have received allocations for manufacturing, industrial processing, and energy-intensive commercial operations for decades. The process involves an application, a review, and an agreement specifying the quantity, rate, and term of the allocation.

What has never happened — and what this plan proposes for the first time — is a municipal entity applying for a strategic allocation not for a specific identified user, but as a power reserve to be allocated to economic development partners on terms determined by the city's public benefit cooperative. This is a different ask than what NYPA typically receives, and it will require a different kind of engagement — not a standard industrial application, but a policy-level conversation between the City of Niagara Falls, the NYPA board, and the office of the Governor.

This conversation is worth having, and it is winnable, for a simple reason: the Governor of New York State has a significant political interest in the economic transformation of Niagara Falls. The city's distress is a persistent embarrassment for state government — a place that should, by any reasonable measure, be thriving, that has instead been a symbol of post-industrial failure for decades. A credible, well-structured proposal for using the state's own power infrastructure as the foundation of a community wealth-building vehicle is exactly the kind of initiative that aligns with the Governor's stated economic development priorities for Western New York.

The NYPA conversation is the first phone call. Everything else — the hyperscaler outreach, the cooperative formation, the land assembly, the deal negotiations — can happen in parallel. But securing the power allocation is the precondition that makes the pitch credible, and it begins with a meeting between the Mayor of Niagara Falls, the NYPA chairman, and the Governor's economic development team.

- NYPA Replacement Power program has allocated preferential rates to regional industry for decades
- Existing NYPA regional customers include manufacturers, food processors, and energy-intensive tech operations
- A municipal strategic allocation — a new ask — requires Governor-level political engagement
- The precedent for public benefit power allocation exists in NYPA's enabling statute

THE HYPERSCALER PITCH

What Niagara Falls offers that no other site in the eastern United States can match. With a power allocation in hand — or even in credible advanced negotiation — the NMPC

(Cont. on pg. 4)

NIAGARA FALLS CONT.

Operation Powerhouse Part 3: The Plan, The Cooperative, and The Check Cont.



The New York State Capitol, Albany. A governor-level conversation with the New York Power Authority is the necessary first step — and one that comes with clear political upside for any administration seeking a transformative win in Western New York.

is in a position to issue a formal Request for Proposals to hyperscale data center operators. This is the step where the city stops waiting to be discovered and starts actively marketing itself to the companies that need what it has.

The pitch document that the NMPC issues to hyperscalers should be specific, quantified, and structured around the variables that actually drive data center site selection decisions. It is not a tourism brochure for Niagara Falls. It is a financial and operational analysis showing why a campus in Niagara Falls is worth more — in lower operating costs, in power security, in ESG compliance — than comparable sites in other markets.

The core pitch, stated plainly:

- Power: NYPA hydroelectric allocation at 40–60% below market rates — the lowest available clean power cost in the eastern United States for a facility of this scale
- Cooling: Free-air economization for 6+ months annually, reducing cooling operating costs by 30–40% — worth \$10–30 million per year per 100MW campus
- Land: City-owned brownfield parcels available through NMPC partnership at nominal cost — no competitive land market, no speculative pricing
- Connectivity: Direct access to existing fiber routes through the Buffalo-Niagara corridor; Rainbow Bridge border connectivity to Canadian networks
- Logistics: 20 minutes from Buffalo Niagara International Airport; I-190 corridor access
- Sustainability: 100% renewable energy sourcing, satisfying the ESG and sustainability reporting requirements of all major hyperscale operators
- Partnership: NMPC equity structure rather than standard tax abatement — meaning the city is a long-term partner with aligned interests, not a regulator to be managed

The deal structure the NMPC offers is the part that is genuinely new. Instead of a standard incentive package — tax breaks, infrastructure subsidies, streamlined permitting — the NMPC offers a partnership: the city contributes land and power access; the operator contributes capital and construction; and revenue is shared at a negotiated rate of 5 to 15 percent of gross operating revenue, in addition to standard property taxes and local hiring commitments.

This framing requires a cultural shift in how the city approaches economic development negotiations, and it is worth being honest about the challenge. City governments are not accustomed to negotiating as equals with companies whose capital budgets exceed the city's total assessed value. The NMPC structure is designed to change that dynamic — not by pretending the power balance is equal, but by giving the city something real to negotiate with. The hyperscaler needs the power, needs the land, and needs the renewable energy certification. The NMPC controls all three. That is a negotiating position, and it should be treated as one.

"The city is not offering a discount. It is offering a partnership. Those are different things — and for the right counterparty, the partnership is worth more."

THE DEAL STRUCTURE IN DETAIL Equity stakes, revenue sharing, and why this protects the city across decades

The mechanics of the NMPC partnership deal deserve careful explanation, because the details matter enormously for whether the city captures real value or merely the appearance of it.

The core structure has three components. First, the land contribution: the NMPC contributes city-owned brownfield parcels to the partnership under a long-term ground lease — typically 30 to 50 years — rather than a sale. This is important. A sale transfers ownership permanently and captures value only once, at the moment of transaction. A ground lease retains city ownership of the underlying land, captures ongoing lease revenue for the duration of the agreement, and — critically — returns the land and any improvements on it to city control at the end of the lease term. The city's asset appreciates with the value of the data center investment; it is not extinguished by it.

Second, the revenue share: the NMPC negotiates a percentage of gross operating revenue from the data center — typically in the range of 5 to 15 percent, depending on the size of the power allocation, the value of the land, and the term of the agreement. This is in addition to standard property taxes, not instead of them. Revenue share on a hyperscale data center campus operating at full capacity can represent tens of millions of dollars per year in NMPC income — income that flows to the Citizens' Dividend and to city infrastructure investment.

Third, the local hiring commitment: all partnership agreements include binding minimum local hiring requirements for both construction and operations phases. Construction of a major data center campus employs hundreds to thousands of workers for multiple years. Operations employ hundreds of permanent, skilled, above-median-wage positions. The hiring requirements are structured with specific percentages and enforcement mechanisms — not aspirational language in a press release.

The enforcement architecture for all three components is as important as the terms themselves. Ground lease covenants are enforceable in court and recorded against title. Revenue-sharing provisions include audit rights — the NMPC has the contractual right to examine the operator's financial records to verify reported revenue. Local hiring requirements include quarterly reporting obligations and financial penalties for non-compliance. None of this is novel; all of it is standard commercial contract practice. What is novel is applying it systematically to a municipal economic development context where enforcement mechanisms have historically been weak or absent entirely.

There is one more structural feature worth highlighting: the term of the ground lease creates an implicit alignment of incentives that standard incentive packages do not. When the city sells land or provides a ten-year tax abatement, the relationship between the city and the developer is essentially transactional and time-limited. The developer gets the incentive, makes the investment, and then operates independently for the remainder of the asset's life. The city's leverage disappears the moment the abatement period ends. Under the NMPC ground lease structure, the city remains the landlord for the entire 30-to-50-year term of the agreement. The operator has an ongoing, continuous relationship with the NMPC — and a strong interest in maintaining that relationship productively. The city's leverage does not expire. It endures for as long as the data center operates.

The Bilbao Model: How Land Value Capture Funds a City

In the early 1990s, Bilbao, Spain was a rusting post-industrial port city with collapsing employment, a polluted river estuary, and a

shrinking population. The Basque regional government and the City of Bilbao created a public company — Bilbao Ría 2000 — with a specific mandate and a specific mechanism: it received ownership of publicly-held industrial land along the estuary, sold that land to developers at market value as the urban regeneration effort made it valuable, and used the proceeds to fund further regeneration — new infrastructure, new public spaces, the Guggenheim Bilbao museum, and an entirely rebuilt urban waterfront. The key insight was that the public entities — the city and the region — owned the land before it was valuable. By retaining that ownership through the process of making it valuable, they captured the appreciation that their own investment created. Private developers participated and profited, but the primary economic beneficiary of the value created was the public entity that had initiated the process.

The NMPC applies this logic to Niagara Falls' data center opportunity. The city owns brownfield land that is currently near-worthless. By contributing that land to data center partnerships — and structuring the contribution as a ground lease rather than a sale — the city retains ownership through the process of making it valuable, and captures the appreciation that the power allocation and the partnership structure created.

THE CHECK IN EVERY MAILBOX *The Citizens' Dividend — the most important and most radical piece of the entire plan*

Every plan this series has reviewed, every precedent examined, every deal structure analyzed leads to one question: who gets the money?

In the standard economic development model, the answer is: the investors, the developers, and eventually — through taxes and jobs — the broader economy in a diffuse and hard-to-trace way. Residents of the host community benefit indirectly, through services funded by tax revenue, through jobs that may or may not be accessible to them, through an economy that may or may not improve their daily lives in ways they can feel.

The NMPC Citizens' Dividend is a different answer. It says: every resident of Niagara Falls gets a direct, quarterly cash payment — not mediated by services, not dependent on being employed at a data center, not contingent on anything other than living in the city for at least twelve consecutive months.

The model comes from Alaska. In 1976, Alaska voters approved a constitutional amendment creating the Alaska Permanent Fund — a sovereign wealth fund fed by a defined percentage of state oil royalties. The Fund invests its principal in a diversified portfolio of assets, and each year distributes a share of investment income to every Alaskan resident who has been in the state for a full calendar year. The annual dividend has ranged from a few hundred dollars in lean years to over \$3,000 in peak years, averaging roughly \$1,600 per year per person since the program began. Over the life of the program, total payments exceed \$25,000 per resident.

The effects have been studied extensively. The Alaska Permanent Fund dividend is associated with measurably lower poverty rates in Alaska relative to comparable states, with reduced outmigration from rural communities that would otherwise lose population to economic pressure, and with a broadly distributed sense among Alaskans that the state's natural resource wealth belongs to them — not to oil companies, not to the government, but to the people of the state. It is the most popular government program in Alaska's history, and no politician who has suggested touching it has survived the attempt.

The NMPC Citizens' Dividend applies this model to Niagara Falls' data center revenue. The NMPC dedicates 25% of its net revenue — after operating costs and the fiber network investment described in the next section — to a Resident Dividend Fund. The fund pays a quarterly distribution to every registered resident who has maintained a primary residence in Niagara Falls for at least 12 consecutive months, verified through voter registration, utility accounts, or other standard residential documentation.

Conservative projections, based on a single anchor data center in its first full year of operation:

- NMPC revenue share from one 100MW campus at 8% of gross: approximately \$8–12 million annually
- Citizens' Dividend allocation at 25%: approximately \$2–3 million annually
- Resident population: approximately 47,500

- Per-resident annual payment, Year 1: approximately \$42–63 per quarter, or \$168–252 per year

These are modest numbers in Year 1 — this is not the point. The point is that the mechanism exists, the checks go out, and every resident of Niagara Falls receives tangible, direct, personal evidence that the data center economy is working for them. As additional data centers come online and the NMPC revenue base grows, the quarterly payment grows with it.

- With three 100MW campuses operating: per-resident dividend approaches \$500–750 annually
- With five campuses: \$800–1,200 annually
- Family of three, at five campuses: \$2,400–3,600 per year in new income — for living in Niagara Falls

The behavioral economics of this structure are as important as the financial mechanics. The Citizens' Dividend changes the calculus of staying versus leaving. For a young family weighing whether to remain in Niagara Falls or relocate to a suburb where costs are higher but the economy is stronger, a quarterly check from the NMPC is a concrete, quantified, real-dollar reason to stay. For a remote worker deciding where to establish a home base, the combination of low housing costs, a quarterly dividend, and — as described in the next section — gigabit internet access makes Niagara Falls a genuinely competitive option against cities that have been marketing themselves as remote-work destinations for years.

There is also a political economy dimension to the Citizens' Dividend that is easy to underestimate. Direct cash payments to residents create a constituency for the NMPC and its mission that no other mechanism can replicate. When the quarterly check arrives, every resident of Niagara Falls has a personal financial stake in the health and success of the data center partnerships. They become advocates for the plan, not passive recipients of its indirect benefits. This is the genius of the Alaska Permanent Fund model: it made the citizens of Alaska into stakeholders in the state's resource economy in a way they could feel every year, in their bank accounts, in their hands. The NMPC Citizens' Dividend does the same thing for Niagara Falls — and in doing so, it builds the broadest possible political base for protecting and expanding the program over time.

"The Citizens' Dividend is not charity. It is a return on the asset that makes the data centers worth building. The falls created the power. The power creates the revenue. The revenue belongs to the people who live here."

THE FIBER BACKBONE

Why the NMPC builds a city-owned gigabit network — and how it pays for itself from day one

The Citizens' Dividend addresses the question of who gets the money. The fiber backbone addresses the question of what kind of city Niagara Falls becomes — and specifically whether it becomes a place that the next generation of workers, entrepreneurs, and residents actively chooses rather than passively inherits.

The proposal is straightforward: the NMPC uses its data center revenue stream as collateral to issue municipal bonds financing the construction of a city-owned gigabit fiber network, serving every residence and business in Niagara Falls. The network is built, owned, and operated by the NMPC — not by a private telecommunications provider. Revenue from the network flows back to the NMPC and, through the NMPC, to residents.

The model for this is Chattanooga, Tennessee — and the Chattanooga story is one of the most compelling urban economic development case studies of the past twenty years.

Case Study: Chattanooga, TN The Gig City

In 2009, Chattanooga's city-owned electric utility — the Electric Power Board, or EPB — completed the construction of a 9,000-mile fiber optic network covering the entire Chattanooga service area. Total investment: approximately \$280 million, partly funded by a federal stimulus grant and partly by EPB revenue bonds.

The network went live as the first municipal gigabit fiber network in the United States. Residential customers received gigabit internet service at competitive rates. Businesses received symmetric high-speed connectivity that had previously been unavailable at any price. And the data-hungry industrial and commercial users that the network attracted generated the anchor revenue that made the economics work from day

(Cont. on pg. 5)

NIAGARA FALLS CONT.

Former DEC Engineer Honored as Environmental Groups Renew Pressure on Goodyear Emissions

Staff Reports

Environmental organizations gathered outside the Goodyear Tire & Rubber plant in Niagara Falls Monday to recognize former New York State Department of Environmental Conservation engineer Dylan Keenan while renewing calls for major reductions in toxic emissions from the facility.

The Sierra Club Niagara Group, the Niagara Falls Branch of the NAACP, Don't Waste New York and the Interfaith Climate Justice Community presented Keenan with their Environmental Justice Hero Award, recognizing his work as the lead DEC engineer overseeing the plant's air pollution permit between 2018 and 2023.

The coalition is urging the DEC to require Goodyear to install pollution-control equipment capable of reducing cancer-causing emissions, including ortho-toluidine, by 90%.

NAACP Niagara Falls Branch President Renae Kimble said clean air should be considered a fundamental civil right and argued that protecting residents' health must come before corporate interests. Kimble praised Keenan for helping expose toxic pollution concerns at the facility and said communities depend on individuals willing to bring environmental issues to light.

The debate surrounding the plant dates back to July 2023 when the DEC notified Goodyear that it was operating

outside the limits of its state air permit and ordered the company to develop a plan for additional pollution controls. Since then, state regulators have maintained that current ortho-toluidine emissions remain within what the agency considers acceptable health-based standards, while also disputing claims that computer modeling shows dangerous levels of exposure in nearby neighborhoods.

The issue has continued to draw attention following state health data showing a crude bladder cancer rate of approximately 63.6 cases per 100,000 residents within roughly a mile east of the plant, compared with 31.9 cases per 100,000 across Niagara County and 20.8 statewide. Health officials have cautioned that those statistics do not establish a direct connection between the plant and cancer cases and continue to describe the overall health risk to nearby residents as very low.

Environmental advocates argue the state should require stronger pollution controls despite those findings, saying significant emission reductions are necessary to better protect surrounding neighborhoods and restore public confidence.

Monday's recognition of Keenan was intended not only to honor his role during the state's investigation, but also to renew public pressure on regulators as discussions over future emission controls continue.

Niagara Falls Council Chairman Says Community Must Confront Youth Gun Violence After Weekend Shooting

Staff Reports

A neighborhood is shaken after multiple homes, a vehicle and a teenager were struck during a chaotic overnight series of incidents that highlight a growing problem in the City.

The violence unfolded during the early morning hours of Saturday, June 20th, after Niagara Falls police began monitoring groups of teenagers moving through several neighborhoods across the city.

According to police, the night's activity began with reports of vandalism at Gluck Park where vehicles were allegedly driven across wet grass leaving behind significant damage. Officers later tracked the same vehicles and groups of juveniles to Legends Park on 11th Street before they eventually gathered behind the former Kalfas School on Beech Avenue.

Shortly after 3:20am, police were dispatched to the Centre Court neighborhood after receiving reports of gunfire. Responding officers searched the area but initially found no victims, shell casings or damaged property.

That changed less than an hour later.

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center contacted police after a 17-year-old male arrived in the emergency department suffering from a gunshot wound to his hand. Authorities said the injury was a grazing wound and was not considered life-threatening.

As Criminal Investigation Division detectives expanded their investigation, they located a Nissan Armada parked in an alley in the 3300 block of Royal Avenue. Investigators discovered a bullet hole in the vehicle's rear driver's side door along with a shattered window. Detectives determined the SUV had been in the Centre Avenue area when it was struck by gunfire.

The search for the shooting scene soon uncovered additional evidence.

Investigators found that a residence at 1505 Centre Ave. had also been struck by bullets, with gunfire damaging a front window.

Hours later, after daylight, police were called

back to the Centre Court neighborhood when a resident living on the 2900 block of Aaron Griffin Way discovered her home had also been struck by gunfire overnight. Officers found a shattered front window and recovered a bullet that had traveled into the home and lodged inside an interior wall.

A search of the surrounding streets led investigators to recover six spent 7.62 caliber shell casings near the intersection of Aaron Griffin Way and Calumet Avenue. The ammunition is commonly associated with AK-47-style semi-automatic rifles.

The shootings prompted Niagara Falls City Council Chairman Brian Archie, who lives in the Centre Court neighborhood, to issue an open letter addressing residents and the growing violence affecting the community.

"I am writing to our city following yet another evening marked by gunfire in the Center Court community," pleaded Archie. "This past Thursday, which should have been a night of joy and celebration for our young people, turned chaotic. Families in Center Court experienced bullets entering their homes through windows and walls, invading the very places where they should feel safest."

Archie said that in the aftermath of the shooting, neighbors repeatedly approached him asking the same question.

"What are we doing to stop this?"

While acknowledging that city leaders understand violence continues to occur, Archie said the larger challenge is changing attitudes among young people who continue carrying firearms and engaging in dangerous behavior.

"We know these things are happening," said Archie. "How do we talk to our young people about carrying weapons, about this behavior. Education and community centers alone won't fix this."

Police sources familiar with recent investigations, along with real-time police radio traffic that Niagara Action monitors to post our police incidents each week, indicate many of Niagara Falls' recent shootings have involved groups of juveniles. As such, it's clear these young offenders no longer believe there are meaningful consequences for carrying or using illegal firearms.

Operation Powerhouse Part 3: The Plan, The Cooperative, and The Check Cont.

one.

The results, documented over 15 years of operation:

- \$5.3 billion in net community economic benefit
- 10,420 jobs created or supported — representing 31% of all new jobs created in Chattanooga during the period
- 6.4x return on a \$396 million total investment (including financing costs)
- Surplus revenue generated that allowed EPB to lower electric rates for residential customers
- Transformation of Chattanooga's national identity — from a post-industrial rust belt city to a nationally recognized tech hub and remote-work destination

Chattanooga was, in 2008, a city with many of the same characteristics as Niagara Falls today: post-industrial, economically distressed, population-declining, struggling to compete with larger regional centers for economic investment. The fiber network was the single intervention that changed the trajectory.

The Niagara version has one significant advantage over Chattanooga: the data centers are the anchor customers for the fiber network from day one. A hyperscale data center campus requires enormous bandwidth — sustained, symmetric, redundant fiber connectivity at scales that dwarf residential and business demand. By building the network to serve the data centers, the NMPC generates immediate, substantial commercial revenue that makes the residential and small-business service affordable and the network financially self-sustaining from its first year of operation.

The downstream effect is the one that changes Niagara Falls' competitive position as a place to live and work. Gigabit internet — symmetric, reliable, competitively priced, and city-owned rather than subject to the service quality and pricing decisions of a private monopoly — is the single infrastructure characteristic most associated with remote-worker attraction in contemporary location research. A city with cheap housing, a quarterly dividend check, a world-class natural attraction, and gigabit internet is competitive for remote workers in a way that Niagara Falls currently is not.

The fiber network also has a direct economic development function beyond attracting remote workers. Small businesses in Niagara Falls,

which currently operate at a connectivity disadvantage relative to counterparts in larger metro areas served by competitive fiber providers, gain access to enterprise-grade internet service at competitive prices. Startups and entrepreneurs who require high-bandwidth connectivity to compete in digital markets — e-commerce, software development, media production, professional services — find Niagara Falls newly viable as a place to build a business, rather than somewhere they must leave in order to operate at full capacity.

None of this requires the NMPC to operate the fiber network as a charity. The network charges market rates — competitive with what Spectrum or Verizon charge, and superior in service quality and reliability. Commercial rates from data center anchor customers subsidize the cost of residential service, allowing the NMPC to offer genuinely affordable connectivity to households that currently cannot afford broadband at all. The network is a public utility in the fullest sense: a service that every resident needs, owned by the community, priced to be universally accessible, and operated to generate surplus that flows back to the public rather than to private shareholders.

THE REVENUE MODEL — HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

From first dollar to Citizens' Dividend — the complete financial picture

The revenue model of the NMPC has four streams, arriving in sequence and growing over time.

Stream One: Option and exclusivity fees from the hyperscaler RFP process. When data center operators respond to the NMPC's RFP and enter exclusive negotiations, they pay fees to secure their position — typically ranging from a few hundred thousand to several million dollars depending on the size of the power allocation being reserved. These fees are non-refundable and arrive before a single shovel breaks ground. They fund the NMPC's initial operating costs and begin the revenue timeline immediately.

Stream Two: Upfront infrastructure fees. When a partnership agreement is executed, the data center operator typically makes a capital contribution to shared infrastructure — road improvements, utility connections, fiber buildout to the campus perimeter. These are negotiated as part of the deal and can range from a few million to tens of millions of dollars depending on the scale of the campus and the existing state

of the infrastructure.

Stream Three: Property taxes. From the moment construction begins, the assessed value of the data center improvements generates property tax revenue for the city. A single 100MW data center campus, fully constructed and assessed, generates between \$3 and \$8 million per year in property tax revenue alone — comparable to what Quincy, Washington received, which funded its new school and hospital.

Stream Four: NMPC revenue share. Once the data center is operational, the revenue-sharing agreement generates ongoing income for the NMPC — 5 to 15 percent of gross operating revenue, paid quarterly, for the term of the ground lease. This is the primary source of Citizens' Dividend funding and grows with each additional campus.

The sequencing of these revenue streams is one of the plan's underappreciated strengths. The NMPC does not wait two or three years for its first dollar of income. Option fees arrive in Year 1 of the negotiation process. Infrastructure co-investment arrives at signing. Property taxes begin at the start of construction, typically in Year 2. Revenue share begins at the start of operations, typically in Year 3 or 4. By the time the Citizens' Dividend pays its first check — targeted for Month 24, as this article's title states — the NMPC already has multiple revenue streams flowing and a clear projection of the revenue share income that will fund the dividend in subsequent years.

- Option/exclusivity fees: \$500K–\$5M per operator, paid before construction begins
- Infrastructure co-investment: \$5–50M per campus, paid at signing
- Property taxes: \$3–8M per year per 100MW campus
- Revenue share at 8% on \$100M gross revenue: \$8M per year per campus
- Five campuses at full operation: \$40M+ per year in NMPC revenue share alone

The risk profile of this revenue model also deserves mention. Option fees and infrastructure co-investment are contractually committed before major NMPC expenditures are made — meaning the plan's early phases are largely self-funding. Property taxes are legally mandatory and independent of the NMPC's negotiating position. Revenue share is the largest variable, but it is tied to the actual financial performance of a large, capital-

intensive, long-lived asset — a hyperscale data center is not a business that opens and closes with the economic cycle. It is a 20-to-30-year infrastructure investment, and the companies that build it do so because they have committed to operating it at scale for its entire useful life.

The NMPC is, in this respect, in an enviable position relative to most public revenue streams. Its primary income source — data center revenue share — is tied to an industry that is growing rapidly, is capital-intensive enough to create high switching costs once a facility is built, and is driven by structural demand from artificial intelligence and cloud computing that shows no sign of peaking within the relevant planning horizon. The city is not betting on a fad. It is building a partnership with the infrastructure of the digital economy — infrastructure that, once placed in Niagara Falls, stays in Niagara Falls.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Part Three has laid out the complete structure of the Niagara Municipal Power Cooperative — the legal entity, the NYPA power allocation, the deal mechanics, the Citizens' Dividend, and the fiber backbone. The structure is specific, the precedents are proven, and the financial projections are conservative rather than aspirational.

Part Four — the final article in this series — maps the complete execution timeline: from the first conversation with the NYPA to the moment the first Citizens' Dividend check is mailed to every resident of Niagara Falls. It also presents the broader vision of what Niagara Falls becomes in the decade after Operation Powerhouse is fully operational — the Powerhouse District, the Tesla-to-AI Museum, the transformation of the tourist experience, and the Innovation Quarter.

The structure is ready. The precedents are proven. Part Four describes how to build it.

About the Author:

Before turning to journalism, John Karcz spent years in technical and analytical roles — first as a field and laboratory investigator in the Buffalo State Department of Geography and Planning, then overseeing technical writing and reliability engineering for Sanofi Pharmaceuticals in Swiftwater, Pennsylvania, and later as plant manager at Stollberg Chemical Company where he worked in close conjunction with the NYPA. That background informs his reporting on economic redevelopment and municipal systems. John grew up in Niagara Falls, is published nationally on medium.com and elsewhere, and is the author of several books.

BUFFALO

Buffalo School Board Turmoil Deepens: Independent Investigation Begins as Resignation Fuels Questions Over Leadership and Transparency (Cont. from cover)

Staff Reports

board's governance, and the district has now retained outside legal counsel to investigate the matter.

What remains unknown is perhaps the biggest question of all.

District officials still have not disclosed which board member is under investigation or revealed the nature of the allegations, apart from that they are sexual in nature. Instead, leadership continues to cite the ongoing investigation as the reason for remaining silent.

On Friday, June 26th, Board President Dr. Kathy Evans-Brown confirmed that the Buffalo Board of Education has retained the law firm Hodgson Russ LLP to conduct an independent investigation.

"I am announcing that the Buffalo Board of Education has retained Hodgson Russ LLP to conduct an outside independent investigation into allegations against a board member. Mr. Jeffrey Swiatek, a partner at Hodgson Russ, will lead the independent investigation to ensure an impartial and fair review of the allegations. The district currently has an engagement letter with Hodgson Russ for legal services. As this is an ongoing investigation, we have no further comment," said Evans-Brown in a statement.

The announcement follows a series of increasingly public disputes over how the board handled complaints that surfaced earlier this month.

Last week, the Board of Education acknowledged during a public meeting that outside investigators would be retained after allegations were brought against one of its members. That announcement came only after days of criticism from fellow board members who questioned why the complaints had not been promptly shared with the full board and why district policies requiring immediate investigations had seemingly not been followed.

The controversy has only grown since then.

The board's internal turmoil reached another level this past week when North District representative Cindi McEachon announced she was resigning from the

Board of Education.

McEachon, who has represented the North District since being elected in November 2022, said she could no longer continue serving because of what she described as fundamental concerns over how the board conducts its business.

"This was not an easy decision. However, I have serious concerns about the Board's current governance practices and whether transparency, accountability and collaboration are being upheld in a way the serves students, families and the public," said McEachon in a statement. "Effective public services requires public trust, and at this time, I do not believe the Board is operating in a manner that consistently supports sound decision-making or the best interests of the district."

Her resignation represents one of the strongest public rebukes yet of the board's leadership.

McEachon, who also serves as chief executive officer of Peaceprints of Western New York and teaches at both the University at Buffalo and Villa Maria College, indicated her decision extended beyond a single controversy and reflected broader concerns about the board's overall governance.

"I respect my colleagues and understand the complexity of the work ahead, but I also believe it is important to be honest about the standards required for effective governance," continued her statement. "My hope is that this moment provides an opportunity for reflection and meaningful improvement in how the Board conducts its work."

Her departure leaves the North District seat vacant and creates yet another challenge for a board already facing intense public scrutiny.

McEachon's resignation did not occur in isolation.

Earlier this month, board member Lawrence Scott publicly criticized leadership over its handling of the allegations, arguing the board risked outside intervention if it failed to promptly appoint an independent investigator.

Now, following McEachon's resignation, Scott again publicly aligned himself with her concerns.

"I fully understand why Cindi has reached this point of resigning, and I share her concerns with board governance, transparency, and accountability and the impact these concerns are having on staff and district operations," said Scott's statement.

Scott's remarks reinforce a growing divide within the Board of Education where multiple elected members are openly questioning how board leadership has handled one of the district's most sensitive controversies in recent years.

Meanwhile, Buffalo Teachers Federation President Rich Nigro described McEachon's departure as a significant loss for the district.

"It is unfortunate because I think that's a loss to this board," said Nigro.

While board members continue debating governance issues, Superintendent Dr. Pascal Mubenga issued a statement thanking McEachon for her years of service.

"I extend my sincere gratitude to Cindi McEachon for her dedication to our students, staff, and whole school community during her more than three years serving as the North District Board of Education Representative," said Mubenga. "I want to personally thank Ms. McEachon for the trust she placed in me as part of the team that brought me to Buffalo to serve as superintendent of the Buffalo Public Schools. Her leadership helped strengthen our district and public education. On behalf of the Buffalo Public Schools, I wish her continued success in her future pursuits."

McEachon served on the board during a period marked by significant financial challenges, academic concerns, curriculum debates and repeated controversy involving district leadership.

Despite Friday's announcement that Hodgson Russ has officially begun its investigation, many of the questions surrounding the controversy remain unanswered.

- The district has not disclosed:
1. which board member is being investigated;
 2. what allegations prompted the investigation;
 3. when the allegations were first reported;



Former North District representative Cindi McEachon

- ed;
4. when the investigation is expected to conclude; or
5. whether the board member remains active in board business while the investigation proceeds.

The hiring of outside counsel represents the board's first formal investigative action after weeks of criticism over its handling of the matter.

For critics, however, the investigation itself has not ended concerns about how leadership responded after receiving the allegations.

Instead, it has become another chapter in what has become an increasingly public dispute over transparency, accountability and confidence in the governance of Buffalo Public Schools.

Under the Buffalo City Charter, the Board of Education has 30 days to appoint a replacement for McEachon's vacant North District seat. If the board cannot agree on an appointment within that time, Buffalo Mayor Sean Ryan will make the selection.

For now, the board says it will have nothing further to say until Hodgson Russ completes its work.

Buffalo Sells Four Downtown Parking Garages for More Than \$60 Million as City Uses Deal to Help Close Budget Gap

Staff Reports

The City of Buffalo has officially completed the sale of four downtown parking garages in a transaction that will bring more than \$60 million into city coffers, providing a significant financial boost as officials work to stabilize Buffalo's budget.

City leaders announced on Monday, June 29th, that the sale of the Turner, Fernbach, Adams and Augspurger parking ramps to the newly created Buffalo Parking Authority has officially closed, one day before the end of the city's fiscal year.

The transaction is expected to generate more than \$60 million in total proceeds, substantially exceeding earlier projections and providing immediate relief for a city facing ongoing financial challenges.

Under the agreement, Buffalo will receive an initial payment of \$30 million immediately while the remaining proceeds will be distributed over the next two fiscal years (2026-27 and 2027-28).

The sale was viewed as a key component of the city's plan to close a substantial budget shortfall during the 2025-26 fiscal year. By finalizing the transaction before the close of the fiscal year, city officials secured a major

influx of revenue that will be used to strengthen Buffalo's financial position.

The final sale price also surpassed expectations.

Officials had originally estimated the garages would generate roughly \$40 million, but the completed transaction ultimately produced approximately \$20 million more than originally anticipated.

According to the city, the parking ramps were sold for a bond value of \$58.15 million, along with an additional \$4,250,228 premium, bringing the total value of the deal to more than \$62 million.

Deputy Mayor Ben Swanekamp said the larger-than-expected return provides the city with a stronger financial foundation while acknowledging the decision to part with the assets was not an easy one.

"This transaction puts the City in a much stronger financial position," said Swanekamp. "While this was a difficult decision, it was a necessary step toward moving Buffalo beyond more than a decade of fiscal instability and onto a path of long-term financial sustainability."

The sale represents the culmination of an effort that began under former Acting Mayor Chris Scanlon.

In 2025, Scanlon proposed transferring ownership of the city-owned garages to a newly created Buffalo Parking Authority after receiving authorization from New York State to establish the authority.

At the time, however, the proposal faced criticism from then-mayoral candidate Sean Ryan.

Ryan argued in April 2025 that selling the garages amounted to "yet another one-time revenue gimmick to kick the can down the road another year instead of doing the hard work to fix Buffalo's structural budgetary problems."

After taking office, Ryan's administration ultimately moved forward with the transaction, embracing the same plan as part of its broader effort to address the city's fiscal challenges.

The four garages included in the sale – the Turner, Fernbach, Adams and Augspurger ramps – are all located in downtown Buffalo and have long served commuters, visitors and businesses in the city's central business district.

While ownership has now transferred to the Buffalo Parking Authority, officials say the facilities are expected to remain important pieces of Buffalo's downtown parking

network.

The authority says it intends to use future revenue generated by the garages to improve the system rather than simply operate the existing facilities.

According to the Buffalo Parking Authority, excess revenues will be reinvested into modernizing the parking structures, enhancing the customer experience and supporting additional improvements throughout its parking operations.

City officials emphasized that the transaction involved months of coordination between several agencies.

"Throughout the process, the City and the Buffalo Parking Authority worked collaboratively to address concerns raised by the BCAR Board and ensure the authority is well-positioned to successfully own, operate and maintain the parking garages," said the city in a statement.

The completed sale marks one of the largest municipal asset transactions Buffalo has undertaken in recent years and arrives as city leaders continue searching for long-term solutions to recurring budget shortfalls. While the immediate infusion of more than \$60 million is expected to ease short-term financial concerns, larger fiscal issues loom ahead.

AROUND ERIE COUNTY

EXCLUSION ISLAND: Grand Island's Bitter Legal War Against Seneca Nation Exposes a Dark Pattern of Suburbia Chasing Out People of Color (Cont. from Cover)

How a wealthy Western NY suburb went from terrorizing a businessman of color with spy drones to suing the Federal Government just to keep a sovereign Native Nation out of their backyard.

John Watson

Seneca Nation.

Their grievance? That the federal government had the audacity to follow Indian law and restore a measly 207 acres of ancestral land to its rightful indigenous stewards.

The Town of Grand Island's federal lawsuit calls the U.S. Department of the Interior's decision – which rightfully removes the central property from local tax rolls – an "administrative end-run" around the Seneca Nation Settlement Act of 1990.

They are crying to a federal judge demanding the court vacate the sovereign designation because they lost a piece of their precious tax grid.

But let's strip away the dry legalese.

This isn't a zoning dispute. This is a targeted, systemic campaign of exclusion.

Grand Island leaders like to pretend they are protecting the "character of the community." But if you look at how they treat outsiders, a deeply disturbing pattern emerges.

This isn't the first time Grand Island has weaponized municipal boards to keep people of color out of their backyard. Just last year, a literal "mob" of angry white residents descended upon the Town Hall to wage a vicious, personal campaign against Sumit Majumdar, a prominent energy executive of color who just recently was appointed Vice Chairman, Chief Sustainability Officer, and Operating Partner of Verite Capital Partners.

Majumdar just wanted to grow garlic, raise chickens, and build a fence to keep his disabled dog safe. Instead, Grand Island gave him a modern-day Salem witch trial.

Whether it is the Seneca Nation trying to establish an economic future on their ancestral homelands, or a successful minority executive buying a home, Grand Island's message is loud, clear, and utterly disgraceful: If you aren't white, you aren't welcome. **When the Feds Righted A 250-year Wrong**

To understand how spiteful Grand Island's current legal tantrum is, you have to look back to February 2026.

The Seneca Nation announced a massive, historic victory for their people and ancestors. The U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs officially approved a petition granting restricted fee status to a 207-acre parcel of land located west of I-190, sandwiched right between Long and Bedell roads. The designation officially recognized the site as sovereign Seneca Nation territory.

The land wasn't even bought through tribal revenues. It was a gift. The Huntress brothers – William and Michael Huntress of Acquest Development – had owned the massive parcel for nearly 35 years.

They had spent years trying to develop a massive Amazon warehouse complex on the site, known colloquially as "Project Olive." But after years of relentless, furious community pushback from Grand Island residents, the project was killed off.

Amazon ended up building their warehouse in Niagara County. Grand Island and the Huntress brothers got nothing. The rest is history.

Faced with local leaders who refused to let them build anything, the Huntress brothers did something remarkable. In December, they transferred the entire 207-acre site to the Seneca Nation for exactly one dollar. It was a beautiful, historic gesture.

Could it also have been a giant fu*k you to every Grand Island Karen who impeded

the Amazon project? Yes, but it was beautiful nonetheless.

"We're excited to take this next step in making this piece of our ancestral homelands a vital part of the Seneca Nation's future," Seneca Nation President J. Conrad Seneca proudly stated at the time. "Now that our permanent future on Grand Island is secured, the Seneca Nation will forever be connected to that community. We think there are significant opportunities for how the site can be developed to benefit the long-term future of the Seneca Nation and our people, as well as the surrounding community and region. We look forward to exploring those opportunities in the days ahead."

Even local Grand Island Councilman Daniel Kilmer seemed to understand the gravity of the moment, breaking ranks with the island's typical isolationist rhetoric.

"It was a gift that was bestowed to them," said Kilmer in February, quickly shutting down the immediate internet trolls and xenophobes trying to stir up panic. "Whatever happens, it should be a team effort when it comes to helping the Senecas develop that land. How can you criticize something when you don't even know what it is?"

J.C. Seneca made it clear that the tribal government intended to be a deliberate, cooperative neighbor. They promised to consult with their own council, tribal members, and the town itself.

"The people's voice is important," J.C. Seneca insisted. "We want to make sure we take the right steps."

The street buzz quickly turned into a frenzy of suburban nightmares: a mega-casino, a massive tax-free smoke shop, a sprawling cannabis dispensary, or an endless row of gas pumps. But J.C. Seneca explicitly told the public not to believe the hysteria. There were no short-term deadlines, no secret blueprints, and no aggressive ultimatums.

It was an invitation to collaborate.

Grand Island's response? A knife in the back in federal court.

Grand Island Sues the Feds

Instead of pulling up a chair to the table to discuss mutual economic opportunity for residents, Grand Island town leaders ran straight to their lawyers to file a federal lawsuit naming the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs as defendants.

The town's legal temper tantrum is an embarrassing mix of entitlement and historical ignorance. In their filings, the town gripes that the parcel "was stripped from the town's tax rolls, removed from its regulatory jurisdiction, and declared sovereign tribal territory."

They complain that the 200-plus acres represent roughly 40% of the island's remaining, undeveloped commercial land, claiming their primary area for future economic growth has been entirely "eliminated."

The lawsuit throws everything at the wall in hope that something sticks. It attacks the federal sovereign designation with a laundry list of desperate arguments:

- It claims the parcel is not within the Seneca Nation's historical aboriginal area.
- It claims the deed is legally defective because it didn't disclose local public infrastructure easements.
- It even desperately tries to invoke the Nation-State Gaming Compact by arguing that tribal land acquisitions must be adjacent to existing Seneca gaming facilities, which is a restriction that ap-

plies to specific gaming funds, not land gifted under the Settlement Act.

The town even complains in their lawsuit that they haven't received a physical copy of the Interior Department's final decision memo, saying that their Freedom of Information Act requests haven't been filled fast enough. They are suing over an administrative decision they haven't even fully read yet.

J.C. Seneca did not mince words when hitting back at the town's litigation.

"Taking Native lands away from our people was a key ingredient in the growth of the United States over the last 250 years," said Seneca in a blistering public statement. "More than two centuries later, we still have state and local governments fighting us for our land. We're thankful that the Trump administration followed the law, and we're looking forward to the United States' defense of this lawsuit. Rather than work with us on a path of mutual benefit, the leaders of Grand Island, in the American tradition, are trying to deny a sovereign nation our rights and our rightful opportunities for progress and advancement."

The Seneca Nation historically claimed ownership of all of Grand Island, fighting a grueling legal battle launched in 1993 which argued that New York State's 1815 acquisition of the island was entirely illegal because it lacked necessary federal oversight. While that specific litigation wrapped up unsuccessfully in 2004, the federal government's recent restricted fee designation was a lawful, modern correction of history.

But Grand Island doesn't care about history, federal law, or human decency. They care about their tax grid and are willing to burn bridges with a sovereign nation to keep it.

David Santana Exposes the Ignorance: "They Are Going to Be Taught a Lesson"

The absolute absurdity of Grand Island's legal position is laid bare by those who actually understand the intersection of municipal greed and federal Indian law. David Santana, a seasoned Seneca Gaming Corporation Executive of 23 years and a proud citizen of the Seneca Nation, broke down the reality of the situation in a candid interview with Niagara Action.

When asked how this historic land transfer originally came about, Santana praised the federal government for having the backbone to uphold its obligations.

"I give the Federal Government kudos for actually making a transaction like this because that supports that movement," said Santana. "You know a lot of people don't understand we're trying to be Western New York friendly. It's not like, you know, again I don't want to speak for the government, but I can tell you that the opportunities for that parcel of land over there are endless. There are things you can do and it doesn't have to be in restricted fee status. There are things that will require federal tax. I give the government high praise – the Seneca Nation government that is – for making that happen."

For Santana, the land isn't just real estate, but a profound connection to bloodline and history. Evidently a concept completely lost on the subdivision-dwelling politicians of Grand Island.

"That's one of the most important things," Santana explained when asked what it means to step onto ancestral homelands. "I was at a function recently and heard some of our elected officials talking about how the education system within New York doesn't really teach a lot about what that means to us. Our aboriginal territory stretches all the way up to the top



J.C. Seneca

of New York State and all the way down through Pennsylvania into some would say Ohio. So you know when you talk about the aboriginal territory in Western New York – Buffalo Creek, Seneca, etc. – a lot of those facts have not been brought forth through traditional education or word of mouth through families."

Santana noted that if Grand Island's local politicians took five minutes to actually educate themselves on Indian Law instead of panicking on social media, they would realize their federal lawsuit is a huge waste of taxpayer money.

"I think they really have to be careful when [they're] talking about Indian law in tribal court cases because I don't think a lot of them are educated on that facts," Santana warned. "I come from a family where it was taught from day one. I understand our rights you know and especially within the Seneca nation, ours is really different than most people and a lot of the things that have been brought up in news articles and stuff are just not factually true. Unfortunately, they're going to go to court and, in my opinion, going to be taught a lesson."

The legal precedents, Santana notes, are completely favor the tribal nation.

"A lot of those cases have already been decided at the federal court level and they're well documented," said Santana. "I don't think Grand Island understands the factual information when you're talking with you know filing a lawsuit against the Seneca Nation, but . . . their lawyers aren't going to tell them that because they're the ones that are financially going gain from this. They're just going to drag it out [to get paid]. In my opinion they're not serving the people of Grand Island the right way."

And what about the suburban nightmares of neon casino lights and endless smoke shops? Santana dismantled the hysteria, revealing that the Seneca Nation's vision is focused on sophisticated, regional diversification. One major idea currently being floated? A world-class, massive sportsplex.

"I don't think they have to worry about a gas station going there," Santana revealed. "I don't think they have to worry about a casino going there. I don't think they have to worry about cigarettes being there. I think if they worked with us, they'd be surprised with the ideas that we bring forth because our focus now is diversification, with the Seneca Nation as an economic

(Cont. on pg. 8)

AROUND ERIE COUNTY CONT.

EXCLUSION ISLAND: Grand Island's Bitter Legal War Against Seneca Nation Exposes a Dark Pattern of Suburbia Chasing Out People of Color (Cont.)

engine within Western New York."

Santana implored people to look and see that the Seneca Nation is more than just casinos, gas stations and cigarettes.

"I've supported some of these moves that are tribal council has done over the years [but] we're way beyond tribal gaming [and] we're way beyond cigarettes and gas," Santana continued. "As a citizen when you read some of the snarky comments that people write on social media it just makes them look ignorant and uninformed because in this day and age you have every opportunity to research and see what the Seneca Nation is doing across our territories."

When pressed on what could possibly motivate Grand Island officials to launch such a hostile, losing legal war, Santana pointed to a toxic mix of political opportunism and old-fashioned ignorance.

"I really think it's just a handful of people that might just not be educated on what the Seneca Nation stands for and what we're about," said Santana. "Then also it could just be some people that are backing politicians who maybe didn't get their piece. Every opportunity we have had to move into a new area we've offered our hand out to work with them. This is why I said this on their attorneys are just going to milk this through the system only to be told there's nothing you can do."

Despite the town's unprovoked hostility, Santana maintains that the Seneca Nation will continue to extend their hand in friendship to residents.

"I think we'll have a lot of people if they ever decided to do like an informational session where they're trying to get feedback from the residents on ideas for plans or something like that," Santana noted, "because no matter what the Seneca Nation does, they're going to welcome the people of Grand Island. We will not do anything to leave their families or community worse off."

The 2025 "Mob" Takedown of Sumit Majumdar

If you want to understand why Grand Island is behaving so aggressively toward the Seneca Nation, you only have to look back a few months to October 2025. The town's treatment of the Senecas isn't an isolated legal disagreement. It might very well be part of a deeply rooted, pattern of xenophobia that defines Grand Island's culture.

Enter Sumit Majumdar.

Majumdar is not a corporation. He is a highly respected, long-time energy executive, the founder of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc., and a minority businessman who recently was appointed Vice Chairman, Chief Sustainability Officer, and Operating Partner of Verite Capital Partners.

He is one of the few prominent executives of color in Western New York's renewable fuels sector. His professional expertise is routinely sought after by national financial heavyweights like Bloomberg and The Wall Street Journal.

In 2024, Majumdar bought a beautiful, 14.43-acre property at 3012 Staley Road on Grand Island for a whopping \$1.2 million. He hadn't even moved into the house yet when he approached the town's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) on October 2nd, 2025, for a routine, completely standard area variance.

His request? He wanted to increase the height of his front fence from three feet to six feet to safely contain his animals, including a disabled dog. He also wanted a variance to construct a 10,000-square-foot agricultural storage building on land that had already been cleared.

Majumdar had applied for agricultural district zoning, explaining to the board that he intended to cultivate organic garlic, raise

chickens, and was in the process of obtaining a state license to rehabilitate injured wildlife.

It was a quiet, rural, environmentally friendly project on a massive double-dig-it acre lot. But the moment Majumdar stepped up to the microphone, a literal "mob" of Staley Road neighbors turned a routine zoning meeting into a public, character-assassinating witch trial.

Instead of addressing the dimensions of a fence, the crowd launched into a barrage of provably false, Google-searched conspiracy theories, outright lies, and thinly veiled threats, all designed to paint a successful man of color as a "sketchy" criminal.

Mary Pflazer of 3013 Staley Road took the mic to spew easily debunked misinformation.

"A Google search unfortunately led me to his company [Buffalo] Biodiesel being closed by the DEC for failure of keeping permits over the last seven years, and another few articles about 27 customers suing to get out of contract for leaky barrels," Pflazer claimed to the board. She added, "I'm concerned that this storage unit is going to end up being for business equipment which could have leaky barrels or whatever. I do not think the intent is really for agricultural or proper storage."

A simple fact-check reveals Pflazer's claims were total garbage. Buffalo Biodiesel was never shut down by the DEC, nor were there lawsuits over leaky barrels. In reality, the company was thriving, securing a massive \$300 million partnership with Verite Capital Partners.

Next up was Sherry Kern of 2905 Staley Road who used her time at the podium to repeat the same provable falsehoods.

"After doing some research regarding Buffalo Biodiesel, which this landowner currently owns... we are very concerned this warehouse... will be used for perhaps collecting or storing used oil – a commercial activity in an R1 zone. His company has been operating illegally for seven years according to the DEC that is why we are here today."

Another complete fabrication. Buffalo Biodiesel was operating entirely with the legal permission of the DEC through formal extensions. A consent order signed around that time contained absolutely zero allegations of illegal activity, merely addressing administrative missed deadlines.

At an October 6th Town Board meeting, Kern returned to the microphone and proudly admitted that the neighborhood had escalated to literal, potentially illegal, espionage.

"We did have somebody who lives nearby... take pictures with a drone," Kern told town officials, offering the drone photos as "evidence" against a man trying to build a fence for his disabled dog.

The public lynching of Majumdar's character only grew more unhinged. Jim Carlson of 2885 Staley Road stood up to invent wild fantasies about chemical dumping.

"It does result in waste products... I think this situation here, if in fact that building is allowed to be built, it'll turn into a processing factory and then who knows maybe use those ponds for disposal purposes," Carlson claimed before taking a petty swipe at the Majumdar's speech. "I'm speaking into the mic like he did not do very well."

Then came Ron Schlifke of 3348 Staley Road who directly pointed his finger at Majumdar in the public chamber, calling him a "sketchy individual."

"To let a sketchy individual like this guy come in and dump, you know, just run the risk of having biodiesel disposed back there and stuff, forget it," Schlifke snarled.

He then issued a chilling, veiled threat to the board members themselves: "You know I'm going to hold everybody [accountable] right now. If there's a disaster you know. I mean this guy's got a horrible reputation. Just Google it."

The YouTube video shows Schlifke making an aggressive physical gesture toward Majumdar as he walked back to his seat.

The chorus of hostility continued. Paul Koppmann of 246 Timberlink Drive told the board to focus on "who you're dealing with and their reputation."

John Gross of 2783 Staley Road also chimed in, claiming "the reputation of this gentleman is in question."

Finally, Ron Fortman of 2944 Staley Road orchestrated the ultimate act of intimidation, he asked every resident opposed to the project to stand up. More than fifteen people stood in unison, silently staring down and intimidating a lone minority homeowner in a public room.

The atmosphere was so disgusting that Town Supervisor Peter Marston later pulled Majumdar aside privately to apologize, admitting there was absolutely no place for personal attacks and a total lack of decorum at a municipal meeting.

But the damage was done. The ZBA members – terrified of the crowd and completely abandoning their statutory duty – parroted the mob's talking points and denied Majumdar's variances.

One resident spoke to the press under anonymity, terrified of being targeted by their own neighbors, and described the "Make Staley Road Safe Committee" as a terrifying, out-of-control vehicle of hate.

"I can't tell you the unbelievable pressure that these people put on other residents and elected officials to get what they want," the resident whispered. "It's scary. Might as well have been a Salem witch trial."

When asked point-blank why this suburban mob descended so violently upon a man who just wanted to grow garlic and raise chickens, the neighbor's answer cut straight to the core of Grand Island's identity:

"Because he's not white."

Majumdar Fights Back in Court

Unlike the Town of Grand Island, which files frivolous lawsuits against the federal government because it's afraid of Native Americans, Sumit Majumdar filed a real lawsuit backed by New York State law.

On November 1st, 2025, Majumdar's legal team filed an Article 78 proceeding in Erie County Supreme Court against the Town of Grand Island and the Zoning Board of Appeals. The lawsuit exposes the ZBA's decision as an "arbitrary and capricious" abuse of power that completely ignored New York State Town Law § 267-b.

The court documents lay out a devastating narrative of municipal failure. Under state law, a zoning board is strictly required to perform a balancing test, weighing the benefit to the applicant against any actual, data-proven detriment to the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Instead, Majumdar's petition notes that the ZBA:

1. Completely failed to analyze the statutory criteria
2. Refused to afford Majumdar an opportunity for rebuttal while he was being publicly slandered
3. Openly deferred their administrative duties to the angry crowd, with one board member literally stating on the record that "the neighbors have spoken."
4. Based their denial on zero facts, zero data, and zero environmental evidence, choosing instead to rely entirely on

the prejudice, personal grievances, and racial attacks displayed by dissenting residents.

The legal memorandum cites powerful precedent, including Matter of Nye v. Zoning Bd. of Appeals of The Town of Grand Is., a case where Grand Island's ZBA was previously smacked down by the appellate court for failing to perform the exact same mandatory balancing test.

The Town of Grand Island reportedly offered to resolve that litigation by granting Majumdar his two variances. However, when Majumdar additionally asked for a public apology to be part of the settlement the Town of Grand Island refused.

The Common Thread of Grand Island's Exclusionary Warfare

When you place the federal lawsuit against the Seneca Nation side-by-side with the mob-driven zoning denial of Sumit Majumdar, the ugly truth about Grand Island is completely laid bare.

This is a town that appears to use municipal codes, zoning boards, and frivolous federal litigation as a modern-day moat to keep people of color out.

When 207-acres was gifted to the Seneca Nation – a sovereign people reclaiming a fraction of their stolen ancestral homelands – the town didn't try to negotiate. They sued the federal government, screaming about tax rolls and imaginary economic ruin. They couldn't handle the idea of a Native nation having an independent economic engine on their island.

And when a wealthy, hyper-successful minority executive buys a multi-million dollar estate on Staley Road, they don't welcome him to the neighborhood. They fly drones over his private property, scream falsehoods at him in public chambers, call him "sketchy," and force him to hire a legal team just to put up a fence for a disabled dog.

Grand Island's lawyers can drag these cases through the courts as long as they want to milk their billable hours, but the verdict in the court of public opinion is already in.

Grand Island's exclusionary, hostile, and deeply biased tactics are a stain on Western New York.

All Grand Island Town Council members were contacted via email in anticipation of this article to comment and did not respond. They were all asked the following questions. None of them responded:

- 1) Who made the decision that Grand Island, as a municipality, was going to commence a lawsuit against the Seneca Nation in federal court? More specifically, whose idea was it? Was there some sort of vote amount the council to initiate a lawsuit? If so, what were the results of said vote with who in favor and who against?
- 2) Was there a public appetite for this to occur? If so, where did it play out (i.e.: social media, town meetings, etc.)? Please direct us to such posts and/or meeting dates.
- 3) Is there something abhorrent about the Seneca Nation that you do not want them on Grand Island?
- 4) Do you / the council / municipality who filed this lawsuit speak for all of Grand Island in telling the Seneca Nation that they are not welcome?
- 5) Do you not believe that the Seneca Nation is entitled to this land? More specifically, do you not believe that this land is the land of their ancestors?
- 6) What public town council meetings or workshops has this federal lawsuit been discussed prior to it being filed? If it has not been, why not?

WESTERN NEW YORK

The Big 250: Red, White, and Boom!

Your Guide to Fireworks in Erie & Niagara Counties

Sumit Majumdar

Hey, it's the big 250! America's Semiquincentennial is officially here, and this July 4th, 2026, the fireworks will be going stronger than ever. Whether you're grabbing a lawn chair to watch a massive municipal display, safely lighting off some sparklers in your driveway, or organizing a neighborhood extravaganza, this is everything you need to know about celebrating America's 250th birthday in Western New York.

LEAVE IT TO THE PROS: WHERE TO WATCH

If you prefer to let someone else handle the pyrotechnics, Erie and Niagara counties have a packed schedule of free, professional displays to celebrate the 250th.

Erie County Highlights:

Buffalo Waterfront: The "716 Celebrates" event at the Naval & Military Park anchors the city's 250th celebration, featuring historic storytelling and a massive fireworks finale over the water.

- Buffalo (Outer Harbor) July 3 — After the Buffalo Philharmonic performance
- Buffalo (Central Wharf/Spirit of Buffalo) July 3 During evening boat tour
- Cheektowaga July 3 at dusk
- Clarence July 5 at dusk
- Depew July 3 at 10:00 p.m.
- East Aurora July 3 at 10:00 p.m.
- Hamburg (Cloverbank Country Club) July 2 at 10:00 p.m.
- Hamburg (Wanakah Country Club) July 4 at 10:00 p.m.
- Lancaster July 4 at 8:00 p.m.
- Orchard Park July 4 at 9:00 p.m.
- Tonawanda July 2 at 9:30 p.m.

Niagara County Highlights:

- -Niagara Falls State Park: You can't beat the backdrop! Nightly 5-minute displays happen at 10:00 PM with an extended Independence Day show featuring special red, white, and blue "America 250" illuminations from July 2nd through July 6th.
- Lewiston July 4 at dusk
- Olcott July 3 at 10:00 p.m.
- Pendleton July 4 at 10:00 p.m.
- Ransomville July 3 at dusk
- Wheatfield July 4 at Dusk
- North Tonawanda (City of Tonawanda event at Renaissance Bridge) July 4 at dusk

nda event at Renaissance Bridge)

July 4 at dusk

• Lockport July 4 at dusk

THE ANATOMY OF A BOOM

Ever wonder exactly what you're looking at when the sky lights up? Pyrotechnicians use specific names for the different types of aerial fireworks explosions you see overhead.

The most common is the Peony, which creates a perfectly round burst of brightly colored stars that ignite immediately after the shell breaks, producing a clean, trail-free display. Similar in shape is the Chrysanthemum, but its stars are coated with a slower-burning titanium mixture that leaves sparkling trails behind each point of light.

One of the most elegant effects is the Willow, featuring long-lasting golden trails that gently droop toward the ground like the branches of a weeping willow tree. This effect is created by stars with a high-charcoal composition that burn slowly as they fall. Another unique design is the Crossette in which each individual star splits into four smaller stars after exploding, creating a distinctive cross-shaped pattern.

Finally, the Brocade produces a massive, shimmering canopy of thick silver and gold trails resembling a glittering spiderweb, thanks to oversized stars packed with metallic glitter mixtures.

THE LEGAL LOWDOWN: NEW YORK VS. PENNSYLVANIA

If you are doing them yourselves, you need to know the rules. New York State law is notoriously strict regarding consumer fireworks.

What is LEGAL in NYS

New York only permits "Sparkling Devices". These are ground-based or hand-held devices that produce a shower of colored sparks, flames, or audible crackling/whistling.

Allowed: Cylindrical and cone fountains, wood sparklers, party poppers, and snappers.

Banned: Aerial consumer fireworks (mortars, skyrockets, roman candles), firecrackers, chasers, bombs, and metal wire sparklers.

The Elephant in the Room: The Pennsylvania Run

Obviously, some larger ordnance is coming across the border from Pennsylvania. We all know it's a "no-no," but you can't deny it happens. Massive fireworks superstores like Phantom and



Fireworks over Niagara Falls and the nighttime illumination.

Keystone sit just over the state line, selling everything from heavy-hitting mortar tubes to 500-gram repeater cakes and Roman candles.

Here is the reality check: While anyone over 18 can legally purchase these heavy-duty fireworks in Pennsylvania, and it is completely legal to light them in PA, the moment you cross the border back into New York, those fireworks become illegal contraband. If you choose to light them in your NY driveway, you risk heavy fines, confiscation, and serious safety hazards.

THE COST OF THE BOOM: DIY vs. PRO

Thinking of putting on a show? Here is what to expect for your wallet.

The DIY Route

- The NY-Legal Show (\$50 - \$150): A solid assortment of large ground-based fountains, wood sparklers, and crackling novelties will run you about a hundred bucks at a local tent.
- The PA Border Run (\$300 - \$1,500+): For those buying the heavy artillery in PA (to light in PA, of course), a multi-box "backyard grand finale" kit containing a couple dozen artillery shells and several 500-gram cakes easily costs between \$300 and \$800.

Going Pro: Pool Your Money!

If you want the big aerial mortars but want to stay completely legal and safe in NY, your best bet is to pool money together with your neighborhood, HOA, or town, and hire a professional pyrotechnic service.

- The Cost: Professional shows generally run between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per minute.
- The Show: A solid 10-minute neighborhood extravaganza will run between \$10,000 and \$15,000.
- The Perks: Service providers handle all the permits, insurance, setup, and cleanup. Getting a professional to put on a show makes it bigger, dramatically safer, and far more enjoyable for everyone involved.

DON'T GET BURNED: SAFETY & SOBRIETY

Nothing ruins a holiday faster than a trip to the ER or a call to the fire department. If you're running a backyard display, there are zero excuses for cutting corners on safety.

1. The Shooter Must Be Sober: Let's be crystal clear—the person lighting the fireworks should not be lit. Being high or drinking alcohol while handling explosives is a horrible mix. Your reaction times drop, your judgment gets sloppy, and that is exactly how people lose fingers or set roofs on fire. If you are the designated "shooter," you need to be 100% sober. Save the beers for after the grand finale.
2. The Fire Safety Setup: Never light fireworks near dry brush, overhanging trees, or wooden decks. Have a charged garden hose and a 5-gallon bucket of water stationed 10 feet from your launch zone. Douse every spent firework shell and sparkler in the bucket before throwing them in the trash.
3. Kids & Sparklers: Wood sparklers are legal in NY, but they are not toys. A burning sparkler reaches 1,200°F—hot enough to melt glass. Swap the sparklers for glow sticks if you have toddlers.
4. Protect Our Dogs: Dogs and fireworks do not mix. Keep your pets indoors, close the windows, and turn on a TV or fan to create white noise. More dogs run away on July 4th than any other day of the year; double-check that their ID tags and collars are perfectly secure before the sun goes down!

A SPARK OF HISTORY

To fully appreciate America's 250th, it helps to know how the tradition started. Fireworks were invented in Liuyang, China, in the 2nd century B.C. when people threw bamboo stalks into fires (the air pockets would explode with a loud "bang" to ward off evil spirits). By the 9th century, Chinese alchemists had invented gunpowder, packing it into bamboo to create the first true fireworks.

The tradition of shooting them off for independence, however, is purely American. On July 4, 1777, the city of Philadelphia celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by firing off a grand exhibition of fireworks. The tradition stuck, and 250 years later, we are still looking up at the sky in awe.

So, grab a hot dog, light a sparkler, watch the Roman candles and mortars fly, and celebrate the 250th with what America does best!



Action Photo

Safe distance and clear zones are critical for backyard fireworks.

STATE NEWS

Siena Poll Gives Hochul Bigger Lead, But New Yorkers Say Cost of Living Remains Their Biggest Concern

Staff Reports

Even as Governor Kathy Hochul has widened her lead in New York's 2026 gubernatorial race, a newly released Siena College poll suggests that her strongest political challenge may not come from an opponent but from voters' continued frustration over the rising cost of living.

The survey, conducted among registered New York voters, shows Hochul holding a comfortable advantage over Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman while also revealing that affordability continues to dominate the minds of voters across virtually every demographic in the state.

According to the poll, Hochul now leads Blakeman by 20 points, 52% to 32%, an improvement from the 16-point margin she held in Siena's April survey. The governor also posted slight improvements in both her favorability and job approval ratings.

Her favorability rating now stands at 43% favorable to 44% unfavorable while 53% of registered voters approve of the job she is doing compared with 42% who disapprove.

Siena College pollster Steven Greenberg said the governor has improved her standing modestly while her likely Republican challenger remains relatively unknown to much of the electorate.

"Governor Hochul now has a break-even favorability rating, and a majority of voters approve of the job she's doing as governor," said Greenberg. "Hochul gained a little ground against Blakeman, who despite having his best ever favorability rating, still

has a majority of voters not knowing him or not knowing enough about him to have an opinion."

The poll also showed Hochul making gains among independent voters, an important voting block heading toward next year's election.

After trailing Blakeman among independents in April, Hochul now holds a five-point advantage with those voters.

Greenberg also noted that the governor expanded her support in the suburban counties surrounding New York City.

"She has also widened her lead in the downstate suburbs from four points in April to 11 points, 49-38%, today," said Greenberg. "Hochul has a better than three-to-one lead in New York City, and she and Blakeman are virtually tied upstate."

Despite those encouraging electoral numbers for the governor, the survey paints a far different picture when voters are asked what matters most in their daily lives.

Affordability overwhelmingly dominates the political landscape.

More than half of all registered voters – 53% – identified the cost of living as the single most important issue facing them today. Affordable housing finished a distant second at 13% while crime received 11%. Immigration, the conflict involving Iran and environmental issues each registered below 10%.

Greenberg said the poll revealed unusually broad agreement across virtually every voting group.

"A clear majority of voters think the cost of living is the most important issue they

are facing and an overwhelming majority, 77%, say it is one of the two most important issues for New Yorkers," said Greenberg. "A majority or large plurality of Democrats, Republicans, independents, upstaters and downstaters, men and women, young and old, Black, Latino or white all say that cost of living is the most important issue. At least 72% of each of those groups of voters say cost of living is one of the two most important issues."

The findings highlight a political environment heading into the 2026 gubernatorial campaign where voters rank economic pressures above nearly every other issue confronting the state.

The Siena survey also measured public reaction to several legislative actions recently approved in Albany.

Among the proposals that received bipartisan support in polling were legislation allowing New Yorkers to sue federal, state or local government officials for constitutional violations, measures affirming every child's right to a public education, utility rebate initiatives for consumers and a one-year moratorium on approving new data centers.

However, not every proposal enjoyed broad support.

One constitutional amendment approved for first passage by lawmakers earlier this month – which would permit mid-decade and partisan congressional redistricting – faced opposition across party lines.

"When it comes to the proposed Constitutional amendment to allow mid-decade and partisan redistricting, there is partisan agreement in opposition to the amendment, which

received first passage by the Legislature earlier this month," said Greenberg. "A majority of Republicans and pluralities of Democrats and independents say the proposed amendment is bad for New York. While these results will make Republican leaders happy, it shows that Democratic leaders have a lot of work to do between now and Election Day 2027 if they want to see this amendment approved by voters."

The poll also measured attitudes toward President Donald Trump among New York voters.

Statewide, Trump recorded a 32% favorable rating compared with 63% unfavorable, numbers that have remained largely unchanged since Siena's April survey.

"In April, Trump's favorability and job approval ratings hit second term lows. In the two months since, they've barely moved a point," said Greenberg. "While Democrats continue to give Trump overwhelmingly negative ratings, and independents soured a little further on Trump, about three-quarters of Republicans have a favorable view of Trump and more than three-quarters approve of the overall job he is doing."

Looking toward congressional elections, Democrats continue to maintain a substantial statewide advantage on the generic congressional ballot, leading Republicans 52% to 32%, a margin that has changed little since Siena's previous survey.

The Siena College poll was conducted between June 17th through June 23rd among 1,120 registered New York voters and carries a margin of error of plus or minus 3.6%.

Governor Hochul Falling into the Nuclear Trap? Her Perilous Energy Gamble

Staff Reports

Driven by an administration seemingly blind to inherent atomic hazards, New York appears to be hurtling towards a dangerous energy future. Shifting state energy policy toward radioactive generation, Governor Kathy Hochul released an official update proudly titled, "Governor Hochul Announces Major Milestone to Facilitate New Advanced Nuclear Development." This aggressive push mirrors her contentious vow from January's State of the State address to establish five gigawatts of fresh atomic capacity across the Empire State. It's a footprint mirroring five facilities the size of Suffolk County's infamous Shoreham site. Disregarding the severe public safety issues associated with reactors, she asserted, "Today's action marks the start of a full examination of ways to bring new advanced nuclear power online."

This marks a radical departure from traditional environmental priorities. Last year, while instructing the state power authority to clear a path for these facilities, Hochul bragged, "I'm the first Democratic governor in a generation to say to nuclear: I'm embracing this." She continues to insist that these upcoming "advanced" models will provide completely "zero-emissions electricity".

However, grassroots resistance is mounting. Activists participating in the "Forums for a Nuclear-Free New York" are pushing back hard against the administration's dangerous narrative. Environmental attorney Susan Shapiro didn't mince words, saying, "It is

patently untrue that nuclear energy is zero-emissions or a carbon-free source of energy."

Shapiro notes that the entire lifespan of atomic production – from mining raw uranium to enrichment – is thoroughly "carbon-intensive," and reactors actively vent a radioactive isotope known as Carbon-14. Labeling the claim that nuclear power is "emissions free" as an outright "fraud on the public," Shapiro warns that this technology is "not part of a solution to climate change."

Compounding the danger, according to progressives, is that Hochul is actively stalling the state's 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, which was designed to prioritize genuinely clean wind and solar projects. Furthermore, the technology being championed is far from revolutionary.

Gordon Edwards, who heads the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, explained at recent forums that these heavily marketed reactors rely on failed, decades-old blueprints. The atomic industry is desperately trying to rebrand these obsolete strategies as "new and improved", but Edwards argues they are fundamentally deceptive.

Meanwhile, deep concern in Albany sparked a legislative effort led by Senate Energy Committee Chair Kevin Parker to freeze Hochul's nuclear expansion. A proposed bill warns that expanding atomic energy pivots the state in an unsafe direction, completely undermining the clean, affordable transition mandated by the landmark Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. The legislation explicitly recalls the Shoreham nightmare, a fiasco

just 39 air miles from Shelter Island that was ultimately stopped by fierce community resistance over catastrophic public safety threats. Though originally projected to cost in the \$65-\$75 million range, the aborted Shoreham project sucked up \$7 billion. As the draft bill states: "New York's own experience, including the Shoreham facility, illustrates the financial risks of nuclear power facilities, which resulted in substantial and lasting costs to ratepayers without delivering electricity."

The financial risks today are even more terrifying. In Georgia, the recent Vogtle expansion saw initial \$4 billion projections explode into a staggering \$36 billion. Replicating Hochul's target of "five gigawatts, the equivalent of five nuclear power facilities" would inflict an "estimated \$100 billion" burden on New Yorkers. Worse, the bill notes "they are being advanced without a financial and environmental assessment, sufficient legislative oversight, or public transparency, contrary to principles of fiscal responsibility and good governance."

The physical dangers are even more

chilling. The legislation highlights that "Nuclear power facilities pose inherent safety and environmental risks, including potential catastrophic accidents, long-term radioactive waste with no permanent disposal solution, and significant public health concerns for surrounding communities."

To address this, the bill mandates that "During the moratorium, a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment will be conducted ... to analyze the expense, health, safety, security, opportunity costs, community impact and environmental impacts of nuclear power facilities, including but not limited to mining and fuel production, construction, operation, nuclear waste long-term management, site and off-site remediation, and a caparisons to alternative energy sources."

Though this critical safety check stalled before the 2026 session wrapped up last month, lawmakers can resurrect it in January 2027. Whether Hochul continues to embrace nuclear energy – despite its unpopularity among democrats and the progressive left – remains to be seen.

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CRIME BLOTTER

CRIME REPORTS PUBLISHED BY NIAGARA ACTION OVER THE LAST WEEK

-Driver Tries to Run Over 7-Eleven Worker After Shift in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 12:03am on June 23rd after reports of an attempted vehicular assault on the 8100 block of Niagara Falls Boulevard in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller – and employee of 7-Eleven – told police that as he was walking to his car after his shift ended and a male in another vehicle tried hitting him. The caller further told police that he had it recorded on his phone to show officers. Police responded to the scene. The suspect fled after the failed attempt at striking the victim. It is unknown whether the male suspect was located and/or arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Hysterical 911 Call After Woman Says Boyfriend's Parents Assaulted Her in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 9:47pm on June 24th after reports of a violent domestic incident and assault on Lockport Street in Lockport. The 911 caller, who dispatch noted was “screaming and crying into the phone,” reported that her boyfriend’s parents hit her causing injury. The caller was severely shaken up by the assault and yelling could be heard. It is unknown how many times the victim was hit and/or punched. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the boyfriend’s parents were on scene and, if so, whether any arrests were made. No further information is available at this time.

-Masked Husband Punches Wife in Face Before Running Away in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 7:28pm on June 25th after reports of a domestic incident and assault with injuries on 27th Street in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, a third party, told police that a male and female were fighting. The male party punched his wife in the face and then fled on foot towards Gill Creek. The caller described the suspect as wearing all green with a mask on his face. Police responded to the scene. The wife was waiting for law enforcement to arrive outside but it is unknown if they located and arrested her husband. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Graduates Brawl Inside Longhorn Steakhouse. Law enforcement received a call around 10:55pm on June 25th after reports a brawl with graduates and/or students of Niagara Falls High School at Longhorn Steakhouse on Military Road in Niagara Falls. The incident took place after they left a graduation ceremony at the high school earlier that evening. Dispatch received calls of about a dozen or more high school students and/or recent graduates celebrating at Longhorn who started brawling. Witnesses at the scene said that people were yelling, hair was being pulled, punches were thrown and people were kicked. Multiple county units responded to the scene. It is unknown how many individuals, if any, were arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Parent Says Child Was Jumped at Park, Attack Caught on Video. Law enforcement received a call around 12:08am on June 12th after reports of a violent assault on 91st Street in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller and mother of the child victim told dispatch that her minor child was “attacked” at the 91st Street park between 7pm and 8pm tonight. She did reach out to the parents of the other child(ren) involved but received no response. According to the parent, she has the assault is on video. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the suspect child(ren) were identified and ultimately

located by law enforcement. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Woman Calls Police After Stepfather Allegedly Spits on Her. Law enforcement received a call around 11:09am on June 26th after reports of a domestic incident on Cudaback Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, a female, told dispatch that her stepfather “spit on her.” She requested police be sent out and for him to taken away. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the stepfather was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-‘I’m Going to Kill My Father and Myself’: Frantic 911 Call Sparks Police Response. Law enforcement received a call around 9:35pm on June 26th after reports of a mental health emergency and domestic incident on Linwood Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, a third party, told police that she was on the phone with her father when she heard her sister in the background say that she was going to “kill her father and herself.” Due to past threats and behavior, the caller believed that her sister was capable of doing something like that. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the sister was taken for mental health treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Tourist and Family Stalked During Niagara Falls Trip. Law enforcement received a call around 9:15pm on June 26th after reports of stalking on Main Street in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, a tourist at Niagara Falls with his family, told dispatch that he was “at the falls with his family and someone was following him.” When they returned to their car, the male that was following them was parked in a vehicle directly next to theirs. The caller requested that officers check his vehicle for any tracking devices. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if officers located any monitoring device from the vehicle. No further information is available at this time.

-Police Respond After 100-person Fight Erupts at Niagara Falls Basketball Tournament. Law enforcement received a call around 7:41pm on June 27th after reports of a massive brawl on Pine Avenue at Packard Court in Niagara Falls. Multiple 911 calls advised police of a large fight at the location. Additional information was received that there was a basketball tournament being held at Packard Court and about 100 people were fighting. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown how many, if any, arrests were made as a result of the incident. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Woman Gets Decked in front of Delta Sonic. Law enforcement received a call around 10:32pm on June 27th after reports of a violent domestic incident on Niagara Falls Boulevard in Niagara Falls at Delta Sonic. The 911 caller, a third party, told police that while walking back to his hotel he saw a white male wearing a black t-shirt “put his hands on a white female with black hair and tattoos” in front of Delta Sonic. It is unknown if the man and woman had come from inside of the car wash prior to the domestic altercation. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Bloody Fight at Amazon Facility Leaves Worker Covered in Blood in Niagara County. Law enforcement received a call around 8:55am on June 27th after reports of an assault at the Amazon facility on Lockport Road in the Town of Niagara. The 911 caller told police that two males were physically fighting in the parking

lot. One of the males sustained a bloody nose and a serious head injury after being struck, resulting in him being covered with blood. The other male fled the scene in what was believed to be a Maroon colored pickup truck. The victim was evaluated by EMS in the parking lot but refused transport to a hospital. There was no mention over the audio of what caused the altercation to begin. Police, medical and fire responded to the scene. The suspect did not return to the scene. However, his identity is known to police. No further information is available at this time.

-Hit-and-Run Driver Leaves Bicyclist Lying in Roadway in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 3:14pm on June 28th after reports of a hit-and-run incident on 19th and Niagara Street in Niagara Falls. Dispatch advised that a vehicle had struck a pedestrian on a bicycle. After striking the bicycle, the vehicle took off and left the victim lying in the roadway until first responders arrived. Police, medical and fire responded to the scene. The victim received medical assistance on location but it is unknown whether he/she was transported to a local hospital for further treatment or what their condition was after being struck. No further information is available at this time.

-‘She has a needle’: Daughter Threatens to Inject Mother with Unknown Substance in Niagara County. Law enforcement received a call around 7:19pm on June 27th after reports of a domestic incident on Capman Road in Hartland, Niagara County. The 911 caller and mother stated that her daughter was making threats to “inject her with something” that she is in possession with. At the time of the call, the daughter still had a needle in her hand ready to stab and inject her mother with an unknown substance. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown whether the daughter was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Concerned Shoppers Call Police Over Dogs Trapped in Hot Car at Wegmans. Law enforcement received a call around 4:20pm on June 27th after reports of animal welfare at Wegmans on Military Road in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, people on location at Wegmans, told police that they were concerned for the well-being of multiple dogs. The vehicle was a red dodge in a handicap spot. Based on the weather at the time of the call, it was estimated that the temperature inside of the vehicle exceeded 100 degrees. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown whether or not police smashed the window to gain entry into the vehicle or of any sort of charges were made / tickets given to the pet owner. No further information is available at this time.

-Woman Slams Shopping Cart with Small Child into Vehicle in North Tonawanda. Law enforcement received a call around 4:34pm on June 27th after reports of disorderly conduct at Walmart in North Tonawanda. The 911 caller, a third party, told police that there was a black woman pushing a shopping cart into a vehicle while a young child in it. The caller said that this was done violently but was not sure if it was done to her car or another person’s. It is unknown if the child sustained any injuries as a result of the incident. She was seen leaving in a vehicle with Florida plates. Police responded to the scene. The suspect was no longer at Walmart but there was mention of a patrol vehicle seeing a car matching a description gave on the road. No further information is available at this time.

13 Indicted After Major Drug Trafficking Investigation Spanning Buffalo, Cheektowaga and North Tonawanda

By: Staff Reports

A months-long federal narcotics investigation spanning Buffalo, Cheektowaga and North Tonawanda resulted in the indictment of 13 people accused of operating two separate drug trafficking organizations involving cocaine, crack cocaine, fentanyl, marijuana and firearms.

Federal authorities executed coordinated search warrants on June 25th, seizing illegal drugs, firearms and ammunition from multiple locations while dismantling what prosecutors describe as organized trafficking operations.

U.S. Attorney Michael DiGiacomo announced that Terrence Phillips, Alexis Rivera, Jamel Joshua Cunningham, Rokym Knox, Kyle Phillips, Daija Mellerson, Alazee Smith, Ashley Johnson and Fernando Mercado-Vazquez were indicted on conspiracy charges involving cocaine, crack cocaine and fentanyl. Prosecutors allege the group distributed narcotics from residences on West Avenue in Buffalo and Cleveland Drive in Cheektowaga beginning in September 2025 while also utilizing firearms. Several defendants also face additional charges involving cocaine trafficking, maintaining drug premises and illegal firearm possession.

A second indictment charges Omar Ali, Kairo Machado-Arguedas, Luthor Jones and Ahmad Elabed with conspiracy to distribute more than 50 kilograms of marijuana. Prosecutors allege that operation began in December 2025 and operated from properties on Connecticut Street in Buffalo and Sweeney Street in North Tonawanda, with members also possessing firearms.

If convicted, defendants in the cocaine and fentanyl conspiracy face mandatory minimum sentences of five years in federal prison and up to 40 years. The marijuana conspiracy charge carries a maximum penalty of 20 years.

“These arrests result from an FBI Safe Streets Task Force investigation undertaken pursuant to the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) initiative, which was established to, in part, rid our communities of dangerous drug traffickers who fill our streets with narcotics that too often have tragic consequences, including death,” stated U.S. Attorney DiGiacomo. “All too often, these drug traffickers rely on firearms and other acts of violence to hold our community hostage. This effort means there are now 13 less traffickers on the streets.”

DiGiacomo added, “That’s 13 drug dealers who are no longer in business.”

Allen D. Davis II, Special Agent-in-Charge of the FBI’s Buffalo Field Office, said the investigation demonstrates the agency’s commitment to removing violent offenders from Western New York.

“This operation highlights FBI Buffalo’s unwavering commitment to protecting Western New York communities,” said Davis. “Working alongside our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, FBI Buffalo removed guns, drugs, and violent criminals from Buffalo neighborhoods. Our work, however, is not over. As part of Operation Summer Heat, FBI Buffalo is surging resources across Western New York to identify, investigate, and hold accountable violent criminals who threaten the safety of our communities.”

Davis continued.

“Over the next three months, the FBI Buffalo will surge resources alongside our federal, state and local partners to identify, investigate and arrest violent criminals that threaten the safety of our communities.”

Federal officials said Operation Summer Heat remains ongoing.

A portrait of a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, a full gray beard, and black-rimmed glasses. He is smiling and wearing a blue and white floral patterned shirt. The background is plain white.

Vice Chairman, Chief Sustainability Officer, & Operating Partner at Verite Capital Partners

THE ALLURE OF ALUMINUM FOIL

THE DIRTY TRUTH: NOT RECYCLABLE

Furthermore, aluminum foil is incredibly thin. Even if you were to meticulously wash your foil (which defeats the convenience factor entirely), many municipal recycling programs still reject it. Thin sheets of foil can easily get caught in the gears of sorting machinery or simply burn up into ash when exposed to the high temperatures of an aluminum recycling furnace, rendering it completely unrecoverable. Consequently, it ends up in the trash as "thrown-away aluminum."

Every balled-up piece of grilling foil tossed in the trash goes directly to a landfill. Once buried, aluminum

- **At the Park:** Portable Stainless Steel Trays

When grilling at a public park, you want something lightweight but durable. Stainless steel grill toppers are perfect. They prevent your food from touching the potentially dirty public



It is simple common sense. By investing in a sturdy cast iron pan or a reliable steel basket, we are choosing a legacy of rich flavors and genuine sustainability over a toxic cycle of endless trash. Let's fire up our grills, share the incredible food we love with our families, and proudly leave the disposable "sin of foil" in the past where it belongs.

U.S. Aluminum Foil & Packaging Waste	Current Estimates (2026)	Projected in 50 Years (2076)
Annual U.S. Usage / Generation	~500,000 Tons	~1,050,000 Tons
Added to U.S. Landfills Annually	~420,000 Tons	~880,000 Tons
Cumulative Amount Sitting in Landfills	~18,000,000 Tons	~52,000,000 Tons

Timeline Period	Total Foil Produced	Energy Required (Electricity)	Carbon Emissions (CO ₂ e)
Current Annual Baseline (2026)	500,000 Tons	7.2 Billion kWh	5.8 Million Metric Tons
Cumulative History (To This Date)	~12.5 Million Tons	180 Billion kWh	143 Million Metric Tons
Next 50 Years (2026–2076 Projection)	~37.8 Million Tons	544 Billion kWh	434 Million Metric Tons

Sumit Majumdar is the Vice Chairman, Chief Sustainability Officer, and Operating Partner of Verite Capital Partners. For over 20 years, he has been a leading voice in the fight against climate change, specializing in practical solutions for reducing carbon and methane emissions through sustainable fuel technology and industrial oversight.

NATIONAL NEWS

250 Years of the Great American Experiment (Cont. from cover)

A Fun, Fast, and Fact-Filled Dive into the History, People, and Laws That Built a Nation.



Sumit Majumdar

Vice Chairman, Chief Sustainability Officer, & Operating Partner at Verite Capital Partners

years old, the United States isn't an ancient nation by global standards, but as a grand political experiment, it is a shining example of incredible resilience, growth, and adaptability. This deep dive will explore how we got here, warts, triumphs, and all.

It's easy to look back with 20/20 hindsight and assume the birth of America was destiny. But back in the 1770s, the reality was chaotic, muddy, and wildly uncertain. For the vast majority of our early history, the colonists were actually fiercely loyal to Great Britain. They didn't want to separate; they liked being British! It was a massive point of pride. The colonies ran under a system historians call "salutary neglect," meaning London largely left them alone to make money, govern their local towns, and live their lives.

So, what changed? Why did a fiercely loyal populace suddenly decide to commit high treason against the most powerful empire on Earth? In a word: taxes. But more accurately, it was terrible British management. Following the incredibly expensive French and Indian War, Parliament passed a series of acts—the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts, and the infamous Tea Act. The colonists shouted, "No taxation without representation!" Britain's response wasn't to listen; they doubled down, passing the Intolerable Acts, closing Boston's port, and sending troops to occupy the city. It was this arrogant heavy-handedness that united thirteen historically divided, bickering colonies into a unified armed rebellion.

"The colonists didn't wake up one morning wanting a new country. They simply wanted their rights as Englishmen. When the King refused, the American Experiment began."

THE BLUEPRINT: REPUBLIC VS. DEMOCRACY

When the dust finally settled after the Revolutionary War, the Founders had a

massive, terrifying problem on their hands: how do we actually run this place? The initial attempt, the Articles of Confederation, was a colossal failure because it gave the federal government almost zero power. So, they locked themselves in a room in Philadelphia during the sweltering summer of 1787 to figure it out.

They were absolutely terrified of returning to a monarchy (a king), but they were equally terrified of a "pure democracy." In a pure democracy, the majority rules absolutely—meaning 51% of the people could legally vote away the rights, property, and freedom of the other 49%. Benjamin Franklin famously described democracy as "two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch."

The solution? A Constitutional Republic. In a republic, the law is king. We have a Constitution that acts as the ultimate rulebook, ensuring that minority rights are strictly protected from the whims of an angry majority. To make this work, they had to balance the power of big, heavily populated states against the smaller, rural ones.

Enter the "Great Compromise." They established a bicameral (two-house) Congress. First, we got the House of Representatives, where seats are based on population. This was a massive win for states with huge populations, giving them proportional power. But to protect the smaller states from getting perpetually bullied, we got the Senate. In the Senate, every single state gets exactly two votes, no matter if they have 40 million people or 400,000. This ingenious system cemented "states' rights," ensuring that local governments retained the power to govern their own unique populations while still participating in the federal system.

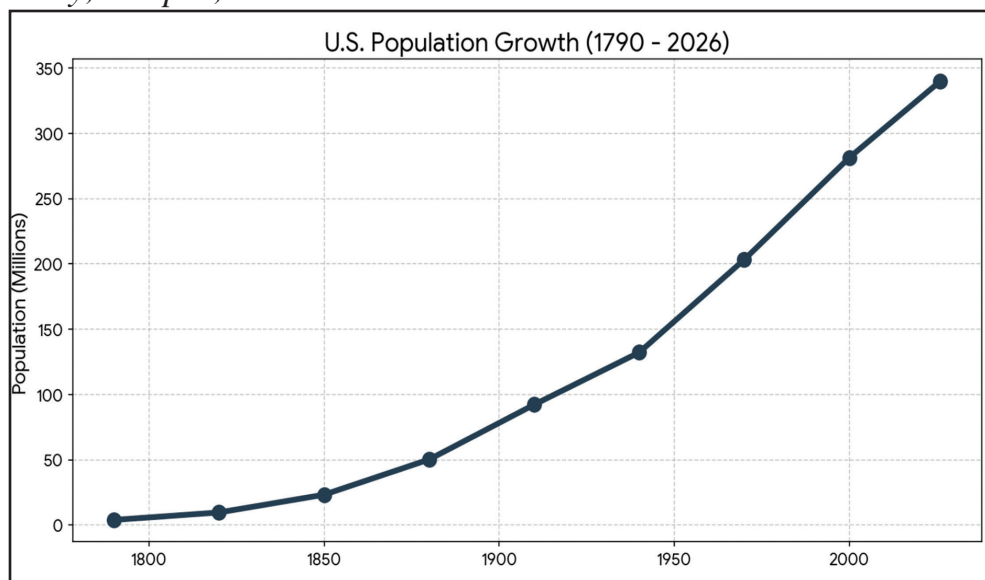
THE ULTIMATE MIC DROP: GEORGE WASHINGTON

You simply cannot talk about American history without tipping your hat to General George Washington. What made him truly unique wasn't just his brilliant, albeit occasionally flawed, military mind; it was his ego—or rather, his absolute control over it.

After miraculously defeating the greatest military power on earth, Washington was essentially a demigod in America. He was the most beloved man on the continent. The army was loyal to him, not the frail Congress. Many people, exhausted by the chaos of the post-war period, literally wanted to crown him King of America. He could have easily seized absolute power.

Instead, in what historians consider one of the most remarkable acts in all of political history, Washington rode to Annapolis, willingly surrendered his military commission to Congress, and simply went home to his farm in Mount Vernon. King George III of England, upon hearing that Washington planned to step down, supposedly said, "If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world."

Later, after being unanimously elected as the nation's first President, he did it again. After serving two terms, despite massive pressure to stay in office for life, he volun-



tarily stepped down. In doing so, he established the bedrock American tradition of the peaceful transfer of power—a tradition that has defined the resilience of the American Republic for 250 years.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION: AN IRONIC TWIST OF FATE

Let's clear up a major historical fact: the United States does not win the Revolutionary War without the Kingdom of France. Period. The French, eager to deal a crippling blow to their bitter global rival, Great Britain, secretly funneled cash and gunpowder to the Americans early on. But after the stunning American victory at Saratoga, France formally allied with us.

The French poured in highly trained soldiers, brilliant engineers, and, crucially, their formidable navy. It was the French fleet that blockaded the coast at Yorktown, trapping British General Cornwallis and forcing the surrender that effectively ended the war.

But this immense, nation-saving support came with a brutal, ironic twist for the French monarchy. King Louis XVI bankrupted the French treasury to help fund our revolution. That crushing financial crisis, combined with the contagious ideals of liberty, equality, and democracy that returning French soldiers brought back from America, sparked the French Revolution.

Just six years after the American Revolution ended, the French populace rose up, stormed the Bastille, and set the Old World on fire. It culminated in the Reign of Terror and the guillotine execution of the very King who had funded American independence. We proved a monarchy could be broken; France proved how bloody that blueprint could be.

SYMBOLS OF A NATION: FLAGS AND ANTHEMS

Where did our iconic symbols actually come from? The story of Betsy Ross single-handedly designing and sewing the first American flag is a charming, widely taught tale, but it's largely a myth propagated by her grandson a century later. Historical evidence actually points to Francis Hopkinson, a New Jersey delegate and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, as the original designer of the flag. The flag started with 13 alternating red and white stripes and 13 stars in a circle, representing a "new constellation." As the country pushed westward and added new states, the constellation grew. The flag has officially been modified 27 times to reach our current 50-star design, which was adopted in 1960 after Hawaii officially joined the Union.

As for our National Anthem, we have the War of 1812—often called America's Second War of Independence—to thank. In September 1814, an American lawyer named Francis Scott Key was negotiating a prisoner release aboard a British ship. He ended up trapped on board as he watched the mighty British navy bombard Baltimore's Fort McHenry with rockets and mortars for 25 relentless hours.

Key was certain the fort would fall. But when the morning sun finally broke through the rain and smoke, he saw the massive American garrison flag still flying defiantly over the ramparts. Overcome with immense emotion and relief, he quickly penned a poem on the back of a letter titled "Defense of Fort M'Henry." Set to a popular tune of the day, it eventually became The Star-Spangled Banner, officially designated as the national anthem in 1931.

IMMIGRATION: BUILDING THE REGIONS AND ZONES

The United States wasn't just built by the men who signed the Declaration of chance at life. Over the last 250 years, millions of people from Ireland, Germany, Italy, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America packed their lives into suitcases and crossed oceans to reach our shores.

They built the monumental transcontinental railroads that connected the coasts. They fueled the booming factories of the Industrial Revolution. They worked the coal mines, farmed the vast plains, and completely transformed the American diet, language, and cultural fabric.

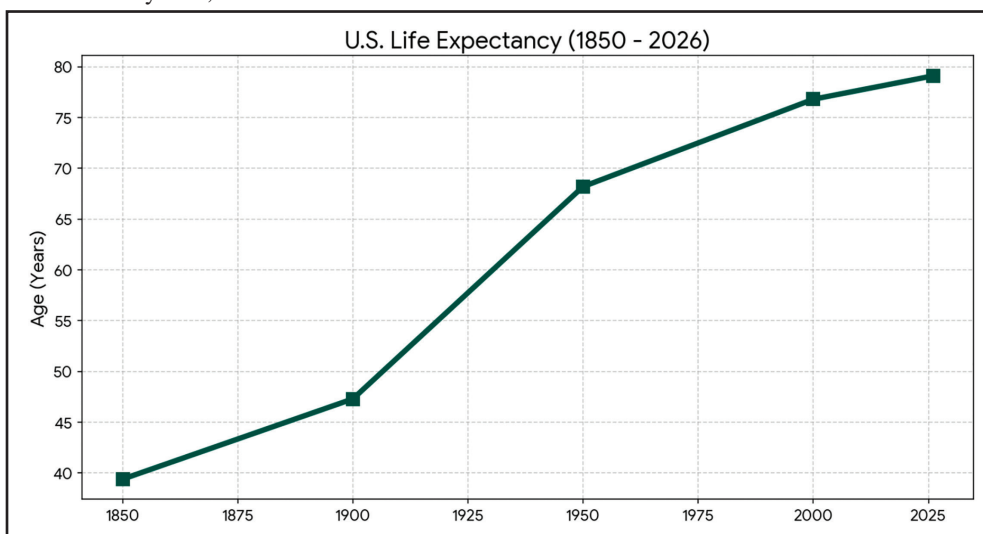
This massive, unprecedented geographic and demographic expansion created distinct regions and cultural zones across the country. Today, you have the fast-paced, historically dense, and financially dominant Northeast. You have the culturally rich, agrarian-rooted, and deeply traditional South. You have the industrious, hardworking, manufacturing-heavy Midwest. And you have the rugged, pioneering, tech-forward West. Each of these zones brought its own unique dialects, economic drivers, foodscapes, and political leanings into the grand American fold. It's what makes the United States less of a singular melting pot and more of a massive, complex mosaic of global cultures striving under one constitutional roof.

THE EMPIRE STATE: THE RISE OF BUFFALO AND NIAGARA

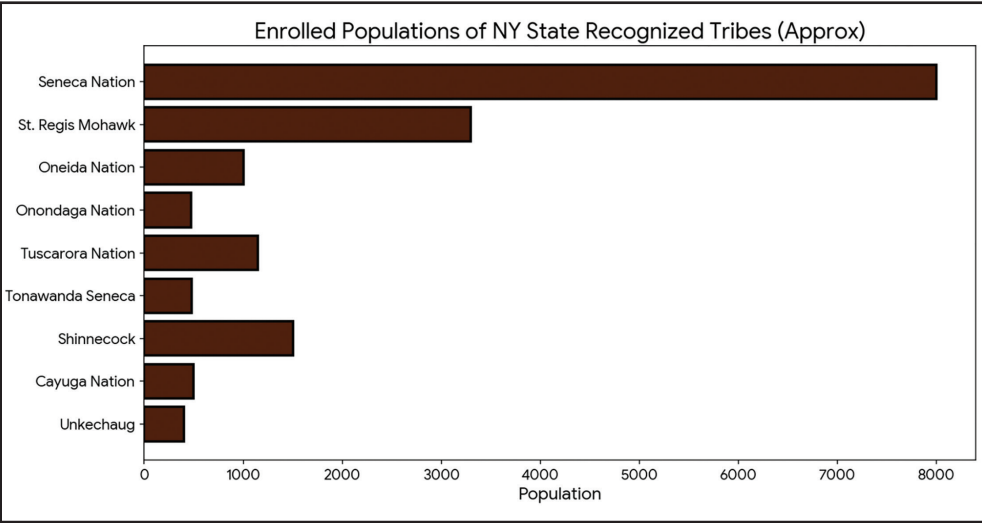
Zooming in closer to home, let's talk about the incredible journey of our very own New York. Entering the Union as the 11th state in 1788, New York almost immediately lived up to its grandiose nickname: The Empire State. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 was an absolute game-changer for the trajectory of the nation. It connected the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, funneling the wealth of the Midwest right through New York and cementing New York City as the undisputed financial capital of the world.

But the real, tangible magic happened right here in our own Western New York backyard. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the City of Buffalo and Niagara Falls were the absolute epicenters of global innovation. Thanks to the staggering, awe-inspiring hydropower generated by Niagara Falls, Buffalo became known globally as the "City of Light"—it was the very first major

(Cont. on pg. 14)



250 Years of the Great American Experiment (Cont.)



city in the United States to feature wide-spread, reliable electric streetlights. During the Gilded Age, Buffalo was effectively the Silicon Valley of its time. It boomed with massive grain silos, sprawling steel plants, grand architectural masterpieces by Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, and staggering millionaire wealth. It was the hub where the Midwest met the East Coast. Of course, history operates in cycles. The mid-to-late 20th century brought severe challenges. The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 allowed ships to completely bypass the Erie Canal and Buffalo's ports. Coupled with a painful, nationwide period of deindustrialization, Western New York, like much of the Rust Belt, saw severe economic decline, factory closures, and population loss.

Yet, true to the enduring American spirit, the Western New York region has demonstrated immense grit. We didn't fold. Today, the region is reinventing itself, transitioning from heavy steel to world-class medical campuses, cutting-edge green energy initiatives, and a booming, revitalized waterfront. The rugged resilience of our local history perfectly mirrors the resilience of the nation at large.

FIRST NATIONS: THE KEEPERS OF THE LAND

Before any of this 250-year American experiment began—before the Constitution, before the French Alliance, before the Erie Canal—this vast territory belonged to a rich, complex network of sovereign Indigenous peoples. Right here in Erie County, our very name comes from the Eriez (or Erie) tribe, also known historically as the "Cat Nation."

By the mid-1600s, long before the American Revolution even sparked, the Erie were absorbed or dispersed by the formidable Haudenosaunee, better known to the world as the Iroquois Confederacy.

250 Years Ago: Let's rewind to the 1770s. At the time of the Revolutionary War, the Haudenosaunee—comprised of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora nations—were the absolute dominant political and military power in this region. Over in Eastern New York and Long Island, Algonquian-speaking peoples like the Mohican, Lenape, Shinnecock, and Wappinger thrived along the coasts and rivers.

The American Revolution was a disaster for the First Nations. It fractured the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, as different nations

allied with either the British Crown or the rebellious colonists. Following the war, a relentless series of treaties systematically pushed the Native groups off their vast ancestral lands. The Seneca, known revered as the "Keepers of the Western Door," dominated Western New York. But treaties, such as the heartbreaking 1838 Second Treaty of Buffalo Creek, forced them to relinquish the massive Buffalo Creek Reservation and retreat to much smaller, isolated territories.

Where Are They Now? Today, despite centuries of systemic challenges, broken treaties, and marginalization, the Indigenous peoples of New York are still here. They are an integral part of the state's cultural fabric.

New York State currently recognizes nine sovereign Native nations:

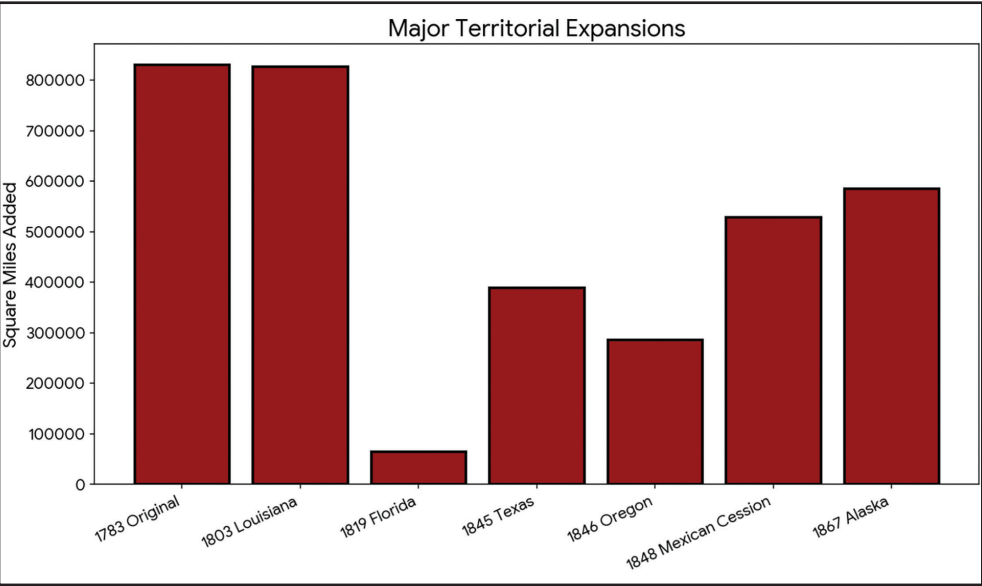
- Seneca Nation of Indians (Allegany & Cattaraugus Territories)
- Tonawanda Band of Seneca
- Tuscarora Nation
- Cayuga Nation
- Onondaga Nation
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Shinnecock Indian Nation (Long Island)
- Unkechaug Indian Nation (Long Island)

Locally, the Cattaraugus Territory touches Erie County's southern edge. The Tonawanda and Tuscarora reservations lie just to our north and east. The Seneca heritage remains deeply woven into Buffalo's DNA, visible everywhere from the waters of Scajaquada Creek to the very name "Niagara" itself.

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION: FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

The original thirteen colonies encompassed a relatively modest strip of land hugging the Atlantic coast. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 officially recognized United States territory extending westward to the Mississippi River. But the American appetite for land, driven by the concept of "Manifest Destiny," was insatiable. What followed was a massive, historically unprecedented, and often highly controversial westward expansion.

Through purchases, diplomacy, and war, the borders of the nation exploded outward. The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country overnight for mere pennies an acre. The Mexican-American War secured the vast stretches of California and the Southwest. The map below charts the massive square mileage added during these



DEFINING HISTORICAL MOMENTS: A TIMELINE

The resilience of the American experiment has been tested by war, economic collapse, technological revolutions, and severe internal division. Below is an expanded timeline of key events that forged the nation we know today over the last 250 years.

1775-1783: The Revolutionary War – The armed conflict securing American independence from the British Empire.

1787: Constitutional Convention – Drafting of the US Constitution in Philadelphia, establishing the Republic.

1803: The Louisiana Purchase – Thomas Jefferson acquires vast western territory from France.

1812-1815: The War of 1812 – Conflict with Great Britain; Francis Scott Key writes the National Anthem.

1846-1848: Mexican-American War – US acquires California and the American Southwest.

1861-1865: The American Civil War – The deadliest conflict on American soil, fought over the moral abomination of slavery and state sovereignty. The Union victory preserved the nation.

Jan 1, 1863: The Emancipation Proclamation – President Abraham Lincoln issues the executive order declaring "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

1869: Transcontinental Railroad – The golden spike is driven in Utah, connecting the East and West coasts by rail.

1898: Spanish-American War – The US emerges as a global power, acquiring territories such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

1914-1918: World War I – The US enters the global conflict in 1917, tipping the scales in favor of the Allied Powers.

Aug 18, 1920: Women's Suffrage – Ratification of the 19th Amendment finally guarantees women the fundamental right to vote.

1929-1939: The Great Depression – A severe worldwide economic depression sparking Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" social programs.

1941-1945: World War II – Following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the US enters WWII, leading to the defeat of the Axis powers and the dawn of the Atomic Age.

1950-1953: The Korean War – A major conflict of the Cold War era aimed at halting the spread of communism in Asia.

1955-1975: The Vietnam War – A prolonged, costly, and domestically divisive conflict in Southeast Asia.

July 2, 1964: The Civil Rights Act – Landmark, long-overdue legislation outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

July 20, 1969: Apollo 11 Moon Landing – American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin become the first humans to walk on the moon.

1989-1991: End of the Cold War – The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union leaves the US as the world's sole superpower.

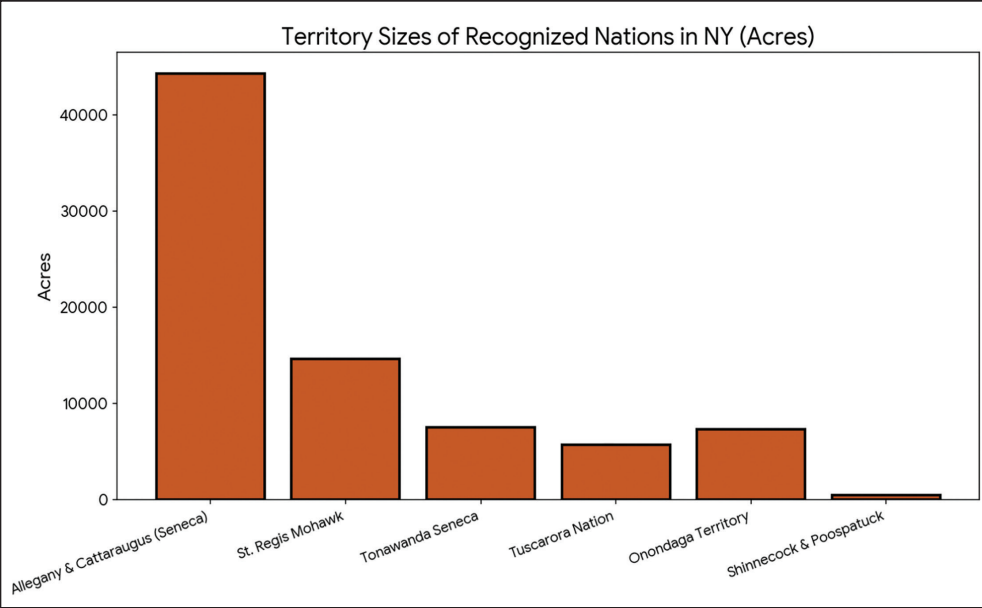
Sept 11, 2001: 9/11 Terrorist Attacks – Unprecedented attacks on US soil that altered global security and triggered the global War on Terror.

2026: The Semiquincentennial – The 250th

Anniversary of the United States of America. THE 27 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS: THE LIVING DOCUMENT Over 250 years, the Constitution has been amended 27 times. It was designed to be a living document, capable of adapting to the changing moral, technological, and legal landscape of a growing nation. Here is the complete list of changes made to our fundamental laws.

- | Amendment | Year | Description |
|-----------|--------|---|
| 1. | (1791) | Guarantees freedom of religion, speech, assembly, press, and the right to petition the government. |
| 2. | (1791) | Protects the right of the people to keep and bear arms. |
| 3. | (1791) | Restricts the quartering of soldiers in private homes without the owner's consent. |
| 4. | (1791) | Protects citizens from unreasonable searches and seizures without a valid warrant. |
| 5. | (1791) | Guarantees due process, protects against self-incrimination ("pleading the fifth"), and double jeopardy. |
| 6. | (1791) | Guarantees the right to a speedy, public trial by an impartial jury, and the right to legal counsel. |
| 7. | (1791) | Guarantees the right to a jury trial in civil cases. |
| 8. | (1791) | Prohibits excessive bail, excessive fines, and cruel and unusual punishments. |
| 9. | (1791) | Clarifies that rights not explicitly listed in the Constitution are still retained by the people. |
| 10. | (1791) | Reserves all powers not delegated to the federal government to the States, or to the people. |
| 11. | (1795) | Makes states immune from suits from out-of-state citizens and foreigners not living within the state borders. |
| 12. | (1804) | Modifies the Electoral College procedures to have separate ballots for President and Vice President. |
| 13. | (1865) | Abolishes slavery and involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime. |
| 14. | (1868) | Grants citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the US; ensures equal protection and due process under the law for all citizens. |
| 15. | (1870) | Prohibits the denial of the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. |
| 16. | (1913) | Permits the federal government to levy and collect a nationwide income tax. |
| 17. | (1913) | Establishes the direct election of United States Senators by popular vote, rather than by state legislatures. |
| 18. | (1919) | Prohibits the manufacturing, transportation, or sale of alcohol within the US (Prohibition). |
| 19. | (1920) | Grants women the right to vote across the entire nation (Women's Suffrage). |
| 20. | (1933) | Changes the dates for the start of presidential and congressional terms to shorten the "lame duck" period. |
| 21. | (1933) | Repeals the 18th Amendment, officially ending the era of Prohibition. |
| 22. | (1951) | Limits the President to serving only two elected terms in office (solidifying Washington's tradition). |

(Cont. on pg. 15)



250 Years of the Great American Experiment (Cont.)

- 23. (1961) Grants electoral votes to the citizens of the District of Columbia (Washington D.C.).
- 24. (1964) Prohibits the revocation of voting rights due to the non-payment of a poll tax.
- 25. (1967) Addresses presidential succession, disability, and vice-presidential vacancies.
- 26. (1971) Lowers the national voting age from 21 down to 18 (spurred by the Vietnam War draft).
- 27. (1992) Delays any laws affecting Congressional salary from taking effect until after the next election.

THE 50 STATES OF THE UNION

- 1. Delaware was admitted on December 7, 1787, its capital is Dover, and it is known as the "First State" because it was the first to ratify the U.S. Constitution.
- 2. Pennsylvania was admitted on December 12, 1787, its capital is Harrisburg, and it is home to the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall.
- 3. New Jersey was admitted on December 18, 1787, its capital is Trenton, and it is the site of George Washington's famous crossing of the Delaware River.
- 4. Georgia was admitted on January 2, 1788, its capital is Atlanta, and it was originally founded as a penal colony for debtors.
- 5. Connecticut was admitted on January 9, 1788, its capital is Hartford, and it is known as the "Constitution State."
- 6. Massachusetts was admitted on February 6, 1788, its capital is Boston, and it is the birthplace of the American Revolution at Lexington and Concord.
- 7. Maryland was admitted on April 28, 1788, its capital is Annapolis, and it donated the land that became Washington, D.C.
- 8. South Carolina was admitted on May 23, 1788, its capital is Columbia, and it was the first state to secede from the Union in 1860.
- 9. New Hampshire was admitted on June 21, 1788, its capital is Concord, and its motto is "Live Free or Die."
- 10. Virginia was admitted on June 25, 1788, its capital is Richmond, and it is the birthplace of four of the first five U.S. presidents.
- 11. New York was admitted on July 26, 1788, its capital is Albany, and it is the Empire State, home to the Erie Canal and Wall Street.
- 12. North Carolina was admitted on November 21, 1789, its capital is Raleigh, and it is the site of the Wright Brothers' first successful flight.
- 13. Rhode Island was admitted on May 29, 1790, its capital is Providence, and it is the smallest state in the nation by land area.
- 14. Vermont was admitted on March 4, 1791, its capital is Montpelier, and it was the first state admitted after the original 13 colonies.
- 15. Kentucky was admitted on June 1, 1792, its capital is Frankfort, and it is the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln.
- 16. Tennessee was admitted on June 1, 1796, its capital is Nashville, and it is known as the "Volunteer State" because of the War of 1812.
- 17. Ohio was admitted on March 1, 1803, its capital is Columbus, and it is the birthplace of seven U.S. presidents.
- 18. Louisiana was admitted on April 30, 1812, its capital is Baton Rouge, and it is the only state that uses parishes instead of counties.
- 19. Indiana was admitted on December 11, 1816, its capital is Indianapolis, and it is known as the "Hoosier State."
- 20. Mississippi was admitted on December 1817, its capital is Jackson, and it is named after the Mississippi River.
- 21. Illinois was admitted on December 3, 1818, its capital is Springfield, and it is known as the "Land of Lincoln."
- 22. Alabama was admitted on December 14, 1819, its capital is Montgomery, and it played a central role in the Civil Rights Movement.
- 23. Maine was admitted on March 15, 1820, its capital is Augusta, and it produces 99% of the nation's blueberries.
- 24. Missouri was admitted on August 10,

- 1821, its capital is Jefferson City, and it is known as the "Gateway to the West."
- 25. Arkansas was admitted on June 15, 1836, its capital is Little Rock, and it contains the only active diamond mine in the United States.
- 26. Michigan was admitted on January 26, 1837, its capital is Lansing, and it touches four of the five Great Lakes.
- 27. Florida was admitted on March 3, 1845, its capital is Tallahassee, and it was purchased from Spain and is home to St. Augustine, the nation's oldest city.
- 28. Texas was admitted on December 29, 1845, its capital is Austin, and it was an independent republic for nine years before joining the United States.
- 29. Iowa was admitted on December 28, 1846, its capital is Des Moines, and it produces more corn than any other state.
- 30. Wisconsin was admitted on May 29, 1848, its capital is Madison, and it is known as "America's Dairyland."
- 31. California was admitted on September 9, 1850, its capital is Sacramento, and it joined the Union during the California Gold Rush.
- 32. Minnesota was admitted on May 11, 1858, its capital is St. Paul, and it is known as the "Land of 10,000 Lakes."
- 33. Oregon was admitted on February 14, 1859, its capital is Salem, and it marks the end of the famous Oregon Trail.
- 34. Kansas was admitted on January 29, 1861, its capital is Topeka, and it is the geographic center of the contiguous United States.
- 35. West Virginia was admitted on June 20, 1863, its capital is Charleston, and it broke away from Virginia during the Civil War to remain in the Union.
- 36. Nevada was admitted on October 31, 1864, its capital is Carson City, and it is known as the "Silver State."
- 37. Nebraska was admitted on March 1, 1867, its capital is Lincoln, and it is home to the nation's only unicameral state legislature.
- 38. Colorado was admitted on August 1, 1876, its capital is Denver, and it is known as the "Centennial State" because it joined the Union 100 years after 1776.
- 39. North Dakota was admitted on November 2, 1889, its capital is Bismarck, and it produces vast amounts of the nation's wheat and oil.
- 40. South Dakota was admitted on November 2, 1889, its capital is Pierre, and it is home to Mount Rushmore National Memorial.
- 41. Montana was admitted on November 8, 1889, its capital is Helena, and it is known as "Big Sky Country."
- 42. Washington was admitted on November 11, 1889, its capital is Olympia, and it is the only state named after a U.S. president.
- 43. Idaho was admitted on July 3, 1890, its capital is Boise, and it produces nearly one-third of America's potatoes.
- 44. Wyoming was admitted on July 10, 1890, its capital is Cheyenne, and it was the first state to grant women the right to vote in 1869.
- 45. Utah was admitted on January 4, 1896, its capital is Salt Lake City, and it is home to the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.
- 46. Oklahoma was admitted on November 16, 1907, its capital is Oklahoma City, and it was formerly designated as Indian Territory before statehood.
- 47. New Mexico was admitted on January 6, 1912, its capital is Santa Fe, and it is home to the Trinity Site, where the first atomic bomb was tested.
- 48. Arizona was admitted on February 14, 1912, its capital is Phoenix, and it is known as the "Grand Canyon State."
- 49. Alaska was admitted on January 3, 1959, its capital is Juneau, and it was purchased from Russia in 1867 and is the largest state by land area.
- 50. Hawaii was admitted on August 21, 1959, its capital is Honolulu, and it is the only U.S. state located entirely outside North America.

At 250 years, the American experiment remains a vibrant, chaotic, and beautiful work in progress. It is up to us to write the next chapter.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

The office of the President of the United States has been held by individuals from various parties, backgrounds, and temperaments, steering the nation through its 250 years of history. Here is the complete roster of the 46 men who have held the highest office in the land.

#	PRESIDENT	TERM	PARTY
1	George Washington	1789-1797	Unaffiliated
2	John Adams	1797-1801	Federalist
3	Thomas Jefferson	1801-1809	Dem-Republican
4	James Madison	1809-1817	Dem-Republican
5	James Monroe	1817-1825	Dem-Republican
6	John Quincy Adams	1825-1829	Dem-Republican
7	Andrew Jackson	1829-1837	Democrat
8	Martin Van Buren	1837-1841	Democrat
9	William H. Harrison	1841	Whig
10	John Tyler	1841-1845	Whig/Unaffiliated
11	James K. Polk	1845-1849	Democrat
12	Zachary Taylor	1849-1850	Whig
13	Millard Fillmore	1850-1853	Whig
14	Franklin Pierce	1853-1857	Democrat
15	James Buchanan	1857-1861	Democrat
16	Abraham Lincoln	1861-1865	Republican / Union
17	Andrew Johnson	1865-1869	Union / Democrat
18	Ulysses S. Grant	1869-1877	Republican
19	Rutherford B. Hayes	1877-1881	Republican
20	James A. Garfield	1881	Republican
21	Chester A. Arthur	1881-1885	Republican
22	Grover Cleveland	1885-1889	Democrat
23	Benjamin Harrison	1889-1893	Republican
24	Grover Cleveland	1893-1897	Democrat
25	William McKinley	1897-1901	Republican
26	Theodore Roosevelt	1901-1909	Republican
27	William H. Taft	1909-1913	Republican
28	Woodrow Wilson	1913-1921	Democrat
29	Warren G. Harding	1921-1923	Republican
30	Calvin Coolidge	1923-1929	Republican
31	Herbert Hoover	1929-1933	Republican
32	Franklin D. Roosevelt	1933-1945	Democrat
33	Harry S. Truman	1945-1953	Democrat
34	Dwight D. Eisenhower	1953-1961	Republican
35	John F. Kennedy	1961-1963	Democrat

36	Lyndon B. Johnson	1963-1969	Democrat
37	Richard Nixon	1969-1974	Republican
38	Gerald Ford	1974-1977	Republican
39	Jimmy Carter	1977-1981	Democrat
40	Ronald Reagan	1981-1989	Republican
41	George H. W. Bush	1989-1993	Republican
42	Bill Clinton	1993-2001	Democrat
43	George W. Bush	2001-2009	Republican
44	Barack Obama	2009-2017	Democrat
45	Donald Trump	2017-2021	Republican
46	Joe Biden	2021-2025	Democrat
47	Donald Trump	2025-Present	Republican

25 Lesser-known and Interesting Facts about U.S. Presidents

- George Washington never lived in the White House. It wasn't completed until after he left office.
- John Adams was the first president to live in the White House, moving in November 1800 while much of the building was still unfinished.
- Thomas Jefferson was an accomplished architect and designed his home, referred to as 'Monticello,' himself.
- James Madison was America's shortest president, standing about 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighing roughly 100 pounds.
- James Monroe survived a musket ball wound suffered during the American Revolutionary War. The bullet remained lodged in his body for life.
- John Quincy Adams regularly swam nude in the Potomac River before work.
- Andrew Jackson owned a pet parrot so foul-mouthed that it reportedly had to be removed from his funeral because it wouldn't stop swearing.
- Martin Van Buren was the only president whose first language was not English. He grew up speaking Dutch.
- William Henry Harrison served only 31 days, making his the shortest presidency in U.S. history.
- John Tyler fathered 15 children, which is more than any other U.S. president.
- James K. Polk kept every major campaign promise he made and voluntarily declined to seek a second term.
- Zachary Taylor never voted in a presidential election before becoming president.
- Millard Fillmore helped establish what became the University at Buffalo.
- Franklin Pierce watched his only surviving son die in a train accident just weeks before his inauguration.
- James Buchanan remains the only lifelong bachelor to serve as president.
- Abraham Lincoln was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame before entering politics.
- Ulysses S. Grant was once arrested for speeding in his horse-drawn carriage through Washington, D.C.
- Rutherford B. Hayes was the first president to use a telephone in the White House. His phone number was simply "1."
- James A. Garfield could write simultaneously in Greek with one hand and Latin with the other.
- William Howard Taft is the only person to have served as both President of the United States and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.
- Calvin Coolidge had a pet raccoon named Rebecca that was originally sent to the White House to be served as Thanksgiving dinner.
- Herbert Hoover spoke fluent Mandarin Chinese after working as a mining engineer in China.
- Gerald Ford was the only president never elected as either president or vice president.
- Jimmy Carter filed a report after witnessing what he believed to be an unidentified flying object in 1969, years before becoming president.
- Theodore Roosevelt was shot in the chest while campaigning in 1912, but because the bullet passed through a folded 50-page speech and his eyeglass case, he insisted on delivering the entire 90-minute speech before seeking medical treatment.



HOROSCOPES, FUNNIES & PUZZLES

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6			1	4	9		7	8
	8		2	5	3		9	6
1	2				7	4	5	

20 Words that Describe Summer

T C S F A R U O L X R Z D B F E X R L I T S R F R
K O A K H W F B N V P Q X J E Z R L W E S C I L B
L Y U M Q W L D C O E W K C H R C J H L N Z O K W
M W S W P F F I R E W O R K S T R B Z S H L H I U
V C M H U I E Y F I S H I N G L D Y L L J B C T Y
B I O S L I N Q N T T S C S C Y D A P N W G H E K
M C R U P E S G G M Z Z C I X A J N T I Q C S F E
G I E N F T M K W T B T H L R Z R N E L C Z P L B
A X S S E I G O B V M A M T W S M N K H X K R Y V
K L E E W Z R K N I H W C I L J E X I J K B I I M
E B V T L A B E H A C L A K C B Q V U V C Q N N H
S U R S V M T U F L D Y S T Y E K Y F V A X K G G
W U I A R F C E R L N E C K E A C L T B S L L K R
I N J G A P L M R Q I E J L H R R R U N U E O Q
M S R U T A A A L B L E N I I H M D E B P L R U I
M G R J Z B I P S W A D S G U N D E C A J H S I P
I K V V S W A F D H Z L X A U Z G O L A M K O U Y
N H Y L G H P R U G L R L C C D A B U O M T J K K
G R J R E Y Q O B W N I J O P Q J E P V N P C A C
G A F F G K C H L E M I G H O X Z A R H K B I U Q
Q R K V P T T Y K W C V Y H B N J C V V Y B K N B
S F F J M V C G Z K W U F L T J S H N U R X R K G
J Y Y R W H P N J K J R E R S T Q I D F O I N D S
U F Z O N J W C C C B U Q S A M A J R Q N J I X H
A S M U R V E J I L E A V J V U F G S Y X N F M D

BackyardCamping	FlashlightTag	WaterBalloons
BerryPicking	Sprinklers	KiteFlying
Watermelon	Bicycling	Fireworks
Barbecues	IceCream	Fireflies
Carnival	Camping	Lemonade
Fishing	Sunsets	S'mores

THE INTERACTIVE WNY SUMMER FUN ZONE!

POP QUIZ! (CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER)

- What causes the "dog days of summer," often the hottest stretch of the season?
A) The Earth is farthest from the sun
B) Sirius, the Dog Star, rises with the sun
C) Longer daylight hours trap more heat
- Which insect is known for its 13-year life cycle and often emerges in large numbers during summer?
A) Cicada
B) Dragonfly
C) Firefly
- Which lake in Western New York reaches its warmest surface temperatures in late July or August?
A) Lake Erie
B) Lake Ontario
C) Chautauqua Lake

CLOUD SHAPES: SPEND 30 MINUTES OUTSIDE.

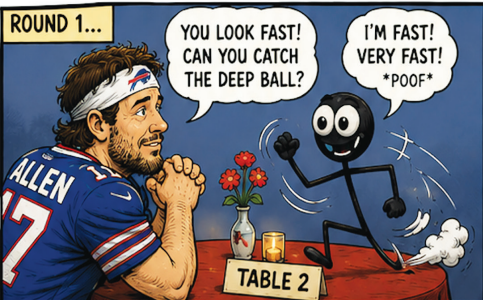
Take 30 minutes and write down all the different shapes of clouds you see.

WNY SUMMER BINGO

Take this paper outside and cross off these local WNY summer phenomena as you spot them!

B	I	N	G	O
Berry picking at a local farm	Watching sunrise over the Niagara River	Hammocking in the backyard	Ice cream from a food truck	Bike ride along the Erie Canal Trail
Slip 'n slide down a hill	Mini golf with friends	FREE SPACE (You survived Winter)	Water fight on a hot day	Fireworks over the Canada-U.S. bridge
Friday night fish fry outside	Boat day on the lake	Finding sea glass on the beach	Sunset picnic in a park	Making s'mores at the fire pit
Visiting a WNY state park	Fresh picked peaches	Floating in a swimming pool	Saturday morning farmers market	Watching a drive-in movie
Paddle boarding at sunset	Concert at Artpark or Darien Lake	Cliff jumping at a local quarry (should be safe!)	Lemonade from a stand	Exploring a small town nearby

JOSH ALLEN GOES SPEED DATING... FOR WIDE RECEIVERS!



MEET THE CANDIDATES!



ARIES (March 21 – April 19)

The start of July brings renewed motivation to tackle unfinished goals. Your confidence is growing, but success this week comes from thoughtful planning rather than rushing ahead. A conversation with a trusted friend or colleague may offer exactly the perspective you need. Stay mindful of spending over the holiday weekend.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20)

Steady progress continues as you focus on building security in both your personal and professional life. Small victories this week can have a lasting impact if you remain patient. A family gathering or holiday celebration may strengthen an important relationship. Take time to appreciate how far you've come.

GEMINI (May 21 – June 20)

Your communication skills are sharper than ever. Whether you're reconnecting with old friends or meeting someone new, your words leave a lasting impression. Stay flexible if holiday plans change unexpectedly. A spontaneous opportunity could lead to an exciting experience.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)

Your birthday season continues, placing the spotlight firmly on you. This is an ideal week to set personal goals and embrace new beginnings. Trust your instincts when making important decisions. The support of family and close friends reminds you that you're not facing challenges alone.

LEO (July 23 – August 22)

A quieter pace gives you the chance to recharge before your busy season arrives. Focus on rest, reflection, and preparing for future opportunities. Don't feel pressured to have every answer immediately. Sometimes stepping back provides the clearest path forward.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22)

Community, friendships, and teamwork bring positive momentum this week. A shared project or social gathering could introduce you to someone with valuable insight. Stay open to collaboration, even if you're used

to working independently. Progress comes through cooperation.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22)

Professional opportunities continue to develop. Your calm approach helps you navigate challenges that might overwhelm others. Recognition may come from someone who has quietly noticed your dedication. Stay focused on long-term goals rather than temporary distractions.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21)

A sense of adventure encourages you to explore new ideas or future plans. Whether it's travel, learning something new, or simply changing your routine, fresh experiences bring renewed motivation. Keep an open mind—an unexpected opportunity may broaden your horizons.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 21)

Financial planning deserves careful attention. Review commitments before making major purchases or investments. Honest conversations about shared responsibilities strengthen trust. A practical decision made this week helps reduce future stress.

CAPRICORN (December 22 – January 19)

Relationships take center stage as cooperation becomes essential. Whether in business or personal life, listening carefully will be just as important as expressing your own ideas. A meaningful partnership grows stronger through mutual respect and understanding.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18)

Daily routines may feel busier than usual, but staying organized keeps everything under control. Focus on healthy habits and manageable goals rather than trying to accomplish everything at once. Consistent effort produces satisfying results.

PISCES (February 19 – March 20)

Creativity, joy, and celebration fill the week with positive energy. The holiday offers a chance to reconnect with loved ones and enjoy life's simple pleasures. An idea or hobby you've been exploring may begin to show real promise. Let your imagination lead the way.