

# Opinion

## THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

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### TODAY'S QUOTE

“And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been.”  
— **Rainer Maria Rilke, German poet (1875-1926)**

## Stop letting world freeload off U.S.

Probably everyone has a friend who is a freeloader — someone who is capable of paying but somehow always weasels out of paying his or her fair share. On a global scale, the United States has a bunch of freeloading friends when it comes to paying for prescription drugs: Canada, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and others. Foreign governments routinely enforce low drug prices in their countries, while expecting U.S. patients and taxpayers to underwrite the costs of research, development and commercialization.

To have access to these big markets, drugmakers accept lower margins abroad and shift to the United States the burden of paying for innovation and bringing the drugs to market. This dynamic has long been called out as a “free ride” on American innovation efforts.

This is a structural distortion in the global pharmaceutical market and unless U.S. policymakers respond smartly, the United States risks undercutting the very innovation that powers modern medicine.

The empirical link between pharmaceutical income and R&D investment is strong. Studies have found that countries imposing controls tend to see declines in drug approvals and reduced industry investment. If we let global price controls erode the margins that support R&D, we risk a future with fewer cures, greater disease burden and early deaths.

Some proposed reforms aim to tie U.S. drug prices to the prices paid in foreign countries — so-called “most-favored-nation” or international reference pricing. While these approaches sound like they would level the playing field, they effectively import the very socialist pricing policies that embrace the freeloader logic.

The problem is, if the United States were to adopt this logic, there would be no one left to freeload from. The result would be a severe suppression of patient access, R&D invest-

ment and new cure development.

Many members of Congress, including U.S. Rep. Brett Guthrie, have wisely expressed opposition to these policies, in spite of President Trump’s support of such ideas.

Instead, Rep. Guthrie has expressed support for more common-sense measures like providing greater transparency, increasing patients’ options and eliminating bureaucracy in the drug pricing system.

There are a couple of other measures that Rep. Guthrie could champion in order to highlight U.S. leadership on drug innovation and to promote global equity on drug pricing.

First, he could push for increased transparency and benchmarking of true R&D costs. Too much of the public debate treats higher U.S. prices as simple corporate greed, ignoring that R&D is capital-intensive, risky and long-term. Policymakers should require drug firms to disclose R&D expenditures, success rates and cost-of-capital assumptions.

Second, he could champion the idea of coordinating with our foreign allies to raise global pricing floors. The freeloading problem is global, so the solution should be global, too. The U.S. should lead coalition efforts whether through an existing structure like the G7 or Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or through a new global pharmaceutical pricing forum. Nations should agree to avoid a race to the bottom, reinforcing the link between sustainable prices and sustainable innovation.

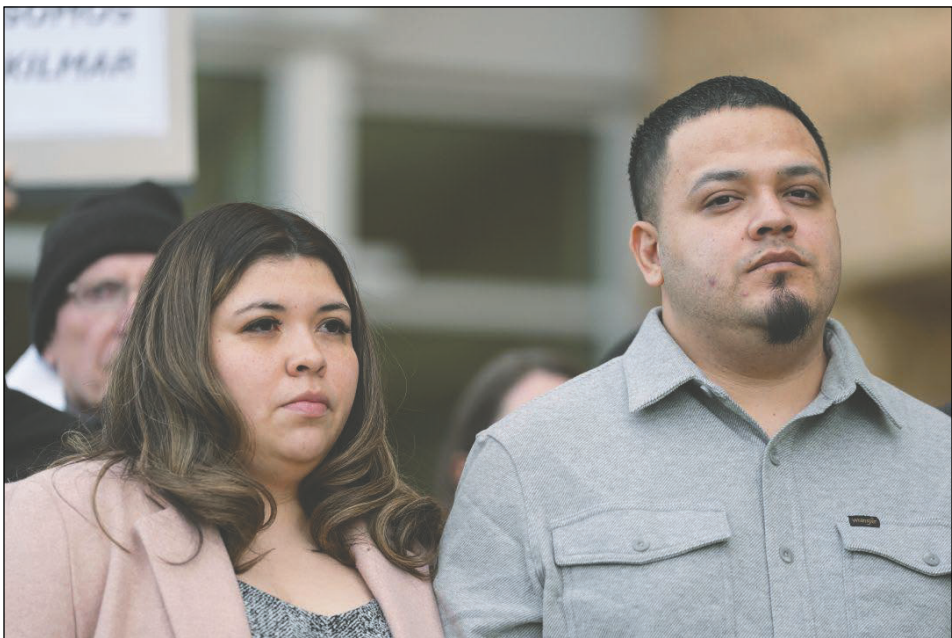
As Rep. Guthrie has communicated, a mature, policy-driven response to drug prices isn’t to adopt the same old price control policies that have failed across the globe, but to rebalance the system.

Such rebalance involves asserting leverage in trade deals, demanding transparency, protecting necessary margins for innovation and working internationally to lift pricing norms.

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KENT KAISER



Stephanie Scarbrough/AP photo

**Kilmar Abrego Garcia and his wife Jennifer Vasquez Sura leave the United States District Court District of Maryland, Monday, Dec. 22, in Greenbelt, Md.**

## Judge says DOJ pursued prosecution only after mistaken deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia

BY TRAVIS LOLLER  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A newly unsealed order in the criminal case against Kilmar Abrego Garcia reveals that high-level Justice Department officials pushed for his indictment, calling it a “top priority,” only after he was mistakenly deported and then ordered returned to the U.S. Abrego Garcia has pleaded not guilty in federal court in Tennessee to charges of human smuggling. He is seeking to have the case dismissed on the grounds that the prosecution is vindictive — a way for President Donald Trump’s administration to punish him for the embarrassment of his mistaken deportation.

To support that argument, he has asked the government to turn over documents that reveal how the decision was made to prosecute him in 2025 for an incident that occurred in 2022. On Dec. 3, U.S. District Judge Waverly Crenshaw filed an order under seal that compelled the government to provide some documents to Abrego Garcia and his attorneys. That order was unsealed on Tuesday and sheds new light on the case.

Earlier, Crenshaw found that there was “some evidence” that the prosecution of Abrego Garcia could be vindictive. He specifically cited a statement by Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche on a Fox News program that seemed to suggest that the Department of Justice charged Abrego Garcia because he had won

his wrongful deportation case.

Rob McGuire, who was the Acting U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee until late December, argued that those statements were irrelevant because he alone made the decision to prosecute, and he has no animus against Abrego Garcia.

In the newly unsealed order, Crenshaw writes, “Some of the documents suggest not only that McGuire was not a solitary decision-maker, but he in fact reported to others in DOJ and the decision to prosecute Abrego may have been a joint decision.”

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Tennessee released a statement saying, “The emails cited in Judge Crenshaw’s order, specifically Mr. McGuire’s email on May 15, 2025, confirm that the ultimate decision on whether to prosecute was made by career prosecutors based on the facts, evidence, and established DOJ practice. Communications with the Deputy Attorney General’s Office about a high-profile case are both required and routine.”

The email referenced was from McGuire to his staff stating that Blanche “would like Garcia charged sooner rather than later,” according to Crenshaw’s order.

The human smuggling charges stem from a 2022 traffic stop in Tennessee where Abrego Garcia was pulled over for speeding. There were nine passengers in the car, and state troopers discussed the possibility of

human smuggling among themselves. However, he was ultimately allowed to leave with only a warning. The case was turned over to Homeland Security Investigations, but there is no record of any effort to charge him until April 2025, according to court records.

The order does not give a lot of detail on what is in the documents that were turned over to Abrego Garcia, but it shows that Aakash Singh, who works under Blanche in the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, contacted McGuire about Abrego Garcia’s case on April 27, the same day that McGuire received a file on the case from Homeland Security Investigations. That was several days after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Abrego Garcia’s favor on April 10.

On April 30, Singh said in an email to McGuire that the prosecution was a “top priority” for the Deputy Attorney General’s Office, according to the order. Singh and McGuire continued to communicate about the prosecution. On May 18, Singh wrote to McGuire and others to hold the draft indictment until they got “clearance” to file it. “The implication is that ‘clearance’ would come from the Office of the Deputy Attorney General,” Crenshaw writes.

A hearing on the motion to dismiss the case on the basis of vindictive prosecution is scheduled for Jan. 28.

## Thieves drill into German bank vault, steal tens of millions in valuables

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GELSENKIRCHEN, Germany — Thieves stole tens of millions of euros worth of property from safety deposit boxes inside a German bank vault that they drilled into Monday during the holiday lull, police said.

Some 2,700 bank customers were affected by the theft in Gelsenkirchen, police and the Sparkasse bank said.

Thomas Nowaczyk, a police spokesperson, said investigators believe the theft was worth between 10 and 90 million euros (\$11.7 to 105.7 million).

German news agency dpa reported that the theft could be one of Germany’s largest heists.

The bank remained closed Tuesday, when some 200 people showed up demanding to get inside, dpa reported.

A fire alarm summoned police officers and firefighters to the bank branch shortly before 4 a.m. Monday. They found a hole



Police Gelsenkirchen/AP photo

**This picture, provided by the Gelsenkirchen Police on Monday, Dec. 29, shows a hole in a wall of the savings bank branch in the Buer district in Gelsenkirchen, Germany.**

in the wall and the vault ransacked. Police believe a large drill was used to break through the vault’s basement wall.

Witnesses told investigators they saw several men carrying large bags in a nearby parking garage over

the weekend. Video footage from the garage shows masked people inside a stolen vehicle early Monday, police said.

Gelsenkirchen is about 192 kilometers (119 miles) northwest of Frankfurt.

## BRIEFS

From staff reports

### ISRAEL SAYS IT WILL HALT OPERATIONS OF SEVERAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN GAZA STARTING IN 2026

JERUSALEM — Israel says it will suspend several humanitarian organizations for failing to meet its new rules to vet international organizations working in Gaza. The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs said on Tuesday that the organizations that will be banned on Jan. 1 did not meet its new requirements for sharing staff, funding and operations information. It accused Doctors Without Borders, known as MSF by its French acronym, of failing to clarify the roles of some staff that Israel accused of cooperation with Hamas and other militant groups. MSF didn’t immediately comment but other international organizations have said that Israel’s rules are arbitrary and could endanger staff.

### ARCTIC BLAST BRINGS SNOW AND WIND TO THE GREAT LAKES AND NORTHEAST

A surge of arctic air is bringing strong winds, heavy snow and frigid temperatures to the Great Lakes and Northeast, a day after a bomb cyclone that hit the northern U.S. Tens of thousands of customers were without power early Tuesday, with Michigan hardest hit. The National Weather Service predicts snow squalls and gusty winds for the Eastern U.S. New York’s governor warned of white-out conditions in parts of the state. In Michigan, snow piled up quickly on Monday, and high waves on Lake Superior sent cargo ships into harbors for shelter.

### UNLEASH THE HOUNDS! AND TERRIERS AND LAPDOGS. THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB ADDS 3 BREEDS

NEW YORK — They’re ready to embark on 2026. Three more dog breeds joined the American Kennel Club’s roster of recognized breeds on Tuesday. One of the newcomers is the Teddy Roosevelt terrier, named for the former U.S. president. Another is the Russian tsvetnaya bolonka (zviht-NEYE’-ah boh-LON’-kah). It’s a lapdog developed in Soviet-era Russia. The third is a centuries-old French hunting hound called the baset fauve de Bretagne (bah-SAY’ fohve deh breh-TAHN’-yeh). The AKC now recognizes 205 breeds. Recognition means eligibility for many U.S. dog shows and can increase a breed’s visibility to the pet-loving public.

### IRAN'S PRESIDENT SAYS ANSWER TO ATTACK WOULD BE HARSH IN APPARENT RESPONSE TO TRUMP WARNING

TEHRAN, Iran — Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has warned of a harsh response to any attack on his country. His statement on Tuesday seemed to address U.S. President Donald Trump’s warning about Iran’s nuclear program. Trump suggested the U.S. could strike if Iran rebuilds its nuclear capabilities. This follows recent talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The discussions included potential military action against Tehran, months after a deadly air war. Meanwhile, protests in Iran have intensified after the currency hit a record low. Pezeshkian has met with businessmen and assigned officials to address the unrest.

