



1

Putting Lands Out of Range

The West is in a fighting mood. The Trump administration's move to review dozens of national monuments to determine whether they should be shrunk or abolished has raised alarm across the region, High Country News reports. Support for the monuments has been strong in Colorado, Montana, Washington and other states. In California, for example, lawmakers introduced three bills to prevent the administration from weakening environmental laws. One, the Public Lands Protection Act, would give California "right of first refusal" on lands the federal government wants to sell in the state, and would give the state a say in transferring land to a new owner.

4

Getting to the Point

In a move that Crocodile Dundee would certainly appreciate, Texas lawmakers passed a law allowing adults to openly carry knives with blades longer than 5.5 inches—swords, spears, daggers, machetes and more. The new law, which goes into effect this month, doesn't apply to schools, prisons, hospitals, amusement parks, sports events or places of worship or where alcohol is served. With Montana and Oklahoma also axing their bans on bladed weapons in recent years, perhaps we'll see a return of the squire as a hot employment opportunity.



2

Abortion Services Update

Lawmakers in 43 states have introduced abortion restrictions this year to date, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization. In 17 of those states, bills would ban abortion at certain stages of pregnancy, including as early as six weeks; in five states, legislation would require a woman to undergo an ultrasound while a provider shows and describes the image to her even over her objection. Twenty-two states now have six or more abortion restrictions, according to the Guttmacher Institute.



3

Private Choices

The Texas Senate passed legislation creating a tax credit scholarship program to subsidize private school tuition for students with disabilities. Under the "private school choice" program, an estimated 6,000 students would receive scholarships of up to \$10,000 to attend private schools. About 26,000 more would get \$500 to stay in public schools and pay for services or transportation. The scholarships would be funded by donations from insurance companies that would receive tax credits in return. Critics are concerned that private schools receiving the scholarship money won't be held to the same accountability standards as public schools serving kids with special needs.

5

Votes Are In. Are They Secure?

Hacking the vote might be easier than you think. In less than a day, groups of "hackers" at the DefCon conference in Las Vegas were invited to help the computer security community by spotting potential vulnerabilities in real voting machines. They tested five different older voting machine types and exploited weaknesses in all of them, USA Today reports. Surprisingly, the groups found passwords allowing administrative access by using Google. The good news is no one could break into the systems wirelessly, no one could change a vote and newer machines are more secure. Next year, the focus shifts to voting network security.





6 **A New Life for Lifers**

Since the Supreme Court ruling barring mandatory life without parole for juveniles was made retroactive in 2016, nearly a dozen Maryland lifers who committed crimes as juveniles are asking for new sentences. As of late July, four of their sentences have been scrapped, and each awaits a resentencing hearing. Maryland is among more than 20 states where judges have the option to give life without parole sentences for certain offenses. In these states, the resentencing cases are trickier than in states with mandatory sentences because they are not explicitly covered under the Supreme Court ruling.

7

Paw-titioning the Court

Testifying in court is stressful for just about everyone, but it can be especially difficult for child and adult abuse victims. It's just the kind of place where a friendly, furry face can help. An increasing number of courts are allowing trained dogs to accompany people while giving testimony. At least 144 "courthouse facility dogs," as they're known, work in about three dozen states, from Hawaii to Massachusetts, Pew's Stateline reports. The calming canines even have an association of their own: the Courthouse Dogs Foundation, a nonprofit that promotes the use of trained dogs during legal proceedings.



8

Protection for Pregnant Workers

A new Massachusetts law requires employers to offer "reasonable accommodations" to pregnant workers and makes it illegal to fire or refuse to hire a worker because of her pregnancy. Employers must also provide time and private space for nursing mothers to pump breast milk. A woman "should not have to choose between having a healthy pregnancy and earning an income for her family," says Senator Joan Lovely (D), who co-sponsored the bill. At least 18 other states have similar protections in place, and businesses could seek an exemption if they can prove compliance would result in an "undue hardship."



9

Aging With Dignity, We Hope

There's no hiding it: America is graying. New estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau show the nation's median age—where half the population is younger and the other half older—rose from 35.3 years on April 1, 2000, to 37.9 years on July 1, 2016. Residents age 65 and over grew from 35 million in 2000 to 49.2 million in 2016, accounting for 12.4 percent and 15.2 percent of the total population, respectively. Maine has the nation's highest median age, at 44.6 years, while Utah has the lowest, at 30.8 years.

10

Defeating Distractions

Can the "textalyzer" help save lives on the road? That's one of the questions New York's traffic safety committee is studying. Similar to the Breathalyzer, which police use to identify drunken drivers, the textalyzer can be plugged into a driver's mobile phone after a crash to determine whether he or she was texting, emailing, surfing the web or otherwise using the phone before the accident. Supporters say the device will curb distracted driving, which killed 3,477 people and injured an estimated 391,000 in 2015. Critics raise privacy concerns, and some question the textalyzer's reliability and accuracy.

