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USA OUTLOOK

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Foto: USA Today

President Trump Signs Bill Making Animal Cruelty, Abuse a Federal Felony

President Donald Trump signed a bipartisan bill into law on November 25 that makes cruelty a federal felony. The law, Prevent Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act, would allow federal authorities to prosecute people engaged in a heinous form of animal abuse known as “crushing”, where individuals maim and torture animals.

PACT Act was introduced by Sens. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) and Richard Blumenthal’s (D-Conn.) and was unanimously passed in the Senate on November 5 and the House on October 23. During the signing, Trump said he was pleased to sign the PACT Act into law. He said, “we have the responsibility to honor the dignity of God’s creation. With today’s Act we take the critical step of being more responsible and humane stewards of our planet.”

Toomey called the enacting of the legislation a “major victory” for the protections of animals from abuse while Blumenthal said he was “grateful” to see it signed into law.

“The barbaric torture of animals has no place in a civilized society and should be a crime – and thanks to that new law, now it is,” Blumenthal said in a statement.

The Humane Society of the United States welcomed the news in a statement describing it as a “defining moment” for animal protection in the country. The animal protection in the country. The animal welfare organization said that while 50 states have laws against animal cruelty, there was no federal ban, causing a gap in the law. The new law will provide federal authorities with the tools and resources to go after individuals who commit such acts within federal jurisdiction.



Foto: FOX 4 Kansas City WDAF-TV

Trump Donates 3rd-quarter salary to opioids fight

President Trump donated his third-quarter salary of \$100,000 to the fight against opioids crisis Tuesday, but the gesture didn’t impress the Baltimore youths who booed first lady Melania Trump as she took the stage at a summit on the drug problem.

Mr. Trump’s pay will be sent to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health, which is leading the fight against the national epidemic of prescription painkiller, heroin and fentanyl addiction. Roughly 70,000 people died of drug overdoses in 2017. About two thirds of those deaths involved an opioid.

Mr. Trump, who hasn’t released his tax returns but is estimated to be worth billions, has been donating his presidential paycheck to various agencies and causes.

His second-quarter salary went to the surgeon general’s office. Previous donations went to the National Park Service, National Institutes of Health, Small Business Administration and the departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security and Agriculture.



Foto: pressfrom.info

Declining Life Expectancy in America 'May Be the New Norm'

After increasing for decades, U.S. life expectancy is on the decline, and a new study reveals some of the reasons behind the alarming trend. The study published in November 26 in the journal JAMA, found that the decline is mostly among "working-age" Americans, or those ages 25 to 64. In this group, the risk of dying from drug abuse, suicide, hypertension and more than 30 other causes is increasing, the authors said. The findings suggest that life expectancy in the U.S. is rapidly falling behind that of other wealthy countries. Indeed, the particular decline among working-age adults has not been seen in other countries, and is a "distinctly American phenomenon," said study co-author Steven H. Woolf of Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

Howard Koh of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, who was not involved in the study, described the findings as "the most exhaustive and detailed analysis of this topic to date." The stakes are no less than the life span of the average American. Before a few years ago "it was largely assumed that life expectancy would always increase in the future," Koh said. "Now the nation risks a future in which declining life expectancy may be the new norm."



Foto: Reuters

Facebook must face data breach class action on security, but not damages: judge

A federal judge said up to 29 million Facebook Inc. users whose personal information was stolen in a September 2018 data breach cannot sue as a group for damages, but can seek better security at the social media company after a series of privacy lapses.

In a decision late Tuesday night, U.S. District Judge William Alsup in San Francisco said neither credit monitoring costs nor the reduced value of stolen personal information was a "cognizable injury" that supported a class action for damages. Alsup also said damages for time users spent to mitigate harm required individualized determinations rather than a single class wide assessment.

Users were allowed to sue as a group to require Facebook to employ automated security monitoring, improve employee training, and educate people better about hacking threats. Alsup rejected Facebook's claim that these were unnecessary because it had fixed the bug that caused the breach.

Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg outlined his "privacy-focused vision" for social media in a March 6 blog post. "Privacy gives people the freedom to be themselves and connect more naturally, which is why we build social networks," he said.

The case is Adkins v Facebook Inc., U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, No. 18-05982.



Foto: CNN.com

Travel Issues Continue as Winter Weather Threatens Large Parts of US into the Weekend

Two powerful storms are leaving much of the United States struggling with blackouts, whiteouts and gusty winds on Thanksgiving Day – and the nightmare could continue in some areas into the holiday weekend.

More than 950 flights in the United States had been delayed by early afternoon Thursday, with more than 30 canceled, according to Flight Aware. And the weather pattern promises to stay active, the National Weather Service said. The storm in the western US has put more than 20 million people under a winter threat. As the storm moves toward the East Coast, it could deliver ice on Thursday and Friday to the middle of the country, then mess up travel into the Monday commute.

"Thanksgiving 2019 will be remembered as a stormy day for many in the West. A cornucopia of hazards will continue to develop eastward across the country

through the weekend," the National Weather Service said.

The weather threatened an iconic facet of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The event 16 giant character balloons aren't supposed to be flown when sustained winds exceed 23 mph and gusts exceed 34 mph, per New York City regulations. The winds got close to that, as gusts of 32 mph were recorded in Central Park. In the end, officials allowed the balloons to float along the parade route Thursday, with handlers keeping them fairly low so the ground so they would be more manageable.