

January-February
GOOD MONTH/BAD MONTH

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Good Month For... Bad Month For...

LA Wildfire Relief Funds

Over 30 artists performed at the FireAid concert on January 30, raising an estimated \$100 million to support communities affected by the devastating Palisades, Eaton, and Hughes fires. These fires scorched a combined total of 13,000 acres, according to Cal Fire. While the flames are extinguished, the financial toll continues to rise. FireAid is accepting online donations to help support affected communities.

Deochii

Rising rap superstar Deochii won a Grammy for Best Rap Album with *Alligator Bites Never Heal*—but she's no stranger to the charts. Over the years, her songs including "What It Is," and "DENIAL IS A RIVER," have dominated TikTok. She has been praised for both her work and humility. During her acceptance speech, she said: "This category was introduced in 1989 and three women have won, Lauren Hill, Cardi B, and Deochii."

Costco

is increasing wages to \$30 per hour for a select group of employees. This applies exclusively to non-unionized hourly workers at the top of the company's pay scale. These employees will receive an extra week of vacation if they've worked at Costco for over 30 years. Those at the lower end of the pay scale will receive a 50 cent increase to \$20 per hour. New hires will also receive vacation days in their first year.

Trans Athletes

President Donald Trump signed an executive order restricting athletes to competing only with others of the same biological sex. This ban applies to all federally funded sports, including schools and universities, and threatens to pull funding from educational programs that allow trans athletes to compete in alignment with their gender identity. This move follows a wave of policies aimed at limiting trans rights.

Imports & Exports

President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China. In response, Mexico and Canada entered negotiations with the U.S., securing a 30-day pause on the tariffs while they attempt to reach a deal. China retaliated, placing tariffs on U.S. coal, natural gas, crude oil, agricultural equipment, and certain cars. These new tariffs are expected to affect \$20 billion worth of U.S. goods.

Aviation Accidents

have been on the rise. Among them are the DC plane crash, the Philadelphia plane crash, and a United Airlines flight that began smoking before takeoff in Texas. According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), there have been 15 recent plane crashes. While technical failures appear to be the leading cause, the DC and Philadelphia crashes remain under investigation. Experts are calling for a closer look at aviation regulations.

Mysterious Drones Spotted in the Northeast



A photo of a drone. Photo by Rawpixel. Creative Commons.

Leah O'Meara
Reporter

On November 19th, 2024, strange, excessive drone activity was spotted all over New Jersey. Since then, there have been an estimated 650 drone sightings nationally, the majority of which were in the Northeast. From the first sighting in early January, drones were being spotted constantly, but never in daylight. Some of these sightings occurred in Connecticut. In Stamford, the drones were spotted along parts of High Ridge Road.

A lot of concern and speculation was caused by these drones, including in the Westhill community.

"I looked up and saw a really bright light, just above the trees, and it flew straight over my car really slowly. It was very concerning because I didn't know why they were here because no one knew," Elayna Dec ('26) said.

These drones were a complete mystery. There was no explanation as to what these drones were for, and whether or not they were operated by the U.S. On January 28th, President Trump provided an answer, saying, "the drones that were flying over New Jersey in large numbers were authorized

to be flown by FAA for research and various other reasons ... this was not the enemy." The FBI and local police were not informed of this until this statement. The Westword reached out to Sergeant Derisme, the leader of the drone program of the Stamford Police department, to speak about this issue.

"They don't have to tell us what's authorized or not, but I'm actually surprised because the FAA is very security-conscious," Derisme said. "If people are concerned, I would think that they would have come out and said 'Hey, no worries, it is us.'"

One of the many unanswered questions about these drones is why the FAA banned certain areas from drones.

"The types of payloads that you can add on to drones, payloads being things that you can attach... it 100% makes sense that there are sensitive areas, anywhere where the President would be, any high-valued buildings, and also military bases. They can't have drones around," Derisme said.

When people aren't properly informed about drones, a lot of panic can

form in the community. However, when used correctly, drones can be very beneficial to help improve the world. For example, they can assist first responders and monitor locations. Derisme points out that drones are an integral part of our future. They are being used more and more, especially in police departments.

"In fact, we're heavily leaning on drones ourselves. Drones are a very helpful tool, but it will cause alarm because of the payload capability and it could be very scary," Derisme said. "They always say, the technology that we know is usually 10 years plus behind the technology that's actually out there."

The mysterious drone situation still has no definite answer. The FAA could have been researching the extent to which they could utilize drones, possibly running tests on them, or they could have been doing totally unrelated research. Or, it could have not been the FAA at all. For now, all we have are many questions and a scarce explanation for an even more concerning situation.