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5 pieces worth reading

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The great grift: How billions in COVID-19 relief aid was stolen or wasted

This *Associated Press* article details how 10 percent of the \$4.2 trillion in federal COVID-19 relief aid has been stolen or wasted. That figure is likely to grow as investigators continue to research alleged fraud schemes. Investigators argue that the government conducted little oversight during the early stages of the pandemic and established few restrictions on relief aid applicants. As of June, 2023, 2,230 defendants have been charged with pandemic-related fraud crimes.

Lardner, R., Mcdermott, J., & Kessler, A. (2023, June 12). "The great grift: How billions in COVID-19 relief aid was stolen or wasted." *AP News*.

<https://apnews.com/article/pandemic-fraud-waste-billions-small-business-labor-fb1d9a9eb24857efbe4611344311ae78>

Why two Supreme Court conservatives just saved the Voting Rights Act

Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux explores the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Allen v. Milligan*. In the case, Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined the court's three liberal justices to rule that Alabama's congressional map likely violates Section 2 of the Voting Right Act, which bars racially discriminatory voting procedures. Thomson-DeVeaux argues that this decision shows that Roberts and Kavanaugh are sensitive to the perception that the court has become partisan, which may affect how willing they are to overturn longstanding precedent on controversial issues.

Thomson-DeVeaux, A. (2023, June 8). "Why two Supreme Court conservatives just saved the Voting Rights Act." *FiveThirtyEight*. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/roberts-kavanaugh-voting-rights-act-alabama/>

America has a chance to make farming more friendly

In this *New York Times* opinion piece, Robert Semple discusses the Inflation Reduction Act's (IRA) \$19.5 billion investment in agricultural conservation programs. The IRA funds will support programs to help farmers reduce greenhouse gas emissions through paying farmers to

Ut Prosim (That I may Serve)

not sell land to developers, and to use sensible planting practices such as careful use of fertilizer. Agriculture-related activities currently account for one-tenth of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. Despite potential for short-term impact, the IRA's ability to provide a multiyear stream of spending on climate-friendly programs depends heavily on how Congress allocates the money in the coming years.

Semple, R. (2023, June 12). "America has a chance to make farming more climate friendly." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/12/opinion/climate-change-farm-bill-farmers.html>

U.S. decides to rejoin UNESCO and pay back dues to counter Chinese influence

This *NBC News* story discusses the U.S.'s decision to rejoin the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The article argues that the U.S. decision was motivated by concerns that China has stepped in to fill the gap left by U.S. withdrawal by influencing UNESCO policymaking in areas such as artificial intelligence and technology education globally. The U.S. plans to allocate its 2023 membership dues to fund Holocaust education, preserve cultural heritage in Ukraine, support journalist safety around the world, and further science and technology education in Africa.

Associated Press. (2023, June 12). "U.S. decides to rejoin UNESCO and pay back dues to counter Chinese influence." *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/us-decides-rejoin-unesco-pay-back-dues-counter-chinese-influence-rcna88796>

Flight turbulence increasing as planet heats up – study

Maddie Molloy examines increased flight turbulence in this *BBC News* piece. Scientists directly attribute this increase to climate change and warmer air from carbon emissions. Turbulent flights are not only uncomfortable but can cause injuries, especially when passengers have not fastened their seat belts. Increased turbulence also creates more wear-and-tear on aircrafts. Finally, avoiding rough air requires pilots to use more fuel, which further contributes to the carbon emissions causing increased turbulence.

Molloy, M. (2023, June 12). "Flight turbulence increasing as planet heats up - study." *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-65844901>