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SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 2025

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## The high price of crop insurance

Taxpayers fork over billions, but only big farms and companies benefit

By Karina Atkins  
Chicago Tribune

### CASH CROPS, HIDDEN COSTS

Reporting for this story was supported by the MIT Environmental Solutions Journalism Fellowship.

For farmers who grow anything but soybeans and corn in Illinois, buying crop insurance is nearly impossible. Even an insurance agent couldn't figure out how to safeguard his vegetable and poultry farm against unpredictable weather and plain old bad luck.

Ed Dubrick, a first-generation farmer, worked at a local crop insurance agency for two years as he was starting up his small operation. He wanted the same federally subsidized safety net for his grapes, raspberries, asparagus and tomatoes that he was easily selling to

row crop farmers. But the bureaucracy was insurmountable.

"After probably two dozen phone calls and at least 100 hours put into trying to figure out what I needed to do, I decided crop insurance was too complicated for my diversified farm. It really felt like an instance of the blind leading the blind," said Dubrick, a veteran who

runs DuChick Ranch on 7 acres in Cissna Park, a small village 100 miles south of Chicago.

Crop insurance is intended to support "food security for American consumers and economic stability for rural America," according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But it doesn't cover all crops equally. It's primarily used by farmers growing the nation's four major commodities: corn, soybeans, wheat and cotton. And Illinois is the nation's No. 1 producer of soybeans and No. 2 producer of corn.

Only 10 insurance policies

Turn to Insurance, Page 4



Ed Dubrick uses a tractor to install posts for a fence around 5 acres on his land in downstate Cissna Park on May 2. ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/TRIBUNE



ONE CENTURY, ONE ROAD

## 'MAIN STREET OF AMERICA' TURNS 100

Each mile of Route 66 promised freedom, escape, adventure and exploration, introducing countless Americans to their country

By Jonathan Bullington and E. Jason Wambsgans  
Chicago Tribune

It was created to connect us, a fused chain of existing roadways — many unpaved — that stretched 2,448 miles across eight states and three time zones, starting steps from Lake Michigan in downtown Chicago and ending near the Pacific Ocean and Santa Monica's famed fishing pier.

Route 66, "The Main Street of America."

There is perhaps no better-known highway anywhere in the world. In its 100-year history, it has offered safe passage to Dust Bowl refugees, World War II transports and vacationing families. John Steinbeck called it "the mother road, the road of flight." Nat King Cole crooned about its kicks in a 1946 hit song. Disney and Pixar took inspiration from it for a 2006 blockbuster.

The famed highway conjured images of quirky roadside attractions, mom-and-pop diners, neon-signed motels and art deco service stations. Each mile promised freedom, escape, adventure, exploration. It introduced countless Americans to their country, to vast lands

Turn to Route 66, Page 12

Above: Roy's Motel & Cafe, seen Tuesday, is a motel, cafe and gas station that is being restored on Route 66 in the ghost town of Amboy, California. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Ethics legislation stalls in Springfield

Harmon tries 'brazen' maneuver that would help his election case

By Ray Long, Rick Pearson and Dan Petrella  
Chicago Tribune

In the closing hours of the Illinois General Assembly's spring session, Senate President Don Harmon tried to pass legislation that would have wiped clean a potential multimillion-dollar fine against his political campaign committee for violating election finance laws he championed years ago.

Harmon's move came against the backdrop of the former Illinois House speaker's upcoming sentencing for corruption and abuse of power and almost instantly created a bipartisan legislative controversy that resulted in the bill never getting called for a vote.

The Oak Park Democrat's maneuver, characterized by critics as "brazen" and self-serving, also raises anew questions about how seriously political leaders are trying to improve ethical standards in a state government the electorate already holds in low regard.

Blowback to Harmon's action, particularly from inside the House Democratic caucus, was so severe it derailed an entire package of

Turn to Ethics, Page 6

### TODAY'S WEATHER

High 80  
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Complete Chicagoland forecast on Opinion, Page 12

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CHICAGO'S **20 BEST RESTAURANTS** 25

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# Paris always a good idea, even in summer



**Rick Steves**

Few cities can even come close to Paris when it comes to cultural, artistic and historic heritage. And few residents are as confident as Parisians in their expertise in good living. While that uniquely French *joie de vivre* can be enjoyed throughout the year, I'd like to talk about Paris in the summer.

An old travel mantra tells you to avoid Paris in summer, when its citizens traditionally go on vacation. Sure, it's hard to get a dentist or find an accountant at work. But, to be honest, it's the tourists' Paris that the tourist is looking for ... and the Paris I'm after is in full swing in July and August.

For the benefit of Parisians who do stay in town — and the countless tourists who visit through the summer — France's ministry of culture sponsors plenty of action including an entertaining Summer Festival for three weeks in July ([www.parislete.fr](http://www.parislete.fr)). Its diverse programs — dance, theater, concerts, acrobatics and installations — take place all around the city, and many are outdoors and free.

During the summer, the Seine River, which has replaced the busy arterials that once lined its banks with a green and inviting riverside park, is filled with life. Landscaped promenades, tailor-made for strolling and biking, rather than traffic jams, now line the riverbanks. I love spending a balmy summer night just downstream from Notre-Dame, where there's an engaging people zone with an open-air art gallery, music and salsa dancing.

Parisians have the habit of spilling onto the river's



Paris' riverside promenade is fine for strolling, biking or just soaking up the summertime ambiance. **RICK STEVES**

bridges and embankments to enjoy the early evening hours. It's the perfect time to share a simple picnic with friends. Join in — for the cost of groceries and a bottle of wine, you can enjoy a gourmet spread with ambiance that no restaurant can touch.

If you'd rather toss a Frisbee than ponder the river's reflections, head to the one-mile stretch of the Right Bank (just north of Ile de la Cité) where the city government trucks in potted palm trees, hammocks and lounge chairs to create colorful urban "beaches" from mid-July through mid-August. With climbing walls, "beach" cafés, stylish swimsuits on parade, volleyball courts and trampolines, it's an ideal place to see Paris at play — and to play with Paris.

If you enjoy the Fourth of July in the US, you'll love Bastille Day in France — which is ten days later. July 14, the country's national holiday, is celebrated in towns big and small all over France. And Paris goes all out: There's a big parade down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, concerts galore and fireworks lighting up the sky over the Eiffel Tower. Later in July, the hugely popular Tour de France bike race culminates in the center of Paris.

Summer also means sightseeing and art after dark: Some museums and sights — such as the Eiffel Tower — keep longer hours, and others host special summer-only events. In nearby Versailles, summer Saturday nights offer a cool array of gushing fountains,

lighted displays and fireworks. King Louis XIV had his engineers literally reroute a river to fuel his fountains and feed his plants. Even by today's standards, the fountains are impressive.

Paris' many lovely parks work overtime in summer as playgrounds for all ages. The sprawling Esplanade des Invalides is just right for afternoon lawn bowling (*boules*). Puppet shows, pony rides, rental toy sailboats and a merry-go-round enliven the Luxembourg Garden. A temporary amusement park pops up at the Tuileries Garden, complete with a huge Ferris wheel. An open-air cinema at Parc de la Villette screens films in their original language with French subtitles on many summer nights (no charge if you sit on your own blanket, [www.villette.com](http://www.villette.com)).

While the big formal music venues such as the opera go on vacation in summer, the city keeps making music. The Paris Jazz Festival swings its hip beats among the spacious lawns and gardens of Parc Floral ([festivalsduparc-floral.paris](http://festivalsduparc-floral.paris)), and the city's many old churches do double-duty as venues for chamber music concerts.

I like seeing the City of Light after dark, lacing together the iconic floodlit sights on a DIY taxi (or Uber) tour, or on a boat cruise — or even by bike. While Paris is enthusiastically bike-friendly, for tourists, the easiest option is to join a bike tour (try Fat Tire Bikes, [www.fattiretours.com](http://www.fattiretours.com)).

Seeing the Eiffel Tower sparkle in the night sky is an unforgettable way to cap

any Parisian day.

Sure, summer in Paris requires patience and flexibility. It's peak tourist season, and it's hot. City buses can be like rolling greenhouses. If you neglect to make advance reservations, you'll swelter in lines at the Eiffel Tower or Louvre. But for the thoughtful and well-prepared traveler, summer in Paris can be a fine time to enjoy such a great city so in love with life and expert at enjoying it.

*Rick Steves writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio, and organizes European tours. This column revisits some of Rick's favorite places over the past two decades. Visit his website at [ricksteves.com](http://ricksteves.com), email him at [rick@ricksteves.com](mailto:rick@ricksteves.com) or follow his blog on Facebook.*

## CELEBRITY TRAVEL

### Montauk favored getaway for Lewis

By Jae-Ha Kim  
Tribune Content Agency

As a performer, Shannon Lewis has appeared in 10 Broadway musicals, including "Fosse," over a career that spans 25 years. Now, the dancer has made her Broadway debut as a choreographer in the musical "Just in Time."

"It is a new musical based on the life and music of the great Bobby Darin, starring the magnificent talent Jonathan Groff," Lewis said. "It is an immersive and unique theatrical event in a Broadway theater that has been transformed into a retro, cool nightclub environment."

"It has a huge dance element and my choreography is utilized in large production numbers and also movement that is woven all throughout the space performed by the entire cast. I'm so proud to be a part of it."

This interview with Lewis has been edited for clarity and length.

**Q: Of course it's an honor to put on a production, but it just seems to hit differently when it's on Broadway. Can you please speak to that a bit?**

**A:** Broadway has a long legacy connected to so many generations of groundbreaking talent. New musicals are born on Broadway that have influence around the world. Also, the talents involved at every level are literally the best of the best. I have a 30-year career that spans from performing, to now choreographing, these special shows. I'm so



"Just in Time" choreographer Shannon Lewis said that Australia is on her travel bucket list. **JON TAYLOR**

honored to be a part of the history and the future.

**Q: What was your first Broadway performance and what was your role?**

**A:** I played Vera in "Crazy for You" at the Shubert Theatre in New York City.

**Q: When you worked in various cities, did you have the opportunity to explore any of those areas?**

**A:** Yes, I love all of these wonderful places and I've spent extended time in all of them. I really love getting to explore places with such rich culture and history like Montreal. The architecture, food and dining is spectacular. I love getting to explore any place I am lucky enough to travel to for work. The only challenge is (that) when I'm working, I rarely have an extended time to go and truly experience them. I'm grateful for any little break I have where I can take it in.

**Q: How long did you live in Canada before moving to the United States?**

**A:** I was born and raised in a suburb of Toronto. I was discovered there by a casting director and then, after a whirlwind audition process, I got my first Broadway show when I was still in my late teens. I moved to New York City for that job and have lived here ever since.

**Q: What's the most important thing you've learned from your travels?**

**A:** I have learned that we all have so much more in common than our differences.

**Q: If you could only pick one place to eat, would you prefer a food truck or fine dining?**

**A:** I would pick fine dining. I love the experience of a great meal in a lovely space. Great conversation, great ambiance and then the presentation and the anticipation of each dish being served. I really enjoy that.

**Q: Where are your favorite weekend getaways?**

**A:** I love going to Montauk for a few days, especially in the off season. I also love a New York City weekend staycation. The South Street Seaport and Battery Park are some favorites.

**Q: What are your five favorite cities?**

**A:** Oh, this is tough! Paris, New York City, Toronto, Tokyo and Amsterdam!

**Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?**

**A:** I have never been anywhere in Australia, and I'd love to go.

**Q: What is your guilty pleasure when you're on the road?**

**A:** I will always spring for a nice hotel room with a comfy bed. Sleeping well on the road is def a priority.

For more from the reporter, visit [www.jaehakim.com](http://www.jaehakim.com).

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

### American cancels flight due to hurricane without refund

By Christopher Elliott | King Features Syndicate

I booked a flight from Tampa to San Diego on American Airlines.

The day before my flight, I received a notification that it had been canceled due to Hurricane Milton.

I requested a refund, but American Airlines just issued a flight credit that expires in one year.

I only booked the ticket the day before, so I feel I should get a full refund.

Can you help me get my \$321 back?

— Nathan Czurzynski, Bradenton, Florida

**A:** You should have received a full refund for your canceled flight. When an airline cancels your flight, it owes you a refund regardless of the reason for the cancellation. It doesn't matter if your ticket was refundable. You should get a refund. Full stop.

Interestingly, your flight cancellation happened just before a new government regulation went into effect. The rule mandates automatic cash refunds when an airline cancels its flight. If the hurricane had waited a few weeks, then you wouldn't have had this problem. But your case is important because hurricane season is just starting, and airlines are only getting used to the rule. Who knows, they might forget!

If an airline doesn't offer you an immediate refund, you should request it in

writing.

And it looks like you did, which is great. Copies of emails and screenshots of any online chats or messages can be helpful if you're trying to get a fair resolution.

If you have to make a call, note the date and time as well as the names of any representatives you speak with.

So, what happened? A look at your itinerary suggests that American only canceled one leg of your flight from Tampa to Dallas. I guess this doesn't count as a fully canceled flight. I'm kidding! It certainly does.

You filled out forms and pleaded your case with American Airlines, to no avail. As a last resort, you could have appealed to a manager or executive. I publish the names, numbers and email

addresses of the American Airlines customer service managers on my consumer advocacy site, [elliott.org](http://elliott.org). A brief, polite email to one of them might have resolved your problem.

I contacted American on your behalf to see if the flight credit was its best offer. It wasn't. "The ticket will be refunded," an American Airlines spokeswoman told me. And it was.

Let's hope that with this new federal rule, we'll never get another refund case like yours. But if you do — well, you know where to find me.

*Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at [elliott.org/help](http://elliott.org/help) or [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).*