

# Opinion

## THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Volume 51, Issue 152

BEN SHEROAN  
Publisher

### Cultural Crossroads: Pride or Fidelity?

The Red-State Blue-State divide is increasingly apparent in political life. It is seen most clearly each election cycle as voters turn out to the polls to support the candidate of their values. Such moments reveal the vast cultural differences across the nation.

JACOB  
OGAN

Everything from the sanctity of human life to the binding nature of biology and gender is on the ballot at nearly every level of government.

But this divide also is seen in smaller political and cultural moments.

This past month was one such moment.

For decades, June has served as a rallying cry for the LGBTQ+ movement as rainbow flags go up across the country in support of Pride Month. The movement has long been supported by elected officials, with every Democratic president since Bill Clinton issuing a Pride proclamation and even President Trump issuing public tweets in favor of Pride in 2019.

June 2026 was different though, as many states dedicated the month, not to Pride, but to Fidelity.

Fidelity Month began three years ago in the mind of Robert P. George, professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University. The movement exists to celebrate what has long made America great — namely, fidelity to God, family and country.

While the left has framed the movement as a negative reaction against Pride, this is not the case. Fidelity Month was founded not as a reaction against Pride, but as a positive vision of what makes America (and Americans) great.

In this way, the movement is an aspirational one, especially in an age of moral confusion.

Dr. George suggests fidelity is a virtue in constant need of renewal in the hearts of all Americans, regardless of political affiliation. Fidelity Month is an opportunity to commit or recommit oneself to the good — that is, “Those things that are not merely means to other ends.”

This pursuit of the good is a breath of fresh air as the values of Americans grow more confused by the day.

The Wall Street Journal reports drastic declines in

values of patriotism, religion, family and community since 1998. Pollster Bill McInturff called these declines so dramatic that they paint “a new surprising portrait of a changing America.”

The goal of Fidelity Month is to reverse this trend.

Whereas Pride focuses on self-expression, self-fulfillment and moral license, Fidelity instead focuses, not on self, but on others. It calls citizens to consecrate their lives to God, love their country, focus on their familiar duties and live out their communal obligations.

Fidelity Month recognizes that true worth and meaning aren’t found in pride and self-seeking, but in a sacrificial love for those around you.

Individuals would do well to ask themselves: Does America need more pride or more fidelity?

As Proverbs reminds us, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Now is the time to rededicate ourselves as Kentuckians to what matters most: Our obligations to God, country and family.

In dedicating ourselves to the service of others, we not only help those around us, but also help ourselves in the process.

Pride is very much the opposite. In exalting self-satisfaction as the chief aim of life, one loses out on the joys of serving others and being part of something greater than oneself.

June then poses something of a crossroads across the lives of states, communities, and even individuals. Americans must ask themselves what it is they ought to celebrate.

So too, the wisdom of another man rings true: “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

We would do well as a nation to heed these words.

Jacob Ogan serves as director of research and publications for the Commonwealth Policy Center. He can be reached at jacob@commonwealthpolicy.org.

## TODAY'S HEADLINES

### NASA rescue mission aims to save telescope

BY MARCIA DUNN  
AP AEROSPACE WRITER

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA is racing to save an aging telescope from falling back to Earth with a daring rescue mission.

The \$30 million salvage operation features the planned launch of a robotic lifesaver.

NASA hired startup Katalyst Space Technologies to boost the Swift Observatory to a higher orbit where it can continue hunting for some of the universe’s biggest explosions. A three-armed spacecraft built by Katalyst will chase after Swift once it takes off from an atoll in the Pacific’s Marshall Islands aboard an airplane-launched Pegasus rocket. Liftoff could occur as early as Tuesday.

Scanning the cosmos since its launch in 2004, Swift has been sinking faster and faster because of recent intense solar activity. It needs to get to a higher, more stable orbit as soon as possible to survive.

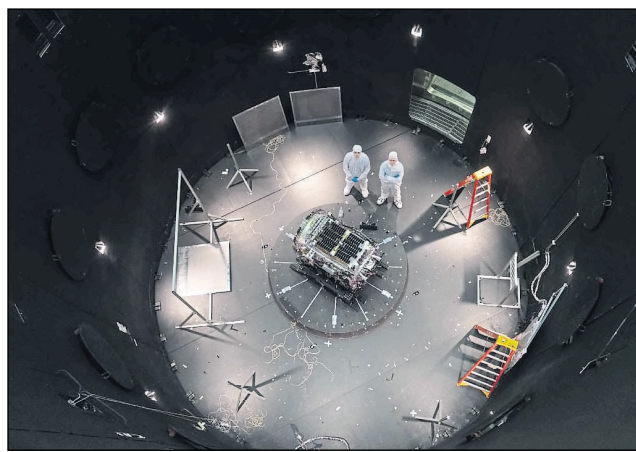
NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope — also at risk — could be next.

Like Swift, Hubble is losing altitude as the sun erupts with one flare after another. Katalyst Space CEO Ghonhee Lee said his company’s next-generation robot, still in development, could save the day for the much bigger Hubble in a couple years.

Only China has attempted a mission like the upcoming one, successfully boosting a satellite into a higher graveyard orbit four years ago.

“This is the first American space robot to go up and do anything like this,” Lee said. “NASA has all these big senior observatories ... all of them can benefit from a service like this. So what we’re proving with this mission is this is a new play in the playbook that’s available.”

It will take Katalyst’s autonomous spacecraft, named Link, about a month to rendezvous with Swift and catch it, and another couple months to raise its orbit from



SOPHIA ROBERTS/NASA

**Kierkieran Wilson, LINK’s principal investigator, and Hunter Robertson, a space systems engineer, both at Katalyst Space, standing next to their spacecraft inside a simulator at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. It is expected to boost the altitude of an orbiting telescope.**

the current 224 miles to the desired 373 miles.

The 1.6-ton gamma ray observatory must be above 185 miles for the rescue to work. It’s expected to reach that point of no return in October, according to the latest estimates.

Roughly the size of a small kitchen refrigerator with a 40-foot solar wingspan, Link sports three arms with a reach of just over 3 feet. Each arm has two finger-like pinching grippers that resemble the hands of a Lego mini figure.

If all goes well, Swift could be back in business by September, according to Lee.

Worth hundreds of millions of dollars, Swift never was designed to be repaired, let alone retrieved by hands — human or otherwise. That’s what makes this so challenging, according to company officials, who stress there is no guarantee it will work.

NASA signed a contract with Katalyst last September with only two requests: It has to be a rush job, but please don’t make things worse. Nine months later, the company is ready to go.

“I have to be honest. No one thought it was going to be possible. No one thought we would get as far as we’ve already gotten today,” said Shawn Domagal-Goldman, NASA’s astrophysics director.

NASA has bought a little more time for Swift, turning off all scientific instruments to slow its descent. Observations ceased in February.

NASA’s science mission chief Nicky Fox said it’s worth the effort.

“If we let Swift reenter, we would lose that telescope. We would lose a lot of capability,” she said. “We don’t currently have the budget to build another one to replace that.”

Katalyst sees Swift as the jumping-off point for a new repair business in space. The company’s next-generation robotic rescuer, scheduled to fly next year, will tackle satellites as high as 22,300 miles up. Lee envisions hundreds of robots in orbit one day, not only fixing and hoisting satellites but also refueling them and building solar farms, data centers and other platforms.

### Researchers say Mom was right: Don't scratch itchy bug bites

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD  
AP MEDICAL WRITER

WASHINGTON — You’ve likely heard it since childhood: Don’t scratch that bug bite or rash, you’ll make it worse. But why would something that feels so good be bad?

A lot of things can cause itchiness, sometimes serious diseases. Whatever the cause, doctors have long warned that scratching too much can damage the skin. Now researchers better understand why even a mildly annoying itch could put you on an itch-and-scratch cycle if you give in.

How did they find out? In part by putting tiny “cones of shame” onto mice to uncover what happens on a cellular level when an itch gets scratched — or left alone.

Dr. Daniel Kaplan, a University of Pittsburgh dermatologist whose lab studies immune reactions in skin, was exploring a run-of-the-mill type of itch called allergic contact dermatitis, caused by irritants such as poison ivy or nickel in jewelry.

Kaplan’s research team put a rash-inducing irritant on the ears of mice. Normal mice scratched and inflammatory immune cells rushed to the site, increasing swelling. The rash was much milder in mice bred with defective itch-sensing nerve cells. But was the difference really the scratching?

Normal mice put into collars like those veterinary “cones of shame” so they itched but couldn’t scratch gave the answer: They, too, had much less swelling and fewer inflammatory cells.

Kaplan said that evidence matches people’s everyday experiences that scratching really can make things worse.

Ignore a mosquito bite and the itch is “gone in five or 10 minutes for most people,” he said. “But if you start scratching it, it’s your friend for a week,” getting itchier and more inflamed.

To understand what was happening in the skin, Kaplan’s team took a deeper look at mast cells, among the immune system’s first responders. When called into action, they release compounds that can help fight germs or toxins — or, through a compound called histamine, trigger itchy allergic reactions.

Scientists have long known that allergens activate mast cells. But other signals can summon mast cells, too, including pain. And when we scratch, “we tend to scratch until it starts to hurt,” Kaplan noted.

Pain-sensing nerve cells release a chemical messenger called substance P. In findings published last year, Kaplan’s team reported that substance P can activate mast cells through a different molecular pathway than allergens do — a double whammy that explains why scratching further inflames itchy rashes or bites.

Then why does a little scratching feel good?

If we experience pain like touching a hot stove, we’ll learn not to do that again. Yet relief from a good scratch, is positive feedback.

One long-held theory is that it may help creatures slough off parasites like fleas or mites. But Kaplan also was intrigued by other labs’ findings that mast cells could fend off a common type of skin bacteria called *Staphylococcus aureus*. So his team infected mice and then repeated the cone-of-shame itch experiment. Sure enough, those that scratched had lower levels of that germ on their ears, maybe because of the extra inflammation or some other mast cell-related compound.

But that’s not enough of an upside to change the health advice.

“Ultimately, scratching is deleterious,” Kaplan stressed. “You should avoid scratching,” he said, although acknowledging that it’s “easier said than done.”

#### BRIEFS

##### SEARCH FOR MISSING MARINE NOW CALLED RECOVERY EFFORT

Multiple agencies continued to search Sunday for a U.S. Marine who went missing during a training exercise off the coast of southern California.

Crews began searching for the Marine early Thursday morning, shortly after midnight, according to a U.S. Navy statement. The Marine was reported missing from the USS Anchorage during integrated training between the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The Navy transitioned from search-and-rescue efforts to a search-and-recovery operation Friday evening. The Marine’s name was being withheld pending the notification of family.

The search has covered about 2,400 square miles and involved three surface ships and 12 aircraft from the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Air Force, officials said.

##### IRAQ REPORTS ARREST OF 47 POLITICAL OFFICIALS

A total of 47 Iraqi political officials have been arrested on corruption charges, Iraq’s state-run Iraqi News Agency reported Sunday.

It said the arrests were based on a statement made by former Deputy Minister of Oil Adnan al-Jumaili, who was arrested last month, and “included members of Parliament whose immunity had been lifted.”

It released names of 15 arrestees, including 12 current lawmakers, one former legislator, a former advisor to former Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, and another high-ranking oil ministry official. Some of the arrested lawmakers came from al-Sudani’s Shiite political bloc and others from the Azm Alliance, an influential Sunni party.

The specific accusations against them were not immediately clear.

##### REMAINS OF DOGS FOUND AT ‘NO-KILL’ SHELTER

Remains of at least 117 dogs found at “no-kill” animal shelter, many of them with gunshot wounds, authorities said.

The Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office said it also discovered 21 canine skulls, hundreds of bones and other remains during searches at Miranda’s Rescue Animal Sanctuary, a 50-acre facility in Fortuna, California.

Investigators combing the site located an area in a barn where they believe dogs likely were killed, the sheriff’s office said. More than 600 dog collars were found nearby, the office said.

Sheriff William Honsal called it a “horrific scene.”

##### ‘TOY STORY 5’ SOARS AS ‘SUPERGIRL’ DISAPPOINTS

In a setback for Warner Bros. • revamped DC movie operations, “Supergirl” was no match for “Toy Story 5” at the box office.

After a near-record debut for an animated movie, “Toy Story 5” remained No. 1 at the box office with \$70 million in domestic ticket sales and another \$89.1 million overseas, according to studio estimates Sunday.

A distant second to the Pixar blockbuster, “Supergirl” opened with \$38 million in U.S. and Canadian theaters. It added \$30 million in overseas markets.

The micro-budget horror phenomenon “Obsession” continued to hold unusually strong. It took third place on the weekend with \$9.8 million in its seventh weekend of release. Curry Barker’s film, made for less than \$1 million, has collected \$233.9 million domestically for Focus Features plus \$108.9 million internationally.

#### TODAY'S QUOTE

“The greatness of America lies not in being more enlightened than any other nation, but rather in her ability to repair her faults.”

— Alexis de Tocqueville, French historian (1805-1859)

#### LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor reflect the views of their writers and not the newspaper or its staff. Submissions must be original works directed to the editor and submitted by the writer, and address one topic. Personal attacks are not allowed. Letters will be edited for clarity, length, grammar and inappropriate content. Letters should be 350 words or fewer and must include the writer’s name, city of residence and a telephone number for confirmation purposes. One letter per month, per writer is allowed. Send a submission by email to letters@thenewsenterprise.com or mail it to Letters, The News-Enterprise, 200 Sycamore St., Suite 134, Elizabethtown KY 42701.