

## Athletes, coaches look back on a tough year

■ 2020 was a year of uncertainty for coaches and students athletes.

By John M. Sherrard  
Contributor

**NORWALK** – It's been a crazy year, 2020. But the New Year couldn't have come any sooner.

Today, Friday, Jan. 1, is a day to look ahead for better days, but at the same time take a look back.

Forty-three weeks have passed without any high school game action in any sport, since it all came to a sudden halt in mid-March.

Sports, of course, are down the list for what is going on around the world.

For the thousands of high school athletes that have been patiently waiting for game action to resume, it's been a challenge.

We just hope, as the calendar turned to 2021, life and the activities that these young people so dearly need starts back up in some form or another.

The CIF-Southern Section has two key dates that everyone will be paying attention to coming up in 2021:

Monday, Jan. 4 – The California Department of Public Health will reassess the Jan. 25 return to competition date and evaluate the situation at that time.

Tuesday, Jan. 19 – The CIF will provide an update on its plans for fall sports championships.

John Glenn High School athletic director Linda Parra, along with many other AD's, have had numerous changes to deal with since the 2020-21 school year began.

"When I reflect back on all events that took place this past year, I am so appreciative of the staff and students we have at John Glenn," Parra said. "2020 was hard for every student, staff member, coach and administrator across the nation. Students and athletes missed out on graduations, senior activities, athletic competitions, and so much more.

"The sense of not knowing what tomorrow may bring definitely taught us the value of being patient and flexible. It is so easy during difficult times to give up and just want to quit for both the athletes and coaches."

However, let's take a look back at some of the brighter spots of the last few months for these student-athletes and their stories.

A few of the athletes that The Norwalk Patriot featured that have graduated are still waiting to compete in their first college competition.

Our very first story featured Santa Fe High softball player Chita Aguirre. She is currently a freshman at the University of North Dakota.

Aguirre, along with hundreds of other players in the CIF-SS, had her season cut short when the pandemic halted sports in March, but she already had been signed up for college in the fall of her senior season.

She recently completed her first semester of school.

With Aguirre home for the holidays, the freshman has been keeping busy on the family's one and a half acre ranch in Chino, taking care of the horses and grandmother, Francisca Figueroa.

"She is our family rock," said Aguirre, who has already gone through fall practice on the Grand Forks campus. "My uncle (Jose Figueroa) and I are busy with the day-to-day duties of the ranch."

That includes the restaurant (Mezquital De Oro) that her grandmother and uncle own in Fontana.

Aguirre, who plays in the infield, has grown as a person

since she has been away from home.

"I definitely feel that I've grown a lot more," she said. "I've most definitely complained about the weather (in North Dakota). It was 14 degrees at the airport the day I left to come home for the holidays in November."

As for the current state of the pandemic, Aguirre said that the softball team was the only one on campus that didn't contract the virus until the last week of practice.

"I had to self quarantine for a week and a half," she added. "It was hard just to be in separate rooms. I honestly didn't like it – I'm a hands-on person."

Fall practice didn't include any games and only had intrasquad competition.

"[Fall] wasn't like I expected without any games," Aguirre added. "I'm just waiting to play and stay positive."

North Dakota has won eight Summit League regular-season championships and advanced to 10 of the past 11 NCAA Division I tournaments, including a Super Regional appearance in 2009.

Two Santa Fe High athletes, Jason Givens and Tomi Oginni, were named Athletes of the Year for the Chiefs and The Patriot was there to tell their story.

Givens was the senior class president and starred in both basketball and baseball. Oginni, who will be attending UC San Diego as a student only, feels for the current students and athletes.

"I feel like it's something that we're getting used to," said Oginni, who will major in public health. "I feel bad for (the athletes) and hope they will have a season."

"Now that the vaccine is out, I still am not getting my hopes up. I'm just hoping for the best."

The Patriot spotlighted current John Glenn senior basketball player Cynthia Almanzar this past summer. She has been frustrated at not being able to practice or play, as most every other athlete has been.

"I think it's heartbreaking not having the chance to play," said Almanzar, who hopes to travel to the Dominican Republic for a tournament in August. "I think about it every day. I just try to keep in shape."

Almanzar has a GoFundMe page and hopes to raise almost \$4,000 for the trip.

Almanzar, who was chosen to play on Team California in the International Dominican Tournament, knows how important it is to keep working out.

"My mom (Daisy) takes me everywhere and has always been pushing me," Almanzar said. "Everything I've worked for is for high school and the Dominican trip."

"As a teenager, I know sports are a big impact in our life, but you have to find other ways to distract from what's going on. At this point, I just want to get a season and graduate."

As for the situation everyone is in, Almanzar added, "...All we can do is wait for answers."

On the other end of the spectrum are the coaches.

The Patriot featured new John Glenn football coach and assistant athletic director David Cruz this past summer, who has his own feelings of the past few months.

"It's a difficult decision," Cruz said. "In one position I feel sad that they aren't playing. I feel compassion for this generation, but I do feel more for my dad's generation that had to go off to war in Vietnam."

"I try to think of it on both sides, as a football coach and an AD."

With CIF constantly updating the different start-up dates for fall sports, it's been a roller



Chita Aguirre, former Santa Fe High School softball player who now plays for the University of North Dakota, works on her grandmother's ranch in Chino during the holiday break. (Photo by Keith Durlinger)

coaster for most coaches

"That's the hard part of not having a concrete answer," Cruz said. "There might be a season, but all these different scenarios, I just feel like we're spinning our wheels."

More recently, The Patriot covered a story on one of Cruz' football players, Joe Varoz, who will be attending Minot State University in North Dakota.

"Joe was able to get a scholarship," Cruz said. "It's all about getting their names out there. Most kids already have videos of themselves."

"I have a handful of kids that can play at the next level."

Cruz, who has been at the school for 18 years as a teacher and coach, knows that a decision to play has to be made soon.

The St. Paul boys volleyball team has high expectations for the season and The Patriot told their story.

Rich Avina, who was recently named athletic director for the Swordsmen, is the boys volleyball coach and has concerns about some of the dual-sport athletes.

"We obviously got the word the season has been shifted to the spring," Avina said. "We have some dual-sport athletes in our volleyball program, such as Nathaniel Lewis (basketball), Eric Brown (track) and Alek Rothweiler (track). I'm just going to wait to see if we have a season."

"We're going to lose a few players. Hopefully they will only miss a couple of matches. The other part of it is the kids have trained to play one specific sport."

### Norwalk's New Sports Complex

Even more disappointing is a nearly-completed, brand new stadium and sports complex at Norwalk High that will sit empty for a few more weeks.

Unofficially, a March completion date is on the horizon.

The new on-field complex features a new baseball and softball all-turf field, soccer fields, tennis courts, concession stand and a field house.

The complex is still being worked on with continuing work on the field house.

### What they said:

**Charles Gandara, St. Paul softball coach:** "To say 2020 has been crazy is the understatement of the year. As 2020 comes to an end, it's hard to believe that in December we'd be talking about the real possibility of not having a 2021 season. We were all naive back in March, thinking that we'd return to the field by Easter and pick up with our lives again. But



Norwalk High School's new sports complex is nearing completion. (Photo by Keith Durlinger)

as spring turned to summer and summer to fall and now winter is here, there seems to be no end in sight. My heart goes out to all of the student-athletes in California that are struggling with staying motivated in school and their sport. I see the signs of depression in my players and the mental toll that distance learning and no high school athletics is having on them. My heart especially goes out to the seniors on my team that has trained for the past four years and has been looking forward to playing together for their final year in high school that may not get that opportunity. Aside from possibly not playing together their senior year, these girls are falling behind players from other states.

"Three of my seniors (Jordin King, Jayne Sepulveda and Kat Serna) will be playing NCAA DI softball next year and will be competing for playing time against players from other states that have been playing with little to no restrictions since the summer. That puts them at a disadvantage. Also, the college rosters will be a little fuller with players from last year not losing a year of eligibility."

"I'm still optimistic that we will have a softball season this year and we have continued to train as best we can the past three months. We are open to anything, a condensed season, league games only, etc., as long as we get to play."

**Linda Parra, John Glenn Athletic Director:** "I am so proud of how our coaching staff remained patient. When given the green light to begin conditioning, our fall sports diligently followed all protocols to provide a safe environment for the athletes during their session. Those few weeks of conditioning allowed for coaches and athletes to begin to get to know each other and understand that they were all part of a team. Being part of a team is so much more than just wearing a uniform. It teaches our students how to be there for one another and to lean on each

other for support. That is needed now more than ever. So, the fact that we were given a chance to create an environment to show the athletes that they weren't alone, but rather part of a team, was valuable.

"2021 will start off the same as 2020 ended, in that we still are unsure what the future of sports looks like. If athletic competitions are allowed to take place, our coaches have a lot of work ahead of them, as our programs have not practiced since last March. It is a blessing to know that John Glenn has a great coaching staff that is willing to put the extra time in to prepare their teams for competitions. 2020 has definitely shown us that we can be resilient and adapt to change at a moment's notice!"

**Rob Wigod, CIF-SS Commissioner (in a statement posted on CIF's website):** "There is no doubt that we have significant challenges ahead of us."

"We must try and overcome those challenges with every effort we can make in support of our student-athletes. It is too important to them for us to not do everything we can do on their behalf to keep their dreams alive."

**Kelly Inouye-Perez, UCLA softball coach:** "This 2020 year has been challenging in many ways for everyone. Gerardo and I usually have very hectic schedules so we have enjoyed quality time to slow down and appreciate the little things at home."

"We have really embraced exercising patience and creativity in our coaching and are very excited to get back out on the dirt and start competing again."

"As Coach Wooden would say, 'yesterday is as old as dirt, we have no control over tomorrow, so create a masterpiece today.' We are making the most of each day and today is going to be a great one! Bring on 2021!"

## Weekend at a Glance

Friday 70°

Saturday 67°

Sunday 65°

### ON THIS DAY JANUARY 1

#### 1808:

A law prohibiting the importation of slaves into the United States went into effect.

#### 1892:

The Ellis Island Immigrant Station in New York opened.

#### 1898:

New York City was consolidated into five boroughs.

#### 1919:

J.D. Salinger, author of "The Catcher in the Rye," was born in New York City.

#### 1934:

Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay became a federal prison.

#### 1956:

Sudan achieved independence from Egypt and the United Kingdom.

#### 1959:

Fidel Castro led Cuban revolutionaries to victory over Fulgencio Batista.

#### 1971:

Cigarette advertisements were banned from American television.

#### 1979:

The United States and China established diplomatic relations.

#### 1990:

David Dinkins was sworn in as New York City's first African-American mayor.

#### 1999:

The euro became the official currency of 11 European countries.

#### 2011:

Oprah Winfrey launched the OWN cable TV network.

#### Birthdays

Hip-hop artist **Grandmaster Flash** (63), "Boyz n the Hood" actor **Morris Chestnut** (52), pop singer **Poppy** (26) and "X-Factor" finalist **Diamond White** (22).

#### Deaths

Country music superstar **Hank Williams** died on this day in 1953 of heart failure brought about by prescription drug abuse and alcoholism. He was 29.

Retired NBA commissioner **David Stern**, who helped shape the league into a global multi-billion dollar industry, died in 2020 of a brain hemorrhage. He was 77.

**Grace Hopper**, a US Navy rear admiral and a pioneer in computer programming, died in 1992 of natural causes. She was 85. Hopper was one of the first programmers of the Harvard Mark I computer, which was finished in 1944.

**Patti Page**, the top-selling female musician of the 1950s, died in 2013 at age 85.

#### Book Recommendation

"**This Time Next Year**" by Sophie Cousins

Minnie Cooper knows two things with certainty: that her New Year's birthday is unlucky, and that it's all because of Quinn Hamilton, a man she's never met. Their mothers gave birth to them at the same hospital just after midnight on New Year's Day, but Quinn was given the cash prize for being the first baby born in London in 1990.

When Minnie unexpectedly runs into Quinn at a New Year's party on their mutual 30th birthday, she sees only more evidence that fortune has continued to favor him.

But if Quinn and Minnie are from different worlds, why do they keep bumping into each other? And why is it that each fraught encounter leaves them both wanting more?

# Whittier school board member thanked on his way out

**WHITTIER** – The Whittier Union High School District Board of Trustees presented outgoing member Tim Schneider with flowers and a plaque of recognition at its November meeting, honoring the longtime Whittier resident for helping to create and maintain a unique educational culture during his 13 years of service.

During Schneider's 13 years as a trustee, he focused on strengthening the bond between parents, teachers and students, and pushed for diversity and equity, supporting the District's motto to "Achieve and Maintain Excellence."

"It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve the Whittier community," Schneider said. "I have met so many wonderful people at Whittier Union, and I thank the Board and people of Whittier for allowing me to serve them."



Schneider and his family have deep roots in Whittier. He has lived in Whittier since he was 1-year old, attending Whittier schools from kindergarten to senior year, and graduating from Whittier High School in 1964.

"Once a Cardinal, always a Cardinal," Schneider said. "My family are all proud Whittier residents. It is a vibrant, diverse community that

is continually moving forward."

Schneider met his wife, Donell, in intermediate school and married her in 1967. His son, who teaches in Whittier, and daughter graduated from Pioneer High and California High, respectively, and his four grandchildren are all current Whittier students or alumni. Schneider was married in the same Whittier church he attended as a child.

After graduating from Whittier High, Schneider attended UCLA, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in political science. Schneider entered into the Army, serving in the Vietnam War as an infantry rifleman and earning a Bronze Star for valor in combat.

"Although my service earned me many commendations and awards, the most fulfilling honor is meeting fellow veterans throughout the city, especially the parents and grandparents of children I have taught," Schneider said. "I have also enjoyed the opportunity to volunteer with the Combat Infantry Badge Association."

Returning to civilian life, Schneider earned a juris doctorate from

Southwestern School of Law, followed by a multiple subject teaching credential from Whittier College. Schneider joined the faculty of Longfellow Elementary School – which he attended as a boy – as a fourth-grade teacher.

Schneider also has served as a soccer and Little League coach, as a member of numerous PTA boards, as a South Whittier Elementary School District Board of Education member for 18 years, as a Whittier Regional Symphony Association Board member and as an A.M. 'Y' Service Club member.

"I have known Tim Schneider as both a colleague and as a Board member and know him to be a man of great integrity who has invested his entire life in the education and betterment of Whittier residents and his country," Superintendent Martin J. Plourde said. "The Whittier community has been well-served by Tim. All of us at the District wish him the absolute best, and we know he will continue to do wonderful things for our community."

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# Whittier paralegal admits scamming immigration clients

**WHITTIER** – A Los Angeles County paralegal pleaded guilty to defrauding more than 100 immigration law firm clients in Southern California by depositing their payments for immigration-related application filing fees or legal services into her personal bank accounts.

Tanya Garcia, 41, of Whittier, pleaded guilty Nov. 19 to one count of wire fraud.

According to her plea agreement, from October 2014 to October 2018, Garcia worked at multiple immigration law firms in Los Angeles and Riverside counties. The law firms assisted clients with matters such as obtaining asylum, relief from deportation, U.S. residency and citizenship, and work permits.

Garcia admitted she met with the law firms' clients and collected payments from them in the form of money orders or checks, representing that the payments would be used for application filing fees with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or for immigration-related legal services provided by the law firms.

As part of her scheme to defraud, Garcia sometimes instructed clients to leave the "pay to" line of money orders or checks blank and at other times she informed the clients that she would complete the money orders or checks for them.

Garcia generally would then write her own name in the "pay to" line of the money orders or checks. Other times, Garcia crossed out "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" from the "pay to" line of money orders and wrote in her own name.

Garcia admitted she deposited the clients' money orders and checks into her personal bank accounts and used the funds to pay off personal expenses including credit card payments, clothing, and food.

In many cases, when clients realized they were not receiving legal services or their immigration-related applications were not being processed by USCIS after providing payment to Garcia, Garcia provided false explanations for the delays or lack of response from USCIS. She also admitted that sometimes she refused to permit the clients to speak to a licensed attorney at the law firms.

In total, Garcia admitted to defrauding at least 144 clients. She also admitted to defrauding the clients and the immigration law firms out of approximately \$199,077.

United States District Judge George H. Wu has scheduled a Feb. 25, 2021 sentencing hearing, at which time Garcia will face a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison.

# Whittier man charged with killing wife inside Kohl's

**WHITTIER** – A 41-year-old man has been charged with fatally shooting his estranged wife inside a department store in Whittier on Dec. 22.

Enrique Acosta, of Whittier, allegedly shot and killed Yvonne Acosta, 46, after they argued inside a Kohl's department store in the presence of their 8-year-old son.

As Acosta allegedly tried to flee in his car, he collided with the victim's car parked nearby.

Acosta was charged with one count each of murder; child abuse under circumstances or conditions likely to cause great bodily injury or death; violation of court order, domestic violence prior conviction; possession of a firearm by a felon; and hit and run resulting in property damage.

He was scheduled to be arraigned Wednesday at Los Angeles County Superior Court, Bellflower Branch.

If convicted as charged, Acosta faces a maximum sentence of 42 years, eight months to life in state prison.



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# Beware progressive prosecutors like George Gascón

By Chandra Bozelko

At his swearing in ceremony, Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón announced he would eliminate cash bail for certain offenses, not seek the death penalty and not charge children as adults. He also promised to undo sentencing enhancements retroactively.

Beware the progressive prosecutor like Gascón. He's not the answer to all of mass incarceration's problems. The hope for reform lies in reducing the power he used for these changes, not celebrating it when it's used in agreeable ways.

Just recently progressive prosecutors have banded together throughout California to create the policies that only they can implement. The movement to elect more of them has taken hold in a number of jurisdictions, moreso during the pandemic when public health interests favored smart decarceration. It's motivated by the recognition that prosecutors control the process; they have more power than judges. Their decisions to proceed with charges aren't reviewable and disciplinary forces rarely act on them when they engage in misconduct.

There's a difference between discretion and power. Power is the ability to do something and discretion is the choice to do it.

Indeed, the accountability for sworn law enforcement agents who kill civilians depends on prosecutorial discretion. From 2005 to June 2019, 122 agents have been arrested for murder or manslaughter for deaths they caused from an on-duty shooting. That's for about 1,000 officer-involved shootings per year. The Breonna Taylor case exemplified one way of using that discretion: keeping evidence from grand jurors so as to keep Louisville police officers from being charged with homicide. The Attorney General exercised his discretion in not presenting evidence. Alternatively, San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin's choice to charge the officer who killed Keita O'Neill in 2017 with manslaughter is an exercise of the same discretion. Discretion is the direction but power is the hinge. It can swing where it likes.

The problem with Gascón's actions is that they only reinforce the prosecutor as the most powerful person in the system. His are called "reformist reforms" meaning they "subordinate its objectives to the criteria of rationality and practicality of a given system." All carceral complications flow from the fact that the entire system is flawed, not just the man or woman who gets elected.

Because the public is so used to a system that advertises itself as adversarial but is, in truth, overbalanced in favor of one side, it's hard to imagine what a world with disempowered prosecutors looks like. It includes jury instructions that openly offer the option

of jury nullification: fact-finders return a not guilty verdict even when a finding of guilt is supported by the evidence if the acquittal would better serve interests of justice; right now courts don't have to disclose the option but they can. Serious consequences for professional malfeasance would work too, including removing sovereign immunity for prosecutors so they're civilly liable for their misdeeds.

The best and most complete way to level the playing field is to eliminate plea bargaining thus requiring prosecutors to prove every case they bring. The trial penalty — the probability that a defendant will receive a longer sentence if he tests the state's case with a trial — provides prosecutors with much of their power. In 2013, Human Rights Watch reported that federal prosecutors leveraged mandatory minimum sentences over federal drug defendants to extract guilty pleas from them.

Jettisoning the plea bargain is an extreme solution — 90% of defendants accept these agreements and plead guilty. Bronx County, New York, tried it at the height of penal populism in the 1990's with the expectation that judges would dole out longer sentences. Instead, judges became more lenient, plea bargaining dropped only 11%, and the dismissal rate — and the backlog — both increased by more than 20%. Any vacation from these agreements likely wouldn't last. Indeed, in the few jurisdictions that experimented with removing plea bargaining as an option to resolve a case, all reversed their bans.

Gascón can't undo sovereign immunity — even though it's entirely a judicial construct. Besides, making these lawyers answerable in civil court assumes that harmful tactics by prosecutors are all actionable; they're not — that's the problem. He can't rewrite jury instructions; that duty belongs to the Judicial Council.

The new District Attorney can institute one change that would change the trial dynamic. LA County District Attorneys could inform sentencing bodies of what the proposed plea bargain was. Knowing exactly how much of a discount a defendant deserved in the state's eyes may cause sentence lengths to drop. Right now, sentencing judges can't know the proposed plea, a practice that must benefit the government otherwise prosecutors would have stopped it.

It's disingenuous to seek between five and 20 years when a defendant's initial offer was just probation. That's what happened to me. I don't know if the judge would have sentenced me to an effective sentence of nine years if he knew the state's attorney demonstrated that probation was appropriate through his plea offer.

Of course, drawing down prosecutorial power would end up preventing the good use of discretion. But evening out the power in the adversarial system would create a bigger, more wholesale change



George Gascon speaks at the University of San Francisco in 2014. Photo by Shawn Calhoun/Creative Commons License

where defendants and constituents alike wouldn't look to the grace of one person to get justice. That's the problem of the progressive prosecutor. Benevolent or not, he's still king of the system.

It's essential to remember that these changes might not even realize; Gascón's revolution is a bit of a mirage. Dozens of "line prosecutors" who may not share his values and vision do most of the work. They're the ones who made the calls on most of the 303,363 cases that appeared in Los Angeles County in 2019; they'll resist losing that autonomy.

When a similar elimination of cash bail was headed to New York state in 2020, one assistant district attorney trained lower tier prosecutors on how to circumvent the new rules. The pandemic's effect on court proceedings prevents us from knowing how many even tried this, much less how many succeeded. They may try the same in Los Angeles. Sabotage lurks in the offices of many progressive prosecutors.

Gascón's goals are laudable and he has the cojones to implement them, but the imbalance and rot in the system remains the same after his announcement. In fact, it might even be stronger.

Chandra Bozelko is a journalist and founder of the *Trusted Opinion Project*.

# Office pool 2021

By Judge Andrew Napolitano

**1) One year from now, the president of the United States will be**

- a. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
- b. Kamala Harris.
- c. Nancy Pelosi.
- d. Donald Trump.

**2) In February 2021, Donald Trump will**

- a. Be indicted for tax and bank fraud in New York.
- b. Have announced that he will remain in the White House until Jan. 20, 2025.
- c. Be living in Saudi Arabia and avoiding American warrants and subpoenas.
- d. Be reorganizing the Department of Justice.

**3) By June 2021, Donald Trump will**

- a. Have lost his Twitter and Facebook accounts.
- b. Be divorced from Melania.
- c. Be reconciled with his former lawyer turned snitch Michael Cohen.
- d. Be negotiating with Vladimir Putin to build Trump Tower Moscow.

**4) In 2021, the Super Bowl will be won by**

- a. The New York Giants, in football history's greatest comeback.
- b. The Tampa Bay Bucs, after Tom Brady is ejected for cheating and a substitute quarterback leads the team.
- c. The Kansas City Chiefs.
- d. The New Orleans Saints.

**5) In 2021, the World Series will be won by**

- a. The New York Yankees when DJ LeMahieu bats .500 in the postseason.
- b. The Boston Red Sox.
- c. The Houston Astros, but the title will be revoked after another cheating scandal.
- d. The Los Angeles Dodgers.

**6) In 2021, all NFL teams will**

- a. Condone players kneeling during the National Anthem.
- b. Lose popularity over the league's efforts to address political and cultural issues.
- c. Again play before empty stadiums.
- d. Play in packed stadiums.

**7) By the end of 2021, COVID-19 will be**

- a. Eradicated.
- b. Exposed as a hoax.
- c. Take more lives than it did in 2020.
- d. No longer on the government's radar.

**8) By the end of 2021**

- a. The roaring economy will have returned.
- b. A great depression will have ensued due to the national debt and insane borrowing.
- c. Unemployment will be above 10%.
- d. Taxes will be higher than they were in 2020.

**9) By the end of 2021**

- a. President Biden will have retired.
- b. Former President Trump will be incarcerated.
- c. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu will be incarcerated.
- d. The U.S. will have more troops abroad than in 2020.

**10) In 2021, President Biden will**

- a. Rejoin the Paris climate accords.
- b. Rejoin the Iran nuclear deal.
- c. Open America's borders to all who wish to come here and cease building Trump's wall.
- d. All of the above.

**11) In 2021, the Supreme Court will**

- a. Reverse Roe v. Wade.
- b. Rule that the right to carry arms outside the home is a fundamental liberty.
- c. Permit those injured by police to sue the police.
- d. Do none of the above.

**12) In 2021, Donald Trump will**

- a. Host "Saturday Night Live."
- b. Form a partnership with Kanye West to buy a major Hollywood studio.
- c. Go bankrupt, again.
- d. Compete with Fox News.

**13) In 2021, global warming will be**

- a. Exposed as a hoax.
- b. Embraced by the Biden administration.
- c. Known as "global cooling," after the coldest, darkest winter on record.
- d. Used as an excuse by congressional Democrats to raise taxes.

**14) One year from today**

- a. Pope Francis will be retired and living in a slum in Buenos Aires.
- b. Roman Catholic cardinals will have deposed Francis for heresy.
- c. Divorced and remarried Catholics will be permitted to receive the Holy Eucharist.
- d. The Latin Mass will be offered in all churches in the west.

**15) One year from today**

- a. The debt of the federal government will have exceeded \$33 trillion.
- b. The Federal Reserve will have caused another bubble due to artificially low interest rates.
- c. The federal government will renege on all its debts.
- d. All Americans will be required to carry an ID card containing medical information and proving a COVID vaccination.

**16) In 2021, President Biden will**

- a. Start a war.
- b. Push for higher taxes.
- c. Push for carbon footprint monitoring.
- d. Advocate for increasing the size of the Supreme Court.

**17) One year from today**

- a. We will finally know how wealthy Donald Trump is, or isn't.
- b. President Biden will have publicly forgotten his own name.
- c. Al Gore will have announced that he will challenge Biden in 2024.
- d. The U.S. and the Islamic State group will have signed a peace treaty.

**18) One year from today**

- a. The U.S. will have socialized medicine.
- b. Obamacare will be the norm for low-income and middle-class health insurance needs.
- c. COVID will have been forgotten.
- d. Roger Clemens will be in the baseball Hall of Fame.

**19) One year from today**

- a. More Americans will be working from home than were in 2019.
- b. Bill and Hillary Clinton will finally get a divorce.
- c. Biden will have removed all of Trump's tariffs.
- d. Chris Christie will have announced he is seeking the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

**20) In the long run**

- a. Everything the government has it has stolen.
- b. Everything the government says is a lie.
- c. That government is best which governs least.
- d. All of the above are true.

My choices are 1a, 2a, 3d, 4c, 5d, 6b, 7d, 8b, 9c, 10d, 11b, 12a, 13d, 14d, 15d, 16 all, 17a, 18d, 19a, 20d.

Happy New Year.

Judge Andrew Napolitano is the senior judicial analyst for Fox News. His column is syndicated nationally.

**The Norwalk Patriot** STAFF

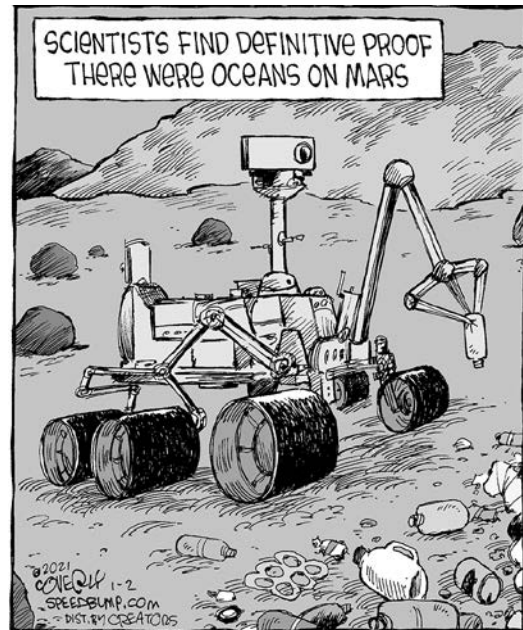
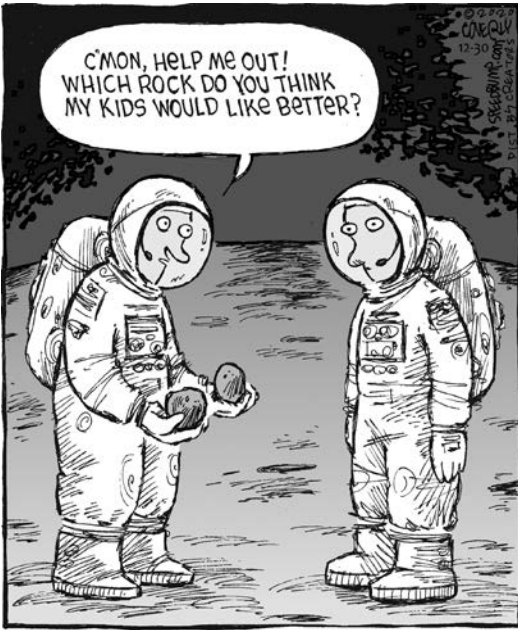
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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## MONDAYS

1st, 6:00 p.m. - Public Safety meetings - Council Chambers

## TUESDAYS

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Farmers Market - Norwalk City Hall  
1st & 3rd 6:00 p.m. - Toastmasters Meetings - Registrar Recorder/County Clerks Office  
1st & 3rd, 6:00 p.m. - City Council - Council Chambers  
3rd, 5:45 p.m. - Housing Authority - Council Chambers

## WEDNESDAYS

1st, 12:30 p.m. - Soroptimist International - Soroptimist Village  
1st & 3rd, 7:00 p.m. - Lions Club - Bruce's Restaurant  
2nd, 10:30 a.m. - Norwalk Woman's Club - Masonic Lodge  
2nd & 4th, 1:30 p.m. - Alondra Senior Citizens - Social Services Center  
2nd & 4th, 7:30 p.m. - Planning Commission - Council Chambers  
4th, 11:30 a.m. - Coordinating Council - Arts & Sports Complex

## THURSDAYS

7:00 p.m. - Boy Scouts Troop 924 - Norwalk United Methodist Church  
2nd, 7:00 p.m. - American Legion Post No. 359 - 11986 Front St.  
2nd, 7:30 p.m. - Golden Trowel -Norwalk Masonic Lodge

## SATURDAYS

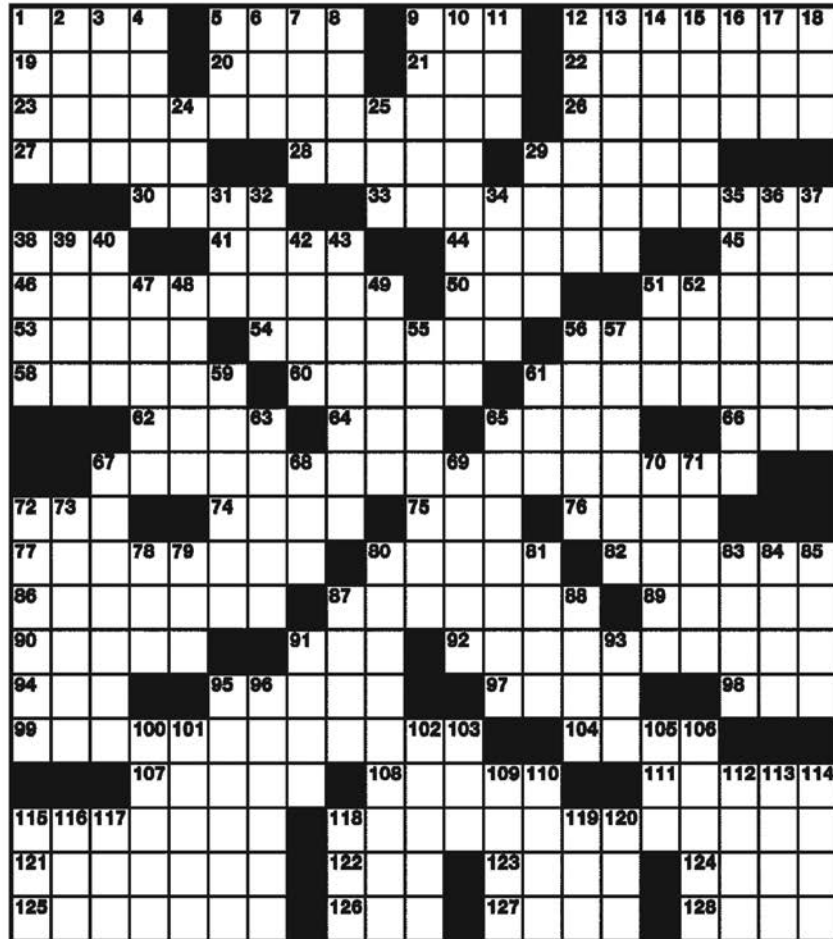
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Farmers Market - Norwalk City Hall  
2nd, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. - Pancake Breakfast - First Christian Church of Norwalk  
Have an event you want listed? E-mail news@thedowneypatriot.com

## THE NEWSDAY CROSSWORD

Edited by Stanley Newman (www.StanXwords.com)  
**MORNING TO NIGHT: A full day of fun**  
by Gail Grabowski and S.N.

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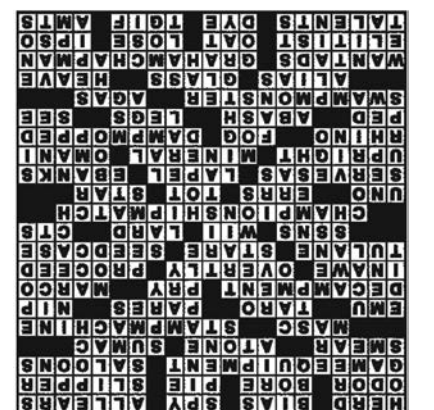
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Reach Stan Newman at www.StanXwords.com























# How young professionals should save and invest – no matter the pandemic’s effects

By Albert Lalonde

When starting a retirement savings and investment plan, the rule of thumb is the earlier, the better.

For young professionals, that can be easier said than done. High rent, student loan payments, and modest junior-level salaries make saving a challenge. And now in this unprecedented year come the dynamics adding economic uncertainty – the coronavirus, a global recession, and the recent presidential election. Those young people whose 401(k) values were rising steadily before 2020 now are nervous and wondering how to plan for a retirement that’s a long way away.

But while the seas are stormy, there are proven principles they can use to navigate and stay on a steady course toward retirement – no

matter how distant it appears on their map. As many of us know, it gets here soon enough.

These are some key points young savers should consider as they develop a financial plan for retirement:

**Become a disciplined saver.** The optimal savings rate toward retirement is at least 20% of gross income. That may be too high for young savers, given their other financial obligations, but the important thing is to make savings a priority. Save at a consistent rate and increase it as soon as possible.

The best way to stick with your savings plan is to develop automated savings strategies, such as to have contributions made directly to a 401(k). Another option that’s popular is splitting up direct deposits, with one going into a dedicated savings account.

**Keep contributing to your**

**401(k) – even if your employer stopped matching.** Due to the pandemic, many companies suspended or reduced their 401(k) matching contributions to save cash and avoid layoffs. While such a move slows one’s accumulation of retirement funds, the bigger long-term damage is done when an employee stops contributing to the 401(k) at the same time that the employer stops matching. At minimum, maintain your current retirement contributions or, if you can afford to, increase them to compensate for the temporary loss of your employer’s 401(k) match.

Another alternative is redirecting a portion of your retirement contributions to a Roth Individual Retirement Account. Contributions to a Roth IRA are made with funds on which you’ve already paid income tax, and in many cases offer more flexibility when it comes to investment choices.

But whatever you do, keep contributing. By staying the course, either in your 401(k) or Roth IRA, you can continue to grow your nest egg and take advantage of a market recovery when it arrives. And if you can afford to increase your contributions, you’ll keep your retirement plan on track.

**Diversify savings and investment vehicles.** 401(k) contributions accumulate on a tax-deferred basis, usually are withdrawn when investors are in a lower tax bracket, and often include some employer-matching funds to augment savings. While these are all positives, it’s important to save elsewhere. Remember, qualified retirement funds are functionally locked away until age 59 1/2, so they aren’t available in the event that a cash need arises. Moreover, 401(k) savings are taxed at the time of withdrawal.

Young investors should consider balancing traditional 401(k)s with a Roth IRA – or Roth 401(k) if it’s offered – or a normal brokerage account. Roth contributions are made after tax, but they allow tax-free growth and withdrawals in retirement. They also typically allow penalty-free withdrawals up to the amount contributed. This provides some liquidity as well as an excellent tax benefit for accounts that appreciate substantially. Regular brokerage accounts provide no tax advantages, but they are liquid and still offer growth.

Having a growth mindset is central to building a good retirement plan while young. With many years until retirement, a young investor’s accounts should be weighted toward stocks, with enough diversification to protect against poor performing stocks or industries. Success in the stock market comes over the

long haul, and young people have time to ride out cycles and downturns.

With a long time horizon and relatively low income relative to their later career earnings, young investors are in a unique position to realize the benefits of these vehicles. Using a mixture of these different account types will diversify tax exposure and balance savings and earnings with accessibility.

For young investors, it cannot be emphasized more: start saving early, be consistent, be diligent, be growth-minded. Start saving in a systematic way and diversify as you can. Whatever 2020 is throwing at you, it doesn’t have to stop you from having a good, disciplined plan that will pay off many years from now.

Albert Lalonde, a financial planner and investment advisor representative, is the founder of Kaizen Financial Group ([www.kaizenfinancialgroup.com](http://www.kaizenfinancialgroup.com)).

# Want to work remotely forever? 5 key factors to consider

Working from home is the new normal for millions of Americans, and many companies are planning to make the move permanent even if vaccines bring an end to the pandemic.

Whether that’s the case at your company, your bosses are giving you an option, or if you want to make a case to them to work remotely, there are important matters to consider, says Cynthia Spraggs ([www.virtira.com](http://www.virtira.com)), a veteran of working remotely and author of *How To Work From Home And Actually Get SH\*T Done*.

“The pandemic may result in something I’ve advocated for years – more people working remotely,” says Spraggs, also the CEO of Virtira, a completely virtual company that helps other businesses work virtually. “But making this kind of transition permanently, whether full-time or part-time, can have a major impact on both your career, finances, and your personal life.

“It’s more than just the dynamics of getting your home workspace set up properly for the long haul and having the right mindset to perform even better than you would in the office. Will your work relationships suffer? Your family and personal relationships? Your career trajectory? Is relocating a good idea financially?”

Spraggs offers these key points to consider about working remotely on a permanent basis:

## Cerritos to resume parking citations

**CERRITOS** – Cerritos’ overnight parking restrictions and enforcement will resume on Monday, February 1.

City Code Enforcement staff will issue warnings for two weeks and will then begin issuing citations on Monday, February 15. This includes citations issued for vehicles parked on the street on street sweeping days.

Permits are required to park on Cerritos streets between 3 and 5 a.m. to help keep streets clear and allow residents and deputies “to quickly spot suspicious vehicles.”

The Cerritos City Council recently amended its parking permit criteria to allow two-car garage households with five vehicles and five licensed drivers to qualify for an annual parking permit.

**Consider possible salary changes and tax implications if relocating.** “You need to ask this question if you’re considering relocating to work remotely,” Spraggs says. “Some employers will base compensation on location, and that means employees moving from a high cost-of-living area to a less expensive one could see their salaries reduced. Also, employees need to do their homework and see how their take-home pay will be impacted by taxes in their new location.”

**Determine your home-or-office comfort level.** Is your life better in the long run working from home? “That question should include whether you miss your work colleagues and team synergy enough that Zoom doesn’t cut it,” Spraggs says. “Maybe social isolation is

catching up with you and you need a hybrid-type balance, or you realize you want to be back in the office after all. The bigger question is how well can you manage your time working from home, or do family dynamics interfere?”

**Plan your pitch thoroughly.** “If you have to sell your leadership team on working remotely full-time,” Spraggs says, “have specific examples of your work performance since you started working from home during the pandemic.

And if you want to relocate, you can inform leadership about what advantages that might have for the company, like giving them a new presence in a certain region.”

**Keep an eye out for other job prospects.** If you relocate,

Spraggs says it’s important to consider what the job opportunities are in your new market, because layoffs are always a possibility. “And wherever you are,” Spraggs says, “remember that your next employer might not be on board with remote work.”

**Beware it could hurt your career prospects.** If most of your company will be

returning to the office, those who work from home either part-time or full-time might be at a disadvantage in terms of promotions or performance evaluation. “It’s important to be proactive about communicating with your manager and having a plan to keep them informed of your progress,” Spraggs says. “It’s a good idea to come to the office occasionally. You have to

have some in-person time to build relationships with teams.”

“Now is a good time to reevaluate your current work environment and how it could be if you continue working remotely,” Spraggs says. “A lot of people have enjoyed the freedom of it, but there’s much to consider if you want to make the new normal a permanent reality.”

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# Paging Dr. Frischer...

By Dr. Alan Frischer

2020 has been far from a "normal" year. We have been faced with a once-in-a-century pandemic, devastating fires, earthquakes, recession, and a particularly divisive presidential election. And yet...here we are. We are resilient. We adapt to circumstances, find ways to cope, and move forward. However, these are indeed times that require plenty of inspiration, so perhaps some of my favorite quotes will strike a chord!



Maya Angelou: "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."

Vince Lombardi: "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up."

Misattributed to Winston Churchill: "The pessimist sees difficulty

in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty."

Misattributed to Confucius: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

Mark Twain: "The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

Rob Siltanen: "The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who actually do."

John Wooden: "Things work out best for those who make the best of how things work out."

Misattributed to Socrates: "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."

Albert Einstein: "Try not to become a man of success, but rather a man of value."

Misattributed to Aristotle: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Napoleon Hill: "If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way."

Attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt: "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be."

Attributed to Oscar Wilde: "Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken."

Unknown: "A bad attitude is like a flat tire; you can't go anywhere until you change it."

Stephen Covey: "I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions."

Roy T. Bennett: "Believe in yourself. You are braver than you think, more talented than you know, and capable of more than you imagine."

Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel): "Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind."

I wish for all of us a year of health, love, happiness, inspiration, and an abundance of growth!

Dr. Alan Frischer is former chief of staff and former chief of medicine at Downey Regional Medical Center. Write to him in care of this newspaper at 8301 E. Florence Ave., Suite 100, Downey, CA 90240.

# Downey councilman criticized for 'sweetheart' plea deal

Downey council member and deputy district attorney Mario Trujillo is accused of offering a murder suspect 7 years in prison as part of a plea deal.

By Eric Pierce Editor

**DOWNEY** - Mario Trujillo, Downey's newest-elected city council member who works as a deputy district attorney, is being criticized for allegedly offering a plea deal of seven years in prison to a gang member accused of helping to kill another man in a case of mistaken identity.

Rudy Dominguez, 24, was charged with murder for the fatal shooting of 26-year-old Fernando Rojo in South Los Angeles in 2016. Although he did not pull the trigger, authorities said Dominguez drove the vehicle in a drive-by shooting that killed Rojo, who was mistaken for another gang member.

Dominguez faced a maximum sentence of life in prison without parole. FOX-11 obtained

transcripts from a Dec. 15 court proceeding in which it's alleged that Trujillo offered Dominguez a plea deal that consisted of seven years in prison.

The offer was later declared invalid at a subsequent hearing.

Rojo's family members, however, were outraged that such a plea deal was offered in the first place.

"We were blindsided by it first of all, we never even heard of anything," the victim's sister-in-law, Amy Rojo, told FOX-11 of Trujillo's plea offer. "From what we knew, it was a preliminary hearing, them trying to get everything together, then all of a sudden, it's kind of like, 'Oh, there's a 7-year plea on the table.' Nobody even spoke to us. How is it that our loved one is worth seven years?"

Trujillo, who was elected to the Downey City Council last month, delayed retirement to work alongside new L.A. County district attorney George Gascon who also was elected last month.

A spokesperson for Gascon told the L.A. Times that no plea deal was offered.

In a statement to The Downey

Patriot, Trujillo said he couldn't comment on the specifics of the case.

"Thank you for this opportunity to address the rumors and accusations circulating in the media regarding an alleged 'backdoor' plea deal in an open case currently being prosecuted by the Hardcore Gang Division of my employer the District Attorney's office of Los Angeles County," Trujillo's statement read. "I am not able to comment about the specifics of any case with pending criminal and legal investigations.

"These attacks against my professionalism, ethics and integrity are reminiscent of the various false narratives that were made against me during my campaign for Downey City Council.

"I recognize that public scrutiny comes with the territory of being a public servant and an elected official. Still I continue to be steadfast in my oath and obligation to the residents of Downey to make sure all families are safe and healthy, our community is protected and our small business owners are supported. Simultaneously

I will continue to represent the People of the State of California in pursuing Justice for ALL."

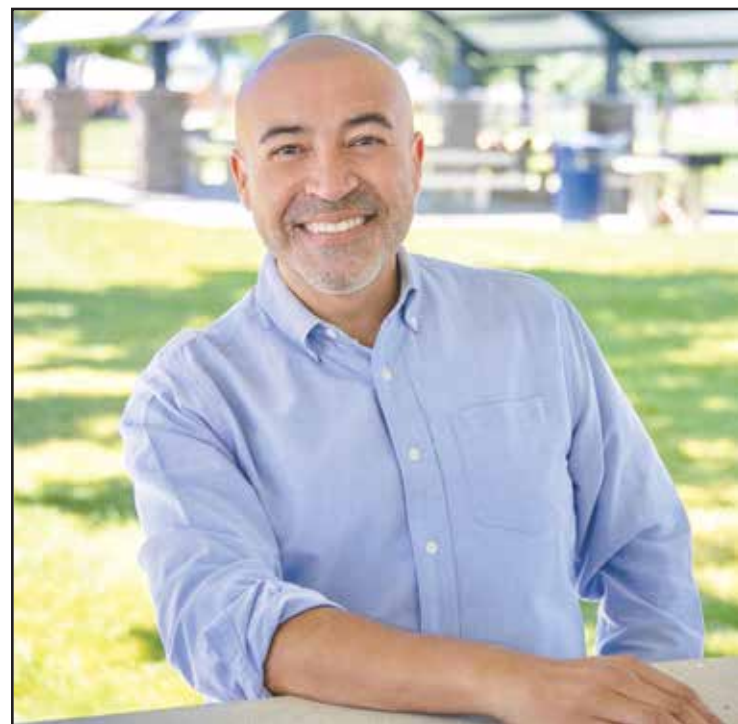
Gascon's sweeping policy changes, including an end to sentencing enhancements for prior convictions, has been met with resistance.

The union that represents L.A. County prosecutors filed a restraining order Wednesday to block Gascon's actions, arguing that the district attorney's new policies violate California's three strikes law.

Gascon released a statement Wednesday addressing the opposition.

"After a summer of unrest, Los Angeles County voters embraced this new, modern approach," he said. "The will of the voters must not be mistaken as a commentary on the hundreds of Deputy DAs who labor, day in and day out, to protect the public. They are public servants who have earned our utmost respect and gratitude. They certainly have mine - and a sincere invitation to join me in making these much-needed changes.

"As we've seen in recent



Downey councilman Mario Trujillo

weeks, this new approach will take some fine-tuning and a tolerance for change.

"I invite open and respectful debate based on the facts,

however, the people have spoken, the direction is clear and, in the end, we all want the same things - safety and equal justice under the law."

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