

## National

### SENATE STALWART DIES

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, known as “Ted” or “Teddy,” died of brain cancer on August 25, just two weeks after the passing of his sister Eunice Kennedy Shriver. His brothers—President John F. Kennedy and Senator Robert F. Kennedy—were felled by assassins’ bullets in their 40s, but Teddy lived on to serve 46 years as one of the most effective lawmakers in Senate history. He was the best-known Democrat in the Senate. His legislative legacy includes the landmark 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, Medicare drug benefits for the elderly, and championing health insurance for children of the working poor.



### IFELICITACIONES!

Congratulations are in order for Justice Sonia Sotomayor! This August, after much debate, Sotomayor took the judicial oath, becoming the first Hispanic and third woman in United States history to serve on the Supreme Court.

### DON'T HIT THE MALL JUST YET...

At his inaugural speech this January, President Obama warned that economic times would get worse before they got better—and he was right. The U.S. unemployment rate is at 9.4. percent and may exceed 10 percent by year’s end. As of this summer, North Dakota was in best shape at 4.2 percent, and Michigan was worst off at 15.2. But there’s hope. Reports show that in July, the American economy shed 247,000 jobs, the smallest monthly toll since last August. No one’s hitting the mall to celebrate though. Consumer spending, which makes up about 70 percent of our country’s economic activity, continues to drop as Americans save more.

### HEALTHCARE HEADACHE?

Revamping America’s ailing health care system is a pain in the neck, but the Obama administration hopes it’ll be good medicine for us all. Congress is currently hard at work hashing out the details of President Obama’s proposed \$1 trillion health care reform bill (introduced earlier this year). The bill aims at slowing skyrocketing health care costs and extending health insurance coverage to our nation’s 47 million uninsured. Key highlights include securing coverage for people who have lower incomes and/or preexisting conditions. Who’s finding the bill a tough pill to swallow? Many employers, insurance, drug and healthcare companies, who would have to change the way they do business.

### JUNKIN’ CLUNKERS

Less than a week after the federal government introduced the new Car Allowance Rebate System (known as “Cash for Clunkers”), it got so popular it ran out of gas. Congress initially doled out \$1 billion towards the program, which offered any American \$3,500–\$4,500 to trade in an old car for one with higher fuel economy. The logic behind the initiative was that it would increase vehicle sales, boost the failing U.S. auto industry, and help bring more fuel-efficient cars to the road. To keep the wheels rolling, Congress revved up its engines and offered \$2 billion more to fuel the program. Environmentalists had mixed feelings, though: why scrap usable cars to make and sell more?

## International



### RADIO INSPIRES RADIOHEAD

This summer, British rock band Radiohead released a new song dedicated to Harry Patch, the last British survivor of World War I living in the United Kingdom, who died in July at the age of 111. Radiohead front man Thom Yorke says he wrote the song several years ago after hearing Patch describe his war experiences on the radio. Give it a listen, and consider what our U.S. soldiers are doing for us over in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### MISSION: EXIT IRAQ

This June, U.S. combat forces withdrew from Iraq’s populated areas, marking the first step in the Obama administration’s plan to pull our soldiers completely from the country. Per Obama’s agreement with the Iraqi government, all U.S.-led combat operations in Iraq will end by September 2010, and all troops will be pulled by the end of 2011. Right now, some 131,000 U.S. troops still remain in Iraq, helping to stabilize the country during the months before the Iraqi national election in January.

### FIGHTING TERRORISM IN AFGHANISTAN

While U.S. soldiers are returning from Iraq, thousands more are pouring into Afghanistan. The U.S. hopes a surge of soldiers will help to clear areas of Taliban rebels and maintain a lasting presence in those regions to keep them from returning. The Taliban is an Islamist fundamentalist religious and political movement that governed Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, when its leaders were overthrown by Northern Alliance and NATO forces. They have since regrouped and revived as an elusive guerilla movement raging against the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and allied NATO forces. The Taliban was responsible for the 9-11 attacks on U.S. soil, but it’s important to remember that they’re a rebel group and certainly not representative of all Afghanis or Muslims.

### HOME, SWEET HOME

Last month, two American journalists who were detained for nearly five months in North Korea were returned to U.S. soil, thanks to former president Bill Clinton, who traveled to North Korea to secure their release. Laura Ling, 32, and Euna Lee, 36, had been captured in March near the Chinese border while making a documentary about the trafficking of North Korean women to China. North Korean dictator Kim Jon Il sentenced the women to 12 years of hard labor for illegally entering North Korean territory. Can you imagine being forced to hammer rocks and do other strenuous labor for 12 years?

## Science and technology

### RESPECT THE SPLEEN!

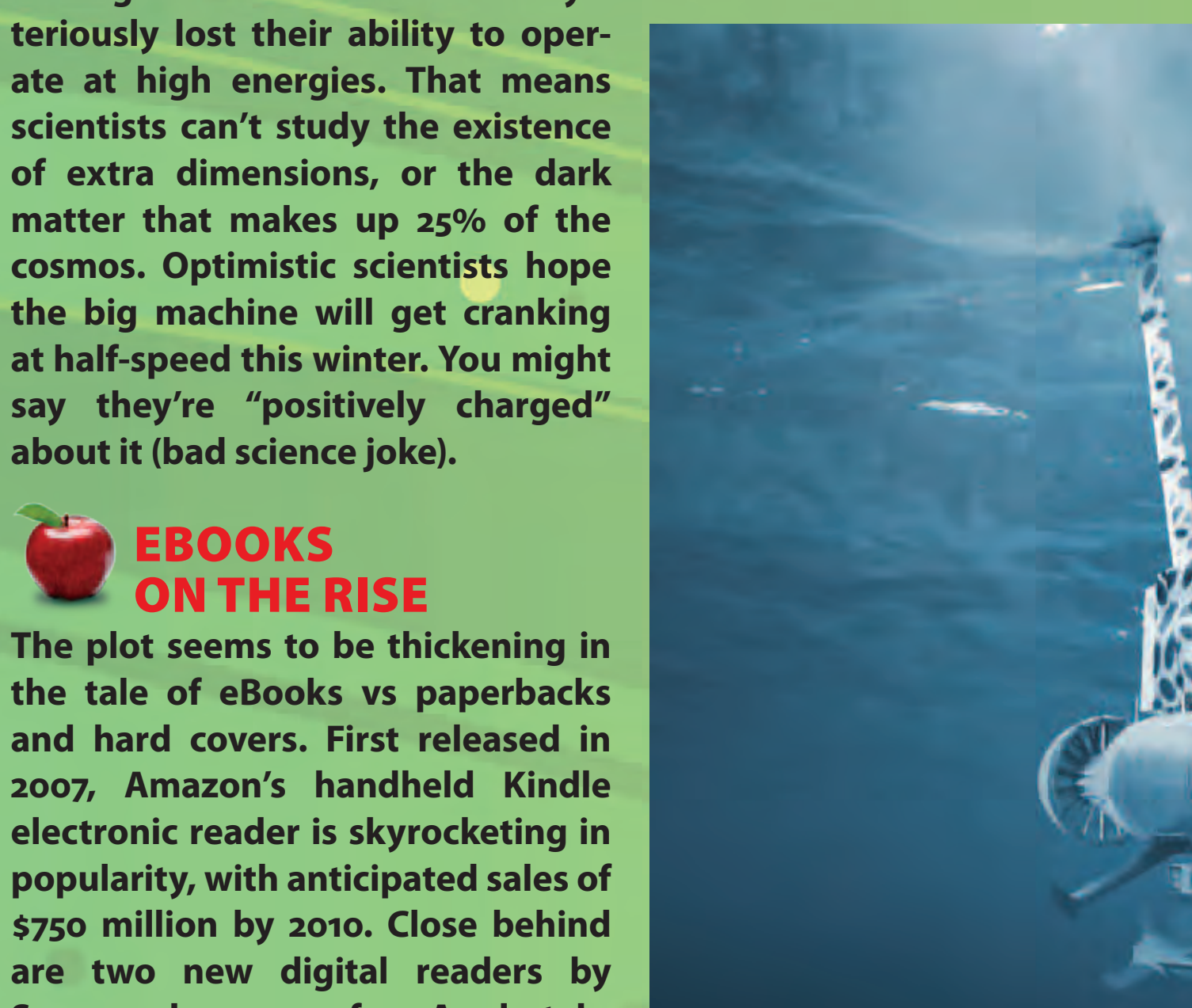
Long thought of as one of the least-important abdominal organs, the spleen plays a more important role in the body’s defense system than anyone ever suspected. Researchers from Harvard recently discovered that the spleen is a reservoir for huge numbers of immune cells called monocytes. Whenever your body undergoes serious trauma—like a gashing wound or microbial invasion—your spleen disgorges multitudes of monocytes into your bloodstream to help tackle the crisis. Funny that after 2,000 years of spleen studies, researchers are only now discovering its major feature!

### MIND YOUR OWN BEESWAX

You’ve heard the buzz about bee populations dwindling, and how it could seriously mess up agriculture across the globe, right? Well, looks like the Brits have developed a sweet way to help save honeybees. The “Beehaus,” developed by the British government, is a state-of-the-art bee house designed to help city-dwellers safely and easily keep bees in their backyards. Sweet side benefit: you can harvest up to 20 kilograms of your own honey each year to eat or sell. The Haus hasn’t hit U.S. shores yet, but the Obamas are already planning their own White House hives. Why keep bees around? They play an important role in pollination of all our crops and in the world’s delicate ecosystem.

### BUSTED PARTICLE ACCELERATOR

After 15 years and \$9 billion in the making, the world’s biggest, most expensive physics machine still isn’t up and running. The Large Hadron Collider, a giant particle accelerator outside Geneva, Switzerland, is riddled with thousands of bad electrical connections and has yet to, well, accelerate particles. For whatever reason, many of the magnets meant to whiz high-energy subatomic particles around the 17-mile



### EBOOKS ON THE RISE

The plot seems to be thickening in the tale of eBooks vs paperbacks and hard covers. First released in 2007, Amazon’s handheld Kindle electronic reader is skyrocketing in popularity, with anticipated sales of \$750 million by 2010. Close behind are two new digital readers by Sony, and rumors of an Apple tablet device. Forrester Research estimates that the number of eReaders sold in the U.S. will exceed 3 million by the end of 2009, and 13 million by the end of 2013. With print magazine and newspaper sales plummeting worldwide, will we soon do most of our reading electronically?



# PLANET NEWS AND VIEWS

## Culture & Fame

### POP KING’S DEATH A HOMICIDE

In late August, the LA County coroner ruled Michael Jackson’s death a homicide and a combination of drugs the cause. The legendary pop star, musician and dancer died in his LA home at age 50 in June—just 19 days before the launch of his slated “This Is It” comeback tour. Forensic tests found the powerful anesthetic propofol, combined with at least two sedatives, to be the cause of Jackson’s death. Criminal charges will likely be filed against Dr. Conrad Murray, M.J.’s personal physician, who used the drugs to treat the singer for insomnia. Both beloved and despised worldwide, Jackson was the most commercially successful musician of all time.

### UMA AIDS CHILD SOLDIERS

“Kill Bill” actor Uma Thurman signed on this summer to star in an independent movie to raise awareness of the plight of child soldiers. “Girl Soldier,” which will start filming next year, tells the story of the 1996 abduction of 140 schoolgirls in Uganda who were forced to fight as soldiers and serve as sex slaves. Since 1986, conflict has raged between the government of Uganda and the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), causing a widespread crisis in northern Uganda and neighboring countries of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Central African Republic. An estimated 30,000 to 66,000 kids and teens have been kidnapped and forced to wield weapons.



### FUNNY GIRL SERIOUS ABOUT AUTISM

Comic Jenny McCarthy is seriously spreading the word about Autism. This fall, the actor and mom is launching Teach2Talk, a 15-part series of instructional DVDs for children both with and without Autism. McCarthy developed the series with a UCLA speech-language pathologist who treats the actor’s 7-year-old Autistic son. Autism is the country’s fastest-growing developmental disability—about 1.5 million Americans currently have it. The condition is the result of a complex neurological disorder that has an effect on normal brain function, affecting development of the person’s communication and social interaction skills.



BECAUSE BOMB-SNIFFING DOGS DON'T WORK WELL UNDERWATER.



### ABDUL LEAVES IDOL AT TWITTER

After eight seasons as a judge on the top-rating talent show “American Idol,” Paula Abdul has left the show and is replaced by comedian Ellen DeGeneres. The former pop star made her announcement on Twitter, leaving Idol fans in shock. Apparently, Abdul was offered a paltry \$5 million for the upcoming season, compared to Simon Cowell’s alleged \$30 million. During her years as judge, Abdul helped unearth some of America’s most popular young musicians, including Kelly Clarkson and Carrie Underwood.

## News About You

### WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU

At the end of the last school year, we polled more than 28,000 high school students to see how they felt about a wide range of the social and political issues currently facing our nation. The results are very interesting and offer insight into the things that most concern your generation.

For instance, in spite of our floundering economy, 59% of these students felt confident they’d land a job after they were finished with school. To help seal the deal, a whopping 92% of them are planning to get a college education—that’s almost everyone polled!

Politically, about 65% of respondents felt that President Barack Obama is making progress stabilizing the U.S. economy, whereas 33% weren’t quite sure. And whereas only 57% felt that American citizens are satisfied with the Obama administration, a resounding 77% agreed with the decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

Performance-enhancing drugs also seem to be a hot topic. 80% of students polled think professional athletes should have to prove they have not taken banned substances before competitions, whereas only 73% think high school athletes should have to. In terms of alcohol, 71% think teenagers should drink less.

When it comes to school, very few students—only 18%—would like to try out segregated classrooms, i.e. boys with boys and girls with girls. But 62% wouldn’t mind spending a school semester in another country, like France or Germany. Interestingly, while 57% of the students said they consider themselves religious, only 35% think prayer has a place in our national schools.

We will be sending out another survey in the spring and we hope you’ll all fill it out. As our new president makes big changes in restructuring our nation’s economy, education, health care system, and relations with foreign nations, your input is more important than ever. Look out for the next survey and have your voice heard!

### OMG U R SO BUSTED

Texting while driving can be deadly, and Colorado’s putting a stop to it. The state’s new House Bill 1094, to be effective this winter, will put a ban on both cell phone use and texting behind the wheel. If you’re under 18, you won’t be able to do either, and if you’re over 18, you’ll be banned from texting while driving. A 2007 study by SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) polled more than 900 teens from 26 high schools nationwide and found that text-messaging while driving is becoming as dangerous as drinking and driving, in terms of inhibiting a teen’s driving abilities.

### QUARTERBACK SCORES GIANT SALARY

Looks like the New York Giants are going to make quarterback Eli Manning the highest-paid player in the National Football League this year. Eli led the Giants to Super Bowl victory last year. This summer, Manning signed on for a six-year contract extension worth \$97.5 million—cash enough to keep Manning in Oreos for life. A big fan of sweets, Eli and his brother, Peyton, famously co-starred in a commercial promoting milk’s favorite cookie.

### HELPING HANDS IN HARD TIMES

In spite of the bum economy, more Americans rolled up their sleeves and volunteered last year than ever. A recent report showed that almost a million more people donated their time to charitable causes in 2008, as compared to 2007. Heartening news, considering volunteer rates typically drop during economic downturns. All in all, 61.8 million people volunteered last year. Looks like teens helped out the most – the biggest increase came among young adults. The number of 16- to 24-year-old volunteers rose 5 percent, from 7.8 million to 8.2 million. Way to pitch in, guys!

### DON'T SQUEAL — IT'S JUST A SHOT

Turns out, you’re first in line for the new swine flu vaccines coming out this fall. Along with pregnant women, health care workers and kids, teens will be given priority status when the U.S. government doles out around 160 million doses of the new swine flu vaccine in autumn. So far, the serious disease with the ridiculous name has infected more than 1 million Americans and resulted in at least 300 deaths. Symptoms of swine flu include fever, coughing, runny nose, diarrhea and sore throat. The best way to stay protected for now? Soap up those hands in public restrooms.

### HIKER FINED HEFTY RESCUE FEES

This summer, the state of New Hampshire fined 17-year-old Scott Mason \$25,000 to cover costs for his dramatic rescue earlier this year. During spring, Mason spent three nights alone on Mount Washington after spraining his ankle and veering off marked trails. The Massachusetts Eagle Scout slept in the crevice of a boulder and jump-started fires with hand sanitizer gel. His Eagle Scout skills sure paid off—just not literally.

### FEELING D-FFICIENT?

Spending too much time in front of the Xbox? Studies show that millions of American kids and teens are Vitamin D deficient, quite possibly because they’re not getting enough sun. About 9% of kids aged 1-21 (about 7.6 million) have Vitamin D levels low enough to be considered deficient, while an additional 61 percent (50.8 million) have higher levels, but still low enough to be considered insufficient. Keep your bones strong and boost your Vitamin D levels by drinking milk, eating Vitamin D-rich foods, and spending 15-20 minute in the sun a day before slapping on the sunscreen.

## Odds & Ends

### FIESTA TIME!

September marks the beginning of National Hispanic Heritage Month, celebrated between September 15 and October 15. Initiated by the U.S. Congress as Hispanic Heritage Week more than 20 years ago, the observance is a month-long celebration to honor the vibrant Hispanic American heritage that’s a part of our nation’s art, music, food, and faiths. Today, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 37 million people in the United States are of Hispanic origin. That’s about ten percent of us! What’s your community doing for a celebración?



### BARACK’S B-DAY WISH

On his 48th birthday, President Obama noshed on cupcakes at the White House with veteran reporter Helen Thomas White House, whose birthday is also August 4th. He later told assembled reporters that both he and Thomas shared the same birthday wish: “a real health care reform bill.”

### “ROADLESS” RULE RULES

In a victory for environmentalists, the United States Court of Appeals reaffirmed a decision to reinstate a Clinton-era rule that substantially limited development of roads on national forest lands. The rule ensures that over 40 million acres of wild national forests and grasslands will stay protected from new road building, logging, and development. This is great news for environmentalists, off-road riders, and the countless wildlife species that thrive in their natural habitats.

### BEWARE OF BESSIE

Cows are peaceful creatures, right? Not always. According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 20 Americans are killed by cows each year. In some cases, the cows actually attack humans—ramming them, knocking them down, goring them, trampling them and kicking them in the head—resulting in fatal injuries to the head and chest. Think twice next time you’re tempted to tip a cow.

Sources: latimes.com, myway.news.com, breitbart.com, nytimes.com, newsweek.com, time.com, cnn.com, washingtonpost.com.

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