



# GEICO NOW

Federal

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## A SMARTER GOVERNMENT

How a tech-savvy program is making an impact.

PAGE f6



**f2** GET UP CLOSE WITH THE NATIONAL ZOO'S NEWEST PANDA

**f3** IN BRIEF: THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM, ASTRONAUTS & MORE

**f8** AMAZING TIME-SHRINKING FACTS ABOUT OUR COUNTRY

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# BEI BEI BOOM

Meet the National Zoo's newest not-quite-giant panda.

**WHILE THEY MAY NOT BE SMARTER** than the average bear (and can still be dangerous), giant pandas are certainly cuter. So it's no surprise that the National Zoo's panda exhibit got more adorable with the public debut of its youngest cub, Bei Bei, in mid-January.

Bei Bei is one of two cubs born at the zoo last August to parents Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, who have lived in Washington since 2000 under an agreement with China that's part of worldwide conservation efforts to save the endangered species. (His twin died shortly after birth; although giant pandas have twins 50 percent of the time,

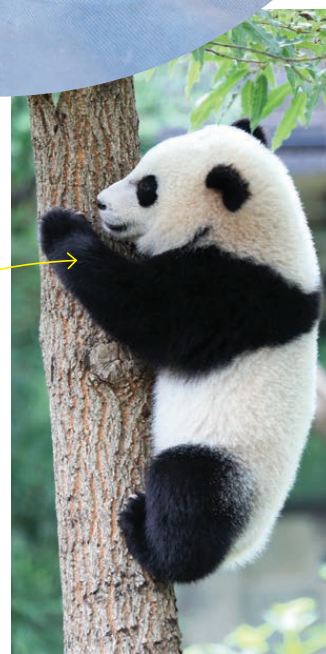
they can only care for one at a time.)

Though tiny, hairless and pink at birth, over the past eight months the cub has gotten his black eye patches and socks, opened his eyes and started crawling. He's tried his first solid foods and is working on his soon-to-be-impressive climbing skills. "Panda cubs spend lots of time in trees while their moms forage for bamboo," says Devin Murphy, a communications specialist at the National Zoo. "So if visitors come to see the pandas, they should definitely scan the trees."

Now that Bei Bei has made his public debut, the panda house is once again open daily to small groups

of visitors from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Murphy suggests arriving before 4 o'clock to give yourself at least a half hour to see the bears.) Look for his father, Tian Tian, and older sister, Bao Bao, in the outdoor habitats, where they're most active in the morning and on colder days. "**Bao Bao** especially loves to climb and splash in her pools," adds Murphy.

If you can't make it to D.C., follow #PandaStory on Instagram or catch every "grunt," "bleat," and "honk" (yes, all real panda sounds) via the Giant Panda Cams online.



## IT'S A ZOO

If the exhibit is sheer panda-monium, don't worry: there are plenty of other animals to meet.



**ELEPHANTS**

Six female Asian elephants live at the National Zoo in a multi-generational herd.



**KIWIS**

This is the only place in the country where you can meet these flightless birds from New Zealand.



**SEA LIONS**

Watch the California sea lions' behavior up close at a demonstration every morning.



**CRANES**

Meet Alice and other Stanley cranes at a crane walk every Thursday.

Photography: Courtesy of Smithsonian National Zoo



# In Brief

News, tips and savings from the GEICO Federal Team

## INNOVATION

### SENSE AND THE CITY

The Windy City's stats, including traffic, weather and air pollution, will be available to its residents.

Photography: [City Street] Sanya Mark Bass and Douglas Panagiot/School of the Art Institute of Chicago; [Night] Urban Center for Computation and Data

**WE CAN TRACK ALMOST** everything about our daily lives, from our sleep and the steps we take to how much we slouch. Thanks to the new Array of Things project from Argonne National Laboratory and the University of Chicago, the city of Chicago is about to get the same stats on itself. Starting this spring, 50 sleek gray nodes will be installed on traffic-light poles to measure things such as temperature, light, vibration, air quality, and pedestrian and vehicle traffic, expanding to a network of 500 by 2017.

Designed in collaboration with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the nodes will be maintained by the Chicago Department of Transportation. A protective screen on the front exposes the sensors inside to enough air to measure things such as temperature and pollution, but shields them from the worst of Chicago's frigid winters and hot, humid summers, according to project communications manager Rob Mitchum.

Infrared and normal cameras as well as other

sensors inside each node collect raw images and data. "To protect privacy, all images will be processed within the node and then deleted, so only numerical data are sent to the main database, like 'five trucks, 10 cars, three pedestrians at 12:33,'" explains project lead investigator Charlie Catlett. Since the database will be open to the public, researchers can use the data to make apps to track crowds or map the quietest streets, and residents will be able to find block-by-block information on weather, air pollution and more.

But the project is for more than just cool apps; it's a "city-scale scientific instrument for urban research and improvement," Catlett says. "It will help us observe and understand the life of a city in unprecedented detail."

*The data-collecting nodes will be mounted on traffic light poles.*



SPRING/SUMMER 2016 | f3

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During her experience in Nepal from 2013–14, Fulbright U.S. student Ulyana Horodyskyj researched lake deepening processes on debris-covered Himalayan glaciers.



EDUCATION

## FOREIGN EXCHANGE

**T**HIS YEAR, the Fulbright Program celebrates 70 years of international cooperation and education. When first proposed in 1946, it was envisioned as a way to spread American ideals. At the end of the Second World War, the U.S. had military equipment scattered around the globe. Congress could have sent soldiers to clean up the tanks, tents and more, but Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas had a better idea: trade

them to other countries to fund a student exchange program.

Today, the program—funded partly by the U.S. Congress, partly by the governments of host countries and partly by the academic and private sectors—pays for nearly 8,000 students and professors to teach English, do research, create art or learn about public policy in more than 160 countries each year, sending Americans abroad and bringing talented citizens of other countries to the States.

“Fulbrighters gain knowledge and build relationships and leadership skills to address the major global challenges of our time,” explains Marianne Craven, acting deputy assistant secretary of state for academic programs in the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Among the program’s 360,000 alumni are 82 Pulitzer Prize winners, 54 Nobel Prize recipients and 33 current or former heads of state. Here’s to another 70 years of living, learning and working together!

**“Fulbrighters gain knowledge and build relationships and leadership skills to address the major global challenges of our time.”**

SAVING

## EMERGENCY FUND

Millions of Americans have given or received government savings bonds at graduations, weddings or births as good long-term investments. But did you know they can help in an emergency, too?

The Treasury’s Bureau of the Fiscal Service, which handles bonds, may waive the one-year minimum holding period for bond holders who live in areas affected by natural disasters, in case you need funds for emergency home repairs or to cover expenses such as hotel stays. After a storm or tornado, or if your community was hit hard by El Niño storms this winter, you can visit [treasurydirect.gov](https://www.treasurydirect.gov) to find out if your region qualifies, get help replacing lost bonds and request a waiver.

Photography: [Kelly Brothers] Courtesy of NASA; [Fulbright Program] Courtesy of Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Department of State. Illustration: © iStock.com/Yury Tsirukov

RESEARCH

# SPACE RACE

Astronaut Scott Kelly and cosmonaut Mikhail Kornienko left for a marathon mission on March 27, 2015, with the goal of living and working in space for one year.

But their mission for NASA's Human Research Program—the longest ever for a NASA astronaut—isn't over. Now, scientists will analyze data from their year in space to determine how long-term spaceflight might affect astronauts' bodies on a trip to an asteroid, Mars or beyond. NASA plans to compare Kelly's data with stats from his Earth-bound twin brother, retired astronaut Mark Kelly.

Here's how the brothers are expected to measure up:

ON EARTH

## MARK

Weighed down by gravity; remains same height

Eats varied diet; has same gut microbes

Keeps muscle mass and coordination; can stand normally on Earth

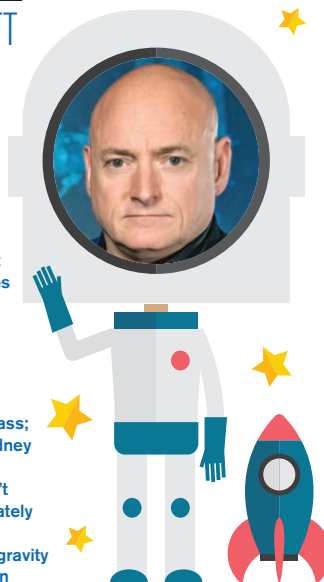
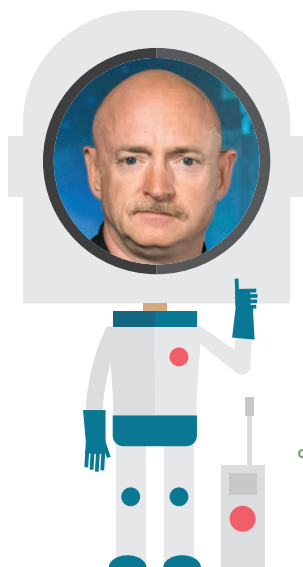
IN SPACE

## SCOTT

Grows slightly taller

May lose gut microbes due to limited diet

Loses bone mass; risks kidney stones and can't immediately stand in Earth's gravity on return



CONSERVATION

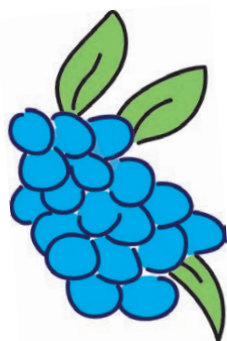
## SAVE(D) THE GROUSE

You might recognize the greater sage-grouse from Internet videos, in which males can be seen strutting their stuff, puffing their chests and even making a burping noise in a bid to attract females. But its sagebrush-covered habitat has long been threatened by ranching, mining, other development and even wildfires, which is why, in 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that the bird qualified for the list of endangered species. That's when the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, state governments, rural towns and even private ranchers across the bird's 173-million-acre range in several western states stepped in. Thanks to the largest land conservation effort in U.S. history, the Service determined last fall that the bird was no longer in danger. And as a bonus, the effort also helped protect at-risk songbirds that share the grouse's habitat.


SCIENCE


## new blue

The creation of a new type of blueberry might sound like a project from Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, but geneticists at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Md., part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, actually patented the vigorous, winter-hardy Nocturne plant last year. Many of the new fruits and vegetables patented by the service are for commercial growers, but these blueberries—on average, 12 pounds per plant!—can be grown in your backyard. Look for the bushes at nurseries this year or next and get ready to pick your own berries.







 LISA JACKSON

**UPGRADING**  
GOVERNMENT 2.0

A look at how talented innovators are making the U.S. government smarter and more efficient.


R

emember the saying that nerds shall inherit the earth? It just might be happening in Washington.

A team of tech-savvy fellows has metaphorically moved into the White House, helping the government tackle some of the nation's biggest challenges. Started in 2012, the Presidential Innovation Fellows program brings entrepreneurs, executives, technologists, designers and other

innovators into government, and teams them up with civil servants to improve programs that serve more than 150 million Americans.

What began as an experiment has been so successful that, as of last year, President Barack Obama made the program a permanent part of the federal government. Here's a look at some of the (seriously cool) initiatives they've launched.



Photography: [Capitol Building] Stefan Zakin/Stringer; [Manuscript] Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution; [Park] ©iStock.com/Marc Dufréne

## THE SMITHSONIAN TRANSCRIPTION CENTER

With the digitization of 137 million artifacts, the Smithsonian Institution had a massive treasure hunt on its hands. How could they make records more accessible to researchers and the public?

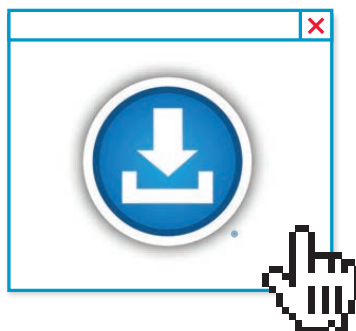
"The Smithsonian has so many interesting documents digitized as an image," says Janet Abrams, director of strategic initiatives for the Smithsonian Institution. "But the text within remains locked. We simply do not have the staff to transcribe all these documents."

So the fellows developed an online portal ([transcription.si.edu](http://transcription.si.edu)) where anyone with a computer and Internet connection can help transcribe handwritten archival materials—everything from scientists' field books



to 19th-century diaries. Once they're transcribed by a volunteer, it's possible to search and pull text from the documents.

"Volunteers are helping us do work that would take decades," says Abrams. "It's become a community of people who are dedicated to helping us uncover some amazing things within our collection." Since the launch, more than 5,700 registered volunteers have transcribed more than 140,000 pages of material. With the text inside these documents now searchable, it's much easier to find the proverbial needle in a haystack!



## BLUE BUTTON INITIATIVE

When was your last tetanus shot? What pill dosage did your doctor prescribe? Do you have any allergies?

Keeping track of your health history can be difficult if it spans decades and is stored across doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacies and health insurance companies. A lot of information can get lost in the shuffle, potentially compromising patient care.

To find a remedy, the Department of Health and Human Services asked the fellows to tackle this common problem using technology. The result? With the click of a mouse, millions of Americans can now go online into a secure patient portal and download their consolidated personal health records using the tool known as "Blue Button."

But what's really cool about this initiative? Blue Button invites you to be the master of your health domain. So at the pharmacy or hospital, your electronic records could be at your fingertips, ready for sharing via your smartphone or computer.



## THE U.S. DIGITAL SERVICE

Whether it's to apply for student loans or file taxes, millions of people interact with the American government on a daily basis. And with a slew of virtual services, successful delivery depends on installing modern technology that's reliable and user-friendly.

Luckily, a team of technologically advanced fellows played an important part in launching the U.S. Digital Services (USDS) team within the Office of Management and Budget, as well as 18F—a consultancy inside the General Services Administration that acts as the government's own "geek squad." In just 18 months, 18F has grown from its founding team to more than 110 specialists providing services to nearly every major federal agency.

With a team of talented tech specialists, both factions have improved how the federal government uses technology, helping to buy and build digital services that work better for users.

And so far, so good. Right now, techies are working to launch MyUSA, a digital services platform for Americans to manage ongoing transactions with U.S. Federal Government services. The USDS and 18F crew has also helped create the **Every Kid in a Park** website, an initiative to encourage children and their families to visit National Parks and other federal lands and waters. And recently, the Department

of Veterans Affairs website was completely overhauled, improving user access to programs and services. With just a stroke of a key, Veterans and their families can file benefit claims digitally. Signed, sealed, and delivered—lickety-split!

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# AN AMERICAN STORY

Celebrate our country's 240th birthday  
with amazing, time-shrinking facts.

This July 4, the United States celebrates the 240th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. It may seem like 1776 was a long time ago—but was it? Read on to discover historic trivia that brings our past much closer than you think.



ALEXANDRA WARD

1864

## PHOTOS TAKEN OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR VETS

Reverend Elias Hillard took it upon himself to interview and photograph the six remaining Veterans of the Revolutionary War—81 years after the war ended. By the time he tracked down all the Veterans, they were all more than 100 years old. One of them, Alexander Milliner, was too young to become an active member of the Army when the war started. Instead, he enlisted as a drummer boy. It's generally believed Milliner was a drummer in Washington's Life Guard.

1956

## LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION RECOUNTED ON TV

When 96-year-old Samuel Seymour appeared on the television show *I've Got A Secret*, his revelation was a real jaw-dropper: at just five years old in 1865, he had witnessed John Wilkes Booth shoot Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. Seymour recalled Booth leaping from the President's box seat to the theater's stage.

2003-2008

## CIVIL WAR WIDOWS SEE THE INTERNET AGE

The Civil War ended in 1865, but three Civil War widows actually lived into the 21st century. We lost Gertrude Janeway in 2003, Alberta Martin in 2004 and Maudie Hopkins in 2008. The reason all three women saw the turn of the century is that they were relatively young brides. Janeway was 18, Hopkins was 19 and Martin was 21 when they married Civil War Veterans who were already in their 80s.

PRESENT

## THE TENTH PRESIDENT'S FAMILY TREE THRIVES

John Tyler fathered 15 children and still has two living grandsons: Lyon Gardiner Tyler Jr. (born in 1924) and Harrison Ruffin Tyler (born in 1928). How are the grandchildren of a man born in 1790 still alive? Great question! Harrison Ruffin Tyler explained that his father and grandfather had children very late in life, a tradition that has served the family well. 🌱

Photography: © Mark Reinstein/Alamy Stock Photo