

Wicker Details Defense Modernization Plans

Deterrence is Cheaper than War

For years, the United States has underinvested in its armed forces, even as the world around us has grown more dangerous. We require new weaponry that did not exist 40 years ago, and the equipment we purchased back then urgently needs replacing. The 21st century calls for modern tools that can adapt with our ever-improving technology.

President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, and I have been working together to increase defense investment and build capabilities that address today's most potent threats. It is worth detailing some of the ways we are implementing the funding from last year's defense bills and this year's upcoming legislation.

Drones Are the Weapon of the Hour

No weapon characterizes today's battlefield more than drones. The conflicts in Ukraine and Iran have proven that America need more drones, as well as more tools to combat drone attacks.

Last year, I led a bill to help the Pentagon buy significant quantities of small aerial drones for the first time. These are used in reconnaissance, targeting, and strike missions. I expect we will increase our stocks by 350,000 drones before the end of 2027.

President Takes Ship-

This year, we are helping produce larger drones, which can travel farther and carry bigger payloads. We can send these systems into risky environments, allowing our forces to receive intelligence and strike the enemy while out of harm's way.

the Hour

Competition Improves Munitions Production In coordination with the president, Secretary Hegseth, and Deputy Secretary

building Seriously

As the headlines show, America's Navy has been busy. Last year's investments provided funding for more ships, along with upgrades to the depots and shipyards where these vessels are built.

We are poised for even more progress this year. I am encouraged that President Trump requested a proper funding level for shipbuilding—a welcome change after President Biden refused to take this effort seriously. The president plans to produce 34 new vessels, including frigates and medium landing ships. These are the kind of ships that can be delivered on time and under budget, a clear sign that the Navy is serious about quickly rebuilding the fleet and is mindful of the cost to taxpayers.

Competition Improves Munitions Production

In coordination with the president, Secretary Hegseth, and Deputy Secretary

Feinberg, we are helping to refill America's stockpile of missiles. We have worked on a plan to manufacture these weapons more quickly and to inject more competition into munitions production.

These efforts are bearing fruit. Startup companies are competing with established firms to produce cruise missiles at a quarter of the usual price. One even built a hypersonic strike missile at 3 percent of the standard cost. The Pentagon recently signed deals with new and old companies, and their combined production will add about 10,000 low-cost munitions to our stockpiles in the next three years.

Deter Nuclear-Armed Tyrants

The rulers of China, Russia, and North Korea believe their nuclear arsenals give them license to threaten the United States and our allies. If not for Operation Epic Fury, the mullahs in Iran would surely soon be doing

the same.

In the Cold War, we met the Soviet Union's threats head-on. Our nuclear arsenal protected the free world. Unfortunately, since then, we have neglected these nuclear forces.

I have been working with national defense leaders to rebuild our nation's ultimate insurance policy. We must build more Columbia-class submarines, complete the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile, advance the Sentinel ballistic missile,

and restore the world-class scientific and manufacturing capabilities that ended the Second World War.

None of these results come cheap. But the investments are worth the cost. Preparedness is far less expensive than getting caught by surprise. Manufacturers, researchers, and military leaders all over Mississippi will be integral to this defense rebuild, helping America stand up to the tyrants sowing chaos around the globe.

Southern Miss Releases Honor Rolls

The University of Southern Mississippi has released its President's and Dean's Lists for the 2026 spring semester. The President's List includes full-time students who earned a perfect 4.0 grade point average. Dean's List scholars are those with at least a 3.5 grade point average, but less than a 4.0.

Students recognized from the local area include the following:

- Dean's List:**
 Vallandra Travis **DURANT**
 Dean's List:
 Destynnee Landra Hemphill **LEXINGTON**
 Dean's List:
 Kenyasha Estronna Bailey
 Bonnie Stewart **PICKENS**
 Dean's List:
 Eric Crayton
 Tyniandra W. Redmond **TCHULA**
 President's List:
 Raymond Carter



Get practical when it comes to saving

Dear Dave, I'm having a hard time saving money. Do you have any practical advice for saving when you have an average income?

Nikki

Dear Nikki,

One thing I've learned over the years is that people only start saving money when they learn healthy money habits—like living on a written, monthly budget—and let their future needs become more important than their current wants. What I'm saying here is it will only happen when you make saving a priority.

Everything doesn't have to magically line up before you start saving, and there are plenty of easy, practical ways to save money and breathe a little extra air into your finances. The biggest one is by saying goodbye to debt. Monthly payments are the biggest drain I can think of when it comes to saving money, because debt robs you of your income.

Most people are shocked when they realize how much they're actually spending at the grocery store. It's easy to walk through the aisles grabbing things on impulse, but it all adds up.

Save money on groceries by planning out your meals each week. Here are some other good ideas:

- Buy generic. One of the easiest ways to save money is to give name brands the boot.
- Skip the coffee shop, and make coffee at home.
- Take your lunch to work, and eat breakfast and dinner

at home.

- Cut your ties with cable, and try network apps or streaming services.
- Check your insurance rates. You owe it to yourself to have your agent look things over for you, and see what savings they can dig up.
- When buying, pay in cash and ask about discounts. You never know until you ask, and you should always ask.
- Declutter your home, garage, basement or attic. Get rid of things you don't need and are willing to let go of for the sake of your financial future.
- Lower your cell phone bill by getting rid of extras like costly data plans, phone insurance, and useless warranties. Don't be afraid to haggle with your provider, or switch to another company.

If your goal is to save money, a vacation is just about the worst thing you can do. Finding fun close to home will save hundreds, if not thousands of dollars.

When it comes to saving, Nikki, work carefully and intentionally you spend can be more important than how much you make!

—Dave
 *Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including *The Total Money Makeover*. The *Dave Ramsey Show* is heard by more than 16 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.

Baking Ingredients That Turn Toxic Past Their Expiration Date

Baking Soda: The pH Nightmare

Technically, eating expired baking soda won't hurt you, so you don't have to worry about falling ill from a cake gone wrong. However, if baking soda has gone bad, it won't work very well. Using baking soda that's past its prime could result in baked goods being denser and flatter than expected. But this common wisdom is missing some crucial information.

Both sodium and bicarbonate can cause serious toxicity if too much is taken. When swallowed, sodium bicarbonate rapidly makes a large volume of carbon dioxide, which can cause dangerous levels of pressure in the stomach. When baking soda expires and potentially becomes unstable, these effects could become even more unpredictable and dangerous.

Using too much baking soda as a homemade antacid can cause rapid formation of gas in the stomach. Stomach ruptures can occur with baking soda use after alcohol binging or a large meal. The frightening reality is that expired baking soda might react differently in your stomach than fresh baking soda, potentially creating even more dangerous pressure situations that could lead to

internal injuries.

Coconut Oil: The Rancid Reality

As a saturated fatty acid, coconut oil's chemical bonds are strong. Coconut oil is practically immortal when stored properly. However, this doesn't mean expired coconut oil is safe to consume. When coconut oil goes rancid, it undergoes chemical changes that can produce harmful compounds.

Coconut oil is fine if it does not smell rancid, but the key word here is "rancid." When coconut oil expires and turns rancid, it produces free radicals and other toxic compounds that can cause oxidative stress in your body. These compounds have been linked to inflammation, cellular damage, and potentially even cancer-causing effects when consumed regularly.

The danger with expired coconut oil is that it might not always smell obviously rancid, especially if you're not familiar with what rancid coconut oil smells like. The toxic compounds can begin forming before the smell becomes noticeable, meaning you could be consuming harmful substances without even realizing it. This is particularly dangerous in baking, where the heat might mask any off odors until it's too late.

2025 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report
 Accona Water Association
 PWS# 0260001
 May 2026

We're pleased to present to you this year's Annual Quality Water Report. This report is designed to inform you about the quality water and services we deliver to you every day. Our constant goal is to provide you with a safe and dependable supply of drinking water. We want you to understand the efforts we make to continually improve the water treatment process and protect our water resources. We are committed to ensuring the quality of your water.

The Accona Water Association works around the clock to provide top quality water to every tap. We ask that all our customers help us protect our water sources, which are the heart of our community, our way of life and our children's future.

Please share this information with anyone who drinks this water (or their guardians), especially those who may not have received the report directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses).

Contact & Meeting Information
 If you have any questions about this report or concerning your water utility, please contact Jimmie D. Thomas, Operator, at 662.735.7376. We want our valued customers to be informed about their water utility. If you want to learn more, please attend any of our regularly scheduled meetings. They are held on the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM at the Accona Water Association Office.

Source of Water
 Our water source is from wells drawing from the Mankin Upper Water Aquifer. The source water assessment has been completed for our public water system to determine the overall susceptibility of its drinking water supply to identify potential sources of contamination. A report containing detailed information on the susceptibility determinations were made has been furnished to our public water system and is available for viewing upon request. The wells for the Accona Water Association have received a moderate susceptibility ranking to contamination.

Period Covered by Report
 We routinely monitor for contaminants in your drinking water according to federal and state laws. This report is based on results of our monitoring period of January 1st to December 31st, 2025. In cases where monitoring wasn't required in 2025, the table reflects the most recent testing done in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations.

As water travels over the surface of land or underground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive materials and can pick up substances or contaminants from the presence of animals or from human activity. Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, that may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife; inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial, or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming; pesticides and herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential use; organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are byproducts of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations and auto service stations; radioactive contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities. In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, EPA prescribes regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. All drinking water, including bottled drinking water, may be reasonably expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. It's important to remember that the presence of these contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk.

We are required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants on a monthly basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not our drinking water meets health standards. In addition to the contaminants listed in the table, we tested for additional chemicals for which the state and EPA have set standards. We found no detectable levels of those chemicals.

Violations
 Our system had no violations. We're proud that your drinking water meets or exceeds all Federal and State requirements.

Lead Educational Statement
 Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and your children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. Our water system is responsible for providing high quality drinking water and removing lead pipes, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components in your home. You share the responsibility for protecting yourself and your family from the lead in your home plumbing. You can take responsibility for identifying and removing lead materials within your home plumbing and taking steps to reduce your family's risk. Before drinking tap water, flush your pipes for several minutes by running your tap, taking a shower, doing laundry or a load of dishes. You can also use a certified by an American National Standards Institute accredited certifier to reduce lead in drinking water. If you are concerned about lead in your water and wish to have your water tested, contact our water system. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure are available at <http://www.epa.gov/lead>.

Our system has completed the Lead Service Line Inventory, and no lead lines were found. The methods used to make that determination were visual inspections, water operator knowledge and archived records. This inventory report is available for viewing at our office upon request.

All sources of drinking water are subject to potential contamination by substances that are naturally occurring or man-made. These substances can be inorganic, organic or radioactive and reactive substances. All drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1.800.426.4751.

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/CDC guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline 1.800.426.4751.

TEST RESULTS									
Contaminant	Unit	Date Collected	Level Detected	Range of Detects or # of Samples Exceeding MCL(G)	Unit Measurement	MCL(G)	MCL	Likely Source of Contamination	
Inorganic Contaminants – Salts and metals which can occur naturally in the soil or groundwater or may result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming.									
10. Barium	N	2025	0.054	0.039 - 0.054	ppm	2	2	Discharge of drilling wastes, discharge from metal refineries, erosion of natural deposits.	
16. Copper	N	202502	0	0	ppm	1.3	AL+3	Erosion of household plumbing systems, erosion of natural deposits, leaching from wood preservatives.	
17. Lead	N	202502	0	0	ppb	0	AL+15	Erosion of household plumbing systems, erosion of natural deposits.	
Sodium	N	2024	57.2	51.9 - 57.2	ppm	20		Road Salt, Water Treatment Chemicals, Water Softeners and Storage Effluents.	
Disinfection By-Products – Substances formed when disinfectants, like Chlorine, used to treat drinking water react with naturally occurring materials in the water.									
91. HAAS	N	2025	0.1	0.1 - 0.1	ppb	0	40	By-Product of drinking water disinfection.	
92. THM4 (Total Trihalomethanes)	N	2025	10.17	8.3 - 10.17	ppb	0	80	By-Product of drinking water disinfection.	
Chlorate	N	2025	2.1-NAA	4 = 3	mg/L	0	MCL+4	Water additive used to control microbes.	

* Most recent sample. No sample required for 2022.

Notes: EPA records show that drinking water did not exceed 20 milligrams per liter (mg/L). The lead action level will be the first because the risk of high lead levels and cardiovascular disease.

Terms and Abbreviations
 In the table you may find unfamiliar terms and abbreviations you might not be familiar with. To help you better understand these terms we've provided the following definitions:

Action Level (AL) – The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements that a water system must follow.

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) – The "Maximum Allowed" (MCL) is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCL(G)s as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCL(G)) – The "Goal (MCL(G))" is the level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCL(G)s allow for a margin of safety.

Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (MRDL) – The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary to control microbial contaminants.

Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (MRDL(G)) – The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDL(G)s do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

Parts per Million (ppm) or Micrograms per Liter (ug/L) – one part by weight of analyte to 1 million parts by weight of the water sample.

Parts per Billion (ppb) or Milligrams per Liter (mg/L) – one part by weight of analyte to 1 billion parts by weight of the water sample.

RAA, Running Annual Average