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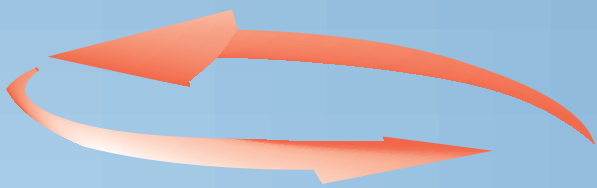


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October 2013

More parents opting kids out of standardized tests

DELAWARE TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP) — While his eighth-grade classmates took state standardized tests this spring, Tucker Richardson woke up late and played basketball in his Delaware Township driveway.

Tucker's parents, Wendy and Will, are part of a small but growing number of parents nationwide who are ensuring their children do not participate in standardized testing. They are opposed to the practice for myriad reasons, including the stress they believe it brings on young students, discomfort with tests being used to gauge teacher performance, fear that corporate influence is overriding education and concern that test prep is narrowing curricula down to the minimum needed to pass an exam.

"I'm just opposed to the way high-stakes testing is being used to evaluate teachers,

the way it's being used to define what's happening in classrooms," said Will Richardson, an educational consultant and former teacher. "These tests are not meant to evaluate teachers. They're meant to find out what kids know."

The opt-out movement, as it is called, is small but growing. It has been brewing for several years via word of mouth and social media, especially through Facebook. The "Long Island opt-out info" Facebook page has more than 9,200 members, many of them rallying at a Port Jefferson Station, N.Y., high school last month after a group of principals called this year's state tests — and their low scores — a "debacle."

In Washington, D.C., a group of parents and students protested outside the Department of Education. Students and teachers at a Seattle high school boycotted

Continued on Page 7. Standardized tests



Exploring Google Glass through eyes of early users

MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) Geeks aren't the only people wearing Google Glass.

Among the people testing Google Inc.'s wearable computer are teachers, dentists, doctors, radio disc jockeys, hair stylists, architects, athletes and even a zookeeper. Some 10,000 people are trying out an early version of Glass, most of them selected as part of a contest.

To get a sense of the advantages and drawbacks of the device, The Associated Press spoke to three Glass owners who have been using the device since late spring: Sarah Hill, a former TV broadcaster and current military veterans advocate; David Levy, a hiking enthusiast and small business owner; and Deborah Lee, a stay-at-home mom. *Continued on page 11..*



Americans driving less as car culture wanes

JOAN LOWY
Associated Press

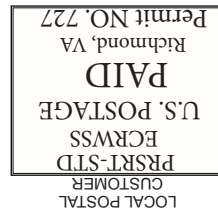
WASHINGTON (AP) Driving in America has stalled, leading researchers to ask: Is the national love affair with the automobile over?

After rising for decades, total vehicle use in the U.S. the collective miles people drive "peaked in August 2007. It then dropped sharply during the Great Recession and has largely plateaued since, even though the economy is recovering and the population growing. Just this week, the Federal Highway Administration reported vehicle miles traveled during the first half of 2013 were down slightly, continuing the trend.

Even more telling, the average number of miles drivers individually rack up peaked in July 2004 at just over 900 per month, according to a study by Transportation Department economists Don Pickrell and David Pace. By July of last year, that had fallen to 820 miles per month, down about 9 percent. Per capita automobile use is now back at the same levels as in the late 1990s.

Until the mid-1990s, driving levels largely tracked economic growth, according to Pickrell and Pace, who said their conclusions are their own and not the government's.

Continued on Pg 9..



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Health law coverage may track workplace cost shift

RICARDO ALON-
SO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) President Barack Obama's health care law appears to mirror a trend in job-based insurance, where employees are being nudged into cost-saving plans that require them to pay a bigger share of their medical expenses.

Two independent studies out this week highlighted attractive prices for less-generous "bronze" plans that will offer low monthly premiums but require patients to pick up more of the cost if they get sick.

Consumers might avoid "rate shock" over premiums, but some could end up struggling with bigger bills for the care they receive.

The Obama plans will be available starting Oct. 1 for people who don't have access to coverage on the job.

Studies by the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation and Avalere Health provided the first look at rates filed by insurers around the country, ahead of the Oct. 1 opening of new state insurance markets under the law.

Consumers will use the markets to find out whether they qualify for tax credits to help pay their premiums and to pick a private insurance plan from a range of coverage levels: bronze, silver, gold and platinum.

Come Jan. 1, virtually everyone in the United States will be required to have coverage, or face fines if they don't. At the same time, insurance companies no longer can turn away people in poor health.

"What was really striking as we dug into the numbers is how inexpensive the bronze plans are," said Larry Levitt, a Kaiser vice president.

Avalere, a private data analysis

firm, found the average monthly premium for a bronze plan is \$274, compared with \$336 for the next level of coverage, a silver plan. The savings from going with bronze adds up to \$744 annually, and that's off the sticker price, before federal tax credits that will reduce premiums for an estimated 4 out of 5 customers in the new markets.

It's "likely to entice healthier enrollees to opt for a less generous benefit package," said Caroline Pearson, a lead author of the study.

The law's tax credits will make low-cost plans even more appealing. The tax credits work by limiting what you pay for premiums to a given percentage of your income.

By pairing their tax credit with a bronze policy, some younger consumers can bring their premiums down to the range of \$100 to \$140 a month, the Kaiser study found. Older people can drive their monthly cost even lower — well below \$100, and zero in some cases — if they are willing to take a chance with higher deductibles and copays.

It's a trade-off that some consumers unfamiliar with insurance might not fully grasp.

"A bronze plan is a very basic plan," explained Levitt. It "will enable consumers to pay very low premiums up front, zero in some cases. But when they actually need medical care, they will pay higher costs out of their own pockets." For the most part, you're stuck with the plan you pick until the next annual open enrollment season.

Job-based plans have been shifting costs to employees for some time. In 2009, when Obama took office, 22 percent of workers were in plans with an annual deductible of \$1,000 or more for single coverage, according to Kaiser. By this year, the share had nearly doubled, to 38 percent, including 3 out of 5 employees of small companies.

Obama's law largely reflects what's already going on in the marketplace, but Pearson said over time it may accelerate the shift to plans with higher out-of-pocket costs.

Administration officials are pleased with the large number of low-cost options. Health and Human Services Department spokeswoman Joanne Peters said the administration is confident that consumers will be able to compare plans side by side in the new markets and make the right choices for themselves.

Avalere crunched the numbers on premiums filed by insurers in 11 states and Washington, D.C. Kaiser added another 6 states. Both studies included a mix of states running their own insurance markets and ones in which the federal government will take charge.

Under Obama's law, all plans on the new insurance markets must cover the same benefits, including preventive care at no charge to patients. Another similarity is a cap on total out-of-pocket costs at \$6,350 for individuals, \$12,700 for a family policy.

The main difference between plans is cost-sharing. Bronze plans cover 60 percent of expected medical costs, silver plans will cover 70 percent, gold will cover 80 percent and platinum 90 percent.

Midrange silver plans were considered the benchmark when the law was written more than three years ago. Lawmakers keyed the tax credits to the cost of the second-lowest-cost silver plan in a local area.

People with modest incomes may still come out ahead by sticking with a silver plan instead of going for bronze. That's because additional help with out-of-pocket costs such as copays will only be available to people enrolling in a silver plan.

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Indiana man gets 8 months for lie detector fraud

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — An Indiana electrician who taught federal job applicants how to beat lie-detector tests has been sentenced to eight months in prison. Chad Dixon of Marion, Ind., pleaded guilty in December to wire fraud and obstructing a government proceeding in conjunction with his business, Polygraph Consultants of America.

Federal prosecutors in Alexandria said Dixon taught dozens of people, including applicants to be federal border guards, how to successfully lie during a polygraph exam.

At Friday's sentencing hearing, Dixon's lawyer argued that teaching people how to lie on a polygraph is protected by

the First Amendment. She said Dixon's only crime was explicitly advising prospective federal employees that they should lie about having received his training.

Dixon's lawyer said the case appears to be the first of its kind in the country.

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US panel OKs Smithfield sale to Chinese company



SMITHFIELD, Va. (AP) — A U.S. committee that reviews mergers between American companies and those overseas has given clearance to the proposed sale of Smithfield Foods Inc. to a Chinese company.

Smithfield said Friday that the U.S. Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States gave clearance for the pork producer to be acquired by Shuanghui International Holdings Ltd.

The committee reviews overseas transactions for national-security implications.

The proposed buyout also received clearance from the Ukraine government, Smithfield said.

Hong Kong-based Shuanghui agreed in May to buy Smithfield in a deal valued at \$7.1 billion, including debt.

Smithfield shareholders are scheduled to vote on the transaction on Sept. 24.

The company, which is based in Smithfield, Va., is the world's largest pork producer and processor. Its sale to Shuanghui comes at a time of serious food safety problems in China, some of which have involved Shuanghui, which owns food and logistics enterprises and is the largest shareholder of China's biggest meat processor.

Some U.S. lawmakers to question the deal, citing food safety concerns as well as questions about the government review process of foreign acquisitions of U.S. companies.

Smithfield has said that the buyout and China's growing demand for pork will be a boon for American agriculture and an opportunity to export to new markets company brands such as Smithfield, Armour and Farmland.

Shares of Smithfield ended regular trading down 4 cents at \$33.92. The stock added 57 cents, or 1.7 percent, to \$34.49 in after-market trading.

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Va. sets tourism revenue record in 2012

MICHAEL FELBERBAUM (AP Business Writer)

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia is celebrating a new record high for tourism revenue across the state, Gov. Bob McDonnell announced Wednesday.

Tourism revenue rose to \$21.2 billion in 2012, a 4 percent increase over the previous year, McDonnell said at a news conference at Brown's Island in Richmond.

The industry also supported 210,000 jobs and provided more than \$1.36 billion in state and local taxes in 2012. And every locality in Virginia reported tourism revenue increases last year, officials said.

"Tourism is an instant revenue generator," McDonnell said. "This is a major driver because we've got so many God-given resources here in Virginia that people want to be able to see."

McDonnell said that Virginia also ranked eighth in the country for domestic travel

spending.

Officials touted Virginia's varied landscapes and historic sites, as well as the film and wine industries as reasons for growth over the past few years.

"Tourists from around the country and the world are being drawn to Virginia to walk in the footsteps of Lincoln, participate and learn from our ongoing Civil War Sesquicentennial events, visit our increasingly globally recognized vineyards and enjoy all that this great state has to offer from Atlantic Ocean beaches to Appalachian mountains," McDonnell said in a statement.

Virginia was named one of the top 10 wine travel destinations in the world by Wine Enthusiast magazine in 2012, riding record-high sales of more than 511,000 cases in the fiscal year that ended June 30.

Officials say the craft beer industry also is on the rise, boasting more than 60 breweries across Virginia.

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Continued from Page 7. **Standardized tests**

"It was kind of convoluted and kind of a dance you do, and the result is the school district, they don't get dinged," Borst said.

Michael Yaple, a spokesman for the New Jersey Department of Education, said about 98 percent of New Jersey students take standardized tests.

"Keeping a child home from testing does no favor to the child or the school," he said.

Morna McDermott, a Baltimore college professor who is a board member of United Opt Out, likens the battle against standardized testing to a fight for corporate reform.

"Ultimately this is an act of civil disobedience," McDermott said. "If this is going to change, it has to fundamentally be grassroots."

Darcie Cimarusti of Highland Park, N.J., didn't like that her twin daughters would have to agonize over a standardized test as first-graders so she worked out an agreement with the principal to move them into a kindergarten class during testing time.

"My goal is that my daughters never take a standardized test," Cimarusti said. "I see less and less value in it educationally and it being used more and more to beat teachers over the head."

Peggy Robertson, a teacher in Centennial, Colo., who is also an Opt Out board member, said she only expects the movement to grow.

"You can feel the momentum," she said. "I think we're headed for a full-on revolt next year."

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Beach Boys sound check interrupts Ohio wedding

Beach Boys sound check interrupts Ohio wedding; bride pulled on stage to play tambourine

A northeast Ohio couple had planned every detail of their wedding except for the sound check of a Beach Boys concert next door during their ceremony.

A few bars of "God Only Knows" played as Mark Kent and Jaime Diadun exchanged vows next to the Jacobs Pavilion at Nautica in Cleveland last

month. The Plain Dealer in Cleveland reports that when the band found out about the timing of its sound check, the newlyweds' guests were told they could attend the concert for free. Many of them wandered over for a couple of songs.

When the bride stopped by the concert, she was brought on stage for the encore and played the tambourine next to Mike Love as he sang "Fun, Fun, Fun."

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Christina Aguilera: I don't work out that much

SFIN FEKADU
AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) Christina Aguilera recently debuted her slimmed-down body, but the singer says she doesn't work out like crazy.

The 32-year-old is on the cover of Maxim magazine's October issue. She's sporting a bra and a big shirt in the cover photo and a fitted dress in the magazine spread.

In a phone interview Thursday, Aguilera

says her daily routine includes working out on some days.

Says Aguilera: "If I can squeeze in a work out, great. If not, that's OK, too."

The Grammy winner adds that her 5-year-old son, Max, is also keeping her in shape: "Running around with him all day is pretty good exercise."

Aguilera will return to the fifth season of NBC's "The Voice" on Sept. 23.

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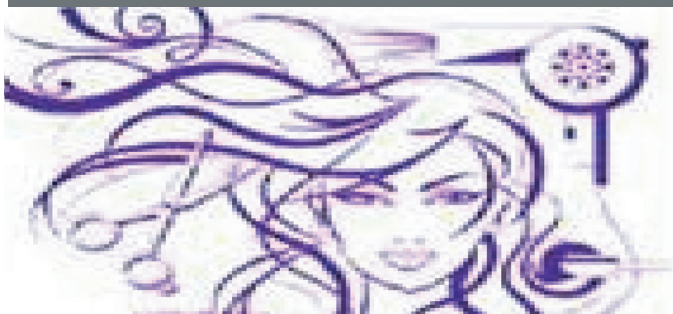


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Study: Children's use of e-cigarettes increasing

MIKE STOBBE - AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Children — like adults — are increasingly trying electronic cigarettes, according to the first large national study to gauge use by middle and high school students.

About 2 percent of the students said they'd used an e-cigarette in the previous month, according to a survey done last year. That was up from 1 percent in 2011.

More kids still smoke traditional cigarettes than the new electronic ones, and it's not clear how dangerous e-cigarettes are. It's also not clear from the report how many are using them on a daily or weekly basis.

But health officials are worried. The new study suggests many kids are now getting a first taste of nicotine through e-cigarettes and then moving on to regular tobacco products, they say.

Electronic cigarettes are battery-powered devices that provide users with aerosol puffs that typically contain nicotine, and sometimes flavorings like fruit, mint or chocolate. They've often been described as a less dangerous alternative to regular cigarettes.

Unlike conventional smokes, the federal government does not yet regulate e-cigarettes, although more than 20 states have banned store sales to minors. The devices began to appear in the United States in

late 2006, but marketing has exploded in the last couple of years.

The new study — released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — is based on a questionnaire filled out by nearly 19,000 students in grades 6 through 12 in 2011 and another 25,000 in 2012.

In 2011, about 3 percent said they'd tried an e-cigarette at least once. That rose to 7 percent last year and translates to nearly 1.8 million students. In contrast, 6 percent of adults have tried e-cigarettes, according to a different CDC survey done in 2011.

Children still are more likely to light up regular cigarettes, though teen smoking rates have dropped in the past decade. More teens now smoke marijuana than tobacco, surveys have found. But health officials worry e-cigarettes could re-ignite teen cigarette use. They point to a finding in the study that 20 percent of middle school e-cigarette users had never tried conventional cigarettes. When the same question was asked of high school students, only 7 percent had never tried regular smokes.

That suggests many kids experiment with the electronic devices and move on to cigarettes by high school, said CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden.

"In effect, this is condemning many kids to struggling with a lifelong addiction to nicotine," he said.

9 traffic deaths in Va. during Labor Day weekend

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia State Police say nine people died in traffic accidents over the four-day Labor Day weekend.

That's up from the six fatalities recorded during the same holiday period in 2012.

State police said Wednesday that five of the victims weren't wearing seatbelts. Alcohol

was a factor in at least two fatal wrecks.

Two fatal accidents occurred in Chesterfield County. The others occurred in Bland, Campbell, Frederick, Hanover, Lee and Roanoke counties.

Troopers also arrested 108 impaired drivers. More than 11,000 motorists were cited for speeding.

Chesterfield man admits cheating military members

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A Chesterfield County man has pleaded guilty to defrauding military personnel and their families.

Vernon Matthews faces a maximum of 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to mail fraud Tuesday in federal court in Richmond. Sentencing is set for Dec. 6.

Matthews operated First Capital Group in Virginia Beach. In court papers, the 42-year-old Matthews admitted soliciting investments from military members and

their dependents and misrepresenting how their money would be used and how much interest they would earn. He received more than \$235,600 from July 2010 to May 2013 and used most of it for his own benefit.

The mail fraud count stemmed from investments by a U.S. Naval Academy graduate attending medical school. She persuaded Matthews to return her investments, but the \$32,328 check bounced.

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wary of steps that might affect adult buyers.

Future regulations shouldn't "stifle what may be the most significant harm reduction opportunity that has ever been made available to smokers," Murray Kessler, chief executive of Lorillard Inc., the nation's third-biggest tobacco company and owner of Blu Ecigs, said in a statement.

AP Tobacco Writer Michael Felberbaum contributed to this report from Richmond, Va.
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Some makers of e-cigarettes said Thursday that they supported regulations that keep the devices out of kids' hands. But some are

Continued from Page 11 **Google Glass**

Lee, 34, told Glass to take the pictures as she as tickled and kissed her daughter's tummy.

"Obviously, you can't do that with a phone in your hand, so I am totally loving Glass," Lee said. "It has really been great."

Glass also allowed Lee to set up live video sessions with her parents in Oregon so they could see Maddie eat her first solid food just as she saw it. She also took pictures of her raising Maddie airborne that wouldn't have been feasible with a camera requiring hands-on operation. "I am capturing all these tiny moments that are really exciting with a baby," Lee said.

Unlike Hill's experience in Missouri, hardly anyone in New York gives her a second look when she wears Glass in Central Park or around her neighborhood.

"I thought more people would stop me in the street or something like that, but that hasn't really happened," Lee said.

Levy, 39, rarely wears his Glass around his hometown of Boulder, Colo., because he doesn't want to stand out from the crowd. Just two days after Levy picked up the device in New York, he recalls seeing someone else wearing the device at the airport. "My initial reaction was, 'What a jerk,'" Levy said. "There was a little bit of ostentatiousness about it, as if he were flaunting it. I am a low-key guy who doesn't like a lot of attention. I have an iPhone that does a lot of things that I might otherwise make Glass do if I didn't want to make a spectacle of it."

Glass has impressed Levy while wearing it for his main purpose of taking pictures and video of some of the trails charted by Protrails.com, an online hiking site he co-owns. His objective is to share more of the Continental Divide with schoolchildren in hopes it will inspire them to do more outdoor exploration and less sitting at home.

"I was wondering if Glass would feel like a burden or part of my hiking equipment. It actually feels pretty cool," Levy said. "They are totally fine on my head and don't block any of my view. When you see something interesting, you can immediately have a camera on it. I really enjoy being able to capture those images."

Glass' ability to take hands-free pictures and video has raised concerns among privacy watchdogs who believe the device will make it easier to secretly record the activities of other people. But Levy is convinced that what Glass can do isn't much different than what many people already do with their smartphones. To prove his point, Levy used his iPhone to record a conversation he was having

with a friend who was railing against the privacy risks posed by Glass.

"I recognize that Glass can make people uncomfortable, but I have to say the privacy issues are a specious concern," Levy said. "If I have a phone in a restaurant, I can get a picture of just about anybody I want with it. So what's the difference between a phone and Glass?"

Lee regularly has Glass with her when Maddie is around other babies and said she hasn't heard any privacy objections from other parents. That could be because she has been careful about following the social cues around her. If she sees other parents snapping pictures of their babies with their phones, Levy has donned her Glass. If no one else is taking pictures or video, though, she leaves Glass in her bag.

Some analysts question whether Glass will have mass appeal once it hits the market. Skeptics who have seen the early participants walking around wearing Glass believe the device will eventually be remembered as a geeky curiosity that never lived up to its hype, similar to the Segway, the two-wheeled, self-balancing scooters that remain an anomaly more than a decade after they first went on sale.

Angela McIntyre, a research director for Gartner Inc., believes the retail price for Glass will have to plummet to \$200 to make a significant dent. Early testers had to pay \$1,500 for the device, though Google hopes to bring that price down by the time of its mass-market release next year.

Even then, McIntyre believes smartwatches, another type of Internet-connected device starting to appear on the market, will win a bigger following than Glass. "Most people are just more used to putting technology on their wrist," she said. "It's less intrusive and obtrusive to wear a watch that can serve as a second screen to your smartphone."

In a recent report on wearable computing, Forrester Research analyst Sarah Rotman Epps predicted Glass will appeal largely to "young, socially connected tech optimists" and professionals, such as surgeons, construction managers and even farmers, who could use the device as part of their jobs. She defines tech optimists as people "who see technology playing a positive role in their lives."

Hill figures it's still way too early to envision all the different ways that Glass will be used.

"We are guinea pigs using the Model Ts of a new age in computing," she said. "They don't have heated seats or radios or all the amenities that they will eventually, and we are still learning how to drive them."

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US economy grew at 2.5 percent rate in spring

MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at a 2.5 percent annual rate from April through June, much faster than previously estimated. The steep revision was largely because U.S. companies exported more goods and imports declined.

The Commerce Department said second-quarter growth was sharply higher than the initial 1.7 percent rate it reported last month. And the growth this spring was more than double the 1.1 percent rate from January through March.

The improvement in the trade deficit helped offset a weaker government spending.

Economists expect growth will stay at an annual rate of around 2.5 percent in the second half of the year, helped by steady job gains and less drag from federal spending cuts. Still, some say higher interest rates might restrain the economy's expansion in the second half.

Rates could rise even further if the Federal Reserve decides to reduce its \$85 billion a month in bond purchases at its September meeting. The Fed will consider the stronger second-quarter growth when making a decision next month. The bond purchases have helped keep long-term borrowing rates low.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said stronger growth in the second quarter "should give Fed officials more confidence that the recovery is gathering steam as the fiscal drag begins to fade."

He said the Fed is now more likely to slow the bond purchases in September, although that decision depends heavily on the August employment report. The government will release the employment report next week.

Ashworth forecast that growth in the current July-September quarter was likely to come in around 2.5 percent as well with the potential for even stronger growth in the October-December quarter. But he said the forecast assumes the Obama administration and Congress reach a deal to fund the government before it hits its \$16.7 trillion borrowing limit cap in mid-October.

The government's estimates of economic expansion measure changes in the gross domestic product, the broadest gauge of the economy. GDP measures the output of all goods and services produced in the United States.

The revision was made after the trade deficit narrowed sharply in June — information that wasn't available to government analysts produced their first estimate for second-quarter growth. The additional information left trade neutral in the second quarter, instead of subtracting 0.8 percentage points from growth.

Government spending shrank an annual rate of 0.9 percent in the second quarter, much worse than the 0.4 percent drop initially estimated. Spending by the federal government shrank at a 1.6 percent annual rate. State and local governments cut at a 0.5 percent rate.

Two key areas of the economy — housing and business investment — remained strong in the revision to second-quarter growth. Housing construction grew at an annual rate of 12.9 percent, the fourth consecutive quarter of double-digit growth. Business investment on structures was revised up to at 16.1 percent rate, although spending on equipment was revised a bit lower.

Consumer spending, which accounts for 70 percent of economic activity, grew by a 1.8 percent rate in the second quarter. That's unchanged from the initial estimate but down from a 2.3 percent growth rate in the first quarter.

Many economists said a key signal of the economy's health in the second half of 2013 will come from Friday's report on consumer spending in July. Consumer spending held up in June. But rising interest rates might have caused it to slow in July.

Long-term rates have risen since Chairman Ben Bernanke said in June that the Federal Reserve could begin trimming its bond purchases later this year if the overall economy and the job market kept improving. Many economists think the Fed will begin slowing its monthly bond purchases to \$70 billion or \$75 billion. Others think it will delay any pullback in bond buying to await more data on how the economy is faring in the second half of the year.

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Continued from Frontpage ..

Google Glass is designed to work like a smartphone that's worn like a pair of glasses. Although it looks like a prop from a science fiction movie, the device is capturing imaginations beyond the realm of nerds.

The trio's favorite feature, by far, is the hands-free camera that shoots photos and video through voice commands.

(Images can also be captured by pressing a small button along the right frame being able to simply by tap-Glass to turn it the same side That menu allows them to do such things as get directions on Google's map or find a piece of information through Google's search engine. The information is shown on a thumbnail-sized transparent screen attached just above the right eye to stay out of a user's field of vision.

Among the biggest shortcomings they cited was Glass' short battery life, especially if a lot of video is being taken. Although Google says Glass should last for an entire day on a single battery charge for the typical user, Hill said there were times when she ran out of power after 90 minutes to two hours during periods when she was recording a lot of video.

Glass' speaker, which relies on a bone conduction technology, also is inadequate, according to the testers the AP interviewed. They said the speaker, which transmits sound through the skull to allow

for ambient noise, can be difficult to hear in any environment other than a quiet room.

"If you are out in the street or anywhere else where there is any noise, it's impossible to hear," Lee said. "That has been challenging because there is no way to adjust it. If you could adjust the sound, I think it would solve a lot of prob-

lems."

Hill, 42, a resident of Columbia, Mo., became a Glass

evangelist shortly after she picked up the device at Google's New York offices in late May. As the AP watched her get fitted with Glass though a video feed on Google's Hangout chat service, Hill quickly began to rave about her ability to take hands-free pictures and fetch information from the Web simply by asking the device to get it. "This is like having the Internet in your eye socket," Hill said. "But it's less intrusive than I thought it would be. I can totally see how this would still let you still be in the moment with the people around you."

The liberating aspects of Glass came into sharper focus for Hill as she took a cab to the airport for her flight back to Missouri. During the taxi ride, she began a video call on Google Hangout with people living in Austria, the United Kingdom and St. Louis. As the cab was preparing to drop her off at the curb, Hill was about to end the call so she could carry her baggage. Then came her first Glass epiphany.

"That's when it hit me that, 'Holy cow, I don't have to cut the call off,'" Hill recalled. "I could continue talking because I didn't have to hold a phone. So I carried on a conversation through the airport and people were staring at me like, 'What is that thing on your face?'"

Hill became accustomed to the double takes and quizzical looks as she wore Glass to community gatherings, restaurants and shopping excursions. The encounters usually led to her offering others to try on Glass, and most were impressed with their glimpses at the technology, Hill said.

"When you have these glasses on, it's like it helps you see the future," Hill said. "It helps you see what's possible."

Hill, a former news anchor and reporter for KOMU-TV in Columbia, Mo., believes Glass is destined to transform broadcast journalism by empowering reporters to capture compelling images at scenes without the need for cumbersome equipment. She likens satellite TV truck ounces. Glass also for reporters to fielders through the Twitter texts.

equip-it to having a that only weighs 1.5 would make it easier questions from view-app or through direct

Hill has already used Glass to provide a tour of the World War II memorial in Washington, D.C., for veterans gathered in St. Louis by Veterans United, where Hill now works as the group's chief storyteller. The veterans were too old or ill to make the journey themselves, so Hill gave them a close-up look through a video feed transmitted through Glass in June.

Lee, a New York City resident, has been relying on Glass mostly to capture precious moments with her 9-month-old daughter, Maddie. Her favorite moment came when she photographed some of her daughter's first giggles a couple months ago.

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*.Continued from frontpage..***Standardized tests**

a standardized test, leading the district superintendent to declare that city high schools have the choice to deem it optional. In Oregon, students organized a

campaign persuading their peers to opt out of tests, and a group of students in Providence, R.I., dressed like zombies and marched in front of the State House to protest a requirement that students must achieve a minimum score on a state test in order to graduate.

"I'm opposed to these tests because they narrow what education is supposed to be about and they lower kids' horizons," said Jesse Hagopian, a teacher at the Seattle school. "I think collaboration, imagination, critical thinking skills are all left off these tests and can't be assessed

by circling in A, B, C or D."

For many parents and students, there have been few to no consequences to opting out of testing. Most parents are choosing to take their younger children out of testing, not older students for whom it is a graduation requirement. It's unclear if things will change when the Common Core Curriculum and the standardized tests that will accompany it are implemented in the 2014-15 school year.

Some states were granted waivers for No Child Left Behind, which requires districts to have at least 95 percent of students participate in standardized testing or be at risk of losing funding.

Kristen Jaudon, a spokeswoman for the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, said the test

Seattle deemed optional is not required by the state. Ninety-five percent of students in a given school must take standardized tests that are required by state law. She said parents who pull their children out of testing wouldn't be able to identify if a student was having problems in a particular subject and the move would deny educators the chance to see if the curriculum is working.

"We are bound by state law to test kids in our state. It's not optional," she said.

Tustin Amole, a spokeswoman for the Cherry Creek School District in Centennial, Colo., said 95 percent of students in the district take standardized tests. If a child stays home on testing day, she said, it's difficult to know if the parent is opting the child out or if the child is home for personal reasons, such as being sick.

"We encourage parents to have their kids take the test, but there are no consequences of any kind," she said. "There's no formal process for opting out. They can keep their child home that day and write an excuse."

Maria Ferguson of the Center on Education Policy said she thinks the practice of parents pulling their kids out of standardized tests is symbolic.

"I think it shows that people are very scared and very confused by tests," she said. "I think it's representative that testing has a branding problem."

Julie Borst of Allendale, N.J., didn't want her rising ninth-grader to take state standardized tests last year because she has special needs and isn't learning at her grade level. Borst is also concerned about the corporate influence of testing on education.

Borst said the school and superintendent asked the New Jersey Department of Education for guidance. Rather than staying home, Borst's daughter had to go into the principal's office each morning of the test and refuse to take it. Borst then drove her home.

Continued on Page 14...

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ABA report cites flaws in Va. death penalty

LARRY O'DELL
Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) Virginia should make several changes to its death penalty laws and procedures to



ensure fairness and guard against executing an innocent person, a report issued Thursday by a panel of legal experts says.

The two-year study by an eight-member American Bar Association panel praises the state for adopting important reforms in recent years but says improvements are still needed throughout the entire process, from the police investigation through the trial and subsequent appeals.

"If we're going to have a death penalty, I think everyone would agree we have to get it right," said former Attorney General Mark L. Earley, who served on the Virginia Death

Penalty Assessment Team.

The study is part of the ABA's review of the death penalty in a dozen states. Some of the 10 previous state reports recommended a moratorium on capital punishment until problems are corrected, but the panel did not propose such action in Virginia, which has executed 110 people since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976 — second only to Texas, which has executed 503.

"We didn't feel that was our charge," said John Douglass, dean emeritus of the University of Richmond Law School and chairman of the panel. He said the group felt its best chance for improving the system was making "politically and judicially attainable" recommendations.

Those recommendations begin with police procedures. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services adopted a model policy for conducting police lineups in 2011, but few law enforcement agencies have voluntarily adopted it. The report suggested the policy should be made mandatory.

It also said police should be required to electronically record all of their interrogations of suspects and suspects' confessions. The Northwestern University School of Law Center on Wrongful Convictions found that only nine Virginia agencies record a majority of their interrogations.

Virginia is more restrictive than other states in allowing capital murder defendants access to evidence against them, the report says. It recommends that the Virginia Supreme Court modify discovery rules, including by requiring prosecutors to disclose the identity and any prior statements of witnesses who will testify.

One of the biggest concerns, the report says, is a state appeals process that "emphasizes finality of convictions and death sentences over fairness." It recommends giving Virginia inmates more time to file state petitions and providing funding for defense attorneys to hire investigators and other experts. It also suggests starting the post-conviction review in the trial court rather than the Virginia Supreme Court, which has granted evidentiary hearings in only five cases since 1995.

Among the other recommendations:

Require long-term preservation of DNA evidence and allow the defendant more opportunity for testing samples if there is evidence previous testing was unreliable.

Create a position for an appellate specialist within the public capital defender's office.

Revise jury instructions to make it clear that jurors never have to return a death verdict and to clarify common misconceptions about mitigating evidence.

Update the state's definition of mental disabilities, allow a pretrial determination of whether a defendant is mentally disabled and ineligible for the death penalty, and prohibit the execution of a defendant who was suffering from a severe mental illness at the time of the offense.

Among the recent changes lauded by the panel are the accreditation of the state's crime labs and medical examiner offices and establishment of regional capital defender offices.

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Continued from frontpage..

Driving in America

Since then, the economy has grown more rapidly than auto use. Gross domestic product declined for a while during the recession but reversed course in 2009. Auto use has yet to recover.

Meanwhile, the share of people in their teens, 20s and 30s with driver's licenses has been dropping significantly, suggesting that getting a driver's license is no longer the teenage rite of passage it once was.

Researchers are divided on the reasons behind the trends. One camp says the changes are almost entirely linked to the economy. In a few years, as the economy continues to recover, driving will probably bounce back, they reason. At the same time, they acknowledge there could be long-term structural changes in the economy that would prevent a return to the levels of driving growth seen in the past; it's just too soon to know.

The other camp acknowledges that economic factors are important but says the decline in driving also reflects fundamental changes in the way Americans view the automobile. For commuters stuck in traffic, getting into a car no longer correlates with fun. It's also becoming more of a headache to own a car in central cities and downright difficult to park.

"The idea that the car means freedom, I think, is over," said travel behavior analyst Nancy McGuckin.

Gone are the days of the car culture as immortalized in songs like "Hot Rod Lincoln," "Little Deuce Coupe" and "Pink Cadillac."

"The car as a fetish of masculinity is probably over for certain age groups," McGuckin said. "I don't think young men care as much about the car they drive as they use to."

That's partly because cars have morphed into computers on wheels that few people dare tinker with, she said. "You can't open the hood and get to know it the way you used to," she said.

Lifestyles are also changing. People are doing more of their shopping online. More people are taking public transit than ever before. And biking and walking to work and for recreation are on the rise.

Social networking online may also be substituting for some trips. A study by University of Michigan transportation researcher Michael Sivak found that the decline in teens and young adults with driver's licenses in the U.S. was mirrored in other wealthy countries with a high proportion of Internet users.

Demographic changes are also a factor. The peak driving years for most people are between ages 45 and 55 when they are the height of their careers and have more money to spend, said transportation analyst Alan Pisarski, author of "Commuting in America." Now, the last of the baby boomers "the giant cohort born between 1946 and 1964" are moving out of their peak driving years.

"They are still the dominant players, and they are moving toward a quieter transportation lifestyle," he said.

There's also a driving gender gap. In a role reversal, there are now more women than men in the U.S. with driver's licenses. And the declines in miles driven over the past decade were more widespread among men than women, according to Pickrell and Pace. Driving by men has declined in every age group except those 65 or older, where it increased slightly. Among women, driving declined only among young adults and teenagers.

There are several economic factors that help explain the trends. Driving declines exactly mirror job losses among men during the recession, when male-dominated industries like manufacturing and construction were especially hard hit, researchers said. But average automobile use has declined recently even among those who have remained employed.

Economists say many Americans, especially teens and young adults, are finding that buying and owning a car stretches their financial resources. The average price of a new car is \$31,000, according to the industry-aligned Center for Automotive Research in Ann Arbor, Mich.

"We're not selling to everyone. We're selling to upper-middle class to upper class," said Sean McAlinden, the center's chief economist. The rest of the public, he said, buys used cars or takes the bus.

Then there's the cost of insurance, maintenance and parking. The price of gas has gone up dramatically over the past decade.

The share of younger workers who can find jobs is at an especially low ebb, while the cost of a college education and with it student loans "is soaring. Many schools have stopped offering free driver's education to students. Owning a car is increasingly beyond the reach of many young drivers, researchers said.

Research by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that 18- to 20-year-olds were three times more likely to have a driver's license if they lived in a household with an annual income above \$100,000 than if they lived in a household with an income below \$20,000.

"I don't think it's a change in people's preferences. I think it's all economics," McAlinden said. "It might last if the economics stay the same. But if they improve, I think people will come back to driving more. ... Give a person a good job 25 miles away and they'll be at the dealership the next morning."

The decline in driving has important public policy implications. Among the potential benefits are less pollution, less dependence on foreign oil, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and fewer fatalities and injuries. But less driving also means less federal and state gas tax revenues, further reducing funds already in short supply for both highway and transit improvements. On the other hand, less driving may also mean less traffic congestion, although the impact on congestion may vary regionally.

Phineas Baxandall, senior analyst for the liberal U.S. Public Interest Research Group, says driving declines mean transportation dollars could be put to other uses.

"You just don't want to spend money you don't have for highways you don't need," he said.

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