

WESTERN FLYER FOUNDATION SHORT FILM

Video wins silver in Anthem Awards

By Kyarra Harris
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The Western Flyer Foundation and Soulcraft Allstars celebrated a win, after their short film won in the 4th annual Anthem Awards.

The short film ‘The Western Flyer with Nick Offerman’ won silver in the Sustainability, Environment & Climate category.

“This recognition celebrates the film’s playful yet profound tribute to the legendary Western Flyer and its inspiring story of resilience and renewal,” read a press statement from the foundation.

The video was selected from over 2,300 submissions spanning

over 34 countries. The nine-minute film weaves together history, science and environmental advocacy, narrated by Emmy-winning actor and comedian Nick Offerman.

“He was perfect for the role in so many ways, not only because he is this hilarious comedian and well known actor, but he’s also a woodworker, a boat builder and a writer,” said Sherry Flumerfelt, Executive Director for the Western Flyer Foundation. “He didn’t even hesitate, so we’re really grateful to him.”

The film also brings the stories of the Western Flyer to life, from its adventures chronicled by John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts in their 1940 expedition to the Sea of Cor-

tez, to its recent transformation into a modern platform for marine research and education.

Director Aaron Straight, who also directed of Soulcraft Allstars, said the win for the foundation and film company is a testament to the power of storytelling.

“The Western Flyer’s journey is a celebration of seeing the world through the lens of art, science and humor. Nick Offerman brought the perfect blend of wit and sincerity to this project, and it’s incredible to see this story resonate on a global scale,” Straight said in a press statement.

You can watch the full short-film on the Western Flyer Foundation page at <https://www.westernflyer.org/nick-offerman-film/>.



KYARRA HARRIS — MONTEREY HERALD

The Western Flyer fishing boat during the homecoming celebration in November 2023.

UKRAINE

Bipartisan letter calls for travel restrictions to be lifted for Congress



PHOTO COURTESY REP PANETTA'S OFFICE

United States Representative Jimmy Panetta (CA-19), right, shakes the hand of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on a trip to Ukraine this past summer. Panetta is a co-lead of a bipartisan letter urging the Biden Administration to lift restrictions on members of Congress traveling to Ukraine.

Letter led by Reps. Jimmy Panetta, CA-19, and Joe Wilson, SC-2

By James Herrera
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MONTEREY » A bipartisan letter urging the Biden Administration to lift restrictions on members of Congress traveling to Ukraine in order to get a clearer picture of American assistance there, among other goals, was led by Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Carmel Valley, and Rep. Joe Wilson, Republican, South Carolina, District 2.

The letter argues that lawmakers need the ability to travel longer and more freely in Ukraine in order to conduct appropriate oversight of American assistance and to make in-

formed decisions on future foreign policy.

Current U.S. State Department policy prevents congressional delegations, or CODELS, to Ukraine from staying overnight and from traveling outside of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. According to Rep. Panetta’s office, these restrictions limit the number of site visits and meetings with Ukrainians that lawmakers can accomplish.

“These restrictions on CODELs to Ukraine prevent members of Congress from developing a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the country and the type of support

that is needed, and altogether deters future Congressional visits,” wrote the members. “It [is] critical that Congress witness and assess how U.S. weapons and humanitarian support are faring on the battlefield. Such an opportunity to view the realities of the war in Ukraine would allow us to deliver an accurate account of the support by the United States to our constituents.”

Over the summer, a bipartisan delegation that included Panetta, traveled to Ukraine to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to reaffirm U.S. support, survey the damages of war and provide oversight of assistance.

The diplomatic trip occurred Aug. 3-9. The members visited U.S. democratic allies as Ukraine prepared for operations

headed into the fall and winter, to discuss the challenges ahead and how U.S. military, energy, humanitarian assistance will be utilized.

The Congressional delegation was able to spend five days in Ukraine, traveling to the southern seaport city of Odesa and into Bucha, where Russia staged one of its most brutal attacks against Ukrainian citizens who fought and ultimately defeated Russian forces.

According to Panetta’s Office, existing U.S. State Department restrictions do not apply to outside organizations, and the delegation that traveled during the summer was with the group Center for Strategic and International Studies, and able to stay longer and travel wider.

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FINANCIAL PLANNING

Your year-end IRA checkup

According to the Internal Revenue Service, more than 60 million Americans own individual retirement accounts, with an estimated combined value of over \$14 trillion. If you own an IRA, here are some year-end considerations to keep it in good shape.



Steve Merrell

1. Review your IRA beneficiary designations. This is especially important after a significant life event like a marriage, divorce or the death of a spouse. These events consume a lot of emotional energy, and people often completely forget to update their IRA beneficiaries.

2. Take full advantage of IRA funding opportunities. IRAs and other retirement accounts provide excellent tax incentives to save for retirement. But you’re limited by how much money you can add to your IRA each year. To maximize the value of your IRA, make sure you maximize your annual contribution. Every dollar that you could have put into your IRA but didn’t, is an opportunity lost forever.

3. Review your investments. Make sure your investments reflect your personal circumstances and current thinking. Your advisor can help you.

4. Compute your RMD and take it on time. RMD age requirements have changed a lot in recent years, which has led to some confusion. Here’s the simple version: if you were born in 1951 or earlier, you must take a minimum distribution from your IRA this year. Unlike employer-sponsored retirement plans like 401(k) plans, you must take your IRA RMD even if you are still working.

Your RMD for the current year is calculated by dividing the value of your IRA at the end of the prior year by the IRS distribution period associated with your age at the end of the current year. You can find your distribution period on the IRS website or your advisor can calculate your RMD for you.

Distributions from multiple IRAs are flexible, but deadlines are not. If you have multiple IRAs, you can take your aggregate RMD from any combination of IRAs. But if you fail to withdraw your full RMD by Dec. 31, you will be subject to a penalty equal to 25% of the undistributed amount. (If this is your first year for an RMD, you need to take your RMD by April 1.)

People sometimes miss their RMD deadline for reasons outside of their control. You can request a waiver of the penalty by filing IRS Form 5329, Additional Taxes on Qualified Plans (including IRAs) and Other Tax-Favored Accounts. If you can make the case that the shortfall was due to a reasonable error, and that you are taking steps to remedy the shortfall, you have a very good chance of escaping the penalty. Remedying the shortfall includes taking your withdrawals and paying the associated taxes.

MERRELL » PAGE 4

WEATHER

Rainy weather headed to Monterey Peninsula

First storm could happen this weekend

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A high surf advisory remains in effect for much of Monterey County, including South Monterey Bay and the Big Sur Coast, until 6 a.m. Friday.

The National Weather Service is reporting large breaking waves between 14 and 19 feet along southwest facing beaches and between 19 and 22 feet along well exposed west facing beaches.

The impacts are dangerous

swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion.

Back to back storms are impacting the West Coast through the end of this week with heavy rain, flooding and strong winds especially in higher elevation areas.

On the Monterey Peninsula, the National Weather Service forecasts some rainfall throughout the week, with chances for more rain and potentially more wind on Saturday and Sunday.

“For our area, the rainiest day will be Friday where we’ll see about an inch of rainfall heading into Saturday,” said Rachel Kennedy, meteorologist for the

National Weather Service Bay Area headquartered in Monterey. “As we go into next week we’ll have more information but for now it’s not quite as bad as the North Bay, but still weather to look out for.”

There is a 30% chance of rain on Thursday, mainly before 10 a.m. Then it’s expected to be partly sunny with a high near 66 and winds at 10 to 13 mph. It will get cooler Thursday evening, but the chance of rain remains the same with forecasts of less than a tenth of an inch altogether.

On Friday the weather will pick up after 10 a.m. for a rainy day with an 80% chance. The

wind will also pick up at 11 to 15 mph with a high near 64 and a low around 52. Forecasts predict between a quarter and half an inch of rain.

The rain will continue into Saturday morning and will likely continue throughout next week into Tuesday.

Kennedy said Saturday and Sunday will be good indicators for meteorologists to see how the storms will effect the Peninsula next week.

“This is going to be one of the first bigger storms of our rainy season,” Kennedy said, “so there’s still a potential for heavier rains, heavier winds, trees falling and road closures.”