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U.S. labor board adopts business-friendly 'micro union' test

(Reuters) - A U.S. labor agency on Friday made it tougher for workers to form so-called micro unions made up of small groups of a company's employees, reversing an Obama-era decision that had been sharply criticized by companies.
It was the fifth time this week that the five-member National Labor Relations Board's (NLRB) Republican majority, which has been in place since late September, upended a decision issued during the Obama administration that business groups said unfairly favored unions.
The NLRB in a 3-2 decision on Friday said a unionized unit of about 100 welders and "rework specialists" at a manufacturing company in Oregon was improper, and should include all 2,500 employees at the company's facility.
Forming smaller bargaining units can be a key organizing strategy for unions, particularly when they lack support from a majority of an employer's workforce. But business groups say that smaller bargaining units fracture workplaces.
The board said on Friday that its 2011 decision involving nursing agency Specialty Healthcare gave too much power to unions

to decide which workers should be included in a bargaining unit.
In Specialty Healthcare, the NLRB ruled that businesses challenging "micro unions" must show that workers left out of a proposed unit share most of their working conditions with those who were included. That is a high bar for companies to meet since workers with different job titles and duties often have distinct supervisors, working hours, and wages.
The board on Friday said that decision improperly allowed unions to handpick groups of workers who were likely to vote in their favor "in all but narrow and highly unusual circumstances."
Previously, the burden was on unions to prove that proposed bargaining units were proper. Friday's decision revived that standard, making it easier for companies to challenge "micro unions."
David French, the vice president of the



National Retail Federation, praised Friday's decision, saying the board's 2011 ruling had "undermined retail operations and limited opportunities for hardworking employees for the sole purpose of empowering Big Labor."
Friday's decision went against rulings by eight federal appeals courts. Courts have approved units of FedEx (FDX.N) drivers that excluded

warehouse workers, and a unit of cosmetic and perfume department workers at a Macy's Inc (M.N) store in Massachusetts, among others.
An appeals court in Washington is considering Volkswagen AG's (VOWG_p.DE)s challenge to a bargaining unit of skilled trade workers at the automaker's Chattanooga, Tennessee plant that excluded production workers.

China raises short- and medium- term interest rates after Fed

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China's central bank nudged money market interest rates upward on Thursday just hours after the Federal Reserve raised the U.S. benchmark, as Beijing seeks to prevent destabilizing capital outflows without hurting economic growth.
Economists were surprised by the move but said at just five basis points, the increases were small and more symbolic than substantive.
The People's Bank of China called it a "normal market reaction" to the Fed that would keep interest rate expectations reasonable and help with the deleveraging campaign.
China's major stock indexes declined modestly after the news, with infrastructure, IT and financial shares down.
The PBOC increased rates on

reverse repurchase agreements, or reverse repos, used for open market operations by 5 basis points for the 7-day and 28-day tenors.
It also said in a statement it increased rates on its one-year medium-term lending facility (MLF) also by 5 basis points.
Thursday's move was the first time the Chinese central bank has raised rates since March, but market interest rates have risen on their own during the interim as the government pursues a range of policies to lower leverage and debt in the economy.
Chen Ji, an analyst at Bank of Communications, said the rate increase was unexpected but too small to have much meaningful impact, and represented only a response to the Fed's rate hike.
"(It) doesn't really impact borrowing

costs, and fluctuations of this level are very normal in the interbank market," he said, adding that he thought China's economy was not robust enough to handle a benchmark rate increase.
Ken Cheung, senior Asian forex strategist at Mizuho Bank Ltd in Hong Kong, also said the rise was surprising, and characterized the five basis point magnitude as "mild".
"This suggests that the PBOC's intention to balance the risk of over-tightening amid the deleveraging process," Cheung wrote in a note.
Benchmark one-year lending and deposit rates have remained unchanged since October 2015, but the PBOC has increasingly relied on market rates to guide the economy.
The PBOC has moved to a tightening bias this year following six benchmark interest rate cuts in 2014-2015



An investor looks at an electronic board showing stock information at a brokerage house in Shanghai

as the economy stabilizes and the focus turns toward credit risk.
In a statement accompanying the rate increases, the PBOC said on Thursday the upward adjustment reflected supply and demand in the market, and was a "normal market reaction"

to Fed's rate increase.
It said the adjustment would help shape "reasonable" interest rate expectations. At the same time, the rate hike would help prevent financial institutions from over-leveraging while helping control the overall macro leverage ratio.



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SOUTHERN CHINESE DAILY NEWS

When Will The Other Shoe Drop In U.S.-China Economic Relations?



Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang, left, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, attend the U.S.-China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue on Wednesday. (Photo/AP)

After an unexpectedly amicable start to U.S.-China relations under President Trump, including high-level economic talks Wednesday, many are wondering when the other shoe will drop.

Trump early on was preoccupied with the North American Free Trade Agreement and then on trade rivals such as Germany, largely giving China, the biggest U.S. trading partner, a pass.

On Wednesday, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin hosted a Chinese delegation led by Vice Premier Wang Yang, continuing an economic dialogue that has spanned three U.S. administrations and marks the institutionalizing of commercial relations between the two largest economies, which account for one-third of the world's economic output.

"It is time to rebalance our trade and

North American Free Trade Agreement



investment relationship in a more fair, equitable and reciprocal manner," he said, adding that "a fundamental asymmetry in our trade relationship and unequal market access must be addressed."

Wang, obliquely responding to U.S. complaints about an uneven playing field, said that the two nations are at different stages of development. He added that "confrontation will immediately damage the interests of both."

After the meeting, Mnuchin and Ross issued a statement saying, "China acknowledged our shared objective to reduce the trade deficit which both sides will work cooperatively to achieve."

Chinese delegation was led by Vice Premier Wang Yan.

As president, Trump has continued to put trade front and center in his economic policy. But by making the trade deficit — its size and whether it is going up or down — the primary measure for judging bilateral economic relationships, Trump has put himself in a difficult position, economists said.

In promising China a better deal on trade if it tightened the screws on

North Korea, Trump hoped to score a big short-term win in what has become an increasingly worrisome threat to the U.S. and its allies in East Asia.



U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to sanction businesses and even countries doing business with North Korea.

More recently the Trump administration has threatened to sanction businesses and even countries doing business with North Korea. And the administration is finding it has little common ground with China on some other international issues.

"Those issues provided ballast to the relationship, and now we've lost that ballast," said David Dollar, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and formerly the World Bank's China country director.

U.S.-China Business Leaders' Meeting

In a U.S.-China business leaders' meeting in Washington this week ahead of the two-nation economic dialogue, executives including chiefs of e-commerce giant Alibaba and U.S. multinationals like General Motors and JPMorgan Chase urged leaders of the two countries to resolve disputes through negotiations instead of resorting to remedies such as sanctions, which could trigger a trade war.

One action the Trump administration could announce soon is tariffs on steel imports, of which there is a worldwide excess thanks to overproduction in China. Trump officials are considering applying tariffs on the grounds that the imports present a threat to U.S. national security, but businesses and analysts alike fear such a move could prompt retaliation from China and other countries.

From Xi and the Chinese, Rothman said, "all the signs are that they want to have a good, stable and productive relationship" with Trump and the

limited U.S. companies from competing in various sectors, even as Chinese companies enjoy generally open access to the American market.



A U.S.-China business leaders' meeting in Washington this past week ahead of the two-nation economic dialogue, executives including chiefs of e-commerce giant Alibaba and U.S. multinationals like General Motors and JPMorgan Chase urged leaders of the two countries to resolve disputes through negotiations instead of resorting to remedies such as sanctions, which could trigger a trade war. Pictured is Jack Ma, CEO of Alibaba.

"I was expecting him to come out of the gates on January 20th blasting at China, based on what he said during the campaign," Rothman said. "All of a sudden he and Xi are buddies.... It's hard to know what the deal is."

Related

China-U.S. Trade Relations: Better Than You Think?

Commentary By Guest Writer Frank Lavin,

China e-commerce and B2C solutions Expert

At first glance, the trade relationship between China and the United States is one of the strongest in the world, topping \$578 billion in merchandise last year. Compare that to U.S.-UK trade at \$110 billion, or U.S.-India trade worth \$68 billion over the same period.

But size doesn't eliminate problems. As trade grows and economies become more complex, there are bound to be issues. China has long blocked and

labeling procedure. Both Alibaba and JD have captured this market segment by establishing special cross-border channels (Tmall Global and JD Worldwide) and putting in place a world class logistics solution.



US President Donald Trump (L) and Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) walk together at the Mar-a-Lago estate in West Palm Beach, Florida, April 7, 2017. (JIM WATSON/AFP/Getty Images)

This asymmetry, along with factors such as slow economic growth in the U.S., have pushed the China trade agenda front and center in Washington. The American Chamber of Commerce in China released a White Paper -- rather hard-edged as these things go -- to spell out U.S. concerns: "With uncertainty stemming from political and economic transitions in both the U.S. and China, perceptions of a deteriorating investment environment for foreign companies in China, and a slowing economy, mean 2017 will likely be one of the most challenging years in decades for U.S. companies in China."

Retail Hope

Not only are exports of consumer goods from the U.S. growing, but the regulatory environment on the China side is actually improving, with strong growth in the cross-border segment of that market. With a bit of hyperbole, Businessweek labels the China cross-border market a "loophole." But let's give the headline-writers a pass because it is a useful article, spelling out the remarkable growth and success of cross-border e-commerce (note: the article mentions my company, Export Now, and clients). Simply put, China's cross-border regulations allow any international brand to sell its products into China without going through a sometimes expensive regulatory and



Both sides have shown to date a capacity to manage these issues without them spilling over into trade disruption or a trade war.

Second, consumer goods are not viewed as strategic, like banks and telecoms, so if a U.S. cosmetic brand gains market share, this is not a troubling development.

Third, over time Chinese firms will increasingly develop the ability to compete in foreign markets as well, a practice we are already seeing as Alipay expands to the U.S. and Europe. The bottom line: Keep these points in mind as you hear more about U.S.-China trade issues.

Both sides have shown to date a capacity to manage these issues without them spilling over into trade disruption or a trade war.



The persistence of immediate geopolitical issues such as North Korea, The South China Sea dispute and Taiwan arms sales all contribute to limiting the emphasis the U.S. will place on trade issues.

China has shown a willingness to resolve some of the long-standing complaints -- witness its recent statements on beef imports. China could probably improve its position by moving more rapidly on these issues but the initial signals are positive.

Historically, consumer goods and e-commerce have been a shining example of bilateral cooperation and neither side has sought to undermine or impede this success.

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A Snapshot Of The World



German Chancellor Angela Merkel is seen on the mobile phone screen as she speaks during the Christian Social Union (CSU) party congress in Nuremberg, Germany, December 15, 2017



North Korea's Ambassador to the UN Ja Song Nam attends the United Nations Security Council meeting on North Korea's nuclear program at U.N. headquarters in New York City



Ash settles following wildfires, on a Hot Cocoa variety of rose on the Rose Story Farm in Carpinteria



U.S. President Donald Trump participates in a graduation ceremony at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia



Israeli policemen detain a Palestinian protestor after Friday prayers in Jerusalem's Old City, as Palestinians call for a "day of rage" in response to President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital



Sculptors carve a giant head snow sculpture representing late French singer Johnny Hallyday in Val d'Isere
PEOPLE-JOHNNYHALLYDAY/



Alpine Skiing - FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup - Men's Alpine Super G - Selva di Val Gardena, Italy - December 15, 2017 - Max Franz of Austria reacts after crossing the finish line. REUTERS/Alessandro Bianchi



Israeli police scuffle with Palestinian protestors after Friday prayers in Jerusalem's Old City
USA-TRUMP/ISRAEL



Operators work on a high voltage tower in Gijon, Spain December 15, 2017. REUTERS/Eloy Alonso TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan announced Wednesday his office has filed a lawsuit against 21 drug manufacturers and distributors, four doctors and one pharmacist because of the opioid epidemic.

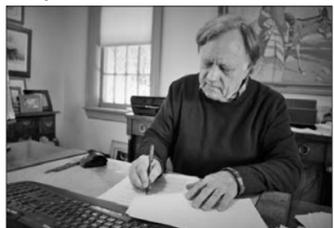
The companies Purdue Pharma L.P., Cephalon Inc. and Janssen Pharmaceuticals Inc. are three of the defendants and they are referred to in the lawsuit as manufacturers, distributors and sellers of opioids in Harris County and the rest of the United States.



Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan announces plans to file lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies and doctors.

The doctors the county is suing are: Gazelle Craig, Arun Shmma, Karin Sharma and Richard Arthur Evans. The lawsuit also lists pharmacist David Devido as one of the defendants. The lawsuit contends the "defendants knew that the use of opioids had the potential to cause addiction and other health maladies" and adds that "driven by profit, defendants engaged in a campaign of lies, half-truths, and deceptions to create a market that encouraged the over-prescribing and long-term use of opioids even though there was no scientific basis to support such use."

As for the impact the opioid epidemic has in Harris County, the lawsuit indicates that opioid prescribing rates in the county "historically have been above average and as high as 79.4 prescriptions per 100 persons." The lawsuit adds that "of the more than 33,000 opioid-related deaths in the United States in 2015, 2,588 were in Texas" and adds that "Harris County bore its share of this burden, with 318 (12.3%) of these deaths occurring in the county."



"I would never say the pharmaceutical companies dropped the ball," lawyer Tommy Fibich said. "The

Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan Sues 21 Manufacturers And Distributors, 4 Doctors, And 1 Pharmacist Operating In The Area

Harris County Sues Pharmaceutical Companies, Doctors For 'Opioid Epidemic'

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

pharmaceutical companies blew up the ball, and kicked it out to the public, for it to explode."

During a news conference held in downtown Houston, Ryan blamed pharmaceutical companies for promoting opioids too widely. Being addicted to painkillers, or opioids, is a serious health issue in Houston and nationwide. In October, President Trump even declared the opioid crisis a "national public health emergency, under federal law."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, opioid prescribing has fueled the epidemic. It said nearly half of all U.S. opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription. And a recent government report said the US economy lost over 500 billion dollars from opioid abuse, in 2015.

When it comes to the question of who should pay for the losses, Harris County has said that the drug companies should; just like tobacco companies were made to pay for smoking-related health care and prevention.

"It's exactly pharmaceutical's tobacco moment," said lawyer Tommy Fibich. He's one of the several lawyers representing Harris County against the pharmaceutical companies mentioned in the lawsuit.

"These are the most addictive drugs on our planet. They knew that. They promoted them in a way that caused people to be addicted to them," said Fibich. "The problem is the companies that manufactured opioids went against every statute in law designed to protect the consumer."

Fibich said the regulations in place should have worked, but they weren't enforced.



"The manufacturers and distributors, primarily, managed to disregard them. They did it with impunity. And everybody was making so much money that they were willing to do it and take the risk," said Fibich.

The Harris County's lawsuit is not the first of its kind. Lawsuits of this nature have been popping up across the country. Upshur County, in East

Texas, filed a similar lawsuit in September. Healthcare Distribution Alliance (HDA) is a national trade association that represents wholesale distributors, some of whom are involved in the lawsuit.

In a statement, HDA spokesman John Parker said:

"As distributors, we understand the tragic impact the opioid epidemic has on communities across the country. We are deeply engaged in the issue and are taking our own steps to be part of the solution - but we aren't willing to be scapegoats.

Distributors are logistics companies that arrange for the safe and secure storage, transport, and delivery of medicines from manufacturers to pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and others based on prescriptions from licensed physicians. We don't make medicines, market medicines, prescribe medicines, or dispense them to consumers.

Given our role, the idea that distributors are solely responsible for the number of opioid prescriptions written defies common sense and lacks understanding of how the pharmaceutical supply chain actually works and how it is regulated.



We are ready to have a serious conversation about solving a complex problem and are eager to work with political leaders and all stakeholders in finding forward-looking solutions."

AmerisourceBergen, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., also involved in the suit, provided Houston Public Media with statements:

Janssen Pharmaceuticals: Responsibly used opioid-based pain medicines give doctors and patients important choices to help manage the debilitating effects of chronic pain. At the same time, we recognize opioid abuse and addiction is a serious public health issue that must be addressed. We believe the allegations in lawsuits against our company are both legally and factually unfounded. Janssen has acted in the best interests of patients and physicians with regard to its opioid pain medicines, which

are FDA-approved and carry FDA-mandated warnings about possible risks on every product label. According to independent surveillance data, Janssen opioid pain medicines consistently have some of the lowest rates of abuse among these medications, and since 2008 the volume of Janssen opioid products always has amounted to less than one percent of the total prescriptions written per year for opioid medications, including generics. Addressing opioid abuse will require collaboration among many stakeholders and we will continue to work with federal, state and local officials to support solutions.

- William Foster, spokesperson, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

AmerisourceBergen: AmerisourceBergen and other wholesale drug distributors are responsible for getting FDA-approved drugs from pharmaceutical manufacturers to DEA-registered pharmacies, based on prescriptions written by licensed doctors and health care providers. Our role in doing so is quite widespread across different therapies, with the distribution of opioid-based products constituting less than two percent of our sales. We are dedicated to doing everything within our power as a distributor to mitigate the diversion of these drugs without interfering with clinical decisions made by doctors, who interact directly with patients and decide what treatments are most appropriate for their care. Beyond our reporting and immediate halting of tens of thousands of potentially suspicious orders, we refuse service to customers we deem as a diversion risk and provide daily reports to the DEA that detail the quantity, type, and the receiving pharmacy of every single order of these products that we distribute. We are committed to collaborating with all stakeholders, including in Texas, on ways to combat opioid abuse



Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.: Teva is committed to the appropriate use of opioid medicines, and we recognize the critical public health issues impacting communities across the U.S. as a result of illegal drug use as well as the misuse and abuse of opioids that are available legally by prescription. To that end, we take a multi-faceted approach to this complex issue; we work to educate communities and healthcare providers on appropriate medicine

use and prescribing, we comply closely with all relevant federal and state regulations regarding these medicines, and, through our R&D pipeline, we are developing non-opioid treatments that have the potential to bring relief to patients in chronic pain. Teva offers extensive resources for prescribers, patients and pharmacists regarding the responsible pain management and prevention of prescription drug abuse. Teva also collaborates closely with other stakeholders, including providers and prescribers, regulators, public health officials and patient advocates, to understand how to prevent prescription drug abuse without sacrificing patients' needed access to pain medicine.

Marc Fleming, Assistant Professor of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy at the University of Houston College of Pharmacy, said while there is an issue in Harris County, there's responsibility and blame all around.

"From a societal stand point, to the individual patients, to unscrupulous doctors that enable these patients with unethical prescribing of these medications," said Fleming.



Marc Fleming, Assistant Professor of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy at the University of Houston College of Pharmacy, said responsibility and blame reaches further than only the pharmaceutical companies.

Fleming also said there are many factors contributing to opioid abuse; one being lyrics to popular songs referencing prescription medication abuse.

"These medications are commonly talked about in some of these lyrics, and so forth," said Fleming. "One of my concerns is that we have a generation of kids that has grown up very accustomed to taking medications. So there's nothing taboo, for this generation, about taking a medication."

Fleming said if damages are awarded to Harris County, it would be best spent in rehabilitation, and other alternatives to help pain management, like yoga and physical therapy.

"Does your insurance cover that? Typically not," said Fleming. "How are you going to pay for that? These are things that are not being addressed."

Lawyers say a trial date could come in the next year. (Courtesy www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news)

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This is the most expensive street to work on in Houston

Downtown Houston's Main Street boasts some of the most expensive office real estate in the country, according to a new report.

The 1½-mile-long street ranks No. 21 on JLL's national list of streets with the highest office rents. The average rent for office space on Main Street downtown is \$44.24 per square foot, about 45 percent higher than the city average of \$30.55 per square foot, the commercial real estate firm said.

Trophy towers on Main Street include Hines' 609 Main, Transwestern's 1000 Main and BG Group Place.

Two other Texas cities made JLL's annual list, including Austin and Dallas. Austin's Congress Avenue was the 10th most expensive street nationally with rents averaging \$58.20 per square foot. Dallas'

McKinney Avenue was the 14th most expensive street with rents averaging \$51.17 per square foot.

Nationally, the most expensive streets command average asking rents of \$48.65 per square foot, a 47 percent premium over the U.S. average. Despite the higher asking rents, these trophy buildings remain popular, with vacancy rates of just 13 percent. These addresses are desired by financial, legal and consulting firms, as well as technology companies.

San Francisco's Sand Hill Road, which is home to several Silicon Valley venture capital firms, was the most expensive street nationally with an average rent of \$119.58 per square foot. Sand Hill was followed by New York's Fifth Avenue, San Francisco's Mission Street, Boston's Main Street and Fairfield County's Greenwich Avenue.



The average rent for office space on Main in downtown Houston runs \$44.24 per square foot. That's roughly 45 percent higher than the city average of \$30.55.

Sexual harassment cases often show the ineffectiveness of complaining to HR

Emery Lindsley was addressing her food and beverage staff at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel in Texas in 2012 when a corporate executive suddenly placed his hand over her mouth to keep her from speaking. The executive then began commenting on the appearance of a woman on Lindsley's staff, even asking if the staff member had a steady relationship with her boyfriend, Lindsley recalled.

As she had been taught at the company's annual - and mandatory - anti-harassment training, Lindsley reported the executive's actions to

her human resources department. "I went to HR and said, you need to do something," said Lindsley, who made these allegations in a lawsuit she filed against Omni Hotels & Resorts and its parent company in October. "I was embarrassed and humiliated about how he had treated me in front of my team."

"But she ignored me," Lindsley said in an interview. "She didn't even write it down. She didn't seem to take it serious at all."

Lindsley's experience illustrates the complicated role that human resources departments play in harass-

ment cases. The recent outpouring of complaints from women about mistreatment in the workplace has included numerous accounts of being ignored, stymied or retaliated against by human resources units - accounts that portray them as part of the problem, not the solution. The lack of trust manifests itself as a self-perpetuating quandary: Women are hesitant to approach human resources departments and those departments cite the absence of complaints as proof of a respectful workplace.

A 2016 study by the Equal Em-

ployment Opportunity Commission reported that of all the options available to workers experiencing harassment - avoiding the harasser, or consulting with family members - the least common response of either men or women was to take some formal action.

Experts point to several contributing factors. Human resources departments, while officially responsible for fielding employee complaints, also work for a company that faces potential liability - an inherent conflict of interest. And for some human resource officers,

conducting an investigation into harassment allegations against a top executive or star performer can be hazardous to their own careers. The result can often be that human resources personnel are more inclined to suppress allegations than get to the bottom of them.

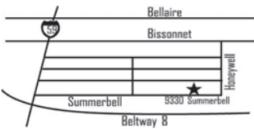
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探寻边塞小城二连浩特感受独特的异域风情

二连浩特，名字听起来就是一个充满了神秘和梦幻的边塞小城。它拥有五彩斑斓的盐池，拥有广袤无边的大草原，还有中蒙之间不同的文化碰撞。心血来潮一查航班，北京直飞二连浩特才一个多小时，毫不犹豫果断出票。

第一眼看到哒二连浩特是有穿越感的市门，两只巨型腕龙相向而吻，这温馨的画面，给这座有“恐龙之乡”美誉的边塞小城增添了浓重的神秘感。这里没有车水马龙的繁华，却有纯粹的夕阳和璀璨的星空。这里没有高楼大厦的局促，却有浓郁的民族风情。

初遇边塞小城

七八月份是到内蒙旅游的最佳时节，这里的热带带一种青草的味道，风吹过来的时候，有一种泥土的香气。这种感觉，让我想起了小时候在姥姥家的那段日子。二连浩特和自己想象中的边塞小城完全不同，这里已经有了各种各样的交通工具，虽然也是一座现代化的城市，但它依然保留着自己专属的风情。

二连浩特的火车站有一点苏式的感觉，精致古朴，却别有风情。最让我触动的是，在二连浩特的火车站里我居然看见了最古老的那种绿皮火车，忽然觉得很美。绿皮火车驰骋在苍茫的戈壁、草原，想着都是一种很美的场景。

二连浩特国家地质公园为国家4A级旅游景区，在额仁诺尔盐池附近，它是内蒙古最早载入国际古生物史册的恐龙化石产地。在地质公园，我参观了恐龙科普馆、矿物晶体馆、化石埋藏馆、伊林驿站遗址博物馆以及树化石景区，感受到了大自然的神奇和人类的渺小。

在这些庞然大物面前，我内心升起了对生命的敬畏。以往，对恐龙的了解都是来源于电视和网络，而现在，和恐龙化石有着如此亲密的接触，就好像洞悉到了关于生命的秘密，那种感觉真的是特别神奇。

个人觉得，最值得一看的是伊林驿站遗址博物馆。在历史上，二连浩特是一座贸易之城，伊林驿站遗址博物馆不仅还原了古代伊林驿站的样貌，而且还介绍了二连浩特这座城市的发展史。

可以说，了解二连浩特，应该从伊林驿站遗址博物馆开始。虽然没有足够的地理、历史知识，但我依然对这座边塞小城充满了憧憬。

带着敬畏之心，我离开了二连浩特国家地质公园，前往鑫金进口商品超市。其实去鑫金进口商品超市并不是为了购物，而是为了了解这里都有什么。

去过巴黎、伦敦的人，大概都会被花花绿绿的名牌所吸引，而二连浩特鑫金进口商品超市却给人一种亲民的感觉，这或许是边塞城镇独有的一种文化气息。在这里找到了各种稀奇古怪的巧克力，付过钱之后，迫不及待的想感受一下这种来自东亚地区的巧克力。

探秘边塞小城

国门景区—扎门乌德边境一日游。

二连浩特的国门是祖国的北大门，共4层，高21米，长71.4米，宽13米，建筑面积2406平方米。在这里，每天都会有很多游客慕名而来。站在边境线上，我总是为祖国的幅员辽阔而自豪。

在一些特殊的环境里，爱国之心会油然而生，然后变成一种深深地感动。拾级而上，站在国门顶层可以看见蒙古国边城扎门乌德火车站大楼，还有各种民居。在国门的下方，是被誉为“欧亚大陆桥”的连接首都北京和乌兰巴托、莫斯科的铁路交通大动脉。

每一座城市都有自己的故事和秘密，我

想二连浩特的故事大概就是从国门开始的。这里是一个国家荣耀的起点，也是国家地域的终点。

站在国门上，我的思绪飘到很远很远的地方，我似乎看见了曾经的金戈铁马，看见了曾经的铁蹄阵阵，看见了曾经蔓延的战火和背井离乡的牧民。

在和平年代回顾战争年代说不上是一种什么感觉，但我知道，在二连浩特的国门上，每个人的脑海里都会闪过这样的桥段。

因为国门是荣耀，它让我们知道中国的领地不可侵犯。国门也是历史，它让我们知道捍卫国土的不易。放眼望去，目光所及之处是一片祥和和温馨，飞鸟飞过，留下悠远的鸣啼。

每天很多外蒙进内蒙的越野车队，排队等候的场面浩大，让我深刻体会到祖国繁荣昌盛的美好与关键。

沿着祖国的边境线漫无目的的走着，看着那些拿起相机纷纷拍照留念的人竟有些感动。在这里不知不觉度过了大半天。这样漫无目的的行走，还真是一件惬意的事情。

扎门乌德火车站，小而精致的美。

到了二连浩特，怎可以错过边境小城扎门乌德之旅，‘扎门乌德’蒙古语意思是“通道上的门”，隶属蒙古国东戈壁省，是蒙古国最大的对华口岸，欧亚铁路中蒙交汇处。一条公路连接了中蒙口岸公路联检区，并贯穿了扎门乌德市中心。

扎门乌德有一座小甘丹寺，是上个世纪末重建的，原来的寺院随着1938年的灭佛杀僧运动而被拆毁。寺庙不大，感觉与内地的藏传佛教有相通之处，最难忘的是那对儿守护寺庙的白色小狮子。

国徽广场是扎门乌德的另外一个地标。蒙古国的国徽呈圆形。外环“万字不到头”的图案，象征国家将永远成长不息；顶为三宝，象征这里蕴藏宝藏。圆面为蓝色，中间是一匹飞奔的骏马，马中间的图案与国旗上的相同，象征游牧民族，也象征国家如千里马般快速发展，前途无限；马下是一个法轮并饰以白色的荷花花瓣，象征其国教藏传佛教。

扎门乌德与二连浩特虽是两座毗邻的城市，但却分属于两个国家，所以切记出行前要带上护照。简短的一日游，对扎门乌德也有了一个大致的了解，遗憾的是，不能在这里多做停留。虽然只是走马观花式的观赏，但依然对扎门乌德留下了深刻的印象。

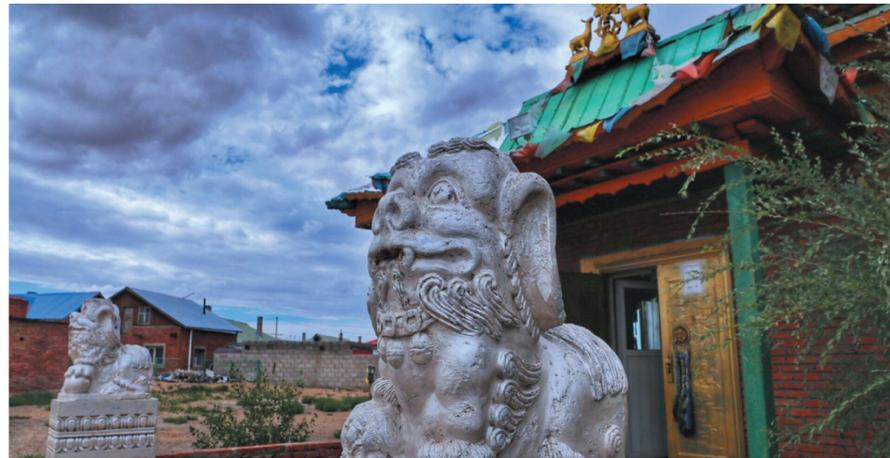
深入边塞小城

七色彩虹门，像征着两座城市之间的友好互通，共建和谐。了解一座城市最好的方式就是变成它的游客，在自然风光中感受返朴归真的纯粹，在人文景观中享受洗涤心灵的过程。二连浩特就是这样的城市，它有湛蓝湛蓝的天空，也有厚重厚重的历史。

你可以自由翱翔在那片纯粹的如蓝丝绒一般的天空，也可以沉浸在厚重如梨花木一般的过往云烟中。我承认，在二连浩特有时候会迷失自己，因为你分不清这里到底是真实的还是虚幻的。它是一座城市，可它却那么淳朴，那么干净，让你无法想象。

带着一些期待和旅游者特有的自豪参观了市门景点和西北红旅游文化观光园。西北红旅游文化观光园是基于二连浩特独特的地理风貌和历史文化建立的。

在西北红旅游文化观光园感受到是最全面的北方文化特点（挤牛奶，住蒙古包，着蒙古袍，吃蒙餐，喝马奶，采摘鲜瓜……）对我们这种常年生活在繁华之中的人，在这样的景致中，总有些无法自拔，难舍难离。



费用：自由行五天一共花了两千五百元，所有的费用都包括其中，如果选择跟团会更优惠些。选择住民宿花销会更少一些。吃的东西价格略高，不过分量真的是很足，买一份一个人吃的饱饱的。

美食：二连浩特的美食大多都是非常特色的，比如奶茶、涮羊肉、手把肉各种餐厅赛诺德西餐厅、格尼斯餐厅、锡利河饭店、苍狼饭店等等。每家餐厅和饭店都有自己的特色菜。

住宿：一两个人来二连浩特可以选择安全系数比较高的酒店，不过价位也比较高。一般时候可以选一些商务宾馆，比较实惠。

出入境：要去扎门乌德就要了解一些关于出入境的信息，这些东西可以让旅行社帮忙解决，最简单的方式就是直接跟团。可以联系我认识的二连浩特金牌导游孙哥（微信：elsunhao）金牌导游，金牌服务不是乱盖哒

二连浩特这座边塞小城是安静而淳朴的，它安静的矗立在边疆，守望着每一次的日出日落，云卷云舒。这里的人们淳朴、热情，每一张脸上都洋溢着幸福和满足的感觉。我已经很久很久没有遇见发自内心的感受到幸福的人了。而在二连浩特，这样的人到处都是。

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请告诉80年前的“南京”，人们从未忘却

今年是南京大屠杀惨案发生80周年，也是第四个南京大屠杀死难者国家公祭日。80年前，“南京”正经历着最为黑暗的一段时期；80年后，人们用实际行动告诉那年的“南京”，历史，从未被忘却，正义，将世代传承。

【一】

12月11日，菲律宾马尼拉湾，距日本大使馆约3公里处，新安放了一座慰安妇铜像。底座上的文字写道：“这是日本统治下遭受虐待的菲律宾女性的记忆。”这或是这个东南亚国家首次安放此类塑像。

近年来，多座慰安妇塑像落地韩国、美国、德国……那些以生命控诉战争罪恶的女性，在血肉之躯湮灭后，得到了思想和精神的延续。

11月23日，韩国国会法制司法委员会表决通过“日军慰安妇受害者的生活稳定支援法”修正案，指定每年8月14日为该国“慰安妇纪念日”。此外，《南京大屠杀史》韩文版也已正式首发。这部记录南京惨案最完整的原创性研究巨著，将通过多种语言向全球发声。

10月26日，经辩论与投票，加拿大安全省议会通过了将每年12月13日，设为该省“南京大屠杀纪念日”的动议，创西方先例。

上月，在美国加州洛杉矶郡，一座纪念医生威尔逊的纪念碑落成。那位被称为“蓝眼睛的南京人”的美国医生，冒着生命危险留守1937年的南京，保护救助了无数南京市民。他在当年的日记信件中，详尽描述了日军南京大屠杀暴行，成为向世界展示真相的见证史料。

请告诉80年前的“南京”，国际社会从未忘却。

【二】

“作为侵华日军的一名士兵，对日军的暴行感到耻辱”。今年9月9日，98岁的日本老兵三谷翔在家中去世。就在逝世前几天，这位南京大屠杀



的亲历者仍在费力地诉说，自己年少时被日本军国主义毒害的历史。

如果今天的三谷翔去住APA(阿帕)酒店，翻阅一下那里的集团老板元谷外志雄关于南京大屠杀、慰安妇的“著作”，他会不会怒斥歪曲；如果他看见孩子们唱着当年自己唱过的军歌、“拼刺刀”，喊口号，他会不会痛心疾首？而这些，都在日本真实上演了。

作为30年来致力于研究南京大屠杀的日本知名学者，松冈环深知形势复杂。她承认，研究遭到了“右翼势力的阻挠”。“的确有很多困难，”她指出，虽然日本有不少人支持她，但“这个力量还不够强”。

谈及让自己坚持下去的原因，松冈环坚定地说：“是为了日本的孩子。希望他们能了解真实、完整的历史”，“由于常常被南京大屠杀幸存者所鼓励，我不希望背叛他们的期待”。

请告诉80年前的“南京”，日本有识之士从未忘却。

【三】

在中国，随着近日最年轻幸存者、百岁老人管光镜的与世长辞，在世的南京大屠杀幸存者已不足百人。

不过，回忆起70多年前被日本政府强征为劳工的悲惨遭遇，88岁的中国老人闫玉成仍忍不住落泪。今年11月，他第二次踏上了日本国土，目的只有一个——代表数万二战中国受害劳工“讨公道”。

上世纪90年代至今，民间对日索赔之路走了20多年，举步维艰。据统计，现在二战中国劳工幸存者只剩下103位，而这个数字还会不断变少。“真希望我们这些活着的人能看到那一天”，闫玉成说。

从心口到纸笔，幸存者们的记忆，承载了历史难以承受之重，成为最有力的档案与证言。然而，在“南京大屠杀”档案申遗成功的两年后，由于日本政府重重阻挠，历经三年准备、两度申报的慰安妇档案项目今年未能入选联合国教科文组织的《世界记

忆名录”。

但在“慰安妇问题研究第一人”、该项目中方首席专家苏智良看来，申报是为文件材料保护争取空间，仍不能放弃任何细微的工作。“未来很难，但也要努力去做”，面对2000多件相关资料，他坚定地说。

从民间到政府，从国家公祭日、全国各地纪念仪式的举行，到上海淞沪抗战纪念馆等多馆的展览和活动，都呼应了同一个声音：

请告诉80年前的“南京”，中国从未忘却。

【四】

1938年12月，抗战到了艰难时刻，熟练的司机和技工紧缺，国民政府电请南洋著名华侨领袖陈嘉庚先生代为招募机工，回国抗战。马来西亚、新加坡、泰国、缅甸、越南、菲律宾、印度尼西亚等国华侨热情响应，经严格选拔，3000多名南洋华侨机工于1939年分9批回到祖国，参加抗日。

由于东南山河相继沦陷，偏居大

西南的滇缅公路成为中国抗战的生命线。据统计，1939年到1942年，将近一半华侨机工牺牲在滇缅公路上。

“我13岁从印度回国抗日”，今年90岁的蒋印生回忆当时的情形道，“我们白天不敢开车，有日军的轰炸和扫射，晚上就在路上铺上白布条当指路牌，关着灯走。”蒋印生说，在一次任务中，紧跟他身后的一辆运输车被日军炸毁，车上战友都遇难，幸运的是他逃过一劫。

无论是战时，还是和平年代，多年来，海外华侨华人用坚持不懈的努力，让更多人铭记历史。美籍华人鲁照宁11年来多次向侵华日军南京大屠杀遇难同胞纪念馆捐赠史料，迄今累计赠予日军侵华铁证等史料已达900余件。

“我们的目标是要日本人道歉、赔偿、建碑、立馆”，“要像德国人对二战的态度一样”。已故美籍华裔女作家张纯如的母亲张盈盈如是说。

“捍卫忠实的伟大女性”——张纯如被如此评价。她用三年访问诸多南京大屠杀幸存者，参阅大量历史文献，直面各种触目惊心的资料，于1997年出版了《南京大屠杀》一书，揭开了那段惨绝人寰的记忆，震惊西方世界。

而在女儿受抑郁症困扰离世的13年后，母亲张盈盈表达了自己的信念：她正像千千万万为维护史实、捍卫真相的人们一样，继续奔走。

2017年12月9日，加拿大安全省各界华人举办主题为“铭记历史，祈愿和平”的“南京大屠杀80周年追思会”。现场2米高、6米长的签名板上，签满了名字。

10日下午，美国旧金山举办第21次“南京祭”，华裔、韩裔、菲律宾裔、非裔及白人社区各界人士500余人，向80年前南京大屠杀的遇难者默哀，献上白色玫瑰。

13日，208个华侨华人社团将在世界各地，举行南京大屠杀遇难者悼念活动。

请告诉80年前的“南京”，海外华人华侨、爱国人士从未忘却。

谈判有进展 但英国与欧盟说“再见”还得啃硬骨头动

当地时间8日，欧盟委员会主席容克宣布，欧盟与英国“脱欧”谈判已在关键议题上取得“足够多的成果”。至此，今年3月开始的英国脱欧谈判终于取得实质性进展。

然而，顺利完成第一阶段的谈判，并不意味着英国就能与欧盟说“再见”。要实现真正意义上的脱欧，双方还需啃完几个“硬骨头”。

【分歧不断的“分手费”】

据悉，此次达成协议的关键点包括，明年开始进行欧盟与英国的贸易谈判、确保数百万生活在英国的欧盟公民权力、以及金额在数百亿欧元的“分手费”。

英国媒体报道指出，为取得欧盟同意，英国再次提高“报价”，把“分手费”抬高到500亿欧元，接近欧盟提出的600亿欧元要价。而英国政府最初的报价为200亿欧元，后来翻番到400亿欧元，但欧盟依然不满意。

所谓“分手费”，涵盖了英国籍前欧盟工作人员退休金、在英欧盟机构搬迁费用以及英国对欧盟财政的承诺等内容。

一直以来，英欧双方在英国是否支付“分手费”及数额方面有明显分歧。如果分手费的数目谈妥，这将是英国与欧盟脱欧谈判正式启动以来，双方取得的第一个实质性进展。



【还有哪些“硬骨头”？】

随着欧盟委员会提议可以进行第二阶段的谈判，其他难啃的“硬骨头”将更加清晰地出现在谈判桌上。

有分析称，爱尔兰边界问题和双方公民权利将取代“分手费”问题，成为谈判的主要“角力点”。特别是爱尔兰边界问题，预计将成为下一阶

段谈判的重点与难点。

边界问题 爱尔兰是欧盟国家，目前英国北爱尔兰地区与爱尔兰之间人员与货物均可自由流动。一旦英国正式脱欧，北爱尔兰地区与爱尔兰之间的边界将从现在在欧盟内部英国与爱尔兰的“两国边界”变为“欧盟区与非欧盟区边界”。

英国政府表示，英国脱欧后将努

力确保这一边界“无缝对接”，建议在陆上及海上边界设海关等实体设施，在人员自由通行方面也维持现状。这意味着英方不希望目前的这条“软”边界“硬”。

但如果北爱尔兰与爱尔兰之间维持现在的“软”边界，英国脱欧后就无法确保，从欧盟其他国家自由进入爱尔兰的移民不能(通过北爱尔兰)自

由进入英国。欧盟认为，避免出现“硬边界”的最好办法是北爱尔兰或整个英国留在关税同盟中。

贸易谈判 此前几轮脱欧谈判中，英欧双方都没有针对边界问题给出清晰解决方案。欧盟方面坚持，这一问题不解决，英国最关心的英欧在脱欧后的贸易谈判就无法进展。有媒体称，脱欧不稳定的“达摩克利斯之剑”始终高悬，这让英国金融界怨声载道。

【2019年最终完成“脱欧”？】

根据《里斯本条约》第50条规定，如果英国确认要脱离欧盟，欧洲理事会应在两年内和英国就“脱欧”后关系变动达成协议。

但是，由于英国与欧盟要谈的内容太多，而即使达成协议，通过的程序也非常严苛，因此有分析称，要在两年内走完所有的脱欧程序非常难。

如果两年内双方没有达成协议，英国可以向欧盟申请延长谈判期限，但需要其他27个成员国同意。如果延期申请被拒，那么接下来英国在与欧盟的各方面问题都需要一一协商。

根据路透社的分析，英欧谈判开始后，欧盟希望于2017年12月底前，就英国脱欧达成基本“撤出协议”，并最迟于2018年秋季完成“撤出协议”最终版。欧洲议会和欧洲理事会或将在2019年3月前批准该草案。2019年4月，英国或将最终完成脱欧。

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「食家庄」餐厅新开业，推出正宗北方菜、川菜 马老板宴请「北京群」，特级主厨菜色不凡，令人惊艳

(本报记者秦鸿钧) 中国八大菜系，随著华人来美的移民脚步，逐一将中国各地的菜色带到美国，带到华埠，各家各派随著岁月的脚步各领风骚数十年。就拿休市来说，历经湖南菜、粤菜、江浙菜、上海菜、川菜、潮州菜、

东江菜，北方菜----- 尤其近年来，随著移民结构的改变，北方菜再度成为新宠，尤其北方的面点，更成了大家日常生活不可或缺的主粮，休士顿几家专卖北方面点的餐馆热销，即为一例。

而「食家庄」近期在「惠康广场」的开张，更顺应休市人的口味。「食家庄」位于「惠康医疗中心」旁，原「老四川」旧址。老板马军先生，为来自北京的山东人，深谙北方菜的奥秘(北方菜源于「鲁菜」)，特聘的几位厨师，都颇有背景，八日晚间在「食家庄」大开筵席，招待「北京群」的群友，名菜叠出，吃得全场五十多位嘉宾，酒酣耳热，大饱口福，大呼过瘾。

「食家庄」的菜色，从冷菜到热菜，到各种北方特色面点，还有「食家庄」独有的特色菜，更令人惊艳！如卖相、口感一流的「大千干烧黄鱼」，黄鱼极其入味，口感特佳，将鸡肉的鲜美发挥的淋漓尽致，再配上面条，绝对是一道开胃的好菜。当天推出的名菜还有咕咾虾、溜肝尖、肉末豆角、梅菜扣肉、芫爆肚丝、五彩小鱿鱼、白菜排骨粉丝砂锅，以及他们著名的田园素菜：西芹百合、醋溜白菜---- 光看师傅的刀工

，即令人叹为观止，更别提入口的滋味及其营养价值。

「食家庄」最值得一提的是「北方特色面点」，该店特聘台北「鼎泰丰」的韩师傅负责面点，当天亮相的羊肉水饺，三鲜水饺，内馅极其讲究，令人激赏不已，还有发面制作的黄金芝麻大饼，更是该店的「卖点」！马老板预备午间推出「大饼套餐」，每人份\$8.99元，包括：现烙芝麻、白面大饼二张，冬瓜羊肉丸子汤，再加上炒菜一道。既经济实惠，又可大饱口福，预计将大受欢迎。

「食家庄」的特色面点，还有老北京猪肉锅贴、羊肉西葫芦锅贴、三鲜锅贴，水饺除上述二种，还有烟台鲅鱼水饺、猪肉水饺，以及最受大众喜爱的葱油饼、北京炸酱面、茄子肉丁打卤面、天津小笼包、担担面、重庆酸辣小面----- 等等，都是一时之选。

当晚，「北京群」的群主刘洋，代表大夥向马老板的盛情款待深表谢意。并对「食家庄」的菜色赞不绝口，大家表示：自今而后，休市又多了一处可以好好吃饭的地方了。

「食家庄」的地址：9114 Bellaire Blvd. Houston, TX 77036 (惠康广场内)



图为位于惠康广场内，原「老四川」旧址的「食家庄」正门夜景。(记者秦鸿钧摄)



图为「食家庄」老板马军(右)向现场的「北京群」朋友举杯欢迎。(左)为「北京群」群主刘洋。(记者秦鸿钧摄)

受哈维(Harvey)飓风影响的地区居民 健康保险申请开放期特别延伸至2017年12月31日

美国卫生及公共服务部最近出具了关于给予被2017年飓风影响地区居民一个新的特殊申请开放期的指示。根据这个新的指示，被飓风影响的居民将会有更多的时间来购买或者更改2018年的健保方案。这项指示适用于通过健康保险交易市场购买医疗保险的人。

这对于您2018年的医保意味着什么？

2018年个人医疗保险的公开申请期为2017年11月1日至2017年12月15日，但是那些在(曾经在)受灾地区居住过的人将可以在2017年12月31日之前申请2018年的医保。

最近很多人会把因飓风而特别把公开申请日期延伸至

2017年12月31日的2018年医疗保险特殊申请期和因飓风而产生的2017年医疗保险特殊申请期弄混淆。

谁能享受到这个特殊开放申请期？

根据这项指示，“现居住在，或飓风时期曾居住在美国联邦紧急事务管理局(FEMA)宣布的任何一个满足‘个人支援’或‘公共支援’条件的区县”的个人能够享受到这个特殊开放申请期。如果您现在居住的区县有受飓风影响或者您在飓风时期(2017年8月23日-2017年9月15日)曾经居住在那个区县，您就有可以在2017年12月31日前申请2018年健保。

德州有哪些区县是被划在

飓风影响范围内？

根据美国联邦紧急事务管理局，下面这些德州的区县是被划在受灾范围内：

According to FEMA's website this includes the following Texas counties: Aransas, Austin*, Bastrop, Bee, Bexar*, Brazoria, Burleson*, Caldwell, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, Comal*, Dallas*, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzales, Grimes*, Guadalupe*, Hardin, Harris, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jim Wells*, Karnes, Kleberg, Lavaca, Lee, Liberty, Madison*, Matagorda, Milam*, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Polk, Refugio, Sabine, San Augustine*, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Travis*, Tarrant*, Tyler, Victoria, Washington*, Walker, Waller, and Wharton.

完成医疗保险的申请。不需要其它证明文件。

如果我在飓风厄玛(Irma)时期住在佛罗里达州或者在飓风玛丽亚(Maria)时期住在波多黎各，现在搬到德州居住呢？

任何因为2017年飓风相关天气而受影响的地区搬出的居民(或者是在灾难时曾住在那个地区的居民)都可以享受受到延伸至2017年12月31日的特殊开放期去申请健保。

个人如何在这段特殊延长开放期去申请2018年的医疗保险？

想要在这段特殊开放申请期去购买2018年的医疗保险，个人必须致电到市场的电话中心并且要求开放特殊申请期。但是，医保购买者可以在致电健保市场电话中心之前先自己或者通过其他人的现场帮助在网上填好申请表。如果在医

保购买者致电健保市场电话中心要求特殊延长申请期时已经在网上完成了他(她)的申请，医保购买者需要把申请号码告知健保市场电话中心。申请人必须告诉电话中心的客服人员他(她)有受飓风影响所以需要更多的时间去完成购买2018年的医疗保险。大家可以在2017年12月15日之后用以下电话号码联系健保市场电话中心：1-800-318-2596 或者 TTY 到 1-855-889-4325。电话中心每周七天，每天24小时开放。

如果我在特殊申请期需要帮助该怎么办？

如果您有任何问题或者在使用这个特殊延长申请期时需要帮助，请电健保市场电话中心：1-800-318-2596 或 光盐社 713-988-4724。光盐社健保市场导航员将提供申请协助。

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