



American  
Heart  
Association.



RELENTLESS TOGETHER  
**40**  
Years of  
ADVOCACY IMPACT



**RELENTLESS  
TOGETHER:  
40 Years of  
Advocacy Impact**





American  
Heart  
Association.

**Our mission is to be a relentless force  
for a world of longer, healthier lives.**

That's our purpose – the reason we exist –  
and our guiding values ensure we commit  
to that mission daily.

**2024 Impact Goal:** Every person deserves the  
opportunity for a full, healthy life. **As champions  
for health equity**, by 2024, the American Heart  
Association will advance cardiovascular health for  
all, including identifying and removing barriers to  
health care access and quality.

## Meet Candice

It may seem like Shreveport, Louisiana, made the decision to go smoke-free quickly because the time between when the ordinance was introduced and passed was about two weeks. However, as *You're the Cure* advocate, North Louisiana organizer of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice, and Shreveport resident Candice Battiste knows all too well, this ordinance is the result of several years of hard work behind the scenes by the American Heart Association and fellow members of the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Louisiana to lay the groundwork.

Since 2018, Candice was the force behind much of the AHA's on-the-ground efforts. She has hosted numerous petition drives, bar events and so much more. On July 26, 2019, Candice teamed up with bar owner Trey Carter of Strange Brew in Shreveport and co-hosted the first smoke-free event aimed at showing her fellow Shreveporters how smoke-free bars don't have to hinder a good time. Months later, Trey decided to build out an outdoor patio and make his bar smoke free.

The Shreveport City Council passed a comprehensive smoke-free ordinance in 2020, but shortly after the council passed another ordinance to give casinos extra time to implement smoke-free specifically on their gaming floors. Sadly, the floors are where the most toxic level of secondhand smoke exposure occurs. The AHA opposed this delay because it allows patrons and employees to be exposed to secondhand smoke.



Candice continues to help the AHA ensure all Shreveport workers can breathe smoke-free air. Candice shares, "I truly love Shreveport and our hospitality workers, many who are my friends and family. They were essential to our local economy before they were given that designation during this pandemic, and absolutely are now. While we are under a statewide mask mandate, they are returning to the gaming floors. It is harmful to allow patrons to remove their masks to smoke around people who are trying to survive COVID-19 and make a living. I will never stop working for the people who are the first representation of our city to visitors. They deserve their elected representatives to serve them."

Like the AHA, Candice believes the health of ALL Shreveport workers must be prioritized now. She will be monitoring things closely in Shreveport alongside us. The AHA thanks Candice for her dedication to *You're the Cure* and her hard work to build a healthier Shreveport.

# Relentless Together: 40 Years of Advocacy Impact

Improving public policy through advocacy is central to the American Heart Association's mission to be a relentless force for longer, healthier lives. For 40 years and counting, the AHA has advocated in support of public policies that promote cardiovascular health and address health disparities to equitably improve health for everyone, everywhere. Leveraging its research, volunteers, community reach and scientific expertise, the AHA has built an extensive record of bipartisan success informing and influencing public policy at the federal, state and community levels. At the same time, the association also has established itself as an essential partner and collaborator working with a broad cross-section of stakeholders to improve public health.

The AHA first established an advocacy office in Washington, D.C. in 1981 after years of engaging with U.S. presidents and federal agencies. Our initial advocacy priorities focused on enacting federal tobacco-control policies and increasing research funding at the National Institutes of Health. Over the next four decades, the association's advocacy priorities expanded to include improving access to quality health care; increasing the availability of healthy foods; creating opportunities for physical activity; strengthening the public health infrastructure and systems of care; and ensuring state and local governments have the ability to address the health needs of their residents.

Today, these priorities are focused squarely on the AHA's **2024 Impact Goal** to ensure every person nationwide has an opportunity to live a full, healthy life. To accomplish that goal, public policies must address inequities in health and health care resulting from social determinants of health, structural racism and gaps in rural health. The foundation of our efforts to achieve health equity is the association's **2020 Presidential Advisory on Structural Racism as a Fundamental Driver of Health Disparities**, which declared structural racism a cause of poor health and premature death from heart disease and stroke. We are guided by the AHA's unprecedented **10 commitments** to addressing the social determinants of health and the barriers to achieving health equity for all.

These commitments include investing in community-led solutions to health inequity and structural racism, improving access to quality health care for under-resourced populations and rural communities, exposing companies that target disadvantaged communities with unhealthy products including tobacco and sugary drinks, and addressing high rates of hypertension among Black, Hispanic and Indigenous communities nationwide.



American Heart Association Immediate Past Chairman Bertram Scott (left) and Chief Executive Officer Nancy Brown (right) present Congressman Bobby Scott with a National Public Service Award during You're the Cure on the Hill Federal Lobby Day in 2019.

With a staff and volunteer presence in state capitals and communities across the country, the AHA worked to pass or defend more than 100 priority policies at the state and community levels this past year alone.

At the federal level, we are an influential, nonpartisan voice for patients. We have played a central role in boosting the federal medical research budget and passing transformative policies, including the **Affordable Care Act**, landmark legislation that includes numerous protections for patients in the insurance market. Other policies include the **Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act**, which took the historic step of giving the Food & Drug Administration regulatory authority over tobacco products; the **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act**, which empowers the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update nutrition standards for all food sold in schools and the **Every Student Succeeds Act**, the biggest-ever federal commitment to physical education in schools. Finally, the **Furthering Access to Stroke Telemedicine (FAST) Act**, significantly expanded access to telestroke care nationwide.

In more than 40 years of unprecedented advocacy success, the association has consistently innovated to meet the political challenges and public policy opportunities of the future. Major milestones include:

- **Elevating grassroots voices** – In 2003, the AHA launched *You're the Cure*, a nationwide network of grassroots advocates who ensure the voices of patients and their families are heard in policy debates.
- **Researching and translating science** – Beginning in the mid-2000s, the association began publishing peer-reviewed policy statements that set the course for its advocacy agenda.
- **Engaging in global advocacy** – Since moving into global advocacy following the 2011 United Nations high-level meeting on noncommunicable diseases, the AHA has worked with the World Health Organization and other international partners to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases.
- **Catalyzing community advocates** – With the creation of Voices for Healthy Kids in 2013, the Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation developed a critical resource for community groups in need of advocacy capacity building, technical assistance and strategic campaign funding.

Advocacy continues to be an essential component of the AHA's work as we strive to improve cardiovascular health. Our support for fact-based, nonpartisan policy solutions is fueled by volunteer advocates and partners motivated by the simple yet extraordinary desire to give all people the chance to live their healthiest life possible.



# We all have the power to make a difference

Visit [heart.org/advocacy](https://heart.org/advocacy) to get involved now

Local lawmakers and AHA advocates proclaim Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week at the Georgia State Capitol Building in Atlanta.



## CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF ADVOCACY IMPACT

*We all have the power* to make a difference by speaking out for policies that help build healthier communities and healthier lives. The American Heart Association supports the enactment of evidence-based public policies at every level of government.

Join a community that is passionate about building a world free of heart disease and stroke — and equitably improving health for everyone, everywhere.

Join us today!



[heart.org/advocacy](https://heart.org/advocacy)

# RELENTLESS TOGETHER **40** Years of ADVOCACY IMPACT

**1981**

Creation of Federal Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C., focused initially on increased funding for research and changes in tobacco policy.

**1988**

Smoking banned on all commercial airlines.

**1995**

The AHA joins with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, American Cancer Society, American Medical Association and others to launch the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

**1998**

Women's Cardiovascular Diseases Research and Prevention Act is signed into law.

**2002**

Delaware becomes the first state to implement a comprehensive smoke-free law.



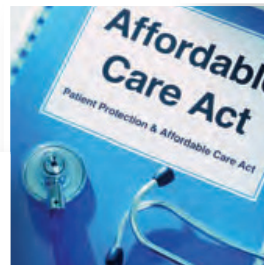
**2005**

Creation of *You're the Cure*, the AHA's powerful grassroots advocacy volunteer network.



**2010**

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passes, extending access to health care coverage to millions of Americans, funding prevention efforts and including the Congenital Heart Futures Act.



**2012**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture releases new nutrition standards for school foods.



**2013**

AHA joins with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to create Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic.



**2015**

Every Student Succeeds Act passes, including AHA-supported provisions to enhance and improve physical education in schools.



**2015**

Congress approves increased funding for the National Institutes of Health of more than \$9 billion.

**2016**

The Food and Drug Administration expands regulation of tobacco products to include electronic cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products.



**F.A.S.T.**

Fast Dispatch, Alert, Stroke, Team to Call 911



**2018**

The Furthering Access to Stroke Telemedicine Act (FAST) is signed into law, giving more Americans access to vital telestroke care.

**2020**

Prince George's County in Maryland becomes the first to require that restaurants offer a healthy drink as the default beverage and require restaurants to limit calories, sugar, salt and fat in kids' meals.

**1996**

AHA champions efforts to allow the Food and Drug Administration regulatory authority over tobacco.

**1994**

AHA champions the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act focused on improving school food.

**2000**

National Institutes of Health funding is doubled.

**2006**

Massachusetts passes a sweeping health care reform law with the aim of providing health insurance to nearly all residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**2008**

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans are released, the first comprehensive physical activity guidelines ever to be released by the federal government.

**2010**

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act Passes, improving the nutritional quality of school food for the first time in a generation.

**2019**

Tobacco to 21 passes, raising the federal minimum legal sale age of tobacco to 21 years of age.





## HEALTH CARE FOR EVERYONE

No one should have to choose between basic needs, such as paying to see a doctor versus putting food on the table. But such decisions are a reality for many people. Despite significant expansion of comprehensive health coverage over the past 10 years, 74 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured and an estimated 20 million Americans with cardiovascular disease or cardiovascular disease risk factors lack insurance coverage. Further, stark racial and income disparities persist regarding access to quality coverage.

**The AHA is expanding and improving health care access and affordability by advocating for federal, state and local policy changes, including expanding Medicaid, expanding telehealth and encouraging people to sign up for coverage under the Affordable Care Act.**

To accomplish this and more, we've launched a three-year **Health Should Not Depend on Wealth** campaign that will drive local, state and national approaches to long-term, equitable and sustainable policy change. We will engage communities in the discussion, lift patient voices and relentlessly work for quality, affordable coverage for all.

### AN URGENT NEED

There are 74 million Americans who are uninsured or underinsured and an estimated 20 million Americans with cardiovascular disease or cardiovascular disease risk factors who lack insurance coverage. This population is far less likely to receive appropriate and timely medical care and often suffers worse medical outcomes, including higher mortality rates.

Beyond employer-provided insurance, public health insurance is not easily accessible, leaving many to fall in the "coverage gap." This means they cannot afford private health insurance and do not qualify for public health insurance.

### HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

The American Heart Association believes every child, every family, every individual should have access to quality affordable health care and shouldn't face financial ruin if they need care. We also believe that too many people have been shut out due to cost, coverage or color. We are doing all we can to ensure quality affordable care is available to all.



*Volunteers gather at the Capitol for **You're the Cure on the Hill**, where they asked members of Congress to support policies that will lead to longer, healthier lives.*

## TOBACCO ENDGAME

### The tobacco endgame — ending tobacco use and nicotine addiction in the U.S. — is within sight.

But e-cigarettes and other tobacco products pose a significant threat to achieving this goal. The new generation of tobacco products is addicting a new generation of users to tobacco and nicotine. The American Heart Association's aggressive public health education campaigns — designed by teens, for teens, along with reinforcement from parents and trusted adults — have worked in the past. But today, we must consider a combination of carefully planned and executed public policy changes, activation of advocates and age-appropriate education.

#### TOBACCO ENDGAME: A CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

The AHA is seeking support for our **National Tobacco Endgame Strategy**, which focuses on reducing the youth vaping epidemic through community education, coalition and partner engagement, strategic communications and decision maker education. A key part of this approach is the local **Kids Heart Challenge** and **American Heart Challenge**, which provides resilience education and helps prepare kids for a healthy lifestyle by supporting their physical and emotional well-being to help stop the growing vaping epidemic.



#### AN URGENT NEED

Nearly 90% of smokers first try a tobacco product by age 18. But if people don't start using tobacco by age 26, they are likely to never start.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, exposure to nicotine during adolescence can cause addiction and harm the developing brain.

With approximately one in four current high school students using e-cigarettes daily, they are now the most popular tobacco products used by kids.



## VOICES FOR HEALTHY KIDS

All children deserve the opportunity to live their healthiest life possible. Unfortunately, not every child in our country has access to healthy foods and beverages or safe places to live, learn and play.



American Heart Association.

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### AN URGENT NEED

Differences in access to opportunities contribute to stark disparities in health outcomes for children who are Black, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and children living in families with low income.

### ADVANCING EQUITABLE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

The American Heart Association's **Voices for Healthy Kids** initiative is working to improve health outcomes for ALL children by supporting, driving and informing local, state and tribal policy change efforts that will dramatically improve the health of children, prioritizing those who experience the greatest health disparities. We believe that policy change can be an effective tool for disrupting age-old systems and practices that enable racism and oppression. We aim for a world where equity exists in all communities, health disparities have significantly decreased and every child has healthy food and safe places to play.

## Building Capacity & Power in Historically Excluded Communities

In collaboration with deeply connected community-based organizations all around the country, **Voices for Healthy Kids** has supported over 235 policy wins that have improved health for more than 300 million people. These policy changes are improving lives while also building long-term relationships and capacity that will promote health improvements for years to come.

By listening to community voices, identifying trusted local leaders and partnering with the American Heart Association's local staff and proven science, we are ensuring that the brightest, most effective and innovative policies and advocacy strategies are supported and advanced. Specifically, we:

- Provide top-notch training and consulting services.
- Support movement-building partnerships between the association and community-based organizations.
- Invest in local non-profit organizations that are leading transformational policy-change efforts.





## HEALTHY FOOD FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE

Good nutrition is critical for a healthy life. Unfortunately, food insecurity — defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the inability of a household to consistently provide enough food — is the reality for millions of people in America. Millions more lack access to healthy foods, putting them at risk for chronic diseases.

### Campaign Goals for a Lifetime of Heart-Healthy Habits:

- Improve the nutritional quality of, and expand access to, school meal and snack programs.
- Support healthy eating within early care and education environments.
- Support SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits for the purchase of healthy foods and beverages.
- Ensure clean water is available for free during the school day and extended hours.
- Reduce consumption of sugary beverages and increase water consumption.
- Improve the quality of restaurant meals offered to children.

*Together, achieving these goals will make our schools and communities places where all kids can grow up healthy and thrive.*

### AN URGENT NEED

Unhealthy diets are a major cause of chronic diseases in kids and adults, including Type 2 diabetes and obesity.

Access to safe drinking water in schools varies by region and the socioeconomic characteristics of the students.

The majority of SNAP recipients are children and elderly or disabled adults.

### A CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

Through our *Healthy Food for Everyone, Everywhere* campaign, we are advocating for change on multiple fronts to increase access to healthy food while simultaneously addressing the systemic challenges families face when trying to make healthy choices.

Contributions to the campaign will support educating key decision makers, coalition and partner engagement, as well as public education and strategic education.



*Pittsburgh volunteers help provide fresh fruits and vegetables to individuals and families in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous 1924 Circle Cor Vitae Society member, and in collaboration with local community organizations, the AHA introduced 45 Pop-Up Produce Markets in January 2021 to the Greater Pittsburgh region.*



## ENSURING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR POSTPARTUM MOMS

Pregnancy and the year following childbirth (termed the “postpartum period”) is a critical and vulnerable time for women’s health. **Many heart-related problems can happen before and after delivery.**

Significant racial disparities exist in heart-related complications among pregnant and postpartum women in the U.S. Tragically, maternal mortality has been increasing over the past three decades in the U.S. Lack of access and poor quality of care, particularly among women of color and those at lower socioeconomic levels, are the leading factors. The American Heart Association is focused on building a nationwide movement to ensure access to postpartum care.

### Advocating to Improve Maternal Health Care Access

We will accomplish Medicaid expansion through efforts such as:

- Working with those in state government who will be responsible for implementing the policy change.
- Supporting a targeted communications campaign to ensure doctors and patients understand that the change has happened and that the benefit is available to patients.
- Growing our network of stakeholders interested in maternal health.
- Leveraging our advocacy staff and volunteers at the state and local levels to continue to engage policymakers and keep them active on maternal health issues.

**The U.S. has the highest rate of maternal mortality — deaths of women during or just after pregnancy — among the world’s developed countries.**

#### AN URGENT NEED

Pregnancy-related deaths are up to three times more common for Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native women.

Cardiovascular diseases are also the leading cause of maternal death — resulting in approximately 700 pregnancy-related complication deaths each year. The most significant risk factors — only some of which can be controlled — include race, age, weight, and blood pressure.

#### ADVANCING TO IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Medicaid finances almost half of all births in the U.S., and mandates coverage for women with incomes up to 138% of the federal poverty level for up to 60 days postpartum. In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act was passed by Congress and included a provision allowing states the option to extend Medicaid for up to one year postpartum.

Extending Medicaid coverage for one year after delivery provides numerous benefits to women and their families, such as covering critical needs related to pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding, management of chronic conditions, mental health challenges and family planning. This opportunity will only be available to states for five years. Without additional action by Congress to extend or make permanent, the incentive for states to extend **Medicaid coverage for pregnant people will expire.**





# National Giving Societies

The American Heart Association is celebrating four decades of nonpartisan advocacy this year — and I’m proud to say I’ve been a volunteer for each of those years, including service as the Chair of the inaugural National Advocacy Coordinating Committee in the late 1990s. Thanks to your support, the AHA continues to advocate for public policies that improve the cardiovascular health for all.



Buddy and Coletta Barrett

Like so many of you, the association’s mission is personal to me. My grandfather, my hero, passed away from a massive heart attack when I was 12. This inspired me to become a cardiovascular nurse and an AHA volunteer. That service commitment put me on a path to serve as the Louisiana Affiliate Chair and eventually National Chairman of the Association Board of Directors. My motivation for staying engaged, even now, is being able to give to grandchildren the gift of time with their grandparents.

I am particularly passionate about the AHA’s efforts to help all people enjoy healthier lives. This work has become even more critical as we see the impact of health inequities in our local and national communities. People suffer when they lack access to basic needs and access to care. Addressing barriers that prevent people from living their healthiest life has been a calling for many years, and the American Heart Association provides opportunities and solutions for doing such work.

My husband Buddy and I are members of both the Cor Vitae and Paul Dudley White Legacy societies. It was a family discussion and a family decision to invest in the American Heart Association. We can help communities by contributing to local and national initiatives as members of these societies, and we encourage your continued participation.

As a registered nurse, I have the opportunity to impact patients’ lives one at a time. As a hospital administrator, I impact the health of my local community. But as an AHA advocate, Cor Vitae and Paul Dudley White Legacy Society contributor, I can impact the health of whole populations of people to live longer, healthier lives. Thank you for joining me in these efforts and for your dedication to the American Heart Association.

With gratitude,

Coletta C. Barrett RN, FACHE, FAHA  
Cor Vitae Society – Champion’s Circle  
Paul Dudley White Legacy Society  
2003-2004 Chairman of the National Board of Directors

A heartfelt thank you goes to members of our national giving societies — **Cor Vitae Society** and **Paul Dudley White Legacy Society**. You represent the American Heart Association’s most generous supporters, and we are incredibly grateful for your dedication to the AHA’s mission. You are at the heart of what makes extraordinary, lifesaving work possible.

Last year, Cor Vitae Society members contributed more than \$85 million in mission support through their annual donations. Since 1956, legacy donors have contributed more than \$3 billion dollars through their estates, ensuring future impact for years to come.

These gifts support local work in our communities nationwide, as well as bold new initiatives with national impact. An exceptional community of individuals, our national giving societies members are united by a determination to ease the burden of cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Your support has funded the research of **14 Nobel Prize** winners in the areas of science, research and technology. The next lifesaving discovery could be made by one of the many experts or researchers funded by the AHA.

For nearly a century, you’ve been instrumental in helping us make an extraordinary difference in the lives of millions of people. Together, we drive maximum impact on equitable health and well-being in the United States and around the world.

The Cor Vitae Society — *Latin for heart of life* — brings together people whose inspiring commitment makes our lifesaving work possible. The Society recognizes those whose generous annual gifts support work in our communities nationwide, as well as those who make direct gifts for bold new initiatives with national impact. Cor Vitae Society members are the heartbeat of the association, driving maximum impact in equitable health and well-being around the world. Cor Vitae membership topped 6,770 in the last year, representing nearly \$85 million in philanthropic support.

The Paul Dudley White Legacy Society honors generous donors who have included the AHA in their wills, trusts or other estate plans. Named after Dr. Paul Dudley White, a founder who’s considered the father of preventive cardiology, more than 5,230 members have committed to leaving a legacy of support.

# Meet Melissa

Melissa Dodge isn't used to putting herself front and center. She is far more comfortable advocating for the American Heart Association on behalf of her daughter, Brooklynn, who was born with half a heart. But when you ask Melissa what she fears most, it's not being there to take care of Brooklynn and her other children. That's a very real concern for this single mom, because despite holding down a part-time job Melissa, like 150,000 other Kansans, is uninsured and living in the KanCare Gap.

Brooklynn has undergone 21 surgeries, three of which were open-heart procedures — the first when she was only 8 days old. She spent seven months of the first year of her life in hospitals. She has overcome a paralyzed diaphragm and is still living with a paralyzed vocal cord.

Brooklynn has three brothers. Four kids will keep any family busy, but with the extra time and energy Melissa must devote each week to her children's health care, this working single mom really has her hands full.

She lives with her mother, who helps with the kids, which allows Melissa to work 20-25 hours a week at a grocery store. Working nights also allows her to take her kids to school each morning and to frequent doctors' appointments.

Melissa remarks, "People occasionally ask why I live with my mother at age 35 and why I don't work a full-time job. The truth is that 99% of what I do in my life is out of necessity for my kids and only 1% is personal convenience."

She recently received the yearly notification from her job that due to her part time status, she doesn't qualify for work-based health insurance. Since she makes too much to qualify for KanCare and not enough to receive assistance on the Affordable Care Act Marketplace, it was a sobering reminder that



she could be one medical event away from keeping her family together. Living with that reality has an impact on her stress and mental health. Melissa's dad died of a heart attack at age 54, so she knows the stress isn't good for her.

She shared, "My daughter's life is dependent upon me. No one else even knows what medications she takes or even the name of her cardiologist. I tell my kids that their health should always be priority, but I don't model that behavior. I don't take care of myself and don't go to the doctor when I should, because I can't afford it."

As the Kansas legislature considers various KanCare Expansion proposals, the American Heart Association urges them to pass a clean expansion bill with no barriers and no delays. Melissa and other families like hers continue to work to convince Kansas legislators to do the right thing. Every day the legislature delays quite literally puts her family at risk.



Watch  
Melissa's story



American Heart Association.  
You're the Cure

Join Today!

When it comes to fighting heart disease and stroke, you're the cure. Join our nationwide movement in support of healthier communities and healthier lives.

Text "CURE" to 46839 or visit

[yourethecure.org](http://yourethecure.org)





## *Thank you!*

We value the confidence and trust you place in the millions of researchers, scientists, donors, volunteers and staff who make up our American Heart Association family. Thank you for being a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.



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