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The Linux Kernel Concurrency Sanitizer Marco Elver, Senior Software Engineer, Google



Introduction and Agenda

- Background on Data Races
- The Linux Kernel Memory Consistency Model
- Linux-Kernel Data-Race Detection with KCSAN
- Concurrency Bugs Beyond Data Races

Scope and Expectations

- Understanding of Data Races
- Brief Introduction to Memory Consistency Models
- Building and Using Kernels with KCSAN





Problem

- Thinking about multiple threads of execution is notoriously difficult
- Tension between performant vs. simpler synchronization mechanisms
- Numerous advanced synchronization mechanisms
- Kernel's job inherently concurrent

We need tool assistance!





Background





- C-language and compilers evolved oblivious to concurrency
- Optimizing compilers are becoming more creative
- load tearing,
- store tearing,
- load fusing,
- store fusing,
- code reordering,
- invented loads,
- invented stores,
- ... and more!

Need to tell compiler about concurrent code

"Who's afraid of a big bad optimizing compiler?", LWN 2019. URL: <u>https://lwn.net/Articles/793253/</u>





Defined via language's *memory consistency model* (more detail later):

- C-language and compilers no longer oblivious to concurrency:
 - C11 introduced memory model: "data races cause undefined behaviour"
 - Not Linux's model!
- Linux kernel has its **own memory model**, giving semantics to concurrent code





Basic definition:

- 1. Concurrent conflicting accesses
 - They conflict if they access the same location and at least one is a write
- 2. At least one is a plain access (e.g. "x + 42")
 - Not specially marked for synchronization (compiler assumes no concurrency)





Data-race-free code has several benefits:

- 1. Well-defined. Avoids having to reason about compiler and architecture.
 - Avoid having to reason "Is this data race benign?"
- 2. **Fewer bugs.** Data races can also indicate higher-level race-condition bugs.
 - E.g. failing to synchronize accesses using spinlocks, mutexes, RCU, etc.
- 3. **Prevent bugs,** and countless hours debugging elusive race conditions!

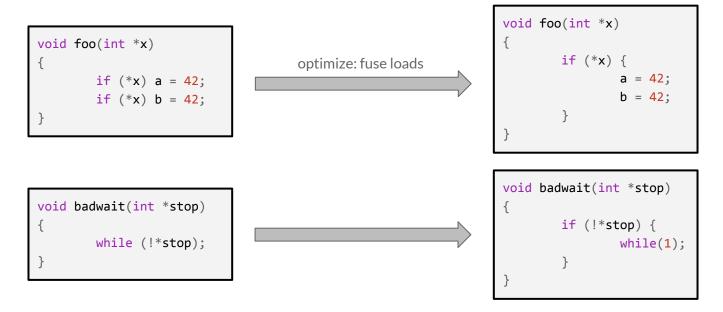








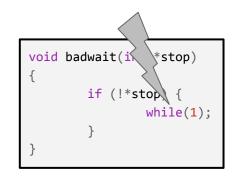






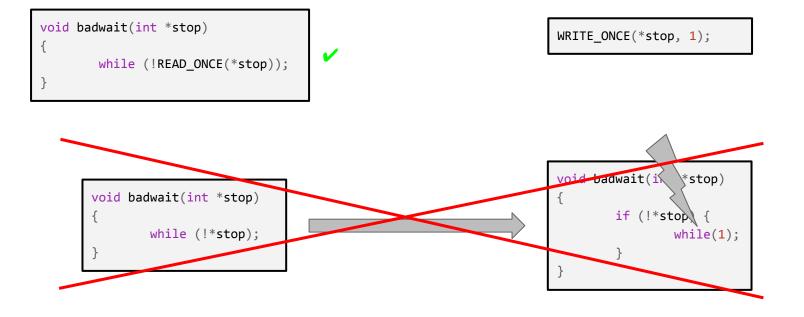


WRITE_ONCE(*stop, 1);













Data races often symptom of more serious issue

BUG: KCSAN: data-race in __fat_write_inode / fat12_ent_get

write to 0xffff8881015f423c of 4 bytes by task 9966 on cpu 1: __fat_write_inode+0x246/0x510 fs/fat/inode.c:877

•••

read to 0xffff8881015f423d of 1 bytes by task 9960 on cpu 0: fat12_ent_get+0x5e/0x120 fs/fat/fatent.c:125

• • •

Careful, if symptom of higher-level issue!

fat: don't allow to mount if the FAT length == 0

If FAT length == 0, the image doesn't have any data. And it can be the cause of overlapping the root dir and FAT entries.

Also Windows treats it as invalid format.

Reported-by: syzbot+6f1624f937d9d691le2d@syzkaller.appspotmail.com Signed-off-by: OGAWA Hirofumi <hirofumi@mail.parknet.co.jp> Signed-off-by: Andrew Morton <akpm@linux-foundation.org> Cc: Marco Elver <elver@google.com> Cc: Dmitry Vyukov <dvyukov@google.com> Link: http://lkml.kernel.org/r/87rlwz8mrd.fsf@mail.parknet.co.jp Signed-off-by: Linus Torvalds <torvalds@linux-foundation.org>

Diffstat

```
diff --git a/fs/fat/inode.c b/fs/fat/inode.c
index e6e68b2274a5c..a0cf99debblec 100644
--- a/fs/fat/inode.c
+++ b/fs/fat/inode.c
@@ -1519,6 +1519,12 @@ static int fat_read_bpb(struct super_block *sb, struct
goto out;
}
+ if (bpb->fat_fat_length == 0 && bpb->fat32_length == 0) {
if (!silent)
+ fat_msg(sb, KERN_ERR, "bogus number of FAT sectors");
+ goto out;
+ }
+ }
+ (14
error = 0;
```





The Linux Kernel Memory Consistency Model (LKMM)



What is a memory consistency model?

- What's the behaviour of memory accesses on a multiprocessor system?
- Or simply: *What value does a read access observe?*
- To write correct concurrent code, programmer needs to understand the semantics of the system they are programming

Memory consistency model specifies ordering guarantees of memory operations with which the programmer can reason about parallel programs





What is a memory consistency model?

Exists at different levels in our stack:

- At hardware level, architecture has a memory model (system-centric model)
 - <u>x86-TSO</u>, <u>Armv8</u>, <u>Armv7</u>, <u>PowerPC</u>, Alpha
- Programming language should have its own (programmer-centric model)
 - C++11 [<u>1,2]</u>, <u>C11</u>, <u>Java</u>





Language-Level Memory Models

- Required to deal with compiler optimizations vs. concurrent code
- Distinguishes
 - "marked" (viz. atomic, or synchronization) and
 - "plain" (viz. "ordinary", non-atomic, or data) accesses
- Atomicity and ordering guarantees of marked accesses w.r.t. other accesses
- Marked atomic accesses building blocks for synchronization
- Compiler must not transform code in ways that would weaken memory model



Trade-offs Between Performance and Programmability

- Strictest and simplest model is <u>Sequential Consistency (SC)</u>
- Weak memory models offer more opportunities for speculation ⇒ Performance!

Programmer-centric

		J	ava [MPA05	5]					
		C++1	1 [ISO11b;]	BA08]					
		C	C11 [ISO11a] PL1 [Gha95] PL2 [Gha95]						
		J]	LKMM	HRF-direct[How+14]	·]	
optimizatio	n	D	DRF0 [Adv93] DRF1 [Adv93]		93]		HRF-indirect[How+14]		•
potential	SC [Lam79]	R	Csc [Gha95	; Gha+90]	POWE	R [Alg+12; A	MT14; Mad+	12; Sar+11]	
	TSO [S]	PA92; OSS09]	RCpc [G	ha95; Gha+90]	ARMv	7 [AMT14]	RM	O-GPU [Alg+15]
		PC [Gha+90]		1	ARMv8	[Flu+16]			
		PSO [SPA	A92]	RMO [SPA94;	Gha95	I			
		WO [[DSB86]						



The Linux Kernel Memory Consistency Model (LKMM)

- The Linux kernel's requirements resulted in a non-standard memory model
- Evolved, with many changes over the years (remember ACCESS_ONCE()?)
- The formal LKMM (tools/memory-model) incomplete vs. real code
- Informal documentation (<u>memory-barriers.txt</u>) not complete either: "[...] This document is not a specification; it is intentionally (for the sake of brevity) and unintentionally (due to being human) incomplete. [...]"





LKMM: Basic Marked Accesses

Primitive	Result	Orders
READ_ONCE(x)	read of x	later dependent reads+marked writes
WRITE_ONCE(x, Y)	write Y to x	none
<pre>smp_load_acquire(&x)</pre>	read of x	later reads+writes
<pre>smp_store_release(&x, Y)</pre>	write Y to x	earlier reads+writes
<pre>rcu_dereference(x)</pre>	read of x	later dependent reads+marked writes
<pre>smp_mb()</pre>	none	earlier+later reads+writes
<pre>smp_rmb()</pre>	none	earlier+later reads
<pre>smp_wmb()</pre>	none	earlier+later writes





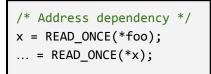
Dependency Ordering

- READ_ONCE() and rcu_dereference() orders later:
 - address-, data-, and control-dependent marked writes
 - address-dependent reads





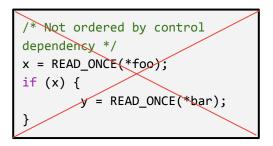
Dependency Ordering



/* Data dependency */
x = READ_ONCE(*foo);
x += 42;
WRITE_ONCE(*bar, x);

Warning: Most tricky aspect of LKMM and likely to change in future because compilers can still break dependencies.

Further reading: <u>Status Report: Broken Dependency</u> <u>Orderings in the Linux Kernel</u>







Many more marked accesses in LKMM

- All <u>atomic_t</u> accessors
- Atomic read-modify-writes: xchg(), cmpxchg() and variants
- <u>Atomic bitops</u>

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What are data races in the LKMM?

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Data races (X) occur if:

- <u>Concurrent</u> conflicting accesses
 - they conflict if they access the <u>same location</u> and <u>at</u> <u>least one is a write</u>
- At least one is a <u>plain</u> access

	Thread 0	Thread 1
×	= x + 1;	x = 0xf0f0;
×	= x + 1;	<pre>WRITE_ONCE(x, 0xf0f0);</pre>
×	\dots = READ_ONCE(x) + 1;	x = 0xf0f0;
×	\dots = READ_ONCE(x) + 1;	X++;
×	x = 0xff00;	x = 0xff;
	\dots = READ_ONCE(x) + 1;	<pre>WRITE_ONCE(x, 0xf0f0);</pre>
/	<pre>WRITE_ONCE(x, 0xff00);</pre>	<pre>WRITE_ONCE(x, 0xff);</pre>





Intentional Data Races

- The Linux kernel says that data races do not result in undefined behaviour of the whole kernel
- Locally "undefined" behaviour: where code still operates correctly even with potentially random data, data races are tolerated (truly "benign" data races)
- Mark such data races with "data_race(.. data-racy expression ..)"
 - Helps tooling understand they are intentional
 - Document intent

For more guidance, see <u>access-marking.txt</u>



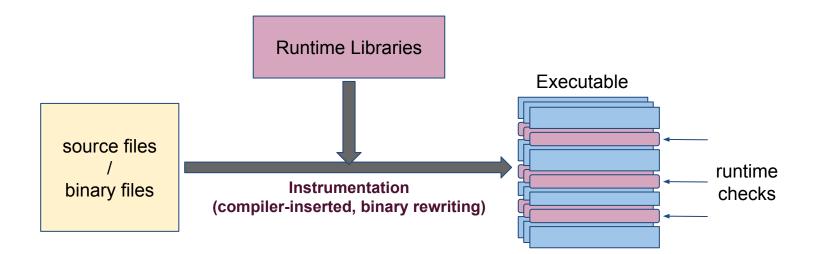


Linux-Kernel Data-Race Detection





Dynamic Analysis



Dmitry Vyukov, "Dynamic Program Analysis for Fun and Profit", LF Webinar 2021



Past Attempts at Kernel Data-Race Detectors

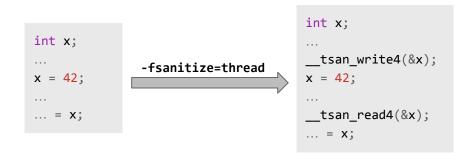
Kernel Thread Sanitizer (KTSAN): google.github.io/kernel-sanitizers/KTSAN.html

- Compiler-instrumentation based (-fsanitize=thread)
- **Runtime:** Same algorithm as user space ThreadSanitizer (TSan v2)
 - Happens-before race detector (vector clocks)
- **Pros:** few false negatives, precise, detects memory ordering issues (missing memory barriers etc.)
- **Cons:** scalability, memory overhead, false positives without annotating all synchronization primitives





Past Attempts at Kernel Data-Race Detectors





Past Attempts at Kernel Data-Race Detectors

Watchpoint-based race detection:

- RaceHound: github.com/kmrov/racehound
- DataCollider: John Erickson, Madanlal Musuvathi, Sebastian Burckhardt, and Kirk Olynyk.
 "<u>Effective Data-Race Detection for the Kernel</u>", OSDI 2010

Basic Idea:

- set HW watchpoint + delay
- if breakpoint triggered \Rightarrow race!
- if value changed \Rightarrow race!

Why did they never make it into the mainline Linux kernel?





Unique Linux-Kernel Requirements

Requirement	RaceHound	DataCollider	Kernel Thread Sanitizer (KTSAN)	Kernel Concurrency Sanitizer (KCSAN)	
Runtime performance	•	/	v	 ✓ 	
Low memory overhead		/	×	 ✓ 	
Prefer false negatives over false positives		×	~		
Maintenance: unintrusive to rest of kernel			×	~	
Scalable memory access instrumentation	×	~	v	~	
Language-level access aware (LKMM-compatibility)	×		v	 ✓ 	

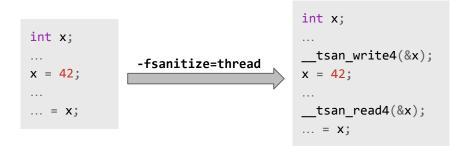


- Compiler-instrumentation based dynamic race detector
- Detects "data races" by default (more with special assertions, discussed later)
- Available since Linux 5.8
- Notable improvements (and relevant release):
 - Distinguishing read-modify-write accesses (5.10)
 - Show value changes (5.14)
 - More filtering data races (5.15)
 - Detection of data races due to missing memory barriers (5.17)





Basic idea: Observe that 2 accesses happen concurrently **Which accesses:** Let compiler instrument memory accesses





- Catch races using "soft" watchpoints:
 - Set watchpoint, and stall access
 - If watchpoint already exists \Rightarrow race!
 - If value changed \Rightarrow race!
 - Stall accesses with random delays to increase chance to observe race
 - *Default:* uniform between [1,80] µs for tasks, [1,20] µs for interrupts
- Sampling: periodically set up watchpoints
 - *Default:* every ~2000 accesses (uniform random [1,4000])
 - Caveat: lower probability to detect rare races
 - Offset by good stress tests, or fuzzers like <u>syzkaller</u>

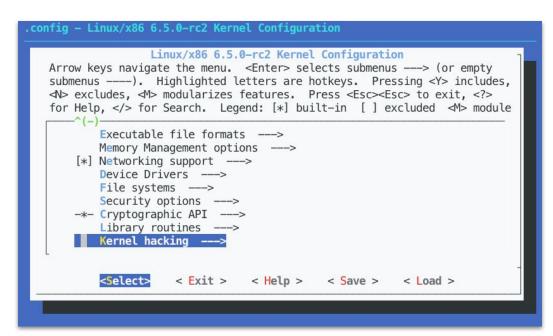


Usage:

- Supported architectures: x86-64, arm64, s390, mips, powerp, xtensa
- **Compiler requirement:** Clang 11+, GCC 11+
- Build your kernel with **CONFIG_KCSAN=y**
 - For debugging and testing kernel
 - **Not** recommended for production kernels more than 5x slowdown
- **Suggested:** CONFIG_KCSAN_STRICT=y (since 5.17)
 - "Strict" LKMM rules (but as of 6.4 still noisy)
 - Includes weak memory modeling (detect missing memory barriers)

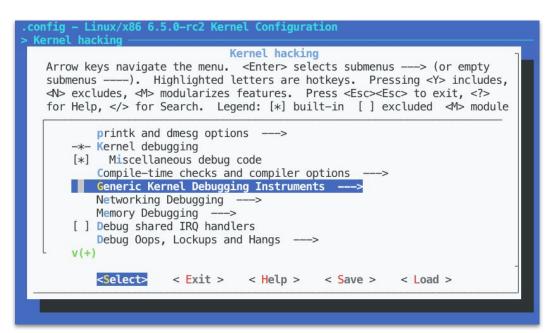






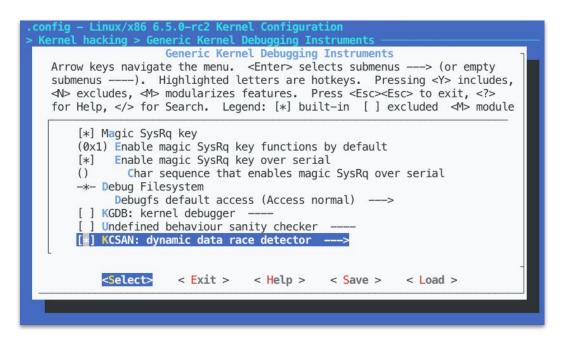






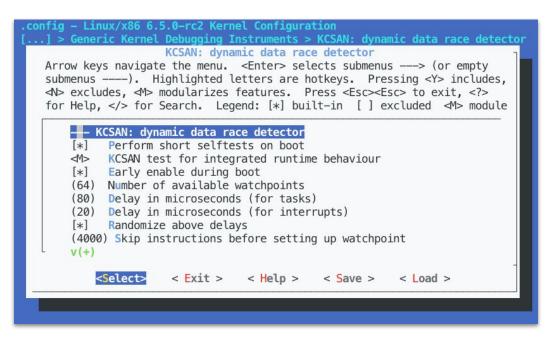






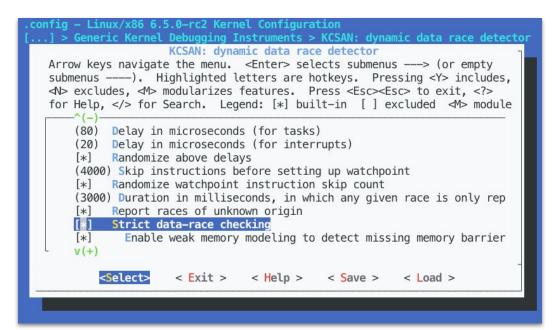
















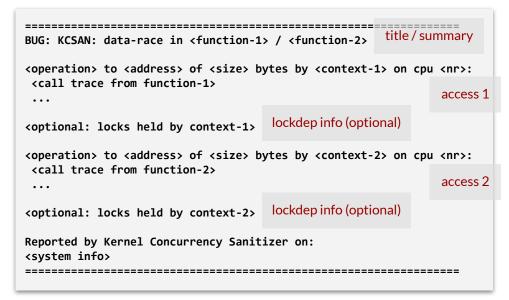
Booting the Kernel with KCSAN

[Freeing SMP alternatives memory: 52K				
[0.653823]	pid_max: default: 32768 minimum: 301				
[0.654967]	LSM: initializing lsm=capability,selinux,integrity				
	0.655855]	SELinux: Initializing.				
[0.657059]	Mount-cache hash table entries: 32768 (order: 6, 262144 bytes, linea				
r)						
[0.657841]	Mountpoint-cache hash table entries: 32768 (order: 6, 262144 bytes,				
linea	ar)					
[0.660704]	kcsan: enabled early				
[0.660823]	<pre>kcsan: non-strict mode configured - use CONFIG_KCSAN_STRICT=y to see</pre>				
all	all data races					
[0.662170]	<pre>smpboot: CPU0: Intel(R) Xeon(R) Gold 6154 CPU @ 3.00GHz (family: 0x6</pre>				
, moo	del: 0x55,	stepping: 0x4)				
[0.664104]	RCU Tasks: Setting shift to 3 and lim to 1 rcu_task_cb_adjust=1.				
]		Performance Events: Skylake events, full-width counters, Intel PMU d				

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Understanding KCSAN Reports

- Title: Shows which 2 functions raced
- Access information: Shows type of operation (read, write, read-write, and if marked), address, size, which task (or interrupt), and on which cpu
- Optional: Shows *lockdep* info if compiled with:
 - OUDE CONFIG_PROVE_LOCKING=y
 - OUDE CONFIG_KCSAN_VERBOSE=y







Severity of Data Races

Often the existence of a data race is merely a symptom of a bigger issue!

Data race may point out the following concurrency bugs:

- A. Race-condition bugs where the resulting error manifests as a data race, followed by eventual system failure. Simply marking the accesses does not fix the problem. The fix requires more invasive changes to program logic (for example adding required locking).
- B. **Miscompilation** may introduce bugs that can lead to **system failure**. The fix requires using *appropriate marked atomic accesses*. Requires no fundamental changes in program logic to fix.
- C. **Miscompilation** may introduce tolerated **inaccuracies** ("benign data race"), but does not lead to system failure. Typically approximate diagnostics. Marking with data_race(..) is sufficient.

Important: Avoid hiding bugs of type (A) by blindly marking data races!





Beyond Data Races





Thread 0

spin_lock(&update_foo_lock);
/* Careful! There should be no other
writers to shared_foo! Readers ok. */
WRITE_ONCE(shared_foo, ...);
spin_unlock(&update_foo_lock);





Thread 0	Thread 1
<pre>spin_lock(&update_foo_lock); /* Careful! There should be no other writers to shared_foo! Readers ok. */ WRITE_ONCE(shared_foo,); spin_unlock(&update_foo_lock);</pre>	<pre>/* update_foo_lock does not need to be held! */ = READ_ONCE(shared_foo);</pre>

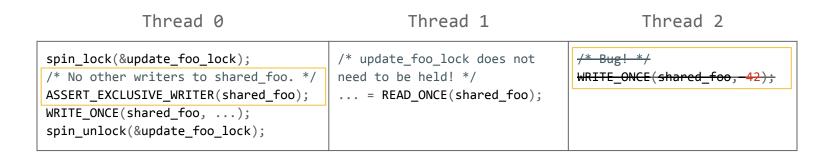




Thread 0	Thread 1	Thread 2
<pre>spin_lock(&update_foo_lock); /* Careful! There should be no other writers to shared_foo! Readers ok. */ WRITE_ONCE(shared_foo,); spin_unlock(&update_foo_lock);</pre>	<pre>/* update_foo_lock does not need to be held! */ = READ_ONCE(shared_foo);</pre>	<pre>/* Bug! */ WRITE_ONCE(shared_foo, 42);</pre>











Detecting More Concurrency Bugs

ASSERT_EXCLUSIVE family of macros:

- Specify properties of concurrent code, where bugs are not normal data races
- Reported as: BUG: KCSAN: assert: race in <func1> / <func2>

	concurre	nt writes	concurrent reads
ASSERT_EXCLUSIVE_WRITER(var) ASSERT_EXCLUSIVE_WRITER_SCOPED(var)	×		v
ASSERT_EXCLUSIVE_ACCESS(var) ASSERT_EXCLUSIVE_ACCESS_SCOPED(var)	×		×
ASSERT_EXCLUSIVE_BITS(var, mask)	~mask 🗸	mask 🗙	v



Concurrency Testing Best Practices

- 1. Design test cases to cover both expected and unexpected interleavings
- 2. Ensure to include test cases that cover different concurrency aspects of the code
- 3. Ensure to include test cases that mimic real-world scenarios
- 4. Stress test with a high number of threads that simulates worst case scenarios
- 5. Design test cases that quickly execute to-be-tested code repeatedly

Brendan Higgins, "<u>KUnit Testing Strategies</u>", LF Webinar 2021





Summary





Summary

- Concurrency in the Linux kernel is challenging
- The LKMM provides the foundation for writing concurrent code in the kernel
- Use KCSAN to help detect concurrency bugs early, and avoid data races

Kernel Documentation: docs.kernel.org/dev-tools/kcsan.html

Marco Elver, Paul E. McKenney, Dmitry Vyukov, Andrey Konovalov, Alexander Potapenko, Kostya Serebryany, Alan Stern, Andrea Parri, Akira Yokosawa, Peter Zijlstra, Will Deacon, Daniel Lustig, Boqun Feng, Joel Fernandes, Jade Alglave, and Luc Maranget. **"Concurrency bugs should fear the big bad data-race detector."** Linux Weekly News (LWN), 2020. URL: <u>https://lwn.net/Articles/816850/</u>

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Thank you for joining us today!

We hope it will be helpful in your journey to learning more about effective and productive participation in open source projects. We will leave you with a few additional resources for your continued learning:

- The <u>LF Mentoring Program</u> is designed to help new developers with necessary skills and resources to experiment, learn and contribute effectively to open source communities.
- <u>Outreachy remote internships program</u> supports diversity in open source and free software
- <u>Linux Foundation Training</u> offers a wide range of <u>free courses</u>, webinars, tutorials and publications to help you explore the open source technology landscape.
- <u>Linux Foundation Events</u> also provide educational content across a range of skill levels and topics, as well as the chance to meet others in the community, to collaborate, exchange ideas, expand job opportunities and more. You can find all events at <u>events.linuxfoundation.org</u>.