

Court sides with Naval Academy in admissions

Race-conscious policies fulfill need for diverse office corps, judge rules

BY SUSAN SVRLUGA

The U.S. Naval Academy can continue to use race-conscious admissions policies, a federal judge ruled Friday in a closely watched case that followed last year's Supreme Court decision rejecting the use of affirmative action in college admissions.

In U.S. District Court in Baltimore, Senior District Judge Richard D. Bennett ruled that the academy had established that a diverse officer corps is important to national security, and that the academy is a vital pipeline to that corps.

The group that brought the case, Students for Fair Admissions, immediately said it would appeal the decision to the appellate court and, if needed, to the Supreme Court.

"It is our hope that the U.S. military academies ultimately will be compelled to follow the Supreme Court's prohibition of race in college admissions," Edward Blum, the president of SFFA, who has propelled multiple cases regarding race and ethnicity to the Supreme Court, wrote in an email.

Last year, the Supreme Court rejected race-conscious affirmative action in college admissions. The ruling was focused on Harvard and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill but upended more than 40 years of legal precedent, changed practices at selective universities across

SEE ACADEMY ON A5

N.Y. slaying sends a chill among ranks of executives

CEOs, often the targets of the public's venom, face rising risk in internet age

BY DANIEL GILBERT AND SHANNON NAJMEBADI

The targeted killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, a powerful executive walking alone on a New York sidewalk, is forcing a broad examination of security practices by corporations whose leaders are frequently subject to threats and internet vitriol.

Thompson, 50, was reportedly the subject of threats before he was fatally shot Wednesday morning outside the midtown Manhattan hotel where UnitedHealthcare was holding its annual investor conference. New York police said Thompson was not accompanied by a security detail at the time he was shot by an unidentified gunman, who remained the subject of a manhunt Friday.

The reported threats, and publicly available information about the event, should have "necessitated some level of protection," said Jonathan Wackrow, chief operating officer for Teneo Risk and a former Secret Service agent. "The question remains, why did he not have it?"

SEE SECURITY ON A10

UnitedHealth: Slain CEO faced litigation, legislative threats. **A10**



GHAITH ALSAYED/AP

Opposition fighters ride through the streets of Hama, Syria, on Friday, a day after they took over the city from government security forces.

Rebel advance threatens Russia's foothold in Syria

Putin may lack resources to save Assad again as he did in 2015 intervention

BY ROBYN DIXON

The lightning advance of rebels in Syria and their rapid capture of the cities of Aleppo and Hama are threatening one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's proudest achievements, his 2015 military intervention to prop up President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Almost a decade later, however, Moscow is embroiled in a massive land war in Europe and analysts question whether it has the resources to save Assad again, even as it continues to pledge



MUHAMMAD HAJ KADOUR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A truck pulls the head of a toppled statue of the late Syrian president Hafez al-Assad through the streets of Hama on Friday.

Abu Mohammed al-Jolani: Islamist leader steps out of the shadows. **A7**

support verbally.

"We are in constant dialogue with our Syrian friends, with Damascus," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday. "And depending on the assessment of the situation, it will be possible to talk about the degree of assistance that is necessary for the Syrian authorities to cope with the militants and eliminate this threat."

At risk here is not just Russia's prestige but its prized military foothold in the eastern Mediterranean region: the naval base of Tartus and, farther north, the Hmeimim air base, both with 49-year leases received after Russia's regime-saving intervention.

Russia has maintained a significant military presence in Syria and stepped up its airstrikes in recent days, with human rights

SEE SYRIA ON A7

Plan to relocate federal jobs has familiar doubts

Trump to expand effort that critics say disrupted work, gutted agencies

BY TODD C. FRANKEL

President-elect Donald Trump and his supporters say they want to move 100,000 federal jobs out of Washington to places that they describe as less expensive, closer to stakeholders and, as Trump put it in a campaign video, "filled with patriots who love America."

Trump tried to move federal jobs out of Washington during his first term — on a much smaller scale — and that resulted in mass departures of experienced workers, questionable cost savings and broad interruptions to government work.

In 2019, the Trump administration said it would move the Bureau of Land Management headquarters and its nearly 600 jobs to the small city of Grand Junction, Colo. When the new offices opened a year later, just three of the bureau's employees walked in the door.

About 40 more were assigned to other offices out West. But nearly 90 percent of headquar-

ters employees opted to leave the agency or work remotely rather than head West. It was "a giant brain drain," said Tracy Stone-Manning, who took over as the agency's director under President Joe Biden in 2021.

Trump officials also moved the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to Kansas City. The relocation of the roughly 700 jobs disrupted the agencies' work and raised doubts it was a money-saving decision, according to interviews and a critical government watchdog report that noted the agencies shed half their staff, including in key positions.

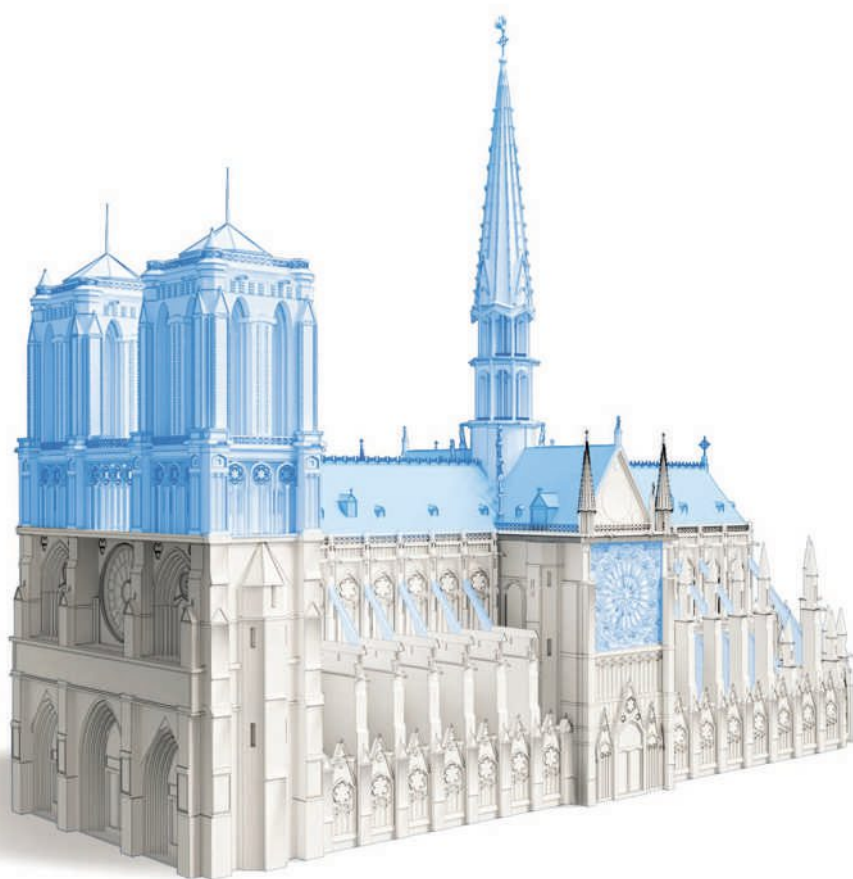
Laura Dodson, an agricultural economist and vice president of a workers local union, called it an "unnecessary kneecapping of an agency."

Trump's transition team did not respond to a request for comment. Project 2025, a policy blueprint for a second Trump term drafted by the Heritage Foundation, defended the move

SEE JOBS ON A12

Ultrich Cabinet: Wealth of many picks raises ethics concerns. **A4**

Elon Musk: Filings show he was this election's biggest donor. **A5**



AARON STECKELBERG/THE WASHINGTON POST

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Amid a buzz about Donald Trump issuing pardons, judges in Jan. 6 cases stressed the need to preserve the truth of that day's events. **B1**

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SPORTS **Oregon** boasts one of the most well-funded NIL operations in the nation. The backing of Phil Knight helps. **D1**

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If Trump wants to cut government workers, look to private sector



Federal Insider
JOE DAVIDSON

President-elect Donald Trump's antagonism toward the federal workforce and his eagerness to slash "deep state" spending will soon meet this harsh reality — so much government work isn't done by

the government.

"The real deep state is the contractor state," argues John J. Dilulio, Jr., a University of Pennsylvania political science professor, in a November article published by the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

If Trump wants big cuts in federal spending, government contractors are a much richer, although less understood, target than the 2.3 million federal employees. Their \$293 billion in compensation was a small portion, 4.3 percent, of the nation's \$6.8 trillion budget in 2024. About 60 percent of the payroll was spent on responsibilities Congress hates to cut — defense, veterans and homeland security.

In fiscal 2023, the government obligated \$759.2 billion in contracts, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Sixty percent of that, \$456 billion, went to the Pentagon.

"There's a war on federal bureaucrats, but federal bureaucrats don't account for much of the federal budget," said Donald F. Kettl, professor emeritus and former dean of the University of Maryland School of Public Policy. "There's talk about cutting back on federal employees, but no one really wants to cut back on functions where the most feds work."

The contracting class, however, has many Capitol Hill protectors.

Contracting private companies to do government work has long been a favorite objective of congressional Republicans for many federal functions. That includes fundamental government responsibilities like veterans' health care and tax collection.

But Trump could disrupt that if his team's rhetoric becomes policy. While he has focused his scorn on federal employees, the government's workforce broadly



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

The federal government was obligated \$759.2 billion on contracts in 2023, the Government Accountability Office reported, with 60 percent of that total going to the Pentagon.

defined includes many more workers — government contractors — who could find themselves in his bull's eye.

"We expect certain agencies to be deleted outright," Trump lieutenant Vivek Ramaswamy told Fox News. "We expect mass reductions in force in areas of the federal government that are bloated. We expect massive cuts among federal contractors and others who are overbilling the federal government. So, yes, we expect all of the above. And I think people will be surprised by, I think, how quickly we're able to move."

Ramaswamy has called for an unrealistic 75 percent evisceration of the on-payroll federal workforce. His co-leader of Trump's advisory "Department of Government Efficiency," Elon Musk, wants a \$2 trillion slashing of the federal budget.

They might be surprised by how difficult it is to change Washington's way.

Ramaswamy's plan will confront Dilulio's main points: "The number of people who get paid from the U.S. Treasury but work for private businesses and nonprofits is now more than three times as large as the entire on-payroll federal civilian workforce

"Eliminating the entire on-

payroll federal workforce would reduce total federal spending by less than five percent

"The 'Washington swamp' is not where the vast majority of federal bureaucrats, citizen-beneficiaries, and contractors live."

Officials at the White House Office of Management and Budget did not respond to questions about the number of contract workers, probably because no one really knows how many there are. The federal government "does not systematically track the number of federal contractor employees," a GAO spokesperson said by email. But Kettl said Dilulio's "analysis is solid," even if the number of federal contractors and subcontractors is not known.

"The federal government just doesn't keep its books in a way that allows us to produce a precise answer," Kettl added. His research indicates "the federal government is now spending about three times as much on services purchased from contracts as on its own payroll."

While the answer isn't known, the question of how many contractors are employed by the government is important, he said, because "the vastly greater number of private sector employees paid by the federal

government is an important issue that gets very little attention."

Battling the contractor state won't be easy because it is protected by "four intersecting networks," according to Dilulio: "financially well-heeled and politically well-protected mega-corporations led by big defense contractors; state and local government leaders in both parties that bark and blaviate about federal bureaucracy and overspending but fight for their constituents' shares of federal dollars; taxpayer-subsidized nonprofit organizations with multi-million-dollar annual budgets; and, last and most lethal to reform efforts, career congresspersons in both parties."

"The real deep state's biggest contracts consistently go to the military-industrial complex's mega-corporations via the U.S. Department of Defense," Dilulio wrote. That's the last agency Republicans want to cut.

If Trump does cut contractors, it will be a reversal of his first-term actions. Then, according to a Brookings article by Paul C. Light, a New York University professor emeritus of public service, Trump added 2 million contractor jobs to the federal payroll, half of which were in the departments of Defense,

Transportation, and Health and Human Services.

Major questions haunting Trump's plans to slash the government's workforce include who will do the jobs and what services will be cut. Trump's transition team and the Professional Services Council, which represents government contractors, declined to comment.

"If the future Trump administration carries out its plans to cut the number of federal employees, but if Congress doesn't cut back on the work that's required by law, who is going to do that work?" Kettl asked. "We're likely to see an even larger number of contractors — and private sector employees paid by federal money — but the true size of the increase, and the implications for how work gets done, will likely be hidden. It would be enormously disingenuous to claim credit for cutting the number of government employees while pushing the work to the private sector. That's not really cutting government — just hiding it."

Trump's long-standing pledge to "drain the swamp," in part by moving agency headquarters from Washington, is a way to reduce the number of federal employees. When he did that with the Bureau of Land Management during his first term, before the Biden administration reversed the move, only about 23 percent of the staff accepted their reassignments, according to a GAO report. The others left the already understaffed agency, "which created additional vacancies," GAO found. Note: 85 percent of feds already live outside the Greater Washington area, so relocation efforts won't accomplish much on that score.

Despite the November Republican sweep of the executive and legislative branches of government, Trump could have a tough time accomplishing all of the suggested cuts, because many government programs are popular.

"Most Americans favor 'smaller government' in theory but not in practice," Dilulio said, while they "love federal government benefits, and loathe federal taxes and bureaucracy" that deliver what taxpayers want.

USDA orders states to test raw milk for bird flu amid outbreak

BY MARK JOHNSON
AND SABRINA MALHI

The U.S. Agriculture Department on Friday ordered testing of the nation's milk supply for bird flu starting Dec. 16, a step public health experts have clamored for following the detection of the H5N1 virus in U.S. dairy herds for the first time this spring.

The mandatory testing system is designed to identify which states and specific herds have been affected by the H5N1 virus. So far, the virus has spread to 720 herds in 15 states.

Nearly 60 people, mostly farmworkers, have been sickened with bird flu in the United States.

"This will give farmers and farmworkers better confidence in the safety of their animals and ability to protect themselves, and it will put us on a path to quickly controlling and stopping the virus' spread nationwide," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a written statement.

The first round of testing will begin in California, Colorado, Michigan, Mississippi, Oregon and Pennsylvania, the agency

said.

An industry representative in Pennsylvania, which ranks second in the nation for the number of dairy farms, said monitoring efforts are precautionary. No cases of H5N1 have been detected in the state's dairy herds to date, according to federal data.

"This shouldn't affect output or production at all," said David Smith, executive director of the PA Dairymen's Association. "It's just monitoring, and the Pennsylvania Agriculture Department and USDA just want to make sure that we're proactive."

The federal government says the commercial milk supply is safe, pointing to studies showing that pasteurization inactivates bird flu.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Presi-

dent-elect Donald Trump's pick to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, has previously voiced support for raw milk despite warnings from the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that drinking raw milk can expose people to dangerous germs, such as salmonella, listeria and E. coli. The bird flu virus circulating in dairy cattle has also been detected in raw milk, but pasteurization kills the virus.

The federal order issued Friday requires dairy farms, bulk milk transporters, milk transfer stations and dairy processing facilities to submit raw milk samples for testing upon request. Herd owners whose cattle test positive for the virus must pro-

vide information for contact tracing and disease surveillance. Private laboratories and state veterinarians must report all milk that tests positive to the USDA.

Regular monitoring will continue to ensure that the disease has not spread, but testing will wane from weekly to monthly to quarterly if herds continually test negative.

The new order does not override USDA's April 24 order requiring mandatory testing of lactating dairy cows before interstate shipment and reporting of all positive tests by private labs and state veterinarians to federal officials.

Rachel Roubein contributed to this report.

DIGEST

NEW YORK

Lesser charge offered in chokehold death

A New York City jury will consider a lesser charge for Daniel Penny in the choking death of subway performer Jordan Neely after jurors could not decide whether to convict him of manslaughter.

Judge Maxwell Wiley on Friday accepted the prosecution's request to dismiss the second-degree manslaughter charge after jurors said they were deadlocked, according to the Associated Press. The jury will return next week to deliberate on the charge of criminally negligent homicide.

Penny, a 26-year-old White man, was charged over putting Neely, a 30-year-old Black man, in a chokehold on a New York City train in May 2023 in a case that turned Penny into a conservative symbol for citizen crime-fighting. Neely was pronounced dead at a hospital, and the death was ruled a homicide caused by compression of the neck.

Penny faces up to four years in prison for the homicide charge. He had faced up to 15 years if he had been convicted of

manslaughter. He pleaded not guilty to both.

The case has fueled debates about public safety, race relations, and the state's approach to homelessness and mental health. Penny's defense hinged on his assertion that he was trying to protect other subway riders from Neely. He has been praised by some as a Good Samaritan, while prosecutors depicted him as a White vigilante who killed a man who needed help with his mental health.

Penny, a Marine Corps veteran, was not immediately charged in the death of Neely, who had been struggling with drug addiction, mental illness and homelessness. Protesters and lawmakers called for his arrest after a video of him holding Neely in a minutes-long chokehold was widely disseminated.

In the video, Neely flailed and kicked his legs while trying to break loose from the chokehold. During the month-long trial, the 12-member jury heard testimony from subway riders, responding police officers, pathologists, a psychiatric expert and Penny's friends, relatives and a former Marine Corps instructor, according to

the Associated Press.

Penny did not testify, but jurors heard his version of events through police body cameras that recorded his account of what happened.

Witnesses said Neely, well-known for his Michael Jackson impersonations, had been acting erratically on the F train in Manhattan.

— Maham Javaid and Jiselle Lee

PENNSYLVANIA

Body found of woman who fell into sinkhole

The remains of a woman who fell into a sinkhole were recovered Friday, four days after she went missing while searching for her cat, a state police spokesperson said.

Trooper Steve Limani said the body of 64-year-old Elizabeth Pollard was sent to the Westmoreland County Coroner's Office for an autopsy after rescuers used machinery to bring her to the surface.

Limani told reporters Pollard was found at about 11 a.m. approximately 30 feet underground, some 12 feet from the opening of the sinkhole. Limani said Pollard apparently fell onto a cone-shaped pile of

debris created by the crumbling mine, then rolled or otherwise moved toward the southwest to where her body was recovered.

The autopsy may help determine whether Pollard was killed by the fall, Limani said.

The announcement came on the fourth day of the search for Pollard, who had been last seen Monday evening, looking for the cat near a restaurant half a mile from her home in the village of Marguerite.

Pollard's family reported her missing around 1 a.m. Tuesday as the temperature in the area dropped below freezing.

The search focused on a sinkhole that began as a manhole-size gap and may have only recently opened above where coal was mined until about 70 years ago. Hunters and restaurant workers who were in the area in the hours before Pollard's disappearance told police they hadn't noticed the sinkhole.

Police said they found Pollard's car parked about 20 feet from the sinkhole with her 5-year-old granddaughter inside. The cat, Pepper, has not reappeared, Axel Hayes, Pollard's son, said.

— Associated Press

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POLITICS & THE NATION

RFK Jr. could upend gender-transition rights of children

Advocates fear HHS pick would make state bans on care a national policy

BY FENIT NIRAPPIL

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has speculated herbicide chemicals are turning kids transgender. He called puberty blockers “repurposed castration drugs.”

Kennedy’s comments, made in the last two years, have plunged him into the debate over transgender care since President-elect Donald Trump, who campaigned against transgender rights, tapped him last month to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

Kennedy also has said trans children should delay medical interventions related to transitioning until they are adults, aligning himself with restrictions that many states have enacted in recent years.

About 39 percent of teenagers who identify as trans in the United States live in one of 26 states that have limited gender transition care for children and adolescents, according to KFF, a health policy and research organization. The Supreme Court considered the constitutionality of such measures on Wednesday, with a majority of conservative justices appearing inclined to uphold a Tennessee ban on certain gender transition care for minors.

Kennedy has said children are not mature enough to consent to medical interventions such as puberty blockers or surgical procedures.

“People with gender dysphoria or who want to change their gender deserve compassion and respect, but these terribly consequential procedures should be deferred till adulthood,” Kennedy posted on X in May. “We must protect our children.”

Most transgender children do not take medication or undergo surgical procedures to assist with their transition. Surgical procedures such as breast removal are especially rare, while operations on genitalia are generally not performed on minors. Healthcare providers typically focus on counseling and assistance on “social transition” such as changing names and clothing.

Major medical associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychiatric Association and World Health Organization, have endorsed gender transition care for youth. There is

broader global scientific debate around providing such care and the best forms of care, and several European countries have enacted youth restrictions. England’s National Health Service has temporarily banned puberty blockers for minors, citing concerns about effectiveness and side effects while the treatments undergo additional review, including a clinical trial.

Katie Miller, a spokeswoman for Trump’s transition team, said Kennedy’s position on gender transition care hasn’t changed from his earlier comments.

“Mr. Kennedy intends to uphold the promises President Trump has made, including ending the insanity of the mutilation of children,” Miller said.

Kennedy has repeatedly — and falsely — asserted that chemicals in the water that disrupt hormones, such as the herbicide atrazine, could be causing gender confusion or “profound sexual changes” in children. A spokesperson for Kennedy told CNN, which first reported the comments last year, that he was not saying those chemicals were the main cause of gender dysphoria — the distress one feels when their gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth — but simply that it merited additional research.

David Gorski, a Wayne State University professor of surgery and oncology and managing editor of Science-Based Medicine, a website that debunks medical misinformation, said Kennedy’s claims about hormones stem from “a very old conspiracy theory” and that it “has no basis in evidence.”

Kennedy has spoken little about transgender issues in recent months, instead focusing on his “Make America Healthy Again” agenda to address chronic diseases and remove ultra-processed foods from schools. He has also urged communities to remove fluoride from drinking water, which would reverse a long-standing measure to improve oral health. And he has insisted on new scientific research of vaccine safety, despite numerous studies concluding that vaccines are safe and effective.

Still, Kennedy’s past comments on trans health care have drawn concerns from parents of trans children, medical providers and trans advocates because Trump campaigned on banning gender transition care for minors and restricting government support for transgender people as the issue has become a rallying cry for conservatives.

Kelsey Leonardsmith, director of youth gender care at Family



ABOVE: LGBTQ+ rights activists protest Senate Bill 14 at the Texas Capitol in May 2023 in Austin. SB14 was aimed at banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender children. BELOW: A box of testosterone cypionate.



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Tree Clinic in Minneapolis, said she has recently fielded calls from parents concerned their trans children will lose access to puberty blockers. Her clinic has seen an influx of patients from neighboring states that passed restrictions on gender transition care.

“It’s a small number of children, but they matter. Losing access is devastating,” Leonardsmith said. “It is such a statement from the government that we don’t care about you or your life.”

During his campaign, Trump said he would ban health providers “participating in the chemical or physical mutilation of minor youth” from receiving Medicare or Medicaid funds, which would be a devastating financial blow. He vowed to sign an executive order on day one of his presidency instructing federal agencies to stop promoting gender transition

at any age.

Advocates say attempts to roll back gender transition care for minors would face legal challenges, and guardrails exist to make it difficult for HHS to bar access.

Chief among them is the Affordable Care Act, which prohibits discrimination in health care. The Biden administration this year finalized rules to reinstate federal protections for LGBTQ+ people seeking health care that the first Trump administration had unraveled. Those rules are under legal challenge, and their future is uncertain with Trump taking office once again.

Roger Severino, who reversed gender identity protections as director of the Office for Civil Rights in HHS during the first Trump administration, told The Washington Post the Department of Justice could stop defending the

rules adopted under Biden, and the federal health agency could craft new regulations to limit gender transition care.

“The Trump administration will be in a position to protect children by reversing the radical Biden administration policies,” said Severino, vice president of domestic policy at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

Kennedy, a former Democrat who ran for president as an independent, is known for fringe beliefs, having embraced medical misinformation and some conspiracy theories, such as the disproven assertion that vaccinations cause autism and the false theory that antidepressants contribute to mass shootings.

“Given that Mr. Kennedy has a track record of being strongly opposed to evidence-based, science-based medicine, we strongly expect he is going to ignore all of the recommendations from medical professionals who’ve actually studied trans people and instead restrict care for minors,” said Olivia Hunt, director of federal policy for Advocates for Trans Equality.

Kennedy’s opposition to gender transition medical care for minors is an opinion shared by most Americans. Sixty-eight percent of Americans said they oppose puberty-blocking medication for trans children ages 10 to 14 while 58 percent opposed hormonal treatments for teens ages 15 to 17, according to a 2022 Washington Post-KFF poll. But more than six in 10 Americans backed gender-affirming counseling for minors.

Attacks on medical interventions for the minority of trans children who receive them have broader ripple effects, advocates say.

“I worry about the mental health of LGBTQ young people generally and their ability to even be able to explore their gender identity in a way that feels authentic to them,” said Ames Simmons, a transgender rights advocate and fellow at Duke University School of Law.

Children who are not transgender could also be affected by a crackdown on gender transition care, experts say.

Meredith McNamara, assistant professor of pediatrics at the Yale School of Medicine, said she spoke to a Florida woman whose daughter received menstrual-suppressing medication to prevent seizures. The girl is not transgender, but her doctor would no longer prescribe the drug out of fear of being scrutinized for offering gender transition care to children, which is illegal in Florida, McNamara said. The girl was hospitalized four times for seizures after switching to another drug.

McNamara compared these situations with the stories of pregnant patients being denied standard medical care to save their lives because doctors are afraid of being prosecuted under state abortion bans.

“It’s impossible to ban a single type of care for a single class of people,” McNamara said.

Lauren Weber contributed to this report.

Democrats propose extending Affordable Care Act subsidies by a year

BY DAN DIAMOND AND RACHEL ROUBEIN

Congressional Democrats have privately proposed a deal to Republicans that would extend expiring Affordable Care Act subsidies by one year, with lawmakers worried by new estimates that 2.2 million people will otherwise lose health coverage, according to five people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the proposal.

The move accompanied a broader package of health-care proposals submitted to Republicans on Thursday night ahead of year-end spending negotiations.

Lawmakers are fiercely hammering out a bill to fund the government, and health-care leaders are pushing to add priorities to one of the final pieces of legislation this Congress. Negotiations are also occurring on other measures, such as more funding for community health centers, proposals to address bipartisan frustrations about pharmacy benefit managers and other extensions of ongoing health-care programs, four of the people said.

A one-year deal to extend the expiring ACA subsidies would avoid what was expected to be a bruising battle for both parties. Democrats, who crafted the subsidies and have fought to defend them, are set to lose control of the Senate and the White House next year, complicating their ability to make policy. Republicans, who are set to gain control of Washington, are wary of being punished by voters for any perception that they are rolling back health-care coverage, with the backlash to



TOM BRENNER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-Illinois), center, and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-New Hampshire), right, have pushed to extend the subsidies — without which an estimated 2 million people will lose coverage.

their ACA repeal efforts still fresh in many lawmakers’ minds.

GOP leaders have repeatedly said they are skeptical of the subsidies, which expanded long-standing ACA tax credits to millions of Americans, and the influential House Republican Study Committee has called to end the nearly four-year-old initiative.

It is not yet clear whether Republican leaders, who control the House, will agree to any of the proposals. Spokespeople for Republicans on the House Ways and Means and the Senate Finance committees declined to comment.

Democrats have prioritized the

ACA subsidies given the number of people affected. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-New Hampshire), Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-Illinois) and other Democrats have repeatedly pushed to extend the subsidies, which lower the cost of plans sold through the ACA’s insurance markets. The expansion of subsidies, which began as a pandemic-era effort to ensure that more Americans received health coverage, has been credited for helping increase ACA enrollment to a record 21 million people this year.

“Sen. Shaheen strongly supports extending these vital tax credits in the end of year package

so millions of Americans can keep their insurance and taxes and costs don’t increase on working families,” Brendan Duff, a spokesman for the senator, said in a statement.

Democrats on Thursday night proposed paying for the one-year extension of the ACA subsidies by offsetting it with automatic spending cuts, invoking what is known as the budget sequester, according to the people with knowledge of the proposal.

Republicans have decried the tax credits as an expensive federal giveaway, saying they distort the purpose of the ACA by subsidizing Americans who don’t need the

assistance. Before the enhanced tax credits took effect, people with incomes above 400 percent of the federal poverty line — about \$58,000 for an individual or \$120,000 for a household of four people — were not eligible for assistance with ACA premiums.

Ahead of their proposal to Republicans, Democrats cited estimates released Thursday by the Congressional Budget Office, lawmakers’ nonpartisan bookkeeper, that projected a significant jump in the nation’s uninsured rate if the ACA credits are allowed to expire.

“Without a permanent extension, CBO estimates, the number of uninsured people will rise by 2.2 million in 2026, by 3.7 million in 2027, and by 3.8 million, on average, in each year over the 2026-2034 period,” Phillip L. Swagel, the CBO’s director, wrote to lawmakers.

“These savings are a lifeline, but if we don’t act now, Americans will see higher health care costs when these popular tax credits expire in 2025,” Underwood said in a statement Thursday.

Other estimates by outside groups have predicted even larger spikes in the uninsured rate. The Urban Institute, a think tank focused on economic policy, last month projected that 4 million people would lose coverage if the tax credits expire.

The CBO earlier this year projected that permanently extending the tax credits would cost the federal government about \$335 billion during the next 10 years.

Advocacy groups have ramped up efforts to raise awareness of

the subsidies and the risks of letting them expire.

“Democrats stand ready to extend the tax credits to ensure everyone has access to affordable health care,” Brad Woodhouse, executive director of Democrat-aligned advocacy group Protect Our Care, said in a statement Thursday. “It’s time for Republicans to get on board.”

Democrats also offered health-care proposals as part of their broader year-end package, including two-year extensions for several provisions set to expire at the end of 2024, according to three of the people with knowledge of the proposals. Those extensions would include a pandemic-era policy expanding the scope of Medicare coverage for telehealth and more funding for hospitals that treat a significant number of low-income patients.

Meanwhile, Democrats’ proposals include taking aim at pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, which have faced bipartisan investigations from lawmakers who contend the industry middlemen are driving up the cost of medication. The Democrats’ proposal would address what they regard as an incentive for PBMs to steer patients toward higher-cost drugs. Under the plan, certain payments to PBMs would not be based on the price of drugs, according to two people familiar with the proposal — a measure some lawmakers in both parties believe would help reduce drug costs.

Democrats are additionally seeking to add measures aimed at improving the country’s mental health care.

Uber-wealthy picks raise concerns about conflicts of interest

Many intended nominees for next Trump term are billionaires, ultrarich

BY CAT ZAKRZEWSKI

A month after securing the White House with populist promises to working-class voters, President-elect Donald Trump has chosen at least half a dozen billionaires and several other ultra-wealthy business leaders to serve in top administration roles.

Trump's Cabinet is on track to be one of the richest in modern history, on par only with the team of millionaires and billionaires he assembled during his first term. He has picked billionaires to serve as commerce secretary and education secretary, and he has tapped other super-rich leaders for Treasury and Interior. He has also offered non-Cabinet positions, including NASA director and deputy defense secretary, to billionaires.

Throughout the transition, Elon Musk, the world's richest man, has been by Trump's side, serving as "first buddy" and establishing the nongovernmental "Department of Government Efficiency." On Thursday night, Trump tapped tech investor David Sacks — who made his fortune in part through the \$1.2 billion sale of the software company Yammer to Microsoft — to serve as his artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency czar.

Trump's team of rivals stands in stark contrast with President Joe Biden's Cabinet, which had a combined net worth of \$118 million in the first year of his presidency, according to Forbes. Trump's picks have not yet released their financial disclosures, but his 2025 Cabinet is likely to be even richer than the first Trump Cabinet, which had a combined net worth of \$6.2 billion.

Linda McMahon, whom

Trump says he will nominate for education secretary, shares a net worth of \$3 billion with her husband, Vincent McMahon, according to Forbes. Howard Lutnick, Trump's pick for commerce secretary, has a net worth of at least \$2.2 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Trump's Treasury choice, Scott Bessent, managed billion-dollar hedge funds, but his exact net worth has not yet been reported. Doug Burgum, Trump's pick for Interior, is worth at least \$100 million, Forbes said.

The median net worth of an American family is \$192,900, according to a 2023 Federal Reserve report.

Wealthy Americans who have had successful careers in business have long served in government, but watchdog groups say the high concentration of ultra-wealthy picks for roles in Trump's Cabinet presents distinct conflict-of-interest risks and could work against promises that Trump — a billionaire himself — made on the campaign trail. As he crisscrossed the country to host rallies, Trump repeatedly promised to fight for the rights of working- and middle-class Americans by bringing back manufacturing jobs and limiting inflation.

Trump's selections may be more inclined to look out for the interests of their own businesses and their fellow billionaires than for working-class voters, said Noah Bookbinder, president of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

"It is hard to see how a Cabinet made up largely of the very, very wealthiest of Americans is going to have an understanding of what the needs of regular Americans are," he said.

Trump, who has an estimated net worth of \$5.5 billion, has long aligned himself with other wealthy business leaders, delighting in attention and praise from those he regards as successful executives.

Taylor Rogers, a spokeswoman for the Trump-Vance transition



From left, Ivanka Trump; Jared Kushner; Linda McMahon, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for education secretary who shares a net worth of \$3 billion with her husband; and Howard Lutnick, a Wall Street executive Trump has tapped for commerce secretary.

team, said in a statement that Trump has made "brilliant decisions" on picks for his second administration and Cabinet.

"Many of these individuals have experienced the American Dream and want to keep that dream alive for future generations," she said.

But the Cabinet selections are an early test of Trump's ability to unite a transformed Republican Party, where the goals of populists who say they are focused on elevating the working class can clash with those of the business leaders and wealthy donors who have long shaped the party's policies. Even some Republicans have expressed worries about the composition of Trump's Cabinet.

Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Missouri) expressed concern about the business backgrounds of some of Trump's picks in an interview with Politico on Tuesday.

"All these Treasury secretaries, my point is, always end up being sort of Wall Street guys. Do I think that's a great trend? Not

really," Hawley said.

After making several industry-friendly picks, Trump made a nod to the growing populist wing of the Republican Party by picking the union-friendly Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-Oregon) to lead the Labor Department.

Oren Cass, founder and chief economist at the conservative think tank American Compass, said he is optimistic that the new Trump administration will be more oriented toward populist goals than the first. He said the best example is Trump's selection of JD Vance for vice president, who stands in stark contrast to former vice president Mike Pence, who has warned that rising populism undermines the "traditional conservative agenda."

"Some of them offer a lot of cause for optimism," Cass said. "It's the sort of thing where [the] rubber meets road when the administration actually starts."

Democrats have roundly criticized Trump's choices. The Dem-

ocratic Party on Tuesday put out a news release that said Trump was "stacking his Cabinet with out of touch billionaires." Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts) told The Washington Post that the choices suggest Trump's presidency will "be one giveaway after another for the wealthy and well-connected."

"He's nominating his 'rich-as-hell' buddies to run every facet of our economy, corrupting our government at the expense of ordinary Americans," she said.

Watchdog groups are concerned about the new conflicts of interests that Trump's picks could present. Trump's first-term commerce secretary, Wilbur Ross, violated an ethics agreement by improperly reporting his stock holdings and faced scrutiny for his financial dealings while in office.

Many business leaders who enter government roles put their assets in blind trusts to preempt concerns that they could abuse their political power to benefit

their personal portfolios. But watchdog groups are skeptical that even those vehicles provide an adequate shield against ethics risks.

"People who spend their entire lives getting rich do not automatically forget their economic stakes when they enter government," said Jeff Hauser, executive director of the Revolving Door Project.

Trump himself has not promised to divest from any of his businesses, which have now soared and include a cryptocurrency business and a stake in a social media company. And with Trump's own party controlling both chambers of Congress and a Cabinet packed with his allies and loyalists, he can expect little oversight over his finances, Bookbinder said.

"People in government take a cue from the top," he said. "This time around, Donald Trump is not — at least as of now — even making a show of addressing his own conflicts of interest."

Trump's choice to head EPA morphed from moderate to MAGA

Zeldin seen as neophyte loyalist willing to reverse or dilute Biden policies

BY MAXINE JOSELOW

When he served as a Republican congressman from New York, Lee Zeldin delighted environmentalists by championing efforts to protect critical wildlife habitat from potential development efforts, including a golf course proposed by Donald Trump.

Now, as Trump's pick to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, Zeldin is pledging to deliver on the president-elect's promise to eliminate several environmental regulations that the fossil fuel industry views as burdensome, according to half a dozen Senate Republicans who met with Zeldin this week.

The shift reflects Zeldin's political evolution from a moderate who occasionally collaborated with conservationists to a MAGA loyalist. As Republican senators press him to overturn the Biden administration's environmental policies, it offers clues to how Zeldin would approach an agency tasked with protecting the nation's air, land, water and climate.

Zeldin lacks extensive experience in environmental policy, and he did not seek out the position of EPA administrator, according to two people familiar with the matter, who like others interviewed for this article spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly. Instead, Trump called Zeldin and asked him to implement his agenda at the agency, and Zeldin agreed, the two people said.

"The president-elect tapped someone who he believes will carry out what he wants at EPA," said former congressman Thomas M. Reynolds (R-New York), a friend of Zeldin's, adding that "Lee has been a guy who Trump knows not only because he was a New York congressman, but also because he was an aggressive supporter."

Zeldin was one of the first Republicans to endorse Trump's candidacy in 2016, joining his



Former congressman Lee Zeldin of New York speaks at a rally for Donald Trump in January.

impeachment defense team and supporting Trump's efforts to deny the results of the 2020 election. During the 2024 campaign, he appeared regularly at Mar-a-Lago and stumped for the former president in battleground states.

This week, Zeldin has held a flurry of meetings with Republicans on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which will vet his nomination. He has not yet met in person with any Senate Democrats, nor with top trade groups in the industries that the EPA regulates, including the chemical and oil sectors.

The former chief of staff to Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-West Virginia), Joel Brubaker, is guiding Zeldin through his confirmation process, according to two people familiar with the matter. In an interview, Capito said she and Zeldin have discussed scrapping President Joe Biden's sweeping environmental rules for coal- and gas-fired power plants.

"We got into that and how we could dismantle some of that," Capito said. "Because of the overreach, some of them may have to be refashioned."

Sen. John Hoeven (R-North Dakota) said he spoke with Zeldin on Wednesday about "cutting the regulatory burden." Sen. Cyn-

thia Lummis (R-Wyoming) said they discussed the Biden administration's "hostility towards oil, gas and coal." And Sen. Pete Ricketts (R-Nebraska) said they focused on "the need for an EPA

"The president-elect tapped someone who he believes will carry out what he wants at EPA."

Thomas M. Reynolds,
a former Republican congressman
from New York and a friend of Zeldin's

that unleashes American energy, instead of attacking it."

Many Senate Democrats said they had not requested meetings with Zeldin and had no plans to do so. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (Rhode Island), who could become the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee next year, said he didn't see much point in talking to the Trump loyalist.

"It does seem that Trump is selecting for the absence of an independent streak in his nominees," Whitehouse said. "I don't know what conversations he's

had with Trump or the Trump team about the extent he'll do exactly as told."

Asked for comment, Trump transition spokeswoman Liz Huston said in a statement: "With Lee Zeldin — and his experience of securing economic and environmental wins throughout nearly a decade in Congress — as head of the EPA, we will ensure that the American economy can continue to grow while we maintain the highest environmental standards on the planet."

Zeldin's recent statements contrast with some of his comments as a congressman, when he vowed to protect Plum Island — a roughly 840-acre island in Long Island Sound that is home to 111 vulnerable species — from developers eager to build on the land. Chief among those developers was Trump, who had spoken with local and federal officials about the possibility of purchasing the island and constructing a golf course there.

"Blessed with the natural beauty of Long Island, we must always be committed to protecting and preserving the abundance of our natural resources that are so important to our life, culture and economy," Zeldin wrote in a 2016 opinion piece in

Long Island Business News. Without mentioning Trump, he added, "I know that we can stop the sale of Plum Island and preserve it for future generations."

During his tenure in the House from 2015 to 2023, Zeldin joined the House Climate Solutions Caucus, a group of Republican lawmakers that argues the GOP should play a greater role in climate policy debates in Washington. Former congressman Carlos Curbelo (R-Florida), who founded what is now called the Conservative Climate Caucus, said Zeldin was a valuable addition.

"I wouldn't say he was one of the most involved members, but he knew the topic of environmental protection was important to his district, and he sought out some opportunities to be constructive and collaborative," Curbelo said. Asked about Zeldin's apparent shift to the right, he added, "Almost every Republican has evolved under the Trump era, and I don't think he's an exception."

While Zeldin sometimes sided with local environmentalists while serving in Congress, he often opposed them on the national level. He received a 14 percent lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters for his votes against numerous environmental bills, including a measure that would have closed a loophole in the Clean Water Act that allowed companies to discharge unlimited "forever chemicals," also known as PFAS, into waterways nationwide.

But Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, a New York-based environmental group, said Zeldin was willing to buck Trump's proposal to open up the East Coast to offshore oil drilling. When the Interior Department unveiled the proposal, Esposito said, she called Zeldin and explained that an offshore oil spill would devastate the tourism industry, a crucial engine of the economy in coastal Suffolk County.

He agreed. "He didn't have to fight against offshore drilling or developing Plum Island, but he really did," Esposito said. "And once he did something, he really did it. He didn't just give us lip service."

Like many GOP lawmakers

from New York's Suffolk County, Zeldin once took more moderate stances on a range of policy questions. His political evolution has taken years to play out, and his tack to the right was on full display during his failed bid for governor in 2022. On the campaign trail, he blasted Democratic rival Kathy Hochul's climate policies as "out of touch," and he called for reversing a ban on fracking in New York.

Since leaving Congress, he has not remained close to his one-time allies at New York-based environmental groups, who are scrambling to figure out his plans for the EPA.

"I'm waiting to see how independent he is versus how much he is carrying out a Donald Trump agenda. And we just don't know the answer to that yet," said Julie Tighe, president of the New York League of Conservation Voters.

Zeldin has never managed a bigger team than a 12-person congressional staff. He has sought to have the former chief of staff in his congressional office, Eric Amidon, serve in a senior advisory role at the EPA, according to two people familiar with the matter. Amidon has accompanied his former boss to meetings on Capitol Hill this week.

Zeldin's lack of environmental experience contrasts with the records of Scott Pruitt and Andrew Wheeler, who both served as EPA administrator during Trump's first term. Before coming to Washington, Pruitt was Oklahoma attorney general, suing the EPA more than a dozen times.

Wheeler worked as a lobbyist for the coal industry and other energy interests, and served as staff director on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

In a brief interview Wednesday, Zeldin said he spent his Thanksgiving break getting up to speed on environmental policy, including by watching five hours' worth of Pruitt's and Wheeler's testimony during their own confirmation hearings and reading relevant documents.

"There's no better way to spend Thanksgiving than rereading Supreme Court cases, op-eds, law review articles and press releases," Zeldin said on his way to a meeting in the Russell Senate Office Building.

Musk was the largest political donor in election cycle, filings show

BY TRISHA THADANI
AND CLARA ENCE MORSE

Elon Musk gave at least \$277 million in political donations this year to back Donald Trump and other Republican candidates, making him the largest political donor in the 2024 election cycle, according to an analysis of new Federal Election Commission filings by The Washington Post.

The billionaire's total for the cycle is the largest from a single donor since at least 2010, outside of candidates funding their own campaigns, according to data from OpenSecrets.

Musk topped the second-largest donor, Tim Mellon, a fellow Trump megadonor and heir to the Pittsburgh banking family, by about \$80 million, the filings released Thursday show.

The massive influx of cash from Musk transformed the billionaire entrepreneur, known for his electric vehicle and space-related ventures, who had rarely before engaged with political

candidates, into the country's largest donor — and one of most prominent members of the president-elect's inner circle.

Musk's donations primarily went to America PAC, his super PAC quietly established in the spring to support Trump and other Republican candidates. It ran one of the most significant get-out-the-vote operations in support of Trump.

The filings also revealed that Musk gave \$20.5 million to a previously mysterious PAC that sought to convince voters in the final days of the presidential election campaign that Trump would refuse to sign a national ban on abortion.

Including that contribution, the new filings show Musk put \$232 million into supporting Donald Trump and other Republican candidates before the Nov. 5 election. He then gave nearly \$45 million to America PAC from Election Day through Nov. 25. — some of which probably paid off pre-election expenses — taking his total political spending to at

least \$277 million.

The billionaire has said America PAC will also be active in the congressional midterm elections and some local races, where he hopes to overthrow liberal district attorneys across the country. The entirety of Musk's donations this election cycle are not yet known and may not all be reflected in publicly available documents.

Business tycoons have long sought to shape the political landscape, but Musk has resources beyond his immense wealth that have thrilled longtime Republican strategists — and Trump himself. The billionaire owns a major social media platform, X, where he has more than 200 million followers and often posted about Trump during the campaign, essentially turning the site into a megaphone for the Republican candidate.

Musk, the world's richest person according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, also showed a willingness to use his celebrity to

push political and legal boundaries during the campaign.

In addition to appearing at Trump rallies, he launched a daily \$1 million giveaway for swing state voters. The Justice Department warned Musk that the giveaway could conflict with federal election laws, and Philadelphia's district attorney unsuccessfully attempted to block it under Pennsylvania consumer protection laws.

Thursday's filings show 18 individuals received \$1 million "spokesperson consultant" payments from the super PAC in October and November.

The entrepreneur's newfound power in conservative politics has led some Republicans to style him "the Soros of the right," referring to billionaire investor and prolific liberal donor George Soros.

"It is noteworthy that he is the owner of one of these tech platforms and has been so out front and vocal for a specific candidate and prominent as a donor — you don't typically see that combina-

tion," said Eric Wilson, Republican digital strategist and the executive director of the Center for Campaign Innovation. "It is a true disruption of campaign finance and how donors approach this."

Musk's investment in Trump has made him into a close confidant of the president-elect and a frequent presence at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida as he prepares to return to the White House.

The tech entrepreneur has joined calls with world leaders, weighed in on Cabinet picks and was picked by Trump to co-chair a nongovernmental commission dubbed the "Department of Government Efficiency," or DOGE, that plans to make recommendations on slashing federal spending and regulation.

Backing Trump appears to have also helped Musk's businesses. His wealth has soared further since the election because of massive gains in the value of shares in Tesla, which is expected to benefit from stream-

lined regulation on autonomous driving during the new Trump administration.

In the final months of the election, Musk was one of the biggest individual donors of the campaign cycle.

America PAC hired thousands of canvassers to knock on doors in battleground states across the country and encourage people to vote early.

America PAC also spent about \$19 million on House races, where Musk's presence was a welcome surprise to some candidates. In Michigan's 7th District, for example, Musk's PAC spent nearly \$1 million to support Republican Tom Barrett, who defeated his Democratic challenger and flipped the seat.

Barrett's campaign spokesman, Jason Roe, said America PAC's support was crucial, although it was just a fraction of the total spent campaigning for the seat. Barrett won by about 17,000 votes.

"We need more Elon Musks," Roe said.

Amid confirmation uncertainty, Trump defends defense pick

Some in GOP skeptical that Hegseth will have votes needed in Senate

BY MARIANNE LEVINE
AND JUSTINE MCDANIEL

President-elect Donald Trump expressed support for Pete Hegseth in a social media post Friday, more forcefully rallying behind his embattled pick for defense secretary after allegations about Hegseth's private behavior left many Republicans questioning whether he could win Senate confirmation.

"Pete Hegseth is doing very well," Trump posted on Truth Social. "His support is strong and deep, much more so than the Fake News would have you believe. He was a great student - Princeton/Harvard educated - with a Military state of mind. He will be a fantastic, high energy, Secretary of Defense ... one who leads with charisma and skill. Pete is a WINNER, and there is nothing that can be done to change that!!!"

Hegseth's path to becoming defense secretary appeared increasingly tenuous this week amid reports that Trump was eyeing possible replacements, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R). The New Yorker on Sunday reported that Hegseth was

forced to leave two nonprofit veterans groups he led over "allegations of financial mismanagement, sexual impropriety, and personal misconduct."

Hegseth's lawyer dismissed the story, calling the allegations "outlandish." That story followed reports that Hegseth paid a woman who accused him of sexual assault as part of a settlement. Hegseth has denied the woman's allegations and on Thursday, his attorney told CNN he may sue the woman if Hegseth doesn't get the role.

Trump has largely left Hegseth to defend himself and until Friday had not made a public statement about his possible confirmation fight. Hegseth responded on X, writing: "Thank you Mr. President. Like you, we will never back down." Vice President-elect JD Vance also defended Hegseth, posting on X on Friday that "led by President Trump, we're fighting for Pete Hegseth."

Some Republican senators said this week that Trump had not spoken to them about Hegseth. One Republican close to Trump predicted Thursday that Hegseth's only path forward was to show Trump he was fighting for the nomination. "We're fighting all the way," Hegseth told reporters Thursday, vowing not to allow his possible nomination to be "tried in the media."

Hegseth spent the week meeting with Republican senators but



Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Pentagon chief, on Capitol Hill on Thursday. He met with GOP senators this week.

has yet to win support from key members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Privately, some Republicans on Capitol Hill were skeptical that Hegseth will have the votes for confirmation.

Hegseth said this week that he would continue pursuing the nomination unless Trump asked him not to. He has doubled down on his claims that the accusations against him are untrue and a "witch hunt" by the media, and said Trump told him: "You're my guy."

Among the key senators Hegseth will probably need to win over is Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), a military veteran and survivor of sexual assault who sits on the Armed Services Committee. After meeting with Hegseth, Ernst said in a Fox News interview on Thursday that he did not yet have her support.

Hegseth's attorney, Tim Parlatore, told CNN on Thursday that he may sue the woman who accused Hegseth of sexual assault if he is not confirmed for the role of

defense secretary and accused her of extorting a settlement from Hegseth.

The woman threatened litigation in 2020, so Hegseth paid her in a settlement agreement, Parlatore said. On Thursday evening, Parlatore alleged that her pursuit of the settlement met the definition of civil extortion in California.

Parlatore also claimed the settlement agreement with the accuser was violated when the woman's friend publicized her

accusations. He repeated that claim in an interview with The Washington Post on Friday. The woman has not publicly come forward; instead, her friend reported the case to the Trump transition team. Other details in the case have come from police records.

Parlatore said the woman was free to speak out but threatened to bring a defamation lawsuit against her if she does.

Paul Kane contributed to this report.

Naval Academy can keep using race in admissions

ACADEMY FROM A1

the country, and prompted numerous attempts to challenge diversity efforts at companies and government agencies.

In that case, *Students for Fair Admissions v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*, the Supreme Court found that the schools' admissions programs violated the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection.

The ruling, however, included a footnote carving out the use of race in admissions within the nation's military academies, writing that the "opinion ... does not address the issue, in light of the potentially distinct interests that military academies may present."

Solicitor General Elizabeth B. Prelogar had argued to justices in that case that the armed forces have learned the hard way that strength and military readiness suffer if the officer corps does not reflect the diversity of the fighting force, and that it would not be possible to achieve that diversity without affirmative action.

SFFA moved quickly to contest that carve-out, challenging any consideration of race in Naval Academy admissions.

In his 179-page ruling, Bennett mentioned the footnote in the Harvard case, writing, "The record in this case demonstrates the wisdom of that caution." Bennett concluded that the Naval Academy's limited consideration of race "further the government's compelling national security interests."

Defense Department leaders across administrations have concluded that a racially diverse

officer corps is important to national security; a lack of diversity has historically led to racial tensions that threatened military preparedness. The ruling delves into that history, noting the racial unrest among troops during World War II and the 1960s and race riots in the '70s.

"The military learned the importance of racial diversity in its leadership the hard way, and it must not be forgotten that our military's efforts to increase the diversity of the officer corps follow centuries of institutionalized discrimination," the judge wrote.

For at least the past 15 years, Bennett wrote, the department has said the officer corps "should 'represent the country it defends' and the service members it leads."

But there is a significant deficiency in the number of officers of color in the Navy and Marine Corps, the judge wrote: More than half of enlisted Naval service members are racial minorities, but less than a third of officers are. In the Marine Corps, 35 percent of enlisted Marines are racial minorities, and 29 percent of officers are.

Gary Orfield, a professor of education, law, political science and urban planning at the University of California at Los Angeles, called the ruling sensible and said there was a good reason the Supreme Court left the issue undecided in last year's affirmative action decision.

"The military made its commitment — in some ways, the most serious institutional commitment of any of our major public institutions — to integra-



Senior District Judge Richard D. Bennett said the Naval Academy is a vital pipeline to ensuring a diverse officer corps.

tion because they had such a catastrophe in Vietnam and such divisions among their own ranks, and it threatened the national security," Orfield said.

The plaintiffs had argued in favor of race-neutral alternatives that could help the academy achieve diversity, but the court concluded there were not workable alternatives that would allow the school to meet the levels of diversity the government had argued were necessary for national security.

The decision is disappointing, Richard D. Kahlenberg, the director of the American Identity Project at the Progressive Policy Institute, an expert who testified for the plaintiffs, wrote in an email Friday, "because a rigorous analysis showed that the Naval Academy could achieve high levels of racial and economic diversity if it invested more in recruitment, ended some of its preferences that tend to benefit the affluent and instead provided an

admissions boost to socioeconomically disadvantaged students of all races."

The ruling found that the Naval Academy's consideration of race in admissions withstood an important test — that it was narrowly tailored to an important governmental interest.

Admission to the service academies is a complex process, one that is different from most selective college admissions and subject to federal law and military directives.

The evidence in the case "clearly indicates that the Naval Academy does not employ quotas, admit candidates based solely on their race or ethnicity, or place minority candidates on separate admissions tracks," Bennett wrote, adding, "this Court defers to the executive branch with respect to military personnel decisions."

A spokeswoman for the Naval Academy said officials are reviewing the ruling.

High court takes up cases on terror suits, inmate appeals

BY JUSTIN JOUVENAL

The Supreme Court agreed Friday to hear cases that examine whether Palestinian groups can be sued in U.S. courts over terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens abroad, and when prisoners are barred from petitioning courts to review their convictions.

The justices consolidated two cases dealing with long-running lawsuits filed by families of U.S. victims killed or injured in terrorist attacks in Israel that allegedly were perpetrated by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

The high court will review a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit finding that a law granting U.S. courts jurisdiction to hear the cases is unconstitutional. The 2019 Promoting Security and Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act said a Palestinian organization could be sued in U.S. courts if the group paid a terrorist to commit an act against Americans or "conduct[ed] any activity" in the United States after the law was enacted.

The U.S. government later determined that those criteria had been met in the cases at issue and the groups could be sued. But the appeals court invalidated the law, saying it violated the Fifth Amendment, which limits government powers over criminal procedures.

"Congress cannot, by legislative fiat, simply 'deem' activities to be 'consent' when the activities themselves cannot plausibly be construed as such," the 2nd Circuit wrote.

The cases are *Fuld v. Palestine Liberation Organization* and *U.S.*

v. Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Supreme Court will also take up the case of Danny Rivers, a Texas prisoner who claims he was wrongly convicted in 2012 of sexually abusing his children and possessing child sexual abuse material. Rivers has served 12 years of a 38-year sentence.

Federal law allows defendants to file one request for the courts to review their conviction but creates stringent standards for submitting "second or successive" petitions. Courts have differed over what that means.

Rivers, who maintains his innocence, unsuccessfully asked state courts to overturn his convictions before filing a federal petition in 2017 alleging his attorney failed to properly investigate his case and showed up to court drunk. Rivers's attorney denied the claims.

The district court rejected his petition. While he was appealing that ruling, Rivers got access to his case file for the first time. In it, investigators indicated that the photos and videos he was convicted of possessing did not feature underage girls. The file also indicated that the material was in a folder on Rivers's computer that featured someone else's name.

Rivers moved to amend his petition to include the new evidence. The courts denied that motion, ruling that it was an improper "second and successive" petition.

The high court will have to clarify whether a filing made after the district court has denied an initial petition but before an appellate court has weighed in counts as a "second and successive" petition. The case is *Rivers v. Lumpkin*.

THE WORLD

Christians in Aleppo fear for future after Islamist takeover

Although Syrian rebels have sought to soften their image in recent years, many worry they will revert to their repressive roots

BY MOHAMAD EL CHAMAA
AND JOE SNELL

BEIRUT — A week after Islamist rebels swept suddenly into Aleppo, members of the city's dwindling Christian community are wondering again what future is left for them in Syria.

Over nearly 14 years of civil war, Aleppo's Christian population has fallen from 300,000 to just 25,000, as many have left the country for better opportunities and a life free from the threat of violence. In 2013, two of the city's archbishops were kidnapped; their whereabouts remain unknown.

Those left behind now face a new chapter of uncertainty. Their fears are shared by many Muslims and the nonreligious, who went to bed on Nov. 29 with the state news bulletin saying the government was repelling a rebel attack, and awoke the next morning to the sight of new rulers — armed men from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, a group once affiliated with al-Qaeda.

A Sunni Islamist political and militant group, HTS broke ties with the global jihadist movement in 2016 and has tried in the years since to convince Syrians that it has renounced its radical, repressive roots. In its home base of Idlib, an hour's drive southeast of Aleppo, it runs the local government and provides social services. Its leader has attempted to reassure minorities, making public appearances with Christian and Druze leaders, but in areas it controls the group has also confiscated land and restricted religious practices among non-Muslims.

One Christian resident of Aleppo, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, was shocked at how quickly the Syrian government army retreated. Forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad had retaken the city in December 2016, after a relentless campaign of airstrikes and siege tactics. Then, seemingly in an instant, they were gone: "There was a complete withdrawal," the Christian resident said by phone.

HTS has taken over for the local police, the resident said, patrolling streets and managing traffic and bread lines. The group has encouraged civil servants to continue their work and has offered amnesty to government soldiers.

So far, the rebels have upheld their promises to respect people of all faiths, the Christian resident said. "They are not harassing anyone; they're helping people out." But he worries that "maybe it's a psychological game to win people over" and that "once they have a better grip, something will change."

"I hope that everything [HTS] is saying is going to be true," Boutros Kassis, archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Aleppo, told The Washington Post by phone, saying his congregation was busy preparing for the holidays. "We are trying to give the people the spirit of Christmas, regardless of what's happening," he said.

He added that rebels have allowed residents to set up Christmas trees and celebrate the feast of Saint Barbara, a local holiday.

There have been isolated incidents that call into question the group's commitment to moderation. Pastor Zani Bakr, a Kurdish Christian, said one of his parishioners was told by rebels to put on a hijab. "She told them she was Christian, and they politely told her to wear one the next time she goes out," he said.

Fears were most acute among



BILAL AL HAMMOUD/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

People walk by a Christmas tree and a church in Aleppo, Syria, on Thursday, a few days after Islamist rebels retook the city from government control.



AAREF WATAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Defectors from the Syrian regime's security forces fill in applications Thursday to receive ID cards allowing them to remain in Aleppo.

recent converts, he said, who worry "they may be put on trial for converting from Islam to Christianity."

Bakr lives in one of Aleppo's last remaining Kurdish enclaves — under the control of a Kurdish rebel group before the HTS takeover — but his parish is in an area formerly held by the government. He was unable to get to his church last week, but is aiming to resume services this Sunday. He hopes for

an agreement between the rebels "so that people can enjoy peace, and life can return to normal."

Many now fear the potential resumption of airstrikes by Syrian forces and their Russian allies, whose indiscriminate attacks devastated the city during the most brutal years of the war. The government lost more ground Thursday, with HTS-led forces entering the city of Hama and vowing to push farther south toward

Homs.

Aleppo has long been home to one of Syria's largest and most vibrant Christian communities, going back hundreds of years, said Joshua Donovan, a visiting professor of history at Boston College.

Aleppo was a "haven for displaced communities around the Middle East, especially Armenian and Assyrian Christians who were facing violence in the early

20th century," he said, adding that the city's Christian leaders played a significant role in the creation of the modern Syrian state.

But as for so many in this fractured country, war made life impossible for the Christians of Aleppo. "You'll find some elderly people here and there, but it is rare to find young Christian men and women," Bakr said. "Most of them left Syria. They couldn't

bear to stay."

As rebels advanced toward Aleppo, some families fled the city, the Christian resident said, guided by their "past experience with armed rebels." By last Saturday, though, roads were closed and there was no way out. About 200 Christian students tried to return to their homes in the Kurdish northeast, but the bus sent to pick them up was blocked from entering the city and the driver was shot. The students hid near the airport as fighting raged around them, Kassis said.

They stayed at Kassis's church for three days until Wednesday, after a deal was reached allowing them to go home. Bakr is counting on a similar agreement that will let him and his parishioners move freely across Aleppo.

But the economic situation in the city was already dire before HTS moved in, and is quickly getting worse. The Syrian pound has lost almost half of its value on the black market over the past week, according to residents, and inflation is rising. A two-pound bag of powdered milk has gone from \$9 to \$11; the price of cheese is up nearly 70 percent.

HTS is filling in the gaps where it can, residents said, distributing bread to those who need it, but it's unclear how the group plans to restart the city's money supply with banks and cash transfer companies still out of service.

"Those who rely on outside remittances will suffer even more," the Christian resident said.

People of all faiths, in Aleppo and across Syria, are united by a simple wish, Bakr said: "Christians and others do not want war, but peace," he said. "All problems in Syria are solved through dialogue."

Snell reported from Washington.

DIGEST

LONDON

Ex-soldier to be tried in two 1972 killings

A former British soldier will be tried in the killings of two men killed during the 1972 "Bloody Sunday" disturbances in Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second-biggest city, after a judge refused to dismiss the charges against him.

The veteran, known only as Soldier F, is charged with two counts of murder and five counts of attempted murder stemming from a civil rights march and the rioting that followed it on Jan. 30, 1972. Thirteen people were killed by British army gunfire that day.

During a hearing Friday at Belfast Crown Court, Justice

Stephen Fowler rejected an application from the ex-soldier's lawyers to dismiss the charges on the grounds that there wasn't enough evidence to convict him.

Following the ruling, Soldier F pleaded not guilty. The veteran entered his plea from behind a blue floor-to-ceiling curtain after the judge granted a request to shield his identity.

The judge said he expected the trial to take place early next year and scheduled the next hearing in the case for Jan. 24.

— Associated Press

HONG KONG

Activist loses appeal over release denial

A jailed Hong Kong activist lost his landmark legal challenge

on Friday against the prison authorities' denial of early release under the new national security law. Ma Chun-man was serving a five-year term for inciting secession under a separate, Beijing-imposed national security law. He was convicted in 2021 for repeatedly advocating for Hong Kong's independence and had expected to be released early on March 25 based on good conduct in jail.

But he was not granted sentence remission after the new security law, introduced on March 23, raised the threshold for early release of those convicted of national security offenses. The new law stipulated that people found guilty of endangering national security must not be granted remission unless the commissioner of

correctional services believes the move would not be a national security risk.

Ma is now expected to be released around November 2025.

— Associated Press

INDONESIA

Filipino on death row to be repatriated

Indonesia and the Philippines signed a deal Friday to send home a Filipino death-row drug convict who was nearly executed by firing squad in 2015, as the new administration of President Prabowo Subianto seeks to shore up diplomatic ties with neighboring countries. The agreement, after a decade of negotiations, will allow Mary Jane Veloso to return home by

the end of the month, said Raul Vasquez, undersecretary at the Philippines' Justice Department.

Although there is no treaty between the countries, Indonesia and the Philippines are both members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the transfer of convicts in the ASEAN region is in accordance with the bloc's Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty.

Indonesian lawmaker Yusril Ihza Mahendra said a joint team from both countries will work closely for Veloso's repatriation.

— Associated Press

A court in Mali has freed 11 opposition leaders who were arrested in June on charges of plotting against the ruling military junta after calling for a return to civilian rule. Their

provisional release on Friday has been seen as an attempt to calm the country's political climate in the wake of the controversial appointment of Gen. Abdoulaye Maïga as prime minister.

The Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra said four of its musicians were injured Friday in an incident during a weekly 15-minute traffic blockade commemorating the 15 people who died when a concrete canopy collapsed at a railway station in a northern Serbian city last month. The traffic blockades have been held every Friday in Belgrade, Serbia's capital, and other cities and towns since the fall of the concrete construction in Novi Sad on Nov. 1.

— From news services

Islamist rebel leading Syrian advance is stepping out of shadows into spotlight

BY ADAM TAYLOR

Amid a rebel offensive that stunned the Syrian regime and led to major losses of territory, the 42-year-old man leading it made a surprising strategic decision: He used his real name.

In an official message Thursday after its fighters entered Hama, the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) Islamist militant group shared a message that was signed Ahmed al-Sharaa — the birth name of a rebel leader better known by his nom de guerre, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani.

The move marks a broader shift for Jolani. Once a shadowy figure who rarely showed his face, Jolani served time in a U.S. prison in Iraq before becoming the commander of an al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria's brutal, multi-pronged civil war. Even now, there is a \$10 million U.S. reward for information that leads to his capture.

But in recent weeks, Jolani has become the public face of the most successful rebel advance in Syria in years, credited as the driving force behind a stunning offensive that captured Syria's second-largest city, Aleppo, from forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Aaron Zelin, a fellow at the Washington Institute, said that by using Jolani's real name, HTS hoped to show "he's just a regular guy." He may be anything but.

"Jolani is young, smart and extremely ambitious," said Charles Lister, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, adding that he has also been ruthless in the past in purging his rivals and potential future threats.

"Make no mistake, he wants to be seen as the kingmaker himself," Lister said.

Where did Jolani come from?

Ahmed al-Sharaa was born in 1982 in Syria. He only much later became known as Jolani.

He has said that his early life was shaped by conflict, with his family forced to leave their home in the Golan Heights during the 1967 war. His later pseudonym was a reference to his family's lost home, using a different transliteration.

In a 2021 interview with PBS' "Frontline," Jolani described growing up in Damascus and working at his father's grocery store. But after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and the subsequent U.S.-led war on terror, he traveled to Baghdad to fight against the U.S. invasion there.

There, he joined al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the affiliate group of the broader al-Qaeda that fought U.S. troops in that country. Around 2005, when he would have been roughly 23, he was



OMAR HAJ KADOUR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, the leader of the Islamist militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, in Syria's Idlib province in February 2023.

arrested in Mosul and spent years in a U.S.-run prison at Camp Bucca.

How did he become involved in Syria's civil war?

When Jolani was released from U.S. custody after five years, AQI had rebranded as Islamic State in Iraq under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, later notorious for his brutal attempts to build a caliphate in Syria and Iraq.

Though they would soon become bitter enemies, at that point, Baghdadi and Jolani were allies. The Islamic State leader sent his younger colleague back to Syria in 2011 as a representative, just as the Assad government began to crack down on revolutionary protests.

As the Syrian civil war began, Jolani formed Jabhat al-Nusra as an al-Qaeda affiliate. The group was soon one of the more significant factions within the anti-government Free Syrian Army, with some analysts describing them as more fearsome fighters than their less-religious allies.

Jabhat al-Nusra was designated a terrorist organization by the United States in late 2012. A year later, Jolani gave his first televised interview, telling Al Jazeera that he wanted to put Syria under strict Islamic law.

"Jolani is young, smart and extremely ambitious. ...

Make no mistake, he wants to be seen as the kingmaker himself."

Charles Lister, senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, about Abu Mohammed al-Jolani

"The battle is almost over," Jolani said, while refusing to show his face on camera.

Why did his group break with al-Qaeda?

Even at that time, however, Jabhat al-Nusra was facing trouble from other Islamist groups in Syria.

Earlier in 2013, Baghdadi had announced that Jabhat al-Nusra should become part of his own growing Islamic State group, which had been expanding into Syria. Jolani rejected the order, though many of his fighters defected.

Al-Qaeda soon broke with the Islamic State, putting Jabhat al-Nusra into direct conflict with Baghdadi's group. Despite its draconian interpretation of Islam and violence toward civilians, the Islamic State was able to grow rapidly, establishing a quasi-state over huge swaths of Syria and

Iraq before being beaten back by a U.S.-led international coalition. Baghdadi killed himself during a U.S. raid in 2019.

There were other major splits. In 2016, Jolani announced that Jabhat al-Nusra would change its name to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and said that it no longer owed allegiance to al-Qaeda.

Jolani showed his face in the video statement shared with Al Jazeera. He said that the split had been made because he didn't want to give a "pretext" for the United States and Russia to conduct airstrikes against the wider rebel movement.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham was later formed out of a merger of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and other groups in 2016.

"He has learned many lessons from his losses in the [Syrian] Civil War," said Joshua Landis, a Syria expert at the University of Oklahoma.

What has he done since the collapse of the Islamic State?

In the years since the collapse of the Islamic State, the battle lines in Syria have remained largely static. At the same time, Jolani was slowly changing the way he presented himself.

In his interview with "Frontline," Jolani said that the more brutal Baghdadi did not have the "competence to analyze situations" and that the group now known as HTS had only used suicide bombings as they had no better weapons.

About two years ago, Jolani switched his outfits from the Islamist insurgent attire he had previously worn to more standard green military fatigues, Zelin said. It appeared he had been watching conflicts outside of the Middle East.

"You might say he's in his Zelensky era," Zelin said, referring to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has worn a simple military uniform since Russia's invasion in February 2022.

Jolani had also rebuilt HTS into a "seemingly professional army," said Landis. "His soldiers' equipment is better than that of the Syrian army. They have walkie-talkies, night vision goggles and elegant uniforms, of much

higher quality than the Syrian army."

HTS has also maintained control of northwest Syria, including the city of Idlib, becoming the de facto government for 4.5 million people. It has sought out partnerships with other groups, including Christians and members of the Druze community, and worked with the United Nations and formed lines of communication with Western governments.

"While he has a \$10 million bounty on his head, he's been appearing publicly across northwestern Syria for the past four years and never once been targeted by a U.S. strike," said Lister, adding that was no coincidence. "He'd certainly be dead by now if he was a priority."

What sort of Syria does Jolani envisage?

Analysts describe Jolani as pragmatic but opportunistic, willing to shift gears as circumstances change — including his having taken advantage of a moment when Assad's allies in Hezbollah, Iran and Russia are all distracted by other conflicts.

"He's very good at pivoting at the right moment," said Zelin, who wrote a book about HTS that was published last year.

This pragmatism extends to his style of rule. While HTS remains an Islamist organization, it has so far made good on its promises of religious tolerance in the areas of Syria it controls. In Idlib province, it effectively runs a one-party state, operating civilian affairs under what it dubs a "Salvation Government."

"This system is not democratic" and is based off a strict interpretation of Islam, said Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, an independent researcher on Syria, but HTS does not envisage "something like al-Qaeda's Islamic emirate projects or the Islamic State's caliphate."

Jolani has hinted at other moves. Dareen Khalifa, a senior adviser with the International Crisis Group, wrote on X this week that Jolani was considering dissolving HTS to "enable full consolidation of civilian and military structures in new institutions reflecting the breadth of Syrian society."

Most analysts agree that the early signs from Aleppo are relatively positive, with no sign of pressure on the city's Christian minority, for example. But there are concerns that Jolani's leadership cadre could face infighting, especially as it appears so tied to one person.

Jolani is "very much in the model of a charismatic leader," said Zelin. "If for whatever reason he was killed or assassinated, how would the movement move on?"

Syrian rebels' advance threatens to unravel Putin's previous military success

SYRIA FROM A1

observers reporting attacks on civilian facilities including hospitals, schools, camps for displaced people and civilian neighborhoods.

But news on Thursday that rebels had driven Syria's army out of the city of Hama raised questions about the Russian capacity to stem the rapid collapse of Assad's military.

The Syrian regime's military failures could see the two Russian bases cut off from the capital, Damascus, analysts said, particularly if forces led by the Islamist militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham continue to advance south to the strategic city of Homs. On Friday, the advancing rebels put Homs in their sights.

The Russian bases not only help protect Assad's regime but have also allowed Moscow to project its military power in the eastern Mediterranean and to claim a role as a world power with vital regional interests, challenging American supremacy.

But Moscow has its hands full with its war on Ukraine, with Russia's grinding advance in eastern Ukraine coming at the cost of massive casualties. Britain's Defense Ministry estimated that November was the costliest month of the war so far for Moscow's forces, with an average of more than 1,500 killed or wounded a day.

Russia is also facing a Ukrainian incursion on its own soil since August that it is struggling to expel, now with the help of North Korean soldiers.

With Russia's capacity to increase its military presence in Syria in question, analysts said Putin's main priority would be preventing threats to the Hmeimim and Tartus bases, through military strikes to stem rebel advances or via pressure on Assad to negotiate a peace deal with Turkey, which backs some

rebel factions and maintains forces in the north of the country.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday that Russian, Iranian and Turkish representatives may meet in the coming days under the Astana process, a platform that was set up by the three powers in 2017 to resolve the Syrian crisis and guard their regional interests.

While Russia has claimed its airstrikes have killed hundreds of rebel fighters in Idlib, Hama and Aleppo provinces, it did not stop the HTS fighters from first taking over Aleppo and then Hama.

Charles Lister, a Syria expert at the Middle East Institute, said that even during the war in Ukraine, Moscow never scaled its military presence back down, although the quality of Russia's officer corps in Syria had declined.

"Russia retains exactly the same troop levels. They've conducted the same number of air sorties over Syria with the same geographical breadth that they did prior to the war in Ukraine," he said, speaking on the "Lawfare" podcast.

What has changed, however, is the strength of the Iranian-backed forces in Syria, especially Hezbollah, which has been weakened by Israeli attacks in recent months and could no longer provide the necessary support to Assad's own army.

Pro-Kremlin media and Russian military bloggers have blamed Assad for failing to create a strong professional army, even as the HTS built itself into a formidable, well-armed force.

"The Syrian government is demonstrating a complete inability to carry out reforms and find the necessary solutions. This applies to all areas, including the army. Since 2020, nothing has been done to improve the armed forces of the Syrian Arab Republic. They are in a state of half-disintegration," Kirill Semenov, a

Russia's bases in Syria



"I think certainly Syria has been very central to Russia's perception of itself as a great power. ... It showed Russia's ability to come in and serve as this alternative great power, contrary to the West."

Nicole Grajewski, expert on Russia and Iran in Syria at the Carnegie Endowment on International Peace

Syria expert at the pro-Kremlin Russian International Affairs Council, told the Vzglyad newspaper.

One factor, however, in favor of

continued Russian support is the huge symbolic importance for Putin of the original Syrian intervention, which was his first major challenge to Western power out-

side the lands of the former Soviet Union, said Nicole Grajewski, an expert on Russia and Iran in Syria at the Carnegie Endowment on International Peace.

"I think certainly Syria has been very central to Russia's perception of itself as a great power," she said adding that it came a year after U.S. President Barack Obama called Russia a "regional power," which was taken as a major slight.

"It was one of the kind of exemplars that the military has used to show their effectiveness. And this was the first real show of [Russian] aerospace forces. It showed Russia's ability to come in and serve as this alternative great power, contrary to the West," she said.

Aleppo's fall in a few days reversed one of Russia's major achievements in the Syrian war in 2016, when it enabled Assad's army, which had been on the verge of defeat, to finally take the whole city. It was seen at the time as a turning point in the war.

Grajewski said Russia, Syria and Iran were likely to be planning a counteroffensive because the rebels could pose a real threat to Russia's Hmeimim and Tartus bases, particularly if they advance toward Homs.

"I just couldn't imagine how humiliating and embarrassing it would be for Russia to have Hmeimim or Tartus overtaken by rebel forces," she said. "I think that Iran and Russia probably are coordinating pretty closely right now to see what ground forces or militia they can pull together to ... push back this opposition offensive."

She noted, however, that HTS appeared to be much more competent than the rebel forces from 2016, "so it's going to be difficult."

Vladimir Pastukhov, an honorary research fellow at University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, wrote on Telegram that if

Assad was defeated, it would be painful for Russia, and a setback for Moscow's geopolitical ambitions since it would be difficult for Russia to find a new location for its crucial air base and naval facility.

Russia has used the bases as a way station for mercenaries headed to Libya and other parts of Africa, extending its reach into that continent.

Analyst Georgy Bovt, of the Moscow-based Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, said that with Russia's military tied up in Ukraine, Turkey would probably benefit from the rebel advances, leaving it the main power broker now in Syria.

"Turkish President Recep [Tayyip] Erdogan, who considers Assad his enemy, will benefit from the weakening of the regime and will be able to expand his influence in northern Syria," he wrote on Telegram.

He said that Russia, Turkey and Iran had used the Astana process to smooth their differences over Syria's future, "but now the Turkish General Staff has torn up those arrangements."

The situation in the Middle East also has Russian commentators claiming to see the hand of a familiar enemy, Ukraine, and accusing Moscow's foe of being behind the rebel successes — a charge that Ukrainian officials have declined to address.

Even two weeks before the offensive, Putin's envoy to Syria, Alexander Lavrentyev, claimed that Ukrainian intelligence was assisting Syrian "terrorists" in a bid to damage Russia.

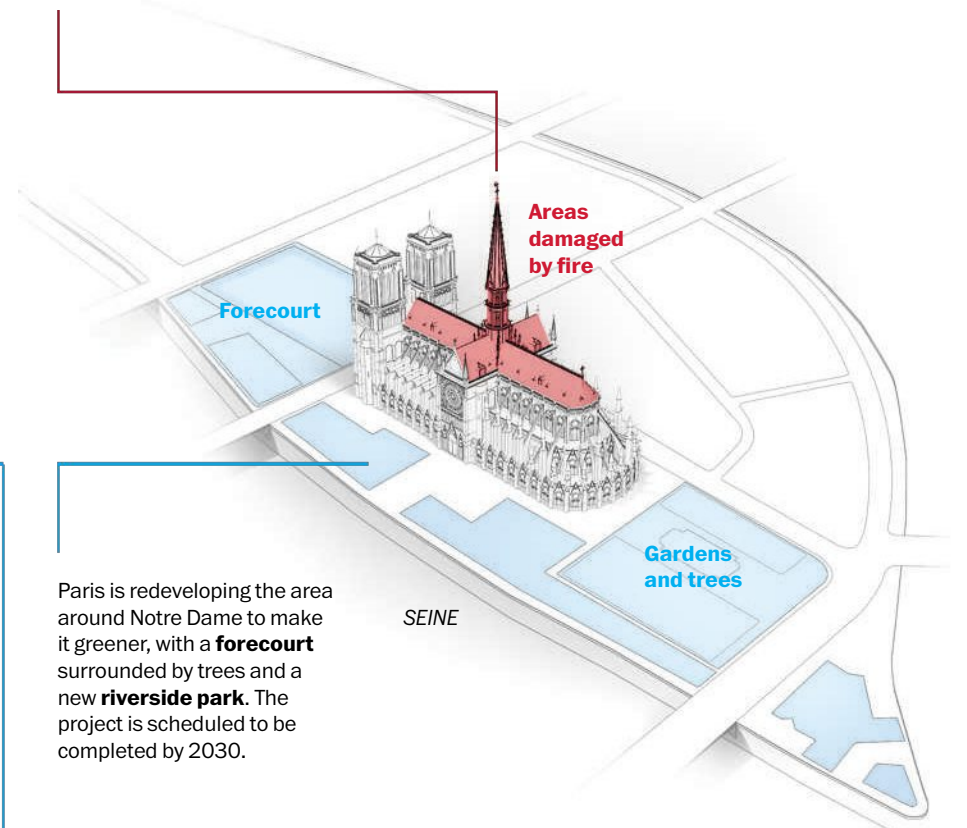
"We do have information that Ukrainian specialists from the Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine are in Idlib, actively not only supplying unmanned aerial vehicles there through certain channels, but also training radicals in their manufacture and use, which is very dangerous," he said.

As Notre Dame reopens, take a look at what survived, what was restored and what's new

BY AARON STECKELBERG, ANNABELLE TIMSIT AND MARISA BELLACK

More than five years ago, Parisians and the world watched in horror as a devastating fire tore through the centuries-old Notre Dame cathedral. Now, Notre Dame is back. The cathedral is returning to the center of religious life in France, resuming its place as a cultural focal point, and expected to become once again Paris's most visited tourist attraction. The April 2019 fire damaged some parts of the cathedral irrevocably, though a feared collapse was averted. More than 2,000 architects, engineers and craftspeople using artisanal methods have worked to painstakingly re-create what was lost and restore what could be saved.

The fire toppled the iconic spire, melted the lead-covered roof, and brought charred beams and stones crashing down. The first task afterward was to stabilize the structure. Then the cleanup and reconstruction could begin.



Paris is redeveloping the area around Notre Dame to make it greener, with a **forecourt** surrounded by trees and a new **riverside park**. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2030.

Modern designs were proposed but rejected in favor of a reproduction of the 315-foot **spire** added by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in 1860.

The **rooster** atop the spire is new. Its designer said its "wings of fire" represent that "the cathedral can be reborn from the ashes, like a phoenix." Its damaged predecessor will be displayed in a new museum.

The 16 **copper statues** below the spire, which represent the 12 apostles and four evangelists, had been removed before the fire as part of restoration work. They have been reinstalled.

Carpenters re-created the 13th-century "forest" of beams in the **attic** using specialized axes and 1,200 trees felled in France. A misting system, for fire prevention, is new.

After the fire spewed lead dust over Paris, there was debate over materials for the new **roof**. But the lead-over-oak design is a facsimile of what was there before.

The 8,000-pipe **grand organ** was dismantled, cleaned of lead dust, reassembled and then tuned, pipe by pipe. The separate choir organ, which suffered severe water damage, is still being rebuilt.

After fire debris was removed, the marble **marquetry floor** was patched, cleaned and polished.

The **vaulted arches** of the nave and choir contain a mix of salvaged stones and new blocks of specially selected limestone. The ceiling and walls are bright as a result of cleaning that eradicated both fire damage and centuries of dirt.

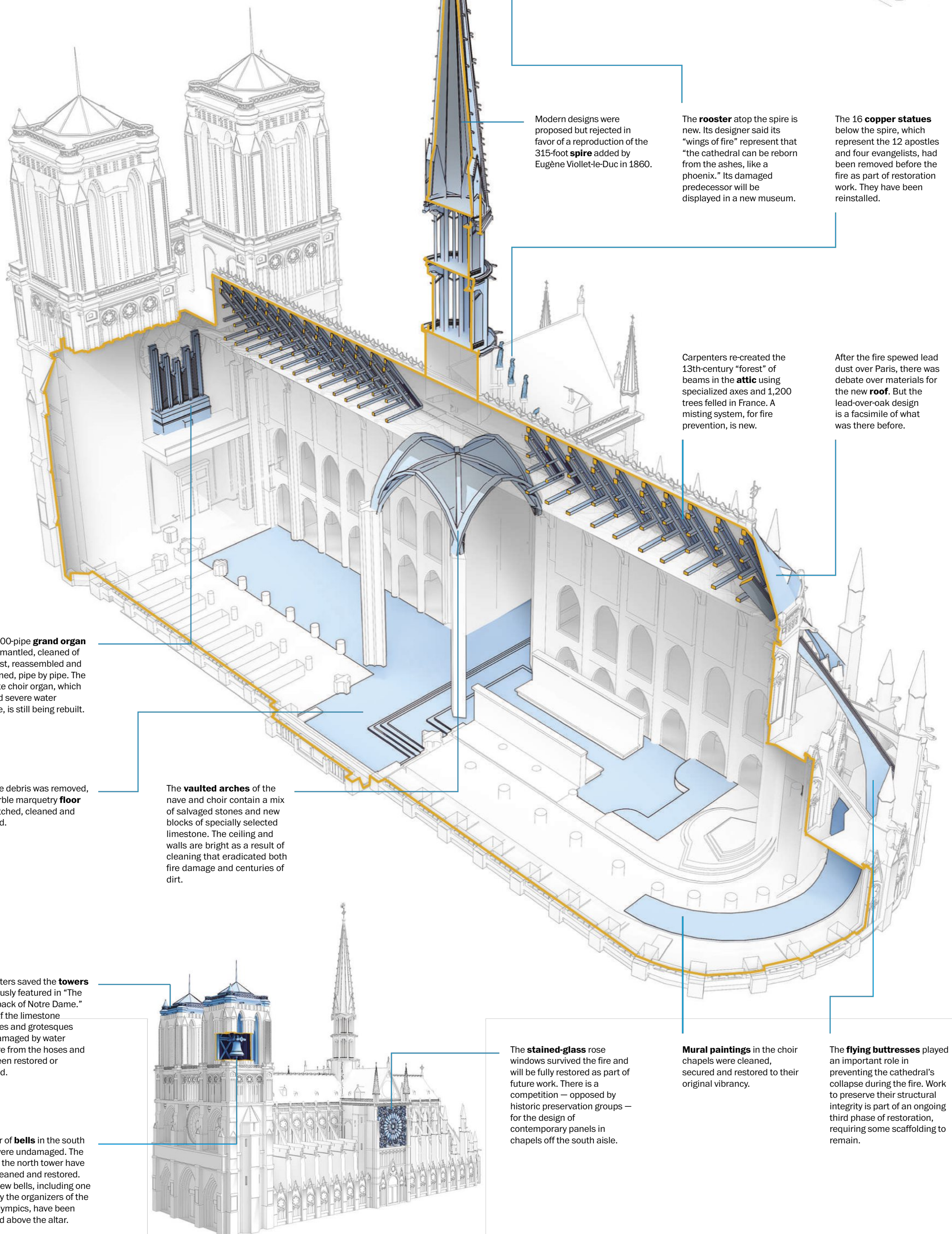
Firefighters saved the **towers** — famously featured in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." Some of the limestone gargoyles and grotesques were damaged by water pressure from the hoses and have been restored or recarved.

The pair of **bells** in the south tower were undamaged. The eight in the north tower have been cleaned and restored. Three new bells, including one gifted by the organizers of the Paris Olympics, have been installed above the altar.

The **stained-glass rose windows** survived the fire and will be fully restored as part of future work. There is a competition — opposed by historic preservation groups — for the design of contemporary panels in chapels off the south aisle.

Mural paintings in the choir chapels were cleaned, secured and restored to their original vibrancy.

The **flying buttresses** played an important role in preventing the cathedral's collapse during the fire. Work to preserve their structural integrity is part of an ongoing third phase of restoration, requiring some scaffolding to remain.



ECONOMY & BUSINESS

HELP DESK

How to fix the iOS 18 changes that some Apple users hate

Have the latest updates brought about Photos app angst, enlarged emojis, Control Center confusion and lousy battery life? Read on for some workarounds.

BY CHRIS VELAZCO

It's generally a good idea to keep your phone's software current — but some iPhone owners are feeling let down by Apple's latest updates.

Since its initial release in September, users who have installed iOS 18 have reported issues ranging from batteries that drain faster to less efficient controls and confusingly redesigned apps.

"Woke up to find out my phone updated to iOS 18 while I was asleep and the new photo app design nearly sent me spiraling again," one user wrote on the social media site X. "It's hideous."

This might all sound like much ado about nothing, but it takes time and effort to learn how to use tools — even digital ones — effectively. And it can be deeply frustrating when out-of-the-blue design changes force us to reset our habits and our muscle memory, as some iPhone owners are learning.

Thankfully, there are fixes and workarounds for at least some of Apple's unpopular changes. Here's what you should know.

The divisive new Photos app

What changed: This year, Apple almost completely redesigned its Photos app, so ... basically everything.

The most annoying change? This new design takes all the options for creating memories, accessing photo utilities, and viewing and sharing albums that used to live on separate pages and crams them all into one. (In other words, get ready to do a lot of scrolling.)

Apple also added a handful of options that further serve to clutter things up, like wallpaper suggestions and an admittedly helpful Apple Intelligence tool that serves up photo and video montages on demand.

The fix: For now, at least, you can't make your Photos app look exactly like it used to. What you



WASHINGTON POST ILLUSTRATION; SHUTTERSTOCK; ISTOCK

can do, however, is tweak its design until it becomes something you can live with.

Scroll down until you find the "Customize & Reorder" option, tap it, and rearrange — or outright disable — the things you actually want to see inside the app.

Supersized emojis

What changed: If you like to pepper your messages with emojis, you might have noticed that they appear larger in iOS 18's keyboard. There's more space around each individual emoji,

too, which can make finding just the right one more time-consuming.

Oh, and if you send an individual emoji, it'll appear much larger inside your message thread than before. As one Reddit user put it: "I do not want to see the eggplant emoji in 4K. I do not like this. 0/10" (Messages that include text, or multiple emojis, display those smileys in their classically small stature.)

The fix: Switching to alternate keyboard apps like Microsoft's Swiftkey can bring back the smaller, more densely packed pal-

ette of emojis you're used to. That said, some third-party keyboard apps ask for deeper or "full" access to your device to make certain features work.

This isn't necessarily a deal-breaker, but it's best to avoid keyboards that aren't clear about what they're doing on your phone.

If you're more bothered by just how big emojis look in your conversations, well, sorry — short of sending a bit of text with each one, you're stuck.

A confusing Control Center

What changed: The Control

Center has always had a lot going on. Now, in iOS 18, there's even more happening, and it's just kind of confusing.

For one, you can now swipe through multiple screens in Control Center to manage your media, toggle smart home gadgets on or off, and more — though you'll often just find duplicates of what's on your main Control Center page. Meanwhile, some options we previously had one-touch access to — like quickly turning Bluetooth on and off — now take an extra tap by default. It's technically easier now to

customize your Control Center — tap the "+" icon in the top-left corner to rearrange these icons — but getting specific controls into just the right spot can also be trickier than it sounds.

The fix: Use that new customization option to get rid of anything and everything you don't need. (I'd start by getting rid of those separate windows for media and smart home controls, personally.) Unlike the Photos app, you can get your Control Center looking like the one you've used for years without too much effort.

Faster battery drain

What changed: After installing iOS 18, or one of its subsequent updates, some users have reported that their iPhones' batteries don't last as long as they used to.

The fix: There's a lot going on behind the scenes when you update your phone, and that backstage work continues even after the update appears to be done. If you've noticed that your phone doesn't last as long after installing some new software, give it a day or two before panicking — that's completely normal.

If that lousy battery life lingers for more than a few days, though, it's time to take some action.

There's only so much you can do about the power iOS and its new features use, though you can try disabling Apple Intelligence or turning off features like Siri listening for its wake words.

There are other ways to optimize your battery life, too. Open your iPhone's Settings, tap the Battery option, and see which apps are using the most power — you may need to tweak settings inside specific apps if there's a standout battery hog. And then there's my personal favorite: Tap the "General" option inside the Settings app, then "Background App Refresh," and toggle off the apps you don't want running when you're not looking.

Are banks really 'de-banking' customers? Here's what you need to know.

BY ANDREW ACKERMAN

Web browser pioneer Marc Andreessen recently made waves with claims that Washington regulators are "de-banking" people — that is, directing banks to cut off accounts belonging to cryptocurrency executives, tech leaders and political enemies of the Biden administration.

The claims also popped up throughout the election cycle, including from Donald Trump.

Do banks really de-bank their customers? Sometimes — if customers are engaged in questionable or unusual behavior that's not consistent with "safety and soundness." That's always been the case.

But is there a concerted top-down initiative by the Biden administration to de-bank purely according to politics as Andreessen describes it? Experts say there's no evidence for that.

Here's what to know about "de-banking."

What's the accusation?

Andreessen appeared last week on Joe Rogan's podcast and made lots of claims over a three-hour interview, including a suggestion that regulators appointed by President Joe Biden have spent the past four years con-

scripting banks to target the administration's political opponents. Andreessen said about 30 founders of tech start-ups have been "de-banked." He called the project "Operation Chokepoint 2.0."

He separately attacked the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau at several points, though in ways that are tough to square with reality. He falsely suggested it was part of the administration's de-banking efforts and described the CFPB as "Elizabeth Warren's personal agency." While the Democratic senator from Massachusetts is credited with coming up with the idea for the agency and worked to set it up before she was elected, she has never actually led the bureau. He later walked back some of his remarks.

Does Washington tell Wall Street whom to do business with?

No, not really. Regulators don't explicitly tell banks whom they can and cannot provide services to. They do enforce rules requiring that banks know whom they are doing business with and what those customers are doing. Banks determine on their own if it's profitable to bank with someone or a company engaged in high-

risk but lawful activities.

What's Operation Chokepoint?

It's a reference to an initiative that started during the Obama administration to ferret out fraud, particularly in the payday lending space. It involved officials at the Justice Department and some bank regulators. Republicans criticized the initiative as an inappropriate campaign to curtail banks' work with lawful businesses.

Operation Chokepoint remains a political talking point among conservatives when criticizing regulatory agencies. They frame it as campaign by Democrats to abuse their power against conservatives, said Dru Stevenson, a law professor at the South Texas College of Law, who has studied the issue. "It is more myth than reality," he said.

Is Chokepoint 2.0 real?

Big players at financial and tech start-ups definitely have a perception that bank regulators are out to get them. Top banking regulators' stated skepticism about the cryptocurrency industry, coupled with a crackdown on crypto from the Securities and Exchange Commission, have fueled a widespread belief that the

administration is hostile to crypto.

But some recent blowups appear to have justified bank regulators' concerns over the fast-growing but high-risk industry. Two of three banks that failed in March 2023 — Silvergate and Signature — specialized in crypto but failed abruptly when they didn't appropriately manage the risks, said Steven Kelly, associate director of research at the Yale Program on Financial Stability.

"It's a volatile sector that is inconsistent with banking," he said.

Are bank regulators hostile to tech firms?

That's tough to argue, too, because recent examples of bank failures show officials going out of their way to protect tech start-ups.

That's what happened when Silicon Valley Bank collapsed last year. It was the third bank to fail in March 2023 and, at the time of its collapse, the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history. The bank catered largely to tech companies. In a classic bank run, these companies rapidly bolted for the exits when SVB got into financial trouble following a rise in interest rates, which in turn caused the bank's holdings of

long-term bonds to decline in value.

Though more than 90 percent of SVB's depositors were "uninsured," or above the typical \$250,000 federal deposit insurance cap, they were all made whole after the Biden administration and the Federal Reserve determined the bank's failure posed a risk to the financial system. Washington's steps to contain the fallout from SVB's failure meant even tech and crypto companies with billions deposited at the lender wouldn't have to take haircuts on any of their money. Notably, regulators did not extend that same safety net to a much smaller group of less-connected depositors at a small Oklahoma bank that failed in October.

What else are people saying?

In her recent memoir, Melania Trump says that she was "shocked and dismayed" to learn that her longtime bank decided to close her account and also that it refused to allow her son Barron to open a new one. "This decision appeared to be rooted in political discrimination, raising serious concerns about civil rights violations" she wrote. The excerpt was highlighted by Andreessen, and amplified by hedge-fund billion-

aire Bill Ackman, on X.

Trump provides no other details about the experience but characterizes it as part of a "cancel mob" plaguing society at large, according to her book. A spokeswoman for the Trump campaign didn't respond to a request for additional details.

Will things change in Washington?

A bipartisan group of lawmakers is sympathetic to concerns raised by people like Andreessen, potentially enough to revive policy efforts aimed at ensuring "fair access" to banking services for all types of legal but politically controversial businesses.

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency quickly finalized such a regulation at the end of Donald Trump's first term in the White House — fueled by concerns that the oil and gas industry was unfairly denied financing by large banks. The rule was opposed by big banks and put on ice at the start of the Biden administration.

The president-elect himself has said he wants to see new restrictions. "We're ... going to place strong protections to stop banks and regulators from trying to de-bank you," Trump said at a campaign rally early this year.

DIGEST

STOCK MARKET

Wall Street rises after solid jobs report

U.S. stocks rose to records Friday after data suggested the job market remains solid enough to keep the economy going, but not so strong that it raises immediate worries about inflation.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.2 percent to 6,090.27, just enough top the all-time high set on Wednesday, as it closed a third straight winning week in what looks to be one of its best years since the 2000 dot-com bust. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 0.3 percent to 44,642.52, while the Nasdaq composite rose 0.8 percent to 19,859.77 to set its own record.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped

to 4.15 percent from 4.18 percent late Thursday.

The quiet trading followed the latest jobs report, which came in mixed enough to strengthen traders' expectations that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates again at its next meeting in two weeks. The report showed U.S. employers hired more workers than expected last month, but it also said the unemployment rate unexpectedly ticked up to 4.2 percent from 4.1 percent.

— Associated Press

NEWS INDUSTRY

Sale of oldest Sunday newspaper approved

The sale of the Observer, the world's oldest Sunday newspaper and a bastion of liberal values in Britain's media landscape, was

approved Friday despite two days of strike action from journalists this week. The Scott Trust, the owner of the Guardian Media Group, which includes the Observer and its sister paper, the Guardian, said the sale to Tortoise Media is expected to be signed in the coming days.

The Scott Trust said it will invest in Tortoise Media, becoming a key shareholder, and take a seat on both its editorial and commercial boards. Under the terms of the deal, Tortoise will invest \$32 million in the Observer, and has committed to continue its Sunday print edition and build up its digital brand.

Journalists at both the Guardian, which publishes print editions between Monday and Saturday and has a deep digital footprint around the world, and the Observer, have protested the sale and went on a 48-hour

strike on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Observer was founded in 1791 and became part of the Guardian Media Group in 1993.

— Associated Press

UNEMPLOYMENT

Canada's jobless rate rises, inviting rate cut

Canada had 1.5 million unemployed people in November, propelling its jobless rate to a near-eight-year high outside of the pandemic era and boosting chances of a large interest rate cut on Dec. 11.

The jobless rate rose to a more-than-expected 6.8 percent in November, Statistics Canada said on Friday, a rise of 1.7 percentage points since April 2023. A rate that high was last seen in January 2017, excluding a

few months in 2020 and 2021.

Currency markets stepped up bets for a 50 basis point rate cut to 80 percent after the employment report, from 55 percent earlier.

The rise in the unemployment rate was due to more people looking for work, with the rate for those ages 15 to 24 being the biggest contributor, at 13.9 percent.

— Reuters

ALSO IN BUSINESS

Apple is preparing to launch its long-awaited series of cellular modem chips next year, which will replace components from longtime partner Qualcomm. The iPhone maker is looking to ultimately overtake Qualcomm's technology by 2027, the report said, citing people familiar with the matter. Qualcomm, a leading

designer of modem chips that connect phones to mobile data networks, has warned investors that Apple will eventually stop using its chips.

Chipotle is raising its U.S. prices to offset inflation and to compensate for a promise to increase portion sizes. Chipotle's chief corporate affairs officer, Laurie Schalow, confirmed Friday that the Mexican restaurant chain was implementing a 2 percent price increase nationally. Schalow said it's the first time the California-based company has raised its prices in more than a year. Chipotle revealed the price increase after an analyst report released earlier this week noted a 2 percent price increase at approximately 20 percent of the chain's 3,500 U.S. stores.

— From news services

Slain UnitedHealthcare CEO faced ongoing court battles, threats

BY ANNIE GOWEN,
YEGANEH TORBATI
AND DAN DIAMOND

Before UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was gunned down in Midtown Manhattan this week, he was steering his company through court battles and legislative threats at a time of public frustration over health insurance industry tactics.

UnitedHealthcare's parent company — which generates \$400 billion in annual revenue — has been under increasing scrutiny by lawmakers and federal officials for allegedly hurting consumers with monopolistic practices. Some Democratic lawmakers have accused UnitedHealthcare of intentionally denying claims to boost profits. And Thompson himself has been accused of insider trading.

Thompson, 50, was well liked internally at UnitedHealth, where he had risen in the ranks over 17 years before being named CEO of the insurance giant in 2021, according to his LinkedIn profile and company statements. He had previously run the Medicare business within UnitedHealthcare.

Legal scrutiny around UnitedHealthcare's Medicare business regarding potentially overbilling the government affected Thompson personally during that time, said a former colleague, who spoke on the condition of anonymity given the sensitivity of Thompson's death.

"He called me and said, 'I'm from Iowa, my parents have difficulty explaining what I do, let alone being sued for a billion dollars,'" he said.

Colleagues described him as smart and affable, with an Iowa farm background that allowed him to explain complexities of health care in relatable terms. Known affectionately as "BT," with the build of a former high school athlete, Thompson had the presence to give major speeches and lead corporate events — and a self-effacing manner that drew staff to him in more intimate settings, remembering personal details about hundreds of UnitedHealth employees, colleagues said. Thompson was

known within the company for his focus on keeping premiums low, said one UnitedHealthcare staffer who spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect their job.

Thompson was on his way to present at UnitedHealth Group's annual investor conference Wednesday when he was shot from behind by a masked gunman. Bullet casings recovered at the crime scene echoed words critics use to deride insurance company tactics — "delay, deny, defend" — according to a person with knowledge of the investigation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing probe.

He told his wife, Paulette Thompson, 51, a physical therapist, that there were "some people that had been threatening him," according to NBC News.

Thompson joined UnitedHealth Group in 2004 and over the next two decades rose quickly through the ranks of the company's largest unit, UnitedHealthcare, which provides employer and individual health coverage to 50 million people in the United States. He enjoyed being part of a major company with lots of resources, believing that it enabled him to figure out big problems, said the former colleague.

That former colleague described Thompson as possessing strong business acumen and being likable, but also unafraid to be blunt and direct. As a public university graduate in an industry replete with Ivy League pedigrees, Thompson was fueled in part by wanting to prove himself, said the former colleague.

"I just saw a guy that wanted to be somebody and the reason he was going to be somebody was because of the chip that he had on his shoulder," the former colleague said. "He had a much more modest background than probably a lot of the circles that he was running in. I don't think it generated insecurity, but I think it motivated him."

He was also a top executive of the parent company, though not its public face, typically playing a supporting role to CEO Andrew Witty in calls with financial analysts. Some colleagues saw him as



UNITEDHEALTH GROUP/AP

Brian Thompson, the UnitedHealthcare CEO who was fatally shot, rose through the ranks at the company over a two-decade career.

a potential successor to the 60-year-old Witty, who has run UnitedHealth Group — the nation's fourth-largest company — since February 2021.

Scrutiny on the company has mounted in recent years. Under Thompson, UnitedHealthcare ramped up its use of tactics such as "prior authorization," in which physicians must submit additional paperwork to justify their treatments and prescriptions, according to reports by congressional investigators and federal watchdogs. The company also increasingly relied on automated programs to immediately reject claims, lawmakers and watchdogs have said.

Industry analysts have said that denying claims has helped UnitedHealthcare and other insurers cut costs and boost profits. The tactics have been faulted by lawmakers, federal officials and advocacy groups who say the health insurance giant has wrongly denied care to customers.

UnitedHealthcare has defended its practices, saying that lawmakers' scrutiny is misplaced and that it is working to prioritize patient care.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Inspector General investigated UnitedHealthcare and other health insurers that operated

managed-care organizations, or MCOs. The probe focused on insurers' Medicaid denials in 2019 — during part of which, Thompson ran UnitedHealthcare's Medicaid business — and concluded that the program had high rates of prior authorization denials.

"These findings raise serious concerns that Medicaid MCOs are systematically and improperly denying necessary care which they are required by law to provide to the low-income children and families, seniors, and people with disabilities who rely on these plans for access to critical health care services," congressional Democrats in September 2023 wrote to UnitedHealthcare.

Consumers' frustrations with the company spilled out in protests long before Thompson's killing.

When Witty, UnitedHealth Group's CEO, testified in Congress in May, he was swarmed by protesters from People's Action. The progressive advocacy group blamed the company for wrongly denying care.

"Stop using prior authorization to kill people," Jennifer Coffey, a woman from Manchester, New Hampshire, said to Witty.

In a subsequent interview, Coffey and fellow protesters shared their stories of having their care requests rejected by UnitedHealthcare.

"Regulators shouldn't have to be looking over insurers' shoulders every time a senior citizen falls or suffers a stroke," Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut) said in a video accompanying a Senate report released in October that faulted UnitedHealthcare and other insurers for repeatedly turning down Medicare Advantage patients' requests. Blumenthal oversaw the investigation.

When asked for comment, a spokesman for UnitedHealthcare pointed to a company statement. "While our hearts are broken, we have been touched by the huge outpouring of kindness and support in the hours since this horrific crime took place," the statement said. "Our priorities are, first and foremost, supporting Brian's family; ensuring the safety of our employees; and working with law enforcement to bring the perpetrator to justice."

Earlier this year, a local firefighters' pension fund and the California Public Employees' Retirement System, which calls itself the nation's largest public pension fund, filed a lawsuit against UnitedHealth Group, Thompson and two other senior executives.

The suit alleged that they took part in deceitful business practices designed to artificially inflate UnitedHealth's revenue and stock price, and then, in the case of Thompson and one other executive, sold their stock before news of a federal investigation into the company became public. The Wall Street Journal reported in February that the Justice Department had launched an antitrust probe into UnitedHealth Group.

Thompson, the suit said, sold more than 31 percent of his UnitedHealth stock for \$15 million less than two weeks before the investigation became public.

The case is ongoing. The latest filing in the case came on Wednesday, the day Thompson was killed, according to court records. It was a judge's order, stating that Thompson's responses to the suit were due by March 1.

James Scullary, a spokesman for the California Public Employees' Retirement System, said that the organization had not issued a

statement related to the lawsuit or "any other pending matters."

"We were shocked to hear of the events in New York and have shared our condolences with the company's leadership," he said.

Thompson grew up the son of a grain elevator worker and farmer in Jewell, Iowa — population 1,100 — and was the valedictorian of his high school, according to news reports. He graduated from the University of Iowa with a bachelor's degree in business administration with an accounting major in May 1997, with special honors and highest distinction, meaning his GPA was 3.95 or above, the university said.

He lived in the upscale Whistling Pines neighborhood of Maple Grove, a small city outside of Minneapolis, according to public records. Thompson's compensation package last year was valued at \$10.2 million, the fourth highest among top executives at UnitedHealth Group, the insurer's parent company.

"Brian was a wonderful person with a big heart and who lived life to the fullest," his wife said in a statement to the Minnesota Star Tribune. "He will be greatly missed by everybody. Our hearts are broken, and we are completely devastated by this news. He touched so many lives."

Thompson had been living separately from his wife and their two teenage sons in recent years, interviews with colleagues and neighbors showed.

Jim Pitzner, Thompson's neighbor, said that Thompson had moved into a home on 62nd Avenue N. in Maple Grove a few years ago. Property records show Thompson purchased the five-bedroom, five-bath home for around \$1 million in 2018. It's now worth about \$1.5 million.

Thompson's sons visited occasionally, he said. Otherwise, Pitzner said, Thompson traveled often and was rarely home.

"He had a crazy travel schedule. The house is probably modest compared to what a CEO makes. It was just kind of a home base," Pitzner said.

Daniel Gilbert, Aaron Schaffer and Caroline O'Donovan contributed to this report.

Health executive did not have a security detail at the time he was shot to death

SECURITY FROM A1

Thompson's killing, by a masked gunman who waited for him before methodically shooting him from behind, shocked corporate leaders and the public alike. But security consultants said the shooting, while exceedingly rare, was indicative of rising levels of danger for executives whose companies are often the subject of intense public controversies.

Health-care leaders can face a particularly high risk of violence, security experts said, given that their decisions can affect whether people have access to critical medical care.

The targeting of Thompson also highlights the potential danger to executives who aren't household names. Though he ran a business that provided health insurance to 50 million people and brought in \$281 billion in revenue last year, Thompson oversaw a subsidiary of a larger company — UnitedHealth Group — and wasn't its public face.

Executives in the internet age have faced rising risks, as online databases make it possible to track corporate planes and identify executives' home addresses. Police in Maple Grove, Minnesota, where Thompson lived, said they received apparently bogus bomb threats at the homes of Thompson and his wife hours after he was killed.

There were some indications that health insurance companies have taken immediate steps to enhance security. UnitedHealth has removed the webpage listing the photos and bios of its top executives. CVS, which owns insurer Aetna, has also removed photos of its leaders on its website. UnitedHealth said late Thursday that "our priorities are, first and foremost, supporting Brian's family; ensuring the safety of our employees; and working with law enforcement to bring the perpetrator to justice." The company "will continue to be there for those who depend on us for their health care," it added. It did not respond to questions about threats against Thompson or his level of protection.

Six of the nation's largest insurers — CVS's Aetna, Cigna, Elevance, Humana, Kaiser Permanente and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association — either declined to say whether they were taking extra security measures or did not respond to requests for comment.



JUSTIN LANE/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

The scene Wednesday in New York where UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was shot and killed in an apparent targeted attack.

"Out of respect for the Thompson family, we're not commenting at this time," said Phillip Blando, a CVS spokesman.

"We will not comment on Humana's security procedures," a Humana spokesperson said.

Law enforcement officials have not identified a motive for Thompson's killing. Police found words on casings at the scene that echo a common criticism of insurance companies — "delay, deny, defend" — that could indicate he was targeted in connection with his work, according to a person with knowledge of the investigation.

Corporate leaders are sometimes the subject of direct verbal protests or even physical confrontation by activists, analysts said.

"There are always issues and incidents involving leaders within companies, but they're more low level — you get people having paint thrown on them, eggs tossed," said Dave Komendat, president of DSKomendat Risk

Management Services and a former chief security officer at Boeing. He participated in a telephone call with dozens of corporate security officers to discuss best practices after the shooting. Health insurers like UnitedHealthcare have "at times, a lot of angry customers," said Fred Burton, a former special agent with the U.S. Diplomatic Security Service who now works at Ontic. "I guarantee you, anybody else in this sector — in the health-care sector — is reassessing their security posture to see what kind of threats are out there."

Dale Buckner, CEO of Global Guardian, said his firm fielded 47 requests for armed agents to protect executives within hours of the shooting. Allied Universal has received hundreds of calls for threat assessments or immediate CEO security, said Glen Kucera, president of its enhanced protection division.

But while corporate security concerns are increasing, security

measures are not ubiquitous. Less than a quarter of S&P 500 companies provided home or personal security as a financial perk to their CEO in 2023, according to WTW, a risk management consultancy. Only 16 percent provided such services to top executives other than the CEO. Such disclosures only concern security outside the workplace.

Thompson, for instance, was also a top executive of UnitedHealthcare's parent corporation, UnitedHealth Group, and received pay valued at \$10.2 million last year. The company didn't report paying any fees for personal security for its executives — benefits that have to be disclosed if they exceed \$10,000 — in securities filings going back to 2018.

Americans take a dim view of the medical system, with views on health-care quality at their lowest point since Gallup began collecting the data in 2001. Health insurers get much of the blame: Nearly a third of Americans gave health

insurance companies a poor rating in 2023, while 11 percent said the same of hospitals, according to Gallup survey results.

Insurance companies denying claims has long fueled consumer anger, political controversies and regulatory investigations, and the use of computer algorithms to rapidly make decisions about care has become a new source of outrage.

A Senate subcommittee released an investigative report in October, finding that insurers who contract with government to provide Medicare benefits are seeking to boost profits at the expense of seniors. It focused on how the companies increasingly deny claims for seniors who seek stays in rehabilitation facilities as they recover from injuries or illness.

The report, by the Democratic majority, found that UnitedHealthcare's rate of denying authorization for such stays increased from 10.9 percent in 2020

to 22.7 percent in 2022, during a time it was seeking to automate the process. The company's denial rate for authorizing stays at skilled nursing facilities rose to 12.6 percent in 2022, nine times higher than in 2020. It also cited similar practices by CVS's Aetna and Humana.

UnitedHealth, CVS and Humana did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the Senate report.

A lawsuit filed last year against UnitedHealth accused the company of using artificial intelligence with a high rate of errors to wrongfully deny claims to seniors. The company has moved to dismiss the case for a range of reasons, arguing in part that the plaintiffs had not exhausted all of their options for appeal.

Even Thompson's LinkedIn page serves as a kind of barometer of the public's view of health insurers, where a bland post praising a colleague's work elicited comments like "hypocrisy at its finest" and stories of battling to get information on gravely ill family members.

Some security consultants said that having a professional protecting Thompson might have made a difference, pointing out that they might have taken a more circuitous route to the hotel or swept the area beforehand to see if anyone was loitering.

"If there was a detail on the gentleman, I think it certainly could have been avoided," said A.J. Caro, CEO of Arrow Security, which provides security guard services to hospitals, schools and various businesses.

Still, many executives chafe at protection and feel they're not in danger. More than just having a security specialist present, executives need one they can confide in about things happening in their personal lives that could make them a target, too, said Manny Mounouchos, founder and CEO of Avante, a Toronto-based security firm that provides executive protection globally.

Wackrow, the former Secret Service agent, said that Thompson's shooting may mark the beginning of lasting change in corporate security.

It "was really the first time that many corporate leaders actually saw the manifestation of a threat into physical, targeted violence," he said. "It played out right before their eyes. I think that for a lot of corporate leaders, that rattled them."

227,000 jobs added in November, a rise from October report

Unemployment rate ticked up to 4.2% but remains near low levels

BY LAUREN KAORI GURLEY AND ANDREW ACKERMAN

Employers created 227,000 jobs in November, a solid improvement reflecting resilience in the economy following a weaker report in October, a month marked by hurricanes and strikes.

The unemployment rate ticked up to 4.2 percent but remains near low levels, according to the November jobs report released by the Labor Department.

Job gains in November beat forecasters' predictions of 200,000. But economists have noted that November job creation could paint an artificially strong picture of the labor market, coming after one-off economic events. Two hurricanes and a strike at Boeing pushed job creation down in October, resulting in the weakest showing since December 2020.

Additionally, job gains for September and October were revised up by a combined 56,000, suggesting that the labor market this fall was stronger than previously thought. That strength could influence the Federal Reserve's interest rate decision later this month.

"This was a recovery month," said Robert Frick, an economist at Navy Federal Credit Union. "When you mix everything together, you have still have a moderately expanding jobs market. ... The labor market is stable."

Adding to the solid picture for workers, the unemployment rate and layoffs remain low, even as the hiring rate in October matched a low for the year that hasn't happened since the pandemic, according to a separate jobs report released Tuesday by the Labor Department.

Wage growth in November grew by 0.4 percent compared with the previous month. Average hourly earnings have risen by 4 percent this year, to \$35.61 an hour, outpacing the rate of inflation and boosting workers' pocketbooks.

While Americans with jobs are prospering, those who are unemployed increasingly struggle to find opportunities. People are staying unemployed for longer, and the number of Americans on unemployment for 27 weeks or longer has grown by 1.2 million over the past year.

President Joe Biden, whose

term has seen the return of a stable labor market following the covid-19 pandemic, touted November's job gains in a statement Friday as evidence of "America's comeback."

Financial markets reacted warmly to November's job gains, with all three major indexes jumping Friday morning, a sign that investors anticipate an interest rate cut this month.

More than 70 percent of November's job gains were concentrated in just four service-related sectors that have been fueling the economy this year, as hiring elsewhere has stagnated.

Health care led the pack, adding 54,000 jobs, in a reflection of the growing demands of an aging generation of baby boomers. Leisure and hospitality expanded by 53,000 jobs. The industry was expected to show strong gains, after workers displaced by hurricanes resumed work. Public-sector payrolls rose by 33,000, mostly in state government. But tighter budgets in 2025 suggest a slowdown could be on the horizon. And social assistance added 19,000 jobs.

The retail sector lost 28,000 jobs, mostly at general merchandise stores, which include Target and Walmart. Economists say this could foreshadow weaker holiday spending this year.

Employment in other major industries barely budged, including information, financial services, transportation and warehousing, professional and business services and construction.

The narrow clustering of job creation in a few sectors over the past year has worried some economists who say a financial hit to one of those areas could hurt the labor market as a whole.

But policymakers are trying to figure out if the job market might be on the cusp of revving up again, after a lengthy cooldown in the labor market, which is now below pre-pandemic levels. In the months to come, the Federal Reserve is expected to keep trimming interest rates, which could eventually help the labor market.

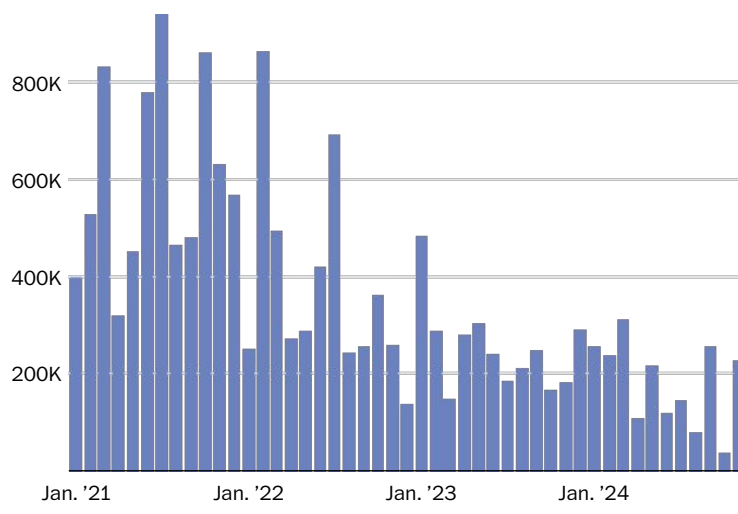
"There's little sign of such a turnaround yet, but there are reasons for cautious optimism," said Julia Pollak, chief economist at the jobs site ZipRecruiter, wrote in an analyst note. "For now, though, the labor market remains in a slowdown, with job seekers and workers waiting for the anticipated tailwinds to kick in."

Later in December, the Federal Reserve will decide to either keep interest rates where they are or cut them by another quarter percentage point. The Fed began lowering interest rates in September and October, but those cuts



Job gains in November beat forecasters' predictions of 200,000, but economists said the number could paint an artificially strong picture.

Monthly change in non-farm jobs



Seasonally adjusted; the figures for the most recent two months are preliminary
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

U.S. unemployment rate



Note: Seasonally adjusted
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics via FRED

don't appear to have moved the labor market much.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell said this week that the Fed could move cautiously to continue cutting interest rates. The economy is in strong overall shape, he said, though inflation remains above the central bank's 2 percent target.

"Growth is definitely stronger than we thought, and inflation is coming a little higher," Powell said Wednesday at a conference hosted by the New York Times in New York. "The good news is that we can afford to be a little more cautious" lowering interest rates to the point that they neither restrict nor spur economic growth, he added.

Investors in the futures market

signaled after Friday's jobs report that they expect yet another quarter-percentage-point cut is likely at the Fed's final 2024 meeting in December, although the pace of additional cuts next year is uncertain.

Investors were betting on a roughly 90 percent likelihood of a quarter-point cut at the Fed's Dec. 17-18 meeting, up from 71 percent on Thursday, according to CME Group.

Economists say there is talk among employers of improved hiring as financial conditions ease. That could help white-collar workers at companies burdened by higher interest rates. For example, financial firms that handle mergers and acquisitions could benefit from laxer stances

on antitrust enforcement under the next administration.

The declining availability of white-collar jobs has made it increasingly difficult for college-educated Americans to find work, while blue-collar jobs are more readily available.

"The group of people in their early 20s [who have recently graduated] are bearing the brunt of a lot of cooling labor market," said Guy Berger, director of economic research at the Burning Glass Institute, which studies the labor market. "We're not used to those people bearing the pain of a cooling labor market."

November's jobs data was collected a week after Donald Trump was elected, but most economists didn't expect the election to affect

the data, with employers still calibrating their next moves. Still, Trump's proposed plans for higher tariffs, lower taxes and a crackdown on unauthorized immigration could all play a role in the economy in the months to come, economists say.

"A lot of the labor market focus is moving to what we call Trump's trio of deportations, tariffs and tax cuts," said Andrew Flowers, chief economist at Appcast, a recruitment advertising firm. "In the short term, immigration policy impact looms the largest because that could really have significant declines in the supply of workers for those industries that rely heavily on unauthorized immigrant labor. ... We're monitoring that in real time."

Appeals court sides with government on TikTok's national security risks

TIKTOK FROM A1

established historical record of protecting Americans' right to free speech and we expect they will do just that on this important constitutional issue," TikTok spokesperson Michael Hughes said in a statement. He criticized the ban-or-sale law, saying it was based on "inaccurate" information and was "resulting in the outright censorship of the American people."

Attorney General Merrick Garland praised the decision as "an important step in blocking the Chinese government from weaponizing TikTok to collect sensitive information about millions of Americans, to covertly manipulate the content delivered to American audiences, and to undermine our national security."

The appeals court on Friday said years-long bipartisan investigations into the app, and the government's willingness to consider TikTok's alternatives, weighed in favor of the law.

"The First Amendment exists to protect free speech in the United States," Judge Douglas Ginsburg wrote for a three-judge panel. "Here the Government acted solely to protect that freedom from a foreign adversary nation."

However, the judges said they rejected the government's "ambitious argument" that the law did not "implicate the First Amendment at all," saying that it would impose a "disproportionate burden on TikTok, an entity engaged in expressive activity." The government had suggested that TikTok's ownership by a foreign company left it without First Amendment rights, despite it having roughly 170 million U.S. accounts.

The decision sets up a potential showdown with President-elect Donald Trump. Having backed a ban during his first term in the White House, he is now expected to try to halt it, people familiar with his views on the matter told The Washington Post in early November, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

"I am optimistic that President Trump will facilitate an American takeover of TikTok to allow its continued use in the United States and I look forward to welcoming the app in America under new ownership," said Rep. John Moolenaar (R-Michigan), the chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party.

The White House and Trump's team did not respond to requests for comment.

"This went about as badly for TikTok as it could've gone," said Alan Rozenshtein, a former national security adviser to the Justice Department. "I see no reason to think the Supreme Court will rule any differently than the DC circuit did." Given that legal situation, he said, Trump could take any of three actions to help TikTok fend off the ban: persuading Congress to repeal the law, directing his new attorney general not to enforce it, or declaring that ByteDance has satisfied the statute by performing a "qualified divestiture" of TikTok.

The court decision drew praise from U.S. security hawks Friday, while free-speech advocates expressed deep dismay.

Craig Singleton, senior China fellow at the nonpartisan Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a former U.S. diplomat, called it a "warning shot to for-

eign companies operating in sensitive sectors."

"This ruling isn't just about TikTok — it's a bellwether for how the U.S. will confront tech threats from authoritarian regimes," he said.

Jameel Jaffer, executive director of the Knight First Amendment Institute, criticized the ruling as "hugely consequential for free speech" and called it "disturbing" that the court would support such curbs on speech based on an argument of protecting Americans from foreign disinformation.

"Foreign disinformation is a

representing a 'hybrid commercial threat,' making them inherently subject to sanction."

Meta's stock briefly hit an all-time high Friday and was up 2.5 percent midafternoon. The company's Facebook and Instagram rival TikTok for social media attention, and in 2022 it paid to orchestrate a media and lobbying campaign portraying TikTok as "the real threat."

The D.C. Circuit's 65-page judgment was unanimous and joined by judges from across the ideological spectrum. The opinion was written by Ginsburg, a nominee of Ronald Reagan, and

"The First Amendment exists to protect free speech in the United States. Here the Government acted solely to protect that freedom from a foreign adversary nation."

Judge Douglas Ginsburg, writing for a three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit

very real thing. It can be a very real threat to the integrity of public discourse in this country," he said. "But to jump from those propositions to 'And therefore the government has a compelling interest in suppressing what it determines to be foreign lies' — I think that's a really big leap."

Anupam Chander, a Georgetown University law professor, called it "clever framing by the government" to require TikTok to sell to new owners instead of banning it outright, which the court saw as a lower burden on speech.

"This decision will be Exhibit 1 in the tech cold war," he said. "It adopts the U.S. government's framing of Chinese business as

joined by Chief Judge Sri Srinivasan, an Obama nominee, and Judge Neomi Rao, a Trump nominee. Srinivasan wrote separately to say he agreed that the law does not violate the First Amendment but for different reasons.

TikTok has the opportunity to ask the D.C. Circuit to rehear the case sitting with a full complement of judges or go directly to the Supreme Court. Because the three-judge panel was unanimous, and the opinion joined by judges with different ideological backgrounds, it is less likely that the full D.C. Circuit would vote to review the decision.

The legislation, known as the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Appli-

cations Act, was signed into law by President Joe Biden in April, shortly after it was passed by Congress as part of a sprawling package offering aid to Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan.

The law called TikTok an application controlled by a "foreign adversary" and gave ByteDance roughly nine months to sell the platform to non-Chinese ownership or face a nationwide ban. Finance experts called that time frame almost impossibly short for executing a sale, a complicated transaction that would require regulatory approval in multiple countries. The law gives the president the option to extend the divestment deadline by 90 days if the administration deems that the company has made "significant progress" toward a sale.

Further complicating the prospects of a sale, China has said it would block the sale and export of TikTok's recommendation algorithm, one of the app's most critical components.

The looming U.S. ban came as a major shock to many of TikTok's users in the United States, who have grown accustomed to using the app for daily entertainment or, in some cases, as the chief way to market their small businesses. Since the end of the Cold War decades ago, the U.S. government has rarely invoked national security to impinge on the operation of media platforms.

U.S. officials who backed the ban say that TikTok collects a vast trove of data on its users, including their location and their contact networks, and that the company would have limited ability under Chinese law to withhold such data if Beijing officials requested it. TikTok executives argued vehemently that they have

firewalled U.S. TikTok user data from the parent company in China, but they failed to convince the U.S. government.

The push to ban the app came against the backdrop of a deepening U.S.-China rivalry, with Chinese technology companies facing closer scrutiny in Washington than similar firms based in other countries.

Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Illinois), who co-introduced the bill in Congress, said in a statement that the opinion affirms lawmakers' conclusion that TikTok "is a national security threat that cannot be mitigated through any other means than divestiture."

TikTok filed its legal challenge against the Justice Department in May, and a group of TikTok creators followed with a parallel lawsuit.

The Justice Department and TikTok presented their cases in September in the federal Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. While Srinivasan noted at the hearing that there would be "serious First Amendment concerns" if such a case involved a purely domestic company, the judges said there was legal precedent for national security concerns to override free-speech considerations.

In a separate legal case, more than a dozen state attorneys general filed a lawsuit in October accusing TikTok of harming the well-being of children by using addictive product features that keep them hooked on the platform. TikTok said in a statement that it strongly disagreed with the claims.

Aaron Schaffer, Ann Marimow and David Nakamura contributed to this report.

FCC readies plan to regulate telecoms' cybersecurity

Agency would claim such power for first time after large-scale China hack

BY EVA DOU
AND ELLEN NAKASHIMA

Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel has drafted plans to regulate the cybersecurity of telecommunications companies as the federal government faces pressure to respond to a massive compromise of U.S. phone networks by Chinese government hackers.

If implemented, the plans would put phone network operators on warning that the FCC could pursue financial penalties against them if they do not do enough to protect their networks. It would be the first time the agency has asserted such powers under federal wiretapping law.

"While the Commission's counterparts in the intelligence community are determining the scope and impact of the Salt Typhoon attack, we need to put in place a modern framework to help companies secure their networks," Rosenworcel said in an exclusive statement to The Washington Post.

Washington has been reeling from revelations of the wide-scale hacks, by a group dubbed Salt Typhoon, which Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-Virginia), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, recently called the "worst telecom hack in our nation's his-

tory." Warner said the companies still have not expelled the hackers, a statement echoed this week by U.S. officials who warned concerned users to turn to encrypted messaging services.

Rosenworcel circulated her draft to fellow FCC commissioners on Thursday, a day after she attended a Senate briefing on the hacks alongside Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines and officials from the FBI and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

On Wednesday, Anne Neuberger, the deputy national security adviser for cyber and emerging technologies, said the Salt Typhoon hack of "at least eight" American telecommunications companies was "part of a global Chinese campaign that has affected dozens of countries around the world."

"We believe that this campaign against telecoms has been underway for some time, likely one to two years," said a senior administration official, adding that the number of countries targeted was in the "low couple of dozens." The official spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House.

The FCC activity comes after calls from lawmakers, including Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut), for the agency to take immediate action based on its existing legislative authority to oversee the telecommunications industry. The FCC has often been divided over the years over how heavily to regulate the sector, with Republican commissioners and industry executives often arguing in favor of a light-



REUTERS

Under FCC chief Jessica Rosenworcel's plan, firms could face fines or criminal penalties if they are lax in securing their networks.

touch approach.

The Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act, or CALEA, was passed in 1994 to require telecom carriers to ensure they can facilitate lawful requests by federal authorities to intercept communications in criminal investigations. It also required that the companies protect those communications and the infrastructure they ride on from unauthorized parties gaining access.

Rosenworcel said the FCC's authority in this matter comes from Section 105 of CALEA — a single sentence that stipulates, without elaboration, that telecommunications carriers should ensure systems security "in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Commission." As

one of the measures, she is seeking to require network providers to submit an annual certification to the FCC that they are implementing a cybersecurity risk management plan.

In addition to imposing fines, the FCC could coordinate with other agencies to pursue criminal penalties against carriers deemed too careless on cybersecurity.

The FCC chairwoman's move is significant, said James A. Lewis, director of the strategic technologies program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. He said he expected it to be adopted by Republican commissioners, including the incoming chairman, Brendan Carr, a staunch China hawk.

While the FCC's five commissioners are divided along party lines on many issues, there has been a growing bipartisan consensus at the agency to adopt a more aggressive interpretation of its authority to act to thwart China's hackers. That improves the chances that Rosenworcel's draft will be passed in her waning term and that the measures will not be reversed under Carr.

Carr said in a statement on X on Wednesday that the Salt Typhoon intrusion was a "serious and unacceptable risk" to U.S. national security.

"It should never have happened," he said. "I will be working with national security agencies through the transition and next year in an effort to root out the threat and secure our networks."

Under the first Trump administration, the FCC began a "rip-and-replace" program to remove Chinese-made phone network gear from U.S. networks as a potential security threat. Rosenworcel has continued under Biden's presidency to tighten FCC regulations with an eye on China-based network hackers, including launching a review in November of the security of undersea cables.

While CALEA was not passed as a cybersecurity measure, per se, Lewis said, "it makes sense" that the FCC would use it for that purpose because "one of the parts of this massive Chinese effort" was hacking for information on whom the U.S. government was seeking to surveil. "In some ways, the Chinese triggered this because they were going after intercept requests," he said.

Biden administration officials

said voluntary efforts to protect against aggressive Chinese hacking activity have fallen short.

"We've had for the last decade voluntary public-private partnership efforts," Neuberger told The Post in a recent interview. "But we continue to see successful breaches, and in many cases, as with ransomware attacks, we continue to see pretty basic cybersecurity practices not being followed."

With China's hackers becoming more brazen, pre-positioning themselves in U.S. critical networks, "we need to lock our digital doors," Neuberger said.

The White House has been regularly convening telecom executives to discuss the threat and ways to counter it. At the most recent meeting last month, the executives and cybersecurity experts discussed "the need to make real changes" to "reduce the blast radius" of cyber compromises, Neuberger said in a call with reporters Wednesday.

Cyber requirements can make a difference, she said. After the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack in 2021 shut down one of the nation's largest energy pipelines for several days, creating a national security scare, the Transportation Security Administration issued several security directives, and today, all of the country's several dozen critical pipeline companies are in compliance, she said.

Similar directives were subsequently issued for rail and aviation sectors, and the compliance rates in those industries are now at 68 and 57 percent respectively, she said.

Trump's threat to move jobs out of D.C. may cause 'brain drain'

JOBS FROM A1

of land management employees as "the epitome of good governance," saying it was "not only well-informed, but it was also implemented efficiently, effectively, and with an eye toward affected career civil servants."

While the vast majority of the nation's 2.3 million federal workers are already spread across the United States, Trump and his supporters have long been critical of the roughly 320,000 federal workers concentrated in and around the nation's capital. Trump has often derided government employees in Washington as part of the "deep state" that he wants to shatter.

Their latest plan would affect nearly 1 in 3 federal workers in the Washington area — a sprawling region of 6.3 million people that extends far beyond the halls of power on Capitol Hill to the Pennsylvania state line and into West Virginia, according to the Office of Personnel Management.

The campaign promise to move federal jobs is separate from pledges by Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, Trump's government efficiency czars, to slash the federal workforce via mass layoffs and by closing entire agencies.

So far, both efforts have been heavy on rhetoric and scarce on details.

The America First Policy Institute, a Trump-aligned presidential transition group, said moving 100,000 jobs and relocating entire agencies from D.C. would pierce the "Beltway bubble" and save \$1.4 billion a year in payroll costs. It named two small agencies as prime targets: the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, to be "headquartered in the coal field" in Pittsburgh, and the Air Traffic Organization, the command center for the nation's air traffic controllers, to be moved to an unnamed destination. Together, they employ fewer than 1,000 people in the D.C. area.

It's not clear that 100,000 jobs could depart the nation's capital without drastic actions such as emptying the Pentagon in Northern Virginia or the medical research campus of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. — the two campuses are home to roughly 40,000 employees inside the Beltway. Nine big agencies, including Defense and Health and Human Services, account for the bulk of the federal jobs in the D.C. area.

About 100,000 other jobs are sprinkled across a roster of 119 lower-profile agencies in and around Washington, including the Peace Corps and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, according to Office of Personnel Management data.

What is clear is that the loss of so many government jobs would deliver a stiff blow to Washington's local economy, said Terry Clower, director of the Center for



KEVIN DIETSCH/GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: During his first term, President Donald Trump tried to move the Bureau of Land Management from the Interior Department headquarters, above, to Grand Junction, Colorado. BELOW: Trump's job moves began in 2018 under Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue.

Regional Analysis at George Mason University. It would have harmful knock-on effects, too, with the lost purchasing power from so many departing high-paying positions.

"It would put us way behind in terms of economic growth," Clower said.

Relocating some federal agencies could make sense after evaluating factors such as whether a particular local area is a good fit, according to a 2019 report from the Brookings Institution, a prominent Washington think tank.

The job migrations of Trump's first term started with an email in the summer of 2018 from Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to the staff of the Economic Research Service, a collection of economists who track things like vegetable production and farm trade fluctuations. The economists had once been spread across the country and focused on regional topics but had been brought together in Washington decades earlier to focus on national issues.

The small agency has a reputation for providing expert analysis on federal policy, said Susan Offutt, a former administrator under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. "It speaks truth to power," she said.

Perdue said the ERS would be leaving D.C. for Kansas City, a move that would streamline operations, save money and help recruit and retain employees. To many inside the agency, it felt like

"We got back up to our same staffing levels, but we never got back the expertise that we lost."

Laura Dodson, an agricultural economist, on Washington staffing levels at two Department of Agriculture agencies that previously sent employees to Kansas City.

a punishment, according to current and former workers.

"It was a terribly dramatic day," said Dodson, the union official.

In the email, Perdue also said the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, which provides funding and grants for agricultural research, would be moving. The small agency was nearing the end of its lease on a Washington office building and needed to move anyway.

Employees at the two agencies were informed they needed to be in Kansas City by September 2019. A small crew would stay in Washington.

According to a cost-benefit analysis by the Department of Agriculture, released in June 2019, moving the workers to the Midwest would save taxpayers

nearly \$300 million over 15 years, mostly through lower payroll and office costs. But a separate review that month by the Agriculture and Applied Economics Association, a professional trade group, argued that the USDA analysis overstated the price of D.C.-area office space and failed to account for the lost value of the research that would have been conducted by employees who would leave the agency. As a result, the association said, the move would not save money but would instead cost taxpayers at least \$83 million.

The Government Accountability Office released a report in 2022 that called into doubt many of the touted benefits of the move, writing that top Agriculture officials overlooked key evidence. For example, "it didn't factor in potential costs related to the attrition of staff or the disruption of agencies' activities due to the relocation."

Of about 550 workers expected to make the journey to Kansas City, only 85 did, according to union officials. "A whole bunch quit or left for other agencies," Dodson said.

Others got extensions to move or were allowed to work remotely, mostly from home, according to the GAO.

After the pandemic hit, sending most workers home, many federal agencies such as the National Institute for Food and Agriculture decided to allow more remote work. The GAO report said that decision helped

the agency eventually staff back up.

Today, about 20 employees are assigned to the Kansas City office, said Tom Bewick, a vice president of the local union, who is based in Virginia. At the ERS, about 40 employees are assigned to Kansas City, according to Dodson, who does her job from Maine.

The situation made an impression on Michigan State University professor Scott Swinton, who visited Kansas City in 2022 to catch up with six former PhD students who worked at the ERS. When he emailed the group about lunch and an office tour, three replied that they didn't live in the area. The other three said they never went into the office.

In 2023, the GAO released another report that found that after relocating to Kansas City, the two agencies lost more than half their employees, produced fewer research reports and took longer to process farming research grants.

It took the agencies two years to reach prior staffing levels and get production back on track at its new Kansas City headquarters, according to the GAO. But the new workers had less experience. "We got back up to our same staffing levels, but we never got back the expertise that we lost," Dodson said.

On paper at least, the case for moving the Bureau of Land Management's headquarters to Colorado appeared stronger. Almost all of the millions of acres of public land that the agency manages — and 97 percent of its roughly 10,000 employees — are out West. In 2019, the Trump administration said it wanted to put the decision-makers closer to the action.

The move was originally supposed to involve 600 positions. The agency wound up targeting about half that, mostly because of existing job vacancies.

Then President Joe Biden took office in 2021, and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced that the move would be reversed, arguing that the bureau's leaders needed to be closer to policymakers and other Interior agencies, said Stone-Manning, its director. Being based in Washington also made it easier for constituents and lobbyists to find agency employees, she said.

The reversal was a huge relief to the agency's workers in Washington, who she said are now awaiting the second Trump administration with trepidation. "I think there will be disruptions again," she said.

Meanwhile, the Grand Junction office became the bureau's new western headquarters. About 40 people work there in good-paying jobs that have been a boon to the small city of about 70,000 just west of the Rockies, said Curtis Englehart, executive director of the Grand Junction Economic Partnership.

"We felt like it was a win," Englehart said.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

FREE FOR ALL

Crimson tide, purple ocean

I appreciated the clarity of Perry Bacon Jr.'s Nov. 12 op-ed, "The election was a Trump splash — but not a red wave." Yes, the result is concerning. But the message that the election was close, that the country is still quite evenly split, needs to be broadcast loudly on more than liberal media.

I'd like to see an electoral map in hues of purple. Almost every state was in the range of 50/50 to 70/30, and D.C., at 93/7, was the only place where a blowout occurred. The red and blue images are powerful — and inaccurate. A more accurate representation could reduce divisiveness and increase cooperation. If we're stuck with the electoral college for now, let's minimize the damage it is doing to our national psyche.

Beth Harris, Chicago

Don't call him a know-nothing

Nowhere in the Nov. 18 article "Trump picks Brendan Carr, who laid out agenda in Project 2025, as FCC chairman" was the most salient fact in all this: that Donald Trump repeatedly disavowed Project 2025 while campaigning but is now taking steps toward implementing it.

At his debate with Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump claimed he knew nothing about Project 2025 and said, "I'm not going to read it." He asserted on social media that "I know nothing about Project 2025" and "I have no idea who is behind it."

You in traditional media are fighting to stay relevant. How can you do that? By giving context. Leave summarizing facts to AI, which is good at that. What actual journalism can bring to the table is backstory and contrasts. You have institutional memory.

The context for this news is that Trump is (a) implementing something that (b) he said he wouldn't. Both of those facts should be put together in one article.

Linda Falcao, North Wales, Pennsylvania

Likeliest to succeed

In his Nov. 28 op-ed, "A visit with the 'deep state' in suburbia," Marc Fisher wrote, "They have seen political interference before, from Democrats and Republicans alike, though it was often more subtle than what Trump threatens."

Let's try that again: "They have seen political interference before, from Democrats and Republicans alike, though it was often subtler than what Trump threatens."

Patrick Milroy, Edmonton, Alberta

Gimme shelter from the CEW

"Gimme shelter from the ASPCA," the Nov. 22 Free for All letter by Edwin Sayres, was irresponsible and misleading about the role of national animal welfare organizations such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This is not surprising, considering Sayres, former president and CEO of the ASPCA, now works for the Center for the Environment & Welfare, a special-interest lobbying group opposing farm animal welfare reform efforts — a fact that was not disclosed.

In reality, and as our public materials clearly state, the ASPCA's role as a national organization is to collaborate with hundreds of local agencies, shelters and rescues to improve the welfare of animals big and small. In crisis situations such as the recent hurricanes, both at our own facilities and through our boots-on-the-ground support, we provide vulnerable animals the care and help they need. Our publicly available tax filings affirm that 75 cents of every dollar spent by the ASPCA goes toward programmatic services that directly advance our lifesaving mission, with the majority of that funding supporting shelters and rescues across the country.

We're proud of our hands-on work helping hundreds of thousands of animals each year, and we won't be distracted by hired guns with hidden agendas.

Bert Troughton, New Gloucester, Maine

The writer is senior vice president of shelter and veterinary services for the ASPCA.



JOHN C. CLARK FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Pointless.

Someone call the ASPCA

The Nov. 29 front-page article "For Virginia's Mattaponi, it's time for recognition" recounted — and showed — a tribute paid to Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) in honor of the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation between Indigenous people and Virginians. After centuries of egregious behavior, one would have hoped for a more humane memorial than the killing of an innocent, beautiful nine-point deer.

Beverly M. Massey, Bethesda

Fit for the National Cartoon Museum

I think the current iteration of Mark Trail ought to stay in the woods (or just leave). In the Nov. 18 strip, he brought a group of students to Washington to go to the National Science Museum. Of all the museums we have, this was one I'd never heard of, so I Googled it and, sure enough, it doesn't exist. That would have been a simple thing for the cartoonist to look up.

Susie Van Pool, Washington

Free for Always

To paraphrase Jean Stapleton at the 1981 Emmys, after her character Edith Bunker had been killed off: See! We're still here!

And we're not going anywhere. We apologize for leaving readers wondering last week whether Free for All had been killed off, and we promise to give notice on the rare occasions we go dark in the future.

Ryan Vogt, Free for All editor



JOEL SAGET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Poet and French Resistance fighter Madeleine Riffaud in Paris in June.

Pete, meet Madeleine

The Nov. 15 news article "Hegseth has decried drive for diversity, demonized Islam," about President-elect Donald Trump's pick of Pete Hegseth to be, as Hegseth would prefer, secretary of war, appeared on the same day as the fascinating obituary for Madeleine Riffaud, "Fought for Paris with French Resistance during WWII." Her heroic — indeed violent — acts showed bravery and certainly enough "muscle" to get the job done, and enough

strength to resist Nazi torture when she was captured. Barring women from roles in the military that allow them to advance into leadership positions will make our country weaker, not stronger. What those roles should be can be discussed with civility and respect, not with language like that quoted from Hegseth, decrying current policy as creating "a more empathetic and effeminate military."

John Borrazzo, Washington



KATHLEEN HINKEL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Driveby country: Workers wrap cheese at the Mars Cheese Castle in Kenosha, Wis., on Nov. 7.

Well that's camembertassing

I loved the Dec. 1 Travel article "In Wisconsin, cheese reigns. And its palace is in Kenosha." As a native Chicagoan, I have driven by the whimsical wonder that is the Mars Cheese Castle in Wisconsin — a delightful, silly stop filled with tasty treats and friendly folks — more times than I can count.

I was disappointed, though, that the writer used the derivative anachronism "flyover country," which demonstrates a coastal ignorance of the many

wonderful things about the Midwest. It was particularly tin-eared in a travel article: The writer went out of her way to find a gem yet effectively dismissed a huge swath of the country as unworthy of exploration.

Maybe the intent was to remind readers not to write off "flyover country." I hope so. Either way, let's retire this snobby term. I win every time I see it.

Tommy Brown, Silver Spring



CARLOS OSORIO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

World Wrestling Entertainment Chairman Vince McMahon braces for Donald Trump to shave his head at WrestleMania 23 in Detroit in 2007, as "Stone Cold" Steve Austin and Bobby Lashley look on.

Oh, don't pretend you don't remember when Trump almost had his head shaved at the Battle of the Billionaires

The Nov. 24 news article "Sexual misconduct allegations surround several of Trump's choices for top positions" mentioned Donald Trump's pick for education secretary, Linda McMahon, being accused in a lawsuit of "failing to prevent the sexual abuse of teenage WWE workers." The article said the plaintiffs "helped set up WWE events as teenagers." It said

she and "husband Vince McMahon — the WWE co-founder — knew that the then-teens were being sexually abused by high-ranking WWE employees."

So what is WWE? I have no clue.

The Post too often assumes its readers know these things, and too often we don't.

John Campbell, Washington

Even a billionaire deserves a free shave

Regarding Erik Wemple's Nov. 26 Tuesday Opinion column, "Five reasons Democrats should turn off 'Morning Joe'":

All the people agonizing over Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski's voyage to Mar-a-Lago should recall and adopt the spirit of the great Herblock cartoon on

Richard M. Nixon's election in 1968. After consistently drawing Nixon with a gloomy, unshaven face, Herblock depicted his cartoonist's office as a barber-shop, with a sign reading, "This shop gives to every new president of the United States a free shave."

Benjamin Huberman, Sarasota, Florida

The Washington Support Beam

In his Nov. 16 Free for All letter, "Off the wall," George Ackerman praised a photograph by André Chung and, in doing so, referred to "porch support beams."

There is a name for these: posts.

Posts might be merely decorative, but if those pictured actually provide support, it is the roof, not the porch, that they support.

In such instances, newspapers should use one of the two words familiar to them: "post" or "column."

Speaking of unsupportable terms: A Nov. 17 front-page headline read, "Trump hews to his own script in naming Cabinet."

One follows a script but hews to a line.

Abraham Lincoln knew well how to score and split wood, a skill sorely lacking among the headline crafters at The Post.

Robert Braxton, Fairfax



VERA NIEUWENHUIS/AP

I can believe it's not butter: Terry McLaurin

Speaking of chiseling (we think)

How serendipitous that a knockout photo of wide receiver Terry McLaurin appeared in the Dec. 1 Sports section a few hours before McLaurin rocked Northwest Stadium with a pair of rollicking touchdowns in the Washington Commanders' solid win over the Tennessee Titans.

With its immediate impact and pulsing of pure power, this picture is a masterpiece. McLaurin explodes from the page with the speed and determination he exerts on the field. Deliberately or by luck, the side lighting sculpts McLaurin's arms, rock-hard, as if carved from black marble.

Barbara Morris, Falls Church



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Two out of five ain't bad.

Just duet

The Nov. 12 Metro article "May we honor their legacy" was a nice story about a trio of centenarian World War II veterans. But a caption informing readers that "the U.S. Army Brass Quintet, below, performed at the ceremony" accompanied a photo of two players; wouldn't that be a duet? Don't photo and text editors ever get together?

Elery Caskey, Rockville

Just dyad

The Nov. 16 news article "Government efficiency panels like DOGE have long and disappointing history" put the two-headed "Department of Government Efficiency" on a par with past "commissions." Yet, according to the Cambridge English Dictionary, a "commission" is "a group of people who have been formally chosen to discover information about a problem or examine the reasons why the problem exists." Though two people can technically make up a group, such a small number is usually called a dyad. Comparing DOGE to government entities comprising many commissioners does a disservice to all those commissions whose work entails ideas and compromises from many viewpoints.

DOGE isn't a department, either, as it is not "part" of any larger body.

Michael Nardolilli, Arlington

Government efficiency is a laudable goal, but the "Department of Government Efficiency" is a misnomer. "Department," as well as media references to DOGE as an "agency," misleadingly suggests this effort is a government entity.

A truthful but bulky term might be the Trump, Musk, Ramaswamy group claiming to improve government efficiency, or TMRgcty. Try that, or some other non-misleading term.

Robert M. Spiller Jr., Penn Laird, Virginia

Just die, ad!

As a person with extremely low vision, I appreciate the audio versions available for almost all Post stories.

In my youth, I wrote and broadcast advertisements for radio stations. So imagine how maddening it was to hear the same advertisement on every story I listened to on a recent day. Even worse, the ad, purporting to show how a social media app is working to keep teenagers safe, has examples of (presumably) a mother talking to teenagers as though they were 6-year-olds. The latest version includes a 6-year-old "teenager" responding. All members of your ad department and the ad agency should be required to listen to the ad 30 times in an hour before being allowed to run it again.

Michael McKinney, Dickinson, Texas

OPINION

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

The Senate's window to protect press freedom is closing

IN 2021, Attorney General Merrick Garland established new, but long-needed, press protections barring federal prosecutors from pursuing journalists' communication records with confidential sources except in extreme circumstances.

EDITORIAL President-elect Donald Trump, who has espoused hostility toward journalists and seeks to elevate people who share this feeling to powerful positions in government, is weeks away from taking over federal law enforcement agencies.

In January, the House of Representatives passed such a bill without opposition. The legislation — the Protect Reporters from Exploitative State Spying Act, or Press Act — would prevent the federal government from using legal tools such as subpoenas and search warrants to go after reporters' information, except in cases where doing so would prevent violence or terrorism.

That legislation has since languished in the Senate,

but a spokesperson for Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-New York) said the majority leader supports the bill and intends to pass it next week. Senators could attach it to the must-pass National Defense Authorization Act, which lawmakers are negotiating now.

The trouble, however, is Mr. Trump. Last month, he posted an all-caps demand on Truth Social that Republicans "KILL" the bill. Although his decision to weigh in on the legislation was unexpected, his opposition is unsurprising, given his first administration's efforts to root out government leakers by obtaining the phone and email records of reporters at multiple outlets, including The Post.

The president-elect's social media missive makes it less likely that Republican senators who support the measure will back it now, but they should keep in mind that this is not a partisan issue. Administrations from both parties have pursued journalists'

sources in recent years, including the Obama Justice Department, which seized phone records of the Associated Press in 2013 and conducted electronic surveillance of Fox News's James Rosen in an aggressive attempt to expose leakers.

Such overreach disserves the public, regardless of whether it happens under a Democratic or Republican president. Confidential sources have been

might be unwilling to reveal information the public deserves to know.

Critics of the bill, such as Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton (R), contend that it would encourage more government leaks, potentially damaging national security. But over the past few years, Mr. Garland's rules do not appear to have increased controversial leaks or damaged national security.

Meanwhile, the need to protect journalists is as clear as ever. Kash Patel, whom Mr. Trump has chosen to replace Christopher A. Wray as FBI director, has said he would "come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens, who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections." He added, "Whether it's criminally or civilly, we'll figure that out."

State and federal government accountability systems are more developed than they used to be, but they still often fall short. When they do, responsible media remain essential outlets for whistleblowers and other public-spirited individuals seeking to expose official wrongdoing. That will be true under Mr. Trump, but also under the next Democratic president. Mr. Schumer should stay firm in his stated intention to advance the Press Act before this Congress's session ends — and the Republicans who understand its merits should support it.

Administrations from both parties have pursued journalists' sources in recent years. Such overreach disserves the public.

critical to exposing government abuses, such as the CIA's waterboarding of al-Qaeda prisoners. One Pulitzer Prize-winning report from Mississippi Today's Anna Wolfe relied on confidential sources to uncover the misuse of welfare funds in the state; now she and her editor face a court order to give up their sources or risk jail time. If journalists cannot protect their sources' identities, whistleblowers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pregnant and rural students, and student protesters, deserve better

Regarding the Nov. 23 Metro article "After fury, law school defers final for student":

The Post's article about Georgetown Law's treatment of Brittany Lovely struck a chord with me.

The week I learned I had been accepted at a law school that was, like Georgetown, a Catholic institution, I found out I was pregnant at last! Well before the law offered me any protection as a pregnant student, my husband and I decided I should go ahead with my plan to attend, and I started in the fall of 1972. When classes began, a professor attempted to have my acceptance rescinded because of my pregnancy.

Barbara Geffen, Washington

As a graduate of Georgetown Law, I was appalled to learn of my alma mater's misunderstanding of its obligations under Title IX, the 1972 statute intended to end sex discrimination in education.

Title IX regulations have expressly prohibited pregnancy discrimination since 1975. Then, in 2013, the Education Department clarified that if a student is absent "due to pregnancy or related conditions, including recovery from childbirth," the school must provide the "opportunity to make up any work missed." Despite this long-standing directive, schools continued to ignore their obligations to pregnant and parenting students — just as Georgetown Law did when it initially denied Brittany Lovely's request, supported by her professor, to take her criminal law exam early, ahead of her due date.

That continued disregard is precisely why the Education Department put out updated Title IX rules to protect pregnant students this year. Though courts have temporarily blocked the 2024 rules in many places, including at Georgetown University, nothing in those decisions prevents schools from following that guidance about how to accommodate pregnant and parenting students. If schools don't listen, nothing stops the Education Department from finding a Title IX violation where a school refuses to reschedule an exam for a pregnant student who needs it. And a student denied a reasonable accommodation such as rescheduling an exam can still sue their university under Title IX, a claim courts have recognized for decades.

But pregnant students shouldn't have to rely on the courts to get common-sense accommodations that allow them to stay in school. More than 50 years after the passage of Title IX, it's past time for schools to get serious about supporting pregnant students.

Jennesa Calvo-Friedman, New York The writer is a senior staff attorney at the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Keep humanities on campus

Regarding the Nov. 29 article "Rural students' options shrink as colleges slash majors":

I read with great dismay and outrage The Post's article about the massive cuts in majors occurring at many U.S. colleges, especially those outside major metropolitan areas. I have two reactions.

First, those running our educational system — at all levels — need to learn a little about demography. If they studied birth rates and immigration rates, they could predict the rise and fall of the numbers and types of students looking for a college education for decades into the future. U.S. fertility rates have generally declined since the 1950s, and the percentage

of older Americans has increased. In fact, we have a baby bust now. Immigration is the primary driver of population increase. As a result, the types of students who might be interested in attending institutions of higher learning in the future could change dramatically. As the percentage of 18-to-25-year-olds goes down, colleges and universities should realize that they should also be looking to serve older Americans who want to change careers or just expand their knowledge of the world.

Second, these institutions should not assume that most students, whatever their age, want to be computer geeks. What we really need as a nation is more people studying the very subjects being eliminated: the humanities, history, government, English, the arts, philosophy, religion, physics, environmental sciences and foreign languages. We live in a multicultural world. Americans need to speak multiple languages if they are going to thrive in it. They also need to learn how to think and analyze. Many of the careers and skills they will need in the future aren't even taught now. It is the humanities that teach one how to think and adapt to what the future offers.

Finally, I was outraged that many colleges feel it is okay to reduce the opportunities of Americans in rural areas by dramatically limiting the things they can study. If they keep this up, they will find that those who will become the great thinkers and doers

of the future won't be applying to their schools. Ann Loikow, Washington

I appreciate The Post's work highlighting how access to higher education is being curtailed for rural students such as Shanya Jones by program cuts and institutional closures.

It is understandable that some institutions seek to curb costs by slashing degree programs that fail to attract enough students and that provide little return on investment — and those two qualities often go hand in hand. But it is unfortunate that more schools don't embrace online technology as a means of providing cost-effective programs and extending access, especially for rural students such as Ms. Jones.

Online, competency-based programs provide the access, affordability, personalization and flexibility rural students need. In fact, rural students were top of mind for the 19 governors who founded Western Governors University in 1997. About 17 percent of our current students come from rural areas. They don't need to drive to campus, give up a job or relocate to pursue an education; our hope is that they will use their degrees to benefit the communities where they live. What we need are more high-quality online programs that reach students no matter where they live and that fit their learning styles and lifestyles. Too many traditional universities refuse to budge from a structure — physical and financial — that

DRAWING BOARD



MATT DAVIES/NEWSDAY

SHENEMAN THE STAR-LEDGER



DREW SHENEMAN/THE STAR-LEDGER

doesn't work for hundreds of thousands of students.

We've made progress bridging the digital divide, but to shrink existing "higher education deserts" and to offer more courses of study in more places, we need to redouble our efforts to leverage technological solutions that facilitate greater access to and attainment of degrees. And those programs need to be worth what they cost students. Neither lack of a car nor the need to care for a toddler, as in Jones's case — nor the many other constraints students face — should be barriers to the opportunities that a higher education can deliver.

Courtney Hills McBeth, Millcreek, Utah The writer is the chief academic officer and provost at Western Governors University.

Squeezing campus speech

Recent measures by universities to curb pro-Palestinian activism have significantly reduced the number of campus protests this semester. According to Harvard University's Nonviolent Action Lab, fewer than 950 protest events have occurred so far, compared with 3,000 last spring. Institutions have tightened restrictions on protest locations and times, enforced new disciplinary policies, and increased police presence, leading to self-censorship among students and faculty.

At Harvard, participants in peaceful "study-ins" were temporarily banned from campus libraries, while Indiana University disciplined candlelight vigil attendees under new rules limiting expressive activities after 11 p.m. Montclair State University has deployed police officers who at times have outnumbered demonstrators at protests mourning Palestinian children killed in Gaza.

University officials argue these measures are necessary for safety and order, particularly after federal scrutiny and lawsuits accusing campuses of tolerating antisemitism. However, critics view the crackdown as suppressing free speech. Students fear that such policies, coupled with Donald Trump's election after his springtime calls to "vanquish the radicals," could escalate further restrictions.

Jewish students and organizations such as Hillel have welcomed the changes, citing improved safety. Yet others, such as the anti-Zionist group Jewish Voice for Peace, report that even religious observances, such as solidarity sukkahs during Sukkot, have faced removals under the guise of new rules.

This intensified regulation raises questions about the balance between maintaining campus order and protecting free expression. Universities must ensure that policies do not unfairly target certain groups, stifle dissent or discourage activism essential to academic communities.

Jagjit Singh, Los Altos, California

Gender warriors

Regarding Magdalene Taylor's Dec. 3 online op-ed, "Your body, my choice? Think before you engage.":

Ms. Taylor seems to think that women walking away from the men in their lives who voted for President-elect Donald Trump are being led astray by feminists who hate men. But misogynists such as Nick Fuentes and the feminist women who stand against them are not the same, and they are not equally at fault for the decision some women are making to distance themselves from all men.

A strong, loud subset of men has always hated women. They've written books and laws denouncing women, created religions that condemn women, and systematically excluded women from public life. There just is no corresponding history of hostile women working to relegate men to the status of chattel. But that is not what the girls and women who have decided they had enough are doing.

Contrary to Ms. Taylor's certainty that Trump-voting men don't "actively want to hurt you and curb your rights," these women have come to the conclusion that the best act of resistance, at least for now, is withdrawal from the men who were supposed to love them yet still voted for an adjudicated rapist and self-confessed groper who brags about overturning Roe v. Wade. The withdrawal of the women in the wake of this election isn't about hate; it's about self-preservation.

Karen Mundy, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

NEWS

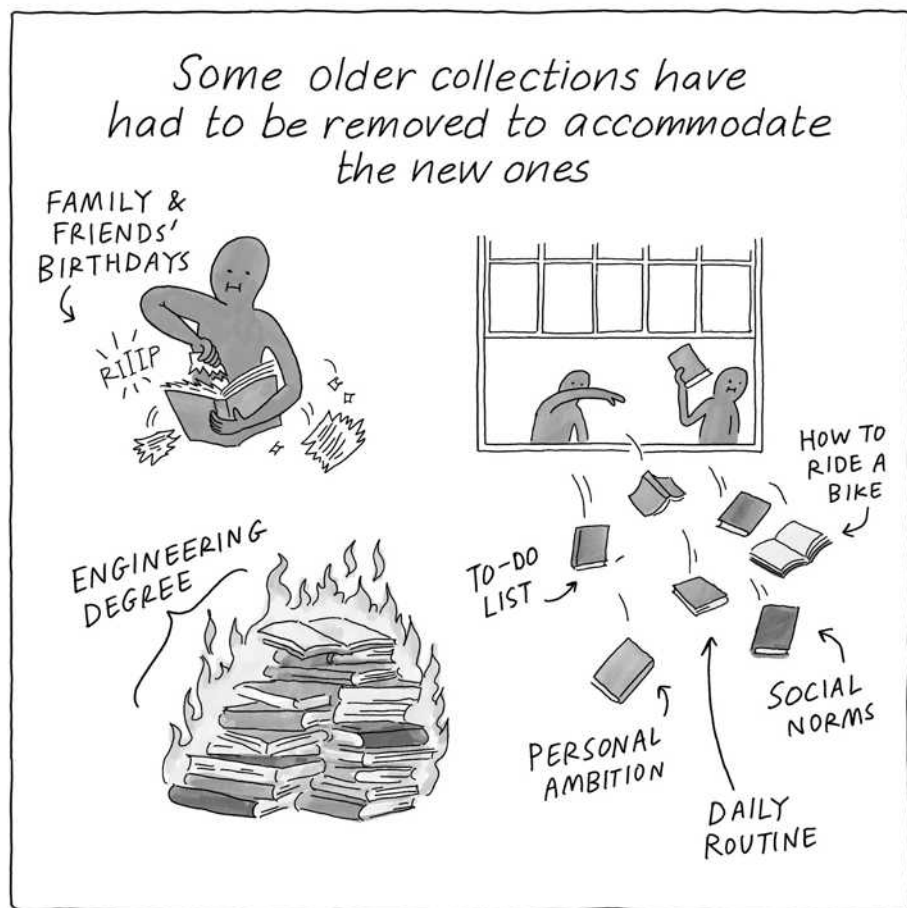
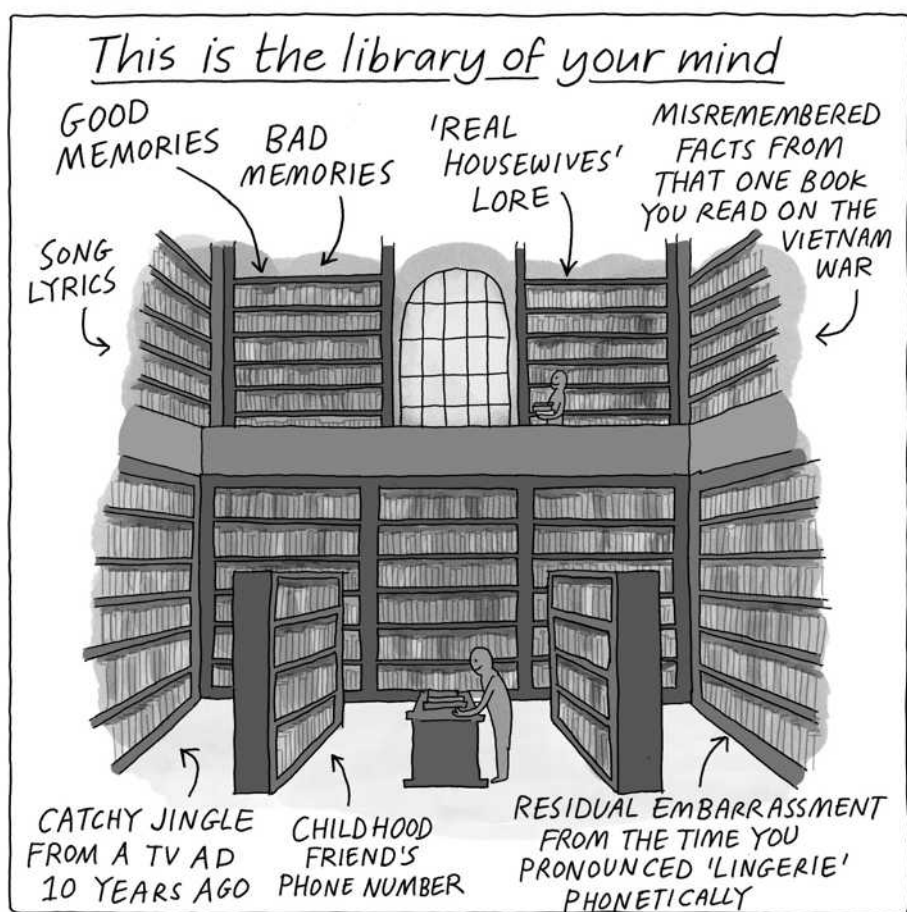
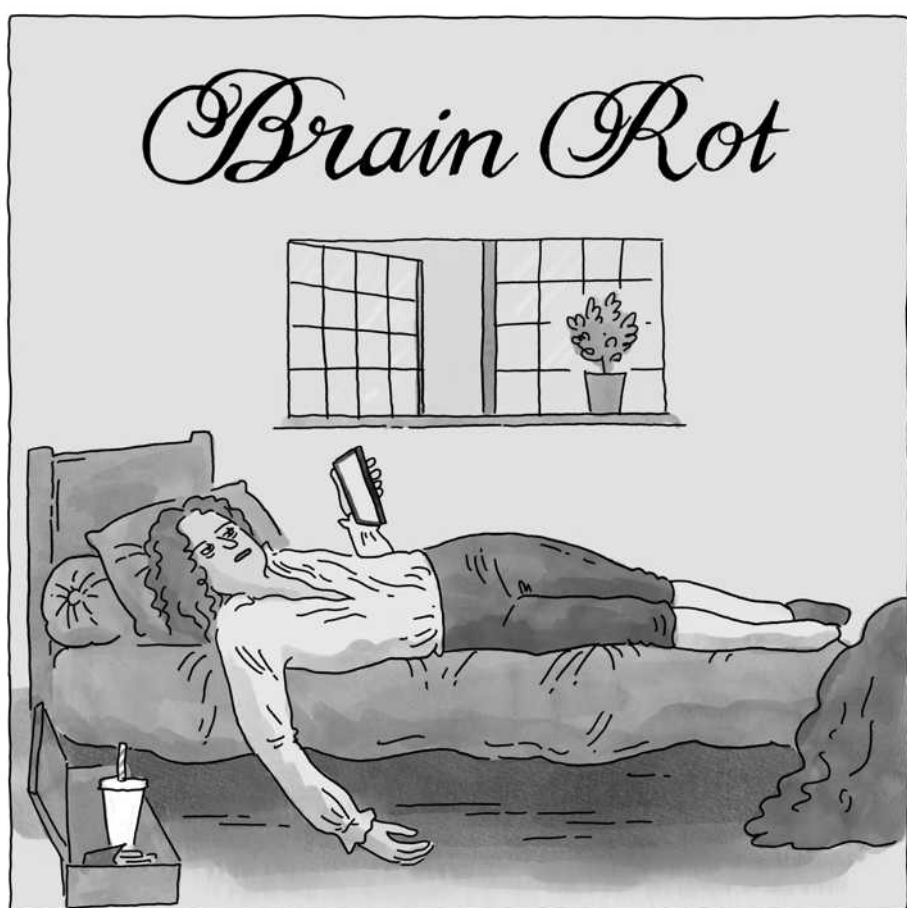
EDITORIAL AND OPINION

OFFICERS

OPINION

EDITH PRITCHETT

2024's word of the year



COLBERT I. KING

What justice would mean for Reggie Brown

There was no justice for Reginald “Reggie” Brown. By the time help arrived, he had been chased, beaten, stomped and kicked to death in a scene captured on video by his pursuers last year.

Brown had lupus and a metal plate that had been surgically placed in his head after a fall and was coping with hours of chemotherapy. He was taking his frail 64-year-old body out for a stroll when he was set upon by five girls ages 12 to 15 who apparently thought it might be great fun to run him down, pull him off a fence as he tried to escape, kick him, stomp his head into the pavement, pull his pants down around his ankles, beat him with his own belt and shout with jubilation as he bled, all while recording their brutality on a cellphone camera.

Reggie Brown was so badly battered that the mortician advised against an open casket, but his mother, 90-year-old Annie Mae Brown Mouton, asked that they do the best they could. She wanted everyone to see what had happened to him. And she wanted justice.

Brown Mouton told The Post’s Keith L. Alexander, who first reported this story, that she sought justice not just for her son but also for the girls and their families. Justice for the girls, she told The Post, would be conviction, juvenile imprisonment and rehabilitation.

“Their families need to realize what these kids have done, and these kids need punishment,” she said. “And justice for the kids is punishment.”

Brown Mouton concluded: “They would be better off getting punishment, because if not, they’ll go out and won’t make it. They have a chance of making it if they get the right kind of punishment. And the right kind of education.”

Let’s pick it up from there. On Tuesday, a D.C. Superior Court judge handed down the maximum punishment allowed to the then-12-year-old involved in the case, who is now 13: confinement with the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services until she turns 21.

Two other teens pleaded guilty to lesser charges, including assault and conspiracy, and have received sentences of as much as four years with DYRS. The two others are set to be sentenced later this month.

What does any of that mean? Not what you might think.

On Wednesday, an email arrived from a fellow journalist who told me he had been chatting with a former DYRS employee: “He was marveling that at one point he counted almost 50 columns you had written back in the day about DYRS. We had a laugh over that. Not a funny one though.”

That’s just about right. I hereby stipulate — as some critics charge — that I have spent years tiresomely saying the same things about D.C. youths and the justice system. I plead guilty. I do keep coming back to the problem of young people quitting school and entering the “school-to-prison pipeline.” I nag about the need for early intervention in the lives of “at-risk” youths. And I plead, ad nauseam, about getting at the “root causes” of children getting into trouble that lands them in the hands of police and judges.

And, yes, I have written dozens of columns and Post editorials about DYRS, the agency responsible for supervising and taking care of D.C. youths

charged with delinquent acts.

This much I know — and it is knowledge germane to the sentences handed down in the case of Reggie Brown: Commitment to DYRS is not what it may sound like. Or what Annie Mae Brown Mouton hopes it might be.

The 13-year-old girl’s attorney argued at her trial that she needed support and therapy. And that’s right. Troubled youths in the city’s care need to be held accountable and take responsibility for their behavior. Many also need specialized services, intensive supervision, and professionally sound behavioral therapy, discipline, and counseling to help get them on the right path. They have adulthood staring them in the face. Those challenges need working on in a safe, structured and secure environment. Today’s DYRS is hardly the place.

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, despite its professed vision and so-called guiding principles and devotion to young people, is a bloviating bureaucracy, fixated on overpromising and plagued with crowding and understaffed, inexperienced workers. Too many children — that’s what they are — who need competent mental health treatment and rehabilitation aren’t getting it. Oh, DYRS gets the part about serving youths in “the least restrictive environment consistent with public safety.” The agency does its best to send youths committed to DYRS out the door and back into a “homelike environment” as quickly as humanly possible.

Young offenders may be committed to DYRS until the age of 21. That does not mean they are kept under the agency’s watchful eye or under direct supervision. Brown’s family asked that DYRS not release the girls from custody before the ends of their sentences. Good luck with that. If history is a guide, count on them being deemed rehabilitated and released from secure detention well before their commitment periods end.

That problem was highlighted in a recent D.C. Council hearing chaired by council member Zachary Parker (D-Ward 5).

“The recidivism rate at DYRS facilities [is] alarmingly high,” Parker noted. Citing 2022 data from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, he said, “Nearly 50 percent of youth committed to DYRS are subsequently convicted of committing an additional criminal offense either while [in] DYRS’s care or within a few years of release from commitment.” That is one important measurement of success.

The other surfaced in a D.C. Office of the Inspector General’s review of community-based services provided and overseen by DYRS. The bottom line: “The OIG found significant gaps in oversight of program spending, attendance, and document retention, putting the DYRS programs at higher risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement of its resources.” Cutting through all the bureaucratic jargon, what the inspector general discovered would be considered firing offenses if decisions were in the hands of a competent, results-oriented and fiscally responsible mayor and council.

Face it: DYRS is a human and financially costly public undertaking that cries out for top-to-bottom reform.

Short of that, there will be no true justice for Reggie Brown or the rest of a city as it looks on and suffers in silence.

CATHERINE RAMPPELL

An invisible pay cut for workers

Job growth rebounded in November, the Labor Department reported Friday. But red flags were buried in that superficially gleeful report. Among them: a higher unemployment rate, declining labor force participation and less telework.

Yes, you heard that right. Declines in remote work — and the recent proliferation of high-profile firms ordering workers back to the office — are a sign that the labor market is weaker than it might appear. That’s because return-to-office mandates are, effectively, an invisible pay cut. Let me explain.

Like other employment benefits (e.g., health insurance, paid leave), telework is not available to everyone. Only about 38 percent of full-time workers report being hybrid or fully remote, according to the Survey of Working Arrangements and Attitudes. Those jobs are disproportionately in higher-paid, white-collar occupations.

This amenity has real value to these workers. It saves them commuting time and transit costs, lets them live farther away (where housing might be cheaper), and offers other conveniences (quiet working spaces, less surveillance from bosses). Some economists have even quantified the value of all these benefits: On average, Americans value the option to work from home two or three days a week at an estimated 8 percent of pay (the equivalent of about \$5,000 for the typical worker).

Some workers, such as those in their 30s, with kids or with a university degree, value it even more — at the equivalent of 10 to 15 percent of their pay, says Nick Bloom, a Stanford economics professor and longtime researcher on remote work.

In other words, many workers effectively banked a sizable raise around the start of the pandemic. And it didn’t even cost employers anything! At least, it didn’t show up on pay stubs, per se.

But employers have worried about less obvious, longer-term costs. Disaggregated offices made it harder to monitor employees and mentor young talent. Academic research on how telework affects productivity is all over the place — some positive, some negative — and varies by sector and exact work arrangements (hybrid vs. fully remote, for example). But bosses and their underlings definitely perceive remote work’s effects on productivity differently. (You can guess which group believes what.)

Concerned about these problems, employers have tried to revert to pre-pandemic attendance expectations. They’ve often failed.

The original return-to-office (RTO) decisions were being made, after all, amid huge labor shortages, when workers were in the catbird seat. Many firms had to loosen their in-person demands as a way to sweeten compensation packages without having to spend much more on payroll.

“The labor market was so red-hot that even em-

ployers who felt that fully remote work wasn’t the best choice were often willing to offer fully remote work because they feared that they couldn’t attract or retain employees otherwise,” Federal Reserve Bank of New York President John Williams told me.

Those labor shortages have mostly passed. Workers have lost bargaining power. Companies have not merely slowed hiring; many are looking for ways to save money or downsize.

Historically, employers have been extremely reluctant to cut workers’ monetary wages. (Economists call this “downward nominal wage rigidity.”) But now they have a new margin on which to effectively cut workers’ compensation: requiring them to commute more.

Amazon made headlines recently when it told workers to come in five days per week, up from three. (Its founder, Jeff Bezos, owns The Post, which also recently announced a return-to-work mandate starting next year.) Meanwhile, Dell ordered its sales staff to return to the office five days per week, with just two days’ notice. And Citigroup announced that hundreds of workers who had been eligible to work remotely had to commute full-time. McKinsey is also revisiting its RTO requirements.

These announcements have sometimes been interpreted as attempts at backdoor downsizing — a way to reduce head count without layoffs or costly severance packages. RTO mandates are more likely to occur in the wake of disappointing profits, after all. In fact, “Department of Government Efficiency” co-heads Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy explicitly said the government should implement a five-day return-to-office mandate to encourage “voluntary terminations.”

Companies have generally denied they’re engaging in “quiet firing,” instead citing other moneymaking goals such as potential productivity gains. Nevertheless, a study in Nature found that going from five to three days in the office reduced quit rates by a third, suggesting a reverse of the policy would increase resignations.

Firms might end up losing their most valuable employees — or at least the ones with outside options. A new paper on the aftermath of return-to-office mandates at S&P 500 companies found that firms disproportionately lose their more skilled employees, senior employees and female employees.

“Even for the largest firms in the world, which usually are the preferred employers by many job seekers, RTO mandates lead to significant brain drain,” said University of Pittsburgh professor Mark Ma, a study co-author.

Again, this shouldn’t be surprising: If the shift to more telework was effectively a pay hike, the reverse is effectively a pay cut. And this matters not only because workers are whining about it but also because it might signal our run of strong economic growth is finally turning.

The Washington Post | LIVE

Upcoming Programs



TUES. DEC. 10 AT 10:30 A.M.

PRESENTING SPONSOR



GLOBAL TRUST IN NEWS

Bill Gross, CEO, ProRata & Chair, Idealab

Faye D'Souza, Journalist & Entrepreneur

Content from *the EY Organization*: Paul Brody, EY Global Blockchain Leader

Gross and D'Souza analyze the state of global trust in news, the impact of new technologies and the future of journalism.



WED. DEC. 11 AT 2:30 P.M.

WORLD STAGE: A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID MILIBAND

President & CEO, International Rescue Committee

Miliband discusses a pivotal new report about the countries at greatest humanitarian risk and how he would like to see the international community respond to the crises.



FRI. DEC. 13 AT 9:00 A.M.

FIRST LOOK

The Post's **Jonathan Capehart**, **Ramesh Ponnuru** and **Jennifer Rubin**

Washington Post Live's "First Look" offers a smart, inside take on the day's politics. Jonathan Capehart hosts a reporter debrief followed by a roundtable discussion with Washington Post columnists.

In Case You Missed It

PRESENTING SPONSOR



THE FUTURIST: THE AGE OF AI

To watch this program on-demand, visit: wapo.st/futuristdec5



THE AI REVOLUTION: WHAT'S NEXT

Shyam Sankar, Chief Technology Officer & Executive Vice President, Palantir Technologies

Sankar explored the use of AI in the military, America's technological edge on the battlefield and how commercial companies benefit from what's next in the AI revolution.



THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Conor Grennan, Chief AI Architect, Stern School of Business, New York University

Kweilin Ellingrud, Director, McKinsey Global Institute & Senior Partner, McKinsey & Company

Top experts examined AI's impact on productivity and the labor market along with reskilling programs that can strengthen the workforce of the future.



AI & THE CREATIVE EDGE

Cristóbal Valenzuela, Co-Founder & CEO, Runway

The founder of the AI video generation company discussed how generative AI could shape media and entertainment and ways to make the technology more accessible to creators.

Content from IBM



FOSTERING A MORE COLLABORATIVE, OPEN APPROACH TO AI

Rob Thomas, Senior Vice President, Software & Chief Commercial Officer, IBM

Ash Jhaveri, Vice President of AI Partnerships, Meta

Clay Shirky, Vice Provost for AI and Technology in Education, New York University

A conversation about why establishing a more open and collaborative approach to AI's development and adoption are critical for creating value broadly, enabling responsible innovation and ensuring ethical transparency.





JOE HEIM/THE WASHINGTON POST

A drop in the buckets: Surprise thefts roil composting program

A citywide pilot program to collect food scraps from District residents has run into a completely unexpected problem: bucket theft.

Big-time bucket theft.

Each of the 9,000 households participating in the Department of Public Works' curbside composting collection program is issued a five-gallon bucket with a screw-top lid in which to place household compost for weekly pickup. A large orange sticker wrapped around the bucket identifies it as containing food waste and as "Property of District of Columbia Government."

They're not beautiful. Or cool. Or trendy. They're buckets.

But soon after the program launched in September 2023, the heists began. From sidewalks and alleys, front steps and backyards, the plastic carriers went missing. Slowly at first. Then much faster.

Number of containers stolen since the District program began has startled administrators

BY JOE HEIM

Widespread compost container theft was not something the agency anticipated, DPW Director Timothy Spriggs said.

By the end of the year-long pilot program, approximately 4,000 buckets had been stolen, according to DPW.

Some participants had their buckets purloined multiple times.

Widespread compost container theft was not something the agency anticipated when it launched the project, DPW Director Timothy Spriggs said in an interview. "And definitely not to the degree of the actual number of buckets that have been stolen," Spriggs said. "So that has taken me by somewhat of a surprise."

The motive for stealing such an ordinary, relatively inexpensive item remains a mystery.

"That's the million-dollar question," John Johnson, DPW's Office of Waste Diversion manager, said in an interview last week.

SEE COMPOST ON B2

In Md. county, a power vacuum

COUNCIL MEMBERS
 JOCKEY FOR POWER

Alsobrooks's move leads Pr. George's to a new era

BY JASMINE HILTON
 AND KATIE METTLER

Prince George's County is entering a new political era now that Angela Alsobrooks (D) has stepped down as county executive on her way to become Maryland's first Black U.S. senator — one where the near-term future appears uncertain.

The transition of county leadership, with top Alsobrooks aide Tara Jackson assuming the role of acting county executive this week, coincided with the Prince George's County Council's annual board election to appoint its own new leadership — a heated meeting that has left that body at odds.

At the same time, the county of nearly 950,000 residents is preparing for a special election to permanently replace Alsobrooks — which already has several prominent Democrats, including two sitting council members and the county's top prosecutor, jockeying for position.

Both the executive and legislative branches will be tasked with guiding Prince George's through what could be a tumultuous period as President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

Trump has promised to downsize the federal government, potentially leading to the departure of thousands of federal jobs from Prince George's. He has also expressed a desire to reverse a decision to move the FBI's headquarters to Greenbelt, which would derail the county's plans to revive that struggling area.

At her first news conference as county executive Wednesday, Jackson promised to continue the vision of the Alsobrooks administration and said she will "maintain the stability of the government" and work with the county council — a body of Democrats

SEE LEADERSHIP ON B3

Judges: Pardons should not blunt truth of Jan. 6

BY SPENCER S. HSU,
 TOM JACKMAN
 AND DAN ROSENZWEIG-ZIFF

Three men who participated in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot were sentenced to a year or more in prison Friday, with federal judges stressing the need to preserve the truth of that day's events even if President-elect Donald Trump pardons those involved.

"No matter what ultimately becomes of the Capitol riots cases already concluded and still pending, the true story of what happened on January 6, 2021, will never change," U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth, a Ronald Reagan appointee, said as he took the unusual step of ordering a Queens man to be taken into custody from the courtroom to serve a one-year term for misdemeanor counts.

"Just as the president must make decisions on matters of clemency without interference, so too must our judiciary inde-

pendently administer the laws and sentence convicted offenders," Lamberth said. "That is what it means to have an independent judiciary, that is what it means to have law and order."

Since Trump's election, federal judges in D.C. have had to wrestle with his claims that he would grant "full pardons" to rioters, which his presidential transition office now says will be decided "on a case-by-case basis."

In a small number of cases, judges have postponed trials past Inauguration Day to conserve jury resources in case a Trump-led Justice Department drops prosecutions. But in the vast majority, judges appointed by both parties have reiterated that the executive branch plans are "irrelevant" to the judiciary's duties. "Our system of justice is always working, no matter the political winds of the day. That is a message worth sending," even at "great expense," Lamberth

SEE REFFITT ON B2

RETROPOLIS

During WWII: Liberté, égalité, sororité

BY LENA ANDREWS

According to most official accounts, Georgia Watson did not exist.

As part of a secretive Army unit, composed almost entirely of women responsible for defending D.C. against an air attack that might have been unthinkable before Dec. 7, 1941, Watson had been instructed to say nothing to anyone.

"We did not exist on paper, had no table of organization, and could officially be issued nothing," she wrote years later in her memoir. The unit was known only as Battery X.

Although Battery X did not exist on paper, its work was very real.

In mid-1942, Gen. George C. Marshall, the Army chief of staff, personally directed the Army to handpick several dozen women for a classified assignment: evaluating whether women could be successfully integrated into D.C.'s anti-aircraft artillery units.

When the women reported for duty in late 1942, Americans were on edge. A year before, the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese rout of American holdings in the Pacific had rattled the nation.

Residents on the East and West coasts installed blackout curtains, painted their windows, and dimmed the lights in the evenings. Air raid drills were commonplace, and civilian patrols kept watch in towers dotting the outskirts of major cities.

SEE RETROPOLIS ON B3



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Women were secretly trained to defend the U.S. after Pearl Harbor.

Ex-officer takes stand for role in Capitol riot

BY TOM JACKMAN

A former D.C. police intelligence officer accused of leaking information to Enrique Tarrío, the leader of the far-right Proud Boys, acknowledged in court Friday that he repeatedly and without authorization shared inside information with Tarrío about an investigation into the burning of a Black Lives Matter flag in December 2020.

But the officer broadly defended his actions as being part of his job gathering intelligence, saying Tarrío was a "professional source."

The officer, Shane Lamond, is on trial for obstructing justice and lying to federal agents. He took the stand in his own defense Friday, a day after Tarrío himself testified on the officer's behalf.

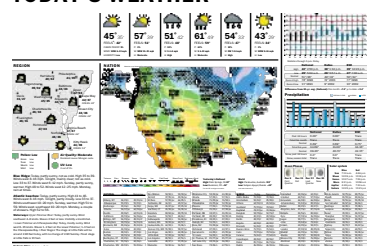
"I don't support the Proud Boys, and I was greatly upset by articles posted about me as a Proud Boys sympathizer or a double agent," Lamond testified.

Tarrío, who is serving a 22-year sentence for seditious conspiracy in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, said Thursday that Lamond didn't tip him to his pending arrest on Jan. 4, 2021. Tarrío testified that when he texted three people while on a flight to D.C. that day that "the warrant has been signed," he didn't actually know that and hadn't heard it from Lamond.

Prosecutors contend a deleted message from Lamond that they never recovered notified Tarrío of

SEE LAMOND ON B3

TODAY'S WEATHER



For weather news, go to B6

VIRGINIA

Fairfax's superintendent apologizes for football recruiting scandal. B2

OBITUARIES

Actor Earl Holliman, who was in "The Twilight Zone" premiere, was 96. B4

Compost bucket thefts mystify officials, residents in D.C.

COMPOST FROM B1

At about \$15 a bucket to replace the stolen ones, it's closer to a \$60,000 question, but it's still unanswered. (DPW says because the program was originally intended to serve 12,000 households, it had extra buckets available, so the replacement cost was "approximately \$23,000 ... above our initial inventory.")

Why so many have been stolen and where they've gone is a conundrum.

"This is a pretty complex problem and we can't point to one particular root cause," Johnson said. "But we recognize that for some participants, this has been an ongoing challenge and we're trying to mitigate that."

The department said it is encouraging participants to write their addresses on their buckets, bring the buckets in as soon as their compost is collected, and move their designated collection point from the back or side of their house to the front, where it will be more visible. Johnson said these strategies have helped reduce theft rates. He encouraged participants whose buckets are stolen to contact the city's 311 call center.

D.C. police are not aware of any arrests made in relation to compost buckets, according to Tom Lynch, a department spokesman. He said he was able to find only one recent report about compost bins, though he noted that because they are the property of

DPW, homeowners would only be able to file a lost property report, rather than flag them as stolen.

According to DPW, the thefts have taken place across the city and the department has not identified any one area of the District where the percentage of theft is significantly higher.

When Diego Salazar's compost bucket disappeared from the alley behind his Northeast Washington home this summer, he assumed a neighbor had taken it by mistake. Or perhaps that it had been damaged by a car and thrown in the trash.

"The idea that someone would steal a bucket with very stinky food scraps and water in it didn't even cross my mind," Salazar said.

But a few weeks later when his replacement bucket went missing, he realized it had been pinched. Now on his third bucket, the 37-year-old project manager said he and his wife have reminders on their phones at 10:30 a.m. on compost pickup day. The message? "Go look for the bucket."

Sarah Levine was mystified as to why anyone would want her compost bucket when it was stolen from the alley behind her Northwest Washington home in June.

"Mine wasn't disgusting, but it wasn't particularly clean," Levine said. "And I doubt there's much of a resale value for buckets, but it's not my area of expertise."

Despite the theft, Levine, 45, said the program is worthwhile



JOE HEIM/THE WASHINGTON POST

"This is a pretty complex problem and we can't point to one ... cause," DPW's John Johnson said.

and she has been impressed with the service. "I'm really happy with it. It's simpler than I thought it might be," she said.

The program's administrators admit to being perplexed about the startling number of thefts, but they have a few working theories. The compost buckets are light and easy to transport, and they're useful for carrying tools or stirring paint or as a carryall storage bin.

Turned upside down, the buckets also make for sturdy, portable stools.

DPW said it plans to introduce newly designed compost totes that will hopefully be less attractive to thieves.

Compost collection is part of Zero Waste DC, the District's sustainable solid-waste-management plan. The effort includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions in part by diverting 80

percent of the city's waste to recycling, reuse and compost instead of to landfills.

The \$3.7 million compost collection pilot year concluded in September, and, despite the bucket thefts, administrators consider it a success. The program collected 2.1 million pounds of food scraps, taking waste that would have been sent to a landfill and diverting it to the Prince George's County Organics Com-

posting Facility, where it is processed into compost and then sold.

An additional \$3 million has been approved to extend the program through fiscal year 2025 for the 9,000 households enrolled, Johnson said. Another 3,000 households are on a waiting list, though there are no plans to expand collections. However, the program will add 30 food-waste drop-off bins in 2025 to make participation accessible for more residents, particularly in densely populated areas.

Administrators say they hope to expand the program in the future. Rachel Manning, DPW program analyst for the Office of Waste Diversion, said the department will look for external funding opportunities in addition to seeking more funding from the District.

"Obviously, we want all 105,000 households that DPW serves for trash and recycling to also have food-waste collection," Manning said. "That's our ultimate goal, and our aim is to start phasing in new households year after year. But of course, that is funding-dependent."

In the meantime, administrators are still scratching their heads over the theft of the buckets.

Other than basic utility, there was nothing particularly appealing about them. But the appeal of basic utility was apparently underestimated — about 4,000 times.

As talk of pardons intensifies, judges stress need to preserve the facts of Jan. 6



DANA VERKOURTEREN/AP

ABOVE: A sketch shows Guy Reffitt, left, with lawyer William Welch in court. RIGHT: Nicole Reffitt, Guy Reffitt's wife, waves to detainees outside the D.C. Central Detention Facility in 2023.

REFFITT FROM B1

said.

Like most days in D.C. federal court, the docket was full of Jan. 6 cases Friday, and judges showed no signs of being deterred by the prospect of pardons.

U.S. District Judge Dabney L. Friedrich, a 2017 Trump appointee, resentenced Texas militia recruiter Guy Wesley Reffitt to 80 months, down from 87 months, after the Supreme Court struck down one of the counts against him.

Reffitt, a member of the right-wing Texas Three Percenters who was the first person to be convicted at a Jan. 6-related trial, led rioters to push through police at a key stairway leading to the building. He came to the Capitol with a pistol on his hip and an AK-47 in his vehicle, and afterward, he threatened his children in hopes they wouldn't turn him in, according to evidence at his

trial.

Reffitt's actions were "highly premeditated and intentional," threatening political violence to intimidate and coerce government officials, the judge said. As Reffitt recorded himself saying, she said, his goal was "literally overthrowing ... elected officials"

While Friedrich made no mention of a pardon, the topic seemed to be on the minds of Reffitt's supporters. "You'll be out soon Guy," one called out after he was resentenced.

Reffitt's son, Jackson Reffitt, who did not attend the hearing, said that Trump's win had made him feel uneasy, and he recently bought a gun over safety concerns. He said he worried the Capitol riot was being romanticized.

"Validation is a dangerous thing," he said.

Guy Reffitt's wife, Nicole Reffitt, said in a statement before the hearing, "He has served his time, much of it under inhumane con-



CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN/THE WASHINGTON POST

ditions, and harsh criticism. I feel optimistic that the process will work, and Guy will be judged on the law, and not an opinion of the day."

One of his daughters, Sarah Reffitt, said afterward, "I'm not here to defend all the stupid things my dad has definitely said and perhaps has done. But my dad is no threat to his children and family."

The man Lamberth sentenced, 50-year-old Philip Sean Grillo, was a Republican state committeeman in New York who ran unsuccessfully for George San-

tos's vacated seat in Congress after being arrested. Grillo claimed at trial to have been too drunk to realize that he was trespassing and disorderly at the Capitol, where, despite contrary video evidence, he said he was pushed inside.

"Trump's going to pardon me anyways," he told supporters as he took off his belt for U.S. Marshals Service deputies before being led away.

U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson, a 2011 Obama appointee, made comments similar to Lamberth in sentencing Proud

Boys member Gabriel Augustin Garcia to 12 months for felony rioting. Another Miami member, Paul Rae, was sentenced Friday to 14 months.

Jackson cited the need to make clear what happened on Jan. 6, and to defend the role of the courts. Hundreds of people who simply protested at the Capitol and who did not enter the building were not charged, nor were others who confronted police but did not interfere with them, Jackson said.

She added that comparing the breach of the Capitol, in which

140 police officers were assaulted, to a peaceful demonstration is unconscionable.

"It needs to be crystal clear, it's not patriotism, it's not standing up for America, it's not free speech to descend violently on the Capitol at the urging of a disappointed candidate," Jackson said.

"The lie that the actions at the Capitol were peaceful, and the lie people are political hostages and victims of mistreatment and abuse are continuing," the judge continued. In fact, she said, the "volume is being dialed up."

VIRGINIA

Fairfax superintendent apologizes for Hayfield football recruiting scandal

BY KARINA ELWOOD

Fairfax County Schools Superintendent Michelle Reid apologized this week for an ongoing controversy surrounding improper transfers and recruiting for the football team at Hayfield Secondary School.

"As the leader of this large and complex school division, the buck stops with me. I have to be responsible for what happens in this division," Reid said at Thursday's school board meeting. "I am sorry to every single athlete that's been impacted negatively by this situation, every coach that's been

impacted, every family member, fan and community member. And I want to assure you this is not going to happen again on my watch."

The Hayfield saga began earlier this year after the school hired coach Darryl Overton in February from Freedom High School in Prince William County. After the move, Hayfield saw an influx of transfers to the program. Fairfax schools announced in August that an investigation into the transfers and eligibility found no wrongdoing by Hayfield's football program.

But in October, the Virginia High School League said the

Hayfield program had violated the league's rules by influencing students to transfer to the Alexandria-area school for athletic purposes, and banned the school from playing in the post-season for two years. A group of Hayfield parents went to court and earned a temporary injunction that reinstated the team before the school's principal later withdrew from the playoffs.

In an email announcing the withdrawal, Reid said newly revealed text messages "brought new concerns to the initial investigation."

The situation has raised

questions about leadership in the Fairfax schools district, prompting numerous statements and letters from school board members calling for an external investigation into the situation.

On Thursday, parents and community members spoke out about how they were shocked by how this could have happened and disappointed by the school district's response.

The school board unanimously passed a measure that said Reid had not complied with expectations set for staff recruitment based on the situation at Hayfield. She is required to write

a corrective action plan for the next board meeting on Dec. 19.

The board also officially approved an external investigation into the matter on Thursday. Reid had previously announced that the district would seek an independent investigation to review student-athlete transfers and eligibility practices across all sports in all schools.

Reid also apologized to the board for the situation and thanked the community for speaking openly on the topic.

She promised that nothing like it would happen again under her watch. "We have to put processes in place that do not

result in a situation like we just had," Reid said. "And that's my commitment to you as the board."

School board members thanked Reid for taking accountability.

"What happened at Hayfield was terrible, but it was a symptom of a larger disease, until we tackle the problems in a systemic way we will not be able to put in place the measures to ensure that it never does happen again," board member Mateo Dunne said. "If we only fix Hayfield, what about all the other concerns that have been raised about programs?"



The Guide to Offers
The Washington Post

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See details at [washingtonpost.com/entertainment/events/lists/388](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/events/lists/388)



Prince George's starts a new era with an uncertain future

LEADERSHIP FROM B1

with historical political divisions between moderate and progressive members.

"I have enjoyed a healthy relationship I believe with each of the council members as the chief administrative officer," Jackson said. "And I look forward to them setting aside their divisions, whatever they may be, so we can work together to really work on behalf of the Prince George's County residents."

Those divisions were laid bare during Tuesday's annual council exchange of gavel ceremony, when 10 council members were unable to gather enough votes to elect a new council chair in what were tense exchanges.

District 3 member Eric Olson, District 6 member Wala Blegay and District 5 member Jolene Ivey were nominated for the top spot. Making the ceremony more politically complex was that two council members — Ivey and Calvin Hawkins (D-At large) — are among the confirmed contenders for Alsobrooks's seat in a special primary election that may not take place for months while others on the council are backing other candidates.

Each nominee fell short of the required vote count to become elected chair. In such a situation, the county charter dictates that

Ivey would remain chair unless the council calls for another vote to elect a successor.

When Ivey began to read a prepared statement, thanking her colleagues for again giving her "the privilege of serving this body as chair" for the next year, two other council members, Krystal Oriadha (D-District 7) and Thomas Dernoga (D-District 1) quickly interrupted.

"As I understand it," Dernoga said, "no one has been elected chair."

Blegay had chimed in earlier: "No one should be chair by default. It should be something that we vote for because we know that this is the true leader that should take us to the next level."

The meeting adjourned without clear resolution on whether or when another vote on the council's leadership will take place, but in a statement, Ivey said she remains chair for now.

"I'm in the seat by the charter," Ivey said in her statement. "I am the chair."

The council did vote to elect member Edward Burroughs III (D-District 8) to replace Sydney Harrison (D-District 9) as vice chair for the 2025 legislative year.

Burroughs became the youngest elected official in Maryland in 2010 when he was elected to represent District 8 on the Prince George's County Board of Educa-



BILL O'LEARY/THE WASHINGTON POST

The council voted to elect Ed Burroughs III (D-District 8) to replace Sydney Harrison (D-District 9) as vice chair for the legislative year.

tion, according to a council statement. He later worked in the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office leading the youth court division before being sworn into the council in 2022.

"I love Prince George's County, and I want the absolute best for the county that helped raise me," Burroughs said in an interview. "I hope to unify my colleagues. We are truly in unprecedented times when we have an acting county executive, no one was elected chair for the county council."

"Now that I'm the vice chair, my hope is that we come together," Burroughs added. "The people need us to deliver for them."

The council will meet again next week to schedule special elections, according to a county council spokesperson.

Ivey and Hawkins recused themselves from voting on the topic in a previous meeting that discussed the county's processes for special elections. Former county executive Rushern Baker, who has expressed interest in running to finish out Alsobrooks's term, called on the two to recuse themselves from voting on the timing of the special election to "remove the appearance of self-interest."

"To do so is not only ethical, it is essential to preserve trust between voters and the democratic systems governing their lives,"

Baker said in a statement.

State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy has also declared her candidacy for the job.

Jackson, who has more than 20 years of public service in Prince George's, has avoided the political fray.

When she was asked at her news conference this week if she would be running for county executive in the special election, Jackson said simply: "I am not."

Her focus, she said, was on advocating for county residents in the upcoming state legislative session and generating a budget as the county faces a \$150 million deficit.

Jackson began her career working as a prosecutor in the state's attorney's office alongside Alsobrooks. She went into private practice, then returned to government as principal deputy state's attorney when Alsobrooks was top prosecutor before serving as deputy county attorney. She then became Alsobrooks's chief administrative officer.

The two attended law school together at the University of Maryland, and Jackson praised her friend "for her service and unwavering dedication to Prince George's County."

"I have worked for her and with her," Jackson said, "and I can tell you I am a better leader because of that."

MARYLAND

Prince George's school board elects leaders, seats all but one new member

BY NICOLE ASBURY

The Prince George's County Board of Education elected its leaders for the year and sat all but one of its new members Thursday after the state finally certified results from last month's elections.

The board was unable to seat a new member in District 8, which covers Oxon Hill, after one of the candidates requested a recount. Madeline LaSalle Frazier, who was appointed to the seat in 2022 but lost a primary reelection bid, remains the district representative for now.

The Maryland Board of Elections certified results Thursday afternoon. Shortly after, the Prince George's board held a swearing-in ceremony for the 10-person board, which includes nine district representatives and one student member. The newcomers include Tiffini Andorful (District 1), Robin Brown (District 5) and Phelton Moss (District 7).

Zakya Goins-McCants, who was leading in the District 8 race, said in an interview that she was told by the county's elections board that her opponent requested a recount, but she was trying to

get more details. According to the finalized results posted Thursday, Goins-McCants was leading by 13 votes.

Goins-McCants said she wasn't surprised her opponent requested a recount, since the race was so close.

"I'm hoping that it won't negatively impact the workings of the board, and hopefully the recount will be quick enough," she said.

Angela Jones, Goins-McCants's opponent, did not reply to a request for comment.

Wendy Honesty-Bey, the Prince George's election administrator, did not return multiple

requests for comment via email or phone.

In addition to allowing the new members to join, the state certification of results pacified a conflict over whether the Prince George's board could vote for new leadership. State law requires the Prince George's board to choose a new chair and vice chair on the first Monday in December and the board had intended to do that earlier this week. But the county's board of elections still wasn't done counting provisional ballots, and none of the new members were seated yet.

Some board members said they

didn't want to select leaders until the new members were sworn in. A group of candidates who were leading in their races and some incumbents filed an injunction in court to request the vote take place after election results were certified.

On Thursday, the school board proceeded with the leadership vote, with no members voicing public opposition to moving forward even with the District 8 race still pending.

Brannndon Jackson (District 6) ran for chair against Lolita Walker (District 9), who had served in the role since July. Jackson won

Thursday's vote by 6-to-3. Jonathan Briggs (District 2) ran unopposed for vice-chair.

"My mission is simple: It's to protect home base," Jackson said during a speech before the chair vote. "We must make sure our children have access to the resources, education and infrastructure they need to thrive. Together, we can build a future where every child has the opportunity to succeed — no matter their background or circumstances."

Katie Shepherd contributed to this report.

A special WAAC unit was trained in WWII — just like men — to protect the U.S.

RETROPOLIS FROM B1

Months of German U-boat attacks in the Atlantic, some of them alarmingly close to the East Coast, reinforced the sense that the United States might again come under direct attack. Watson and the women of Battery X trained to ensure that the Axis Powers never got close enough to try.

The idea of using Army women to guard the nation's coasts was born of necessity. Marshall, the American commander responsible for allocating Army resources during World War II, faced an acute personnel dilemma in 1943: He needed more men to fight abroad, more men to defend the homeland, and more men to build weapons — and he was running out of them fast.

But on a serendipitous visit to England, Marshall stumbled on a solution to his manpower crisis: women.

After seeing the effectiveness of the British women defending England from attack in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, Marshall quickly realized that the women signing up in droves for the U.S. Army women's program — then called the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) — could be used in the same way.

Marshall knew the experiment would be controversial. Even though hundreds of thousands of women were donning military uniforms by 1943, none of them had been authorized to help operate heavy weapons. He needed to be sure women could do the job. But if they failed, no one could know they had tried.

Watson understood that discretion was paramount. "The gun batteries defending the Capitol would be used in the experiment and their location rated the highest classification," she wrote, adding that "public attitudes toward

the use of women in combat positions also made it necessary."

The lack of recognition, however, did not stop Watson and her colleagues from doing their jobs. Military women in World War II were there to serve.

Elna Hillard joined the WAAC one month after it was established. Her first assignment was to oversee Battery X's training, and she got to see the unit's performance up close. During one drill, she wrote in a memoir, the male colonel responsible for timing the exercise was dumbfounded when her crew matched the speed of the best crew in the entire command.

"Impossible," he said.

Assuming there had been an error, the colonel asked the women to do the same task two more times. They found the target just as fast.

When explaining what made the women so effective, Hillard said that they were willing to make

small, creative changes that had a big effect on the outcome.

For instance, rather than follow the standard practice of intentionally overshooting the target by a wide margin and then walking this distance back, the women almost never overshot on purpose. Instead, Hillard said, they got as close as they could on the first try, and then patiently zeroed in on the target in small, deliberate increments.

In this way and countless others, the women of Battery X proved they could do the job — and do it well.

"We got no medals, no commendations, no news releases," Watson wrote, "nothing but the private satisfaction of proving to ourselves that we could keep our mouths shut and do a job. Any job."

Despite their sterling performance during training, the women of Battery X never got the chance

to operate guns over Washington. By the time they had completed their final qualification exercises — and passed with a near-perfect score — the threat of air attack had receded. Army planners shifted their focus to Europe, and the women moved on to their next assignments.

Eighty-two years later, the memory of Battery X has nearly vanished. The women involved in the experiment, like Watson and Hillard, have died; and, with no official record of the unit, there has been little public acknowledgment of Battery X's trailblazing work. All that is left of their service are a handful of short memoirs.

Before the unit disbanded, however, there were a few moments of quiet recognition. When, in 1943, Rep. Harold Cooley (R-North Carolina) accused the War Department of endangering Congress by defending the capital with wooden guns (they were de-

coys), Congress sent the chair of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate National Defense to Hillard's office to inspect the unit.

When the chairman, then-Sen. Harry S. Truman (D-Missouri) arrived, Hillard remembered that he peppered the unit commander with questions. As former artillery officer himself, Truman understood the ins and outs of air defense and insisted on a comprehensive overview from Hillard's superiors.

Ultimately, Truman walked away from the briefing satisfied with the men — and women — defending Washington.

"Excellent organization," Truman said. "I feel safe now."

Lena Andrews is the author of *Valiant Women: The Extraordinary American Women Who Helped Win World War II* and an Associate Research Professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy.

Former D.C. lieutenant says he didn't tip off Proud Boys' leader to an arrest

LAMOND FROM B1

the arrest warrant shortly before the Proud Boys' leader began texting others about it. Lamond conceded he told Tarrío that criminal investigators were submitting an arrest warrant for him, more than a week before it was signed and he was taken into custody.

After the burning of the flag at 11th and E streets on Dec. 12, 2020, Lamond met Tarrío at the Dubliner bar near Union Station three days later and showed him a police flier seeking information about suspects. Tarrío and Lamond both said Tarrío never mentioned he was the one who burned the flag. But Tarrío texted Proud Boys members saying he confessed to Lamond about the flag-burning, prosecutors said.

Lamond admitted he hadn't told the investigators he met with Tarrío and that they discussed the case. And after police received a tip three days later that Tarrío was responsible, Lamond didn't tell investigators he had contacted Tarrío and that Tarrío confirmed he had confessed to the flag-burning on social media.

Lamond faces a minimum three-year sentence if convicted on the obstruction charge. He

chose to have the case heard by Senior U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson rather than a jury. Jackson said she planned for testimony to end Monday, with closing arguments Tuesday.

Lamond said he worked for D.C. police for 23 years, joining the intelligence unit as a lieutenant in 2017 and retiring in May 2023, the same month he was arrested and accused of leaking inside information to Tarrío. Investigators examining the phones of other members of the Proud Boys came across texts in which Tarrío indicated he was getting information from a police source, trial testimony indicated.

Lamond said he began speaking with and occasionally meeting Tarrío in 2019 to find out about the Proud Boys' movements in D.C. during their visits to the city. Lamond said "around a dozen" people in the police department were aware of his contacts with Tarrío.

The former lieutenant said he wasn't required to register Tarrío as an informant or document his contacts with Tarrío because they were discussing "First Amendment" events, not criminal matters. So he kept no records of what Tarrío told him, wrote no reports and did not preserve any of their

messages.

After the Proud Boys marched through the city on Dec. 12, 2020, and one was stabbed when members of the group assaulted a pedestrian, Tarrío said he met with Lamond on Dec. 15 to discuss security for his people. Lamond arranged the meeting to talk about that and the flag-burning.

"At no point did he ever confess to me that he had burned the BLM banner," Lamond testified.

But three days later, the police received a phone tip that Tarrío was responsible for the banner-burning. Lamond then texted Tarrío and asked if he had called in the tip, though prosecutors said revealing the tip equaled sharing police information with the suspect.

A month earlier, Lamond had texted Tarrío that "I know detectives are working on a BOLO [Be On the Lookout] for the suspects" in another episode in which Proud Boys members had been stabbed "and are pulling the security cameras from the block. I will keep you updated on the investigation."

Lamond said he didn't actually know what the detectives were doing, and "I may have given him [Tarrío] false information to continue our collection of informa-

tion."

Lamond sent similar messages to Tarrío over the next two months, seeming to offer inside information. On the night of Dec. 12, Lamond texted Tarrío, "We just locked up one of your guys at 14th and K," providing nonpublic information to the right-wing leader without authorization. Similar text exchanges in which Lamond provided police information to Tarrío also were not preserved or authorized, he testified.

Three days after the banner-burning, Lamond said, he knew that the Proud Boys were suspects.

Then when Tarrío confirmed to Lamond on Dec. 18 that he had written a social media post confessing his involvement, Lamond testified he did not tell the investigators about the exchange.

On Dec. 25, 2020, Lamond told Tarrío that the criminal investigators "had me identify your photo," and they "may be submitting an arrest warrant for him." Lamond admitted he did not tell the investigators he was sharing that information with him, which police officials said this week could cause a suspect to flee or destroy evidence.

Even after an arrest warrant for Tarrío was signed in late Decem-

ber, Lamond continued texting with the suspect on Telegram.

"You never told any supervisor," Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua Rothstein asked Lamond, "that you had discussions with Mr. Tarrío about whether the warrant had been submitted?"

"Correct," Lamond said.

"You're aware Mr. Tarrío knowing about the arrest warrant could affect officer safety?" Rothstein asked.

"It's possible," Lamond answered.

Intelligence officers often hold

their information closely, to include not sharing it with the rest of their department. Lamond said he never received any training on intelligence procedures before joining the unit and only minimal training in the six years he was there. Lamond said he didn't recall communicating with Tarrío on Jan. 4, the day of his arrest. The only indication prosecutors have is that at 1:02 p.m. that day, moments after Tarrío's flight from Miami lifted off, Lamond set his "self-destruct timer" on Telegram messages to 10 seconds.

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OBITUARIES

EARL HOLLIMAN, 96

Rugged character actor appeared in Westerns, 'Giant'

BY BRIAN MURPHY

Earl Holliman, an actor with a chiseled jaw and rugged aura who found roles in westerns and war films, played a gruff lieutenant in the 1970s drama "Police Woman" and earned a place in television history as star of the first broadcast of "The Twilight Zone," died Nov. 25. He was 96.

Mr. Holliman died at his home in Studio City, California, said his husband, Craig Curtis, but no cause was noted.

Mr. Holliman was sometimes described as a consummate journeyman actor — not always the leading man but steadily amassing a prolific résumé of nearly 100 film and television appearances during a five-decade career.

His breakthrough moment came by beating out Elvis Presley for a role in "The Rainmaker" (1956), a film set in Depression-era Kansas with a grifter (Burt Lancaster) seeking to scam desperate farmers with the promise that he can bring a deluge during a drought. Mr. Holliman won a Golden Globe for best supporting actor as the younger brother of a woman (Katharine Hepburn) who falls for the con man.

"It's wonderful to get a break," Mr. Holliman said in a 2016 interview with the "Connors Corner" podcast, "but when you do, you have to be ready for it."

After "The Rainmaker," Mr. Holliman was in demand. He appeared as a serviceman in the war drama "The Bridges at Toko-Ri" (1954), starring William Holden and Grace Kelly, and played lawman Wyatt Earp's assistant in "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral" (1957) alongside Lancaster and Kirk Douglas.

He also landed his first science-fiction role: the cook on the spacecraft in 1956's "Forbidden Planet," the story of a 23rd-century mission to seek the fate of an expedition decades before. Mr. Holliman's character brings some comic moments as he discovers a robot can churn out gallons of whiskey.

"Gallons?" Mr. Holliman's character tells the robot. "Mister, I've been from here to there in this galaxy and I just want you to know you're the most understanding soul I ever met up with."

Mr. Holliman was then approached by Rod Serling with a script for a new anthology series called "The Twilight Zone." (In 1957, Mr. Holliman starred in a Sterling-written installment "The Dark Side of the Earth" for "Playhouse 90" on CBS.)

At the time, nothing was certain about the future of "The Twilight Zone." Serling hoped to show CBS executives that there was a wide audience for his concept of one-act teleplays full of twists and settings that often served as social and scientific commentary.

Much was riding on Serling's first "Twilight Zone" story, "Where Is Everybody?" about a man who wakes up with amnesia and finds he's the only person left in a small town. What the man doesn't know is that he is really an astronaut being tested to see if he can handle the isolation of space on a voyage to the moon.

Mr. Holliman's performance is a slow unraveling. At first, Mr. Holliman's character is befuddled by the ghost town. Then panic creeps in.

Mr. Holliman's portrayal helped establish a fan base for "The Twilight Zone," which ran until 1964 and was regarded as one of the seminal shows in expanding television's storytelling potential. Before "Where Is Everybody?" was broadcast on Oct. 2, 1959, Serling sent Mr. Holliman a message of thanks: "Your performance was outstanding, full of dimension, shading and a fantastic believability."

Mr. Holliman said Serling kept the high stakes of the episode to himself. "I didn't realize ... how much it depended on being something [Serling] could go



CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

back to New York and sell to the sponsors," he said on "The Twilight Zone Podcast" in 2020. "Thank God nobody kept saying, 'We gotta get this right! You gotta be wonderful!'"

One of Mr. Holliman's most defining roles came as a rough-edged but loyal Lt. Bill Crowley on NBC's 1974-1978 "Police Woman," starring Angie Dickinson as a Los Angeles undercover cop, Sgt. Suzanne "Pepper" Anderson.

"She'd get into trouble and I'd run in and save her," Mr. Holliman said. Their banter — his old-school machismo slapped down by Dickinson's character — also became part of the show's style. "A lot of that was ad-libbed," he said. "We had a tacit kind of permission to do that."

Hitchhiked to Hollywood

Henry Earl Holliman was born in Delhi, Louisiana, on Sept. 11, 1928. He was put up for adoption as an infant. His father died before he was born, and his mother had nine other children to care for.

He was raised as the only child of an oil worker and a waitress. "When [his adoptive parents] came to see me, I was sick and they took me right away to the doctor, who apparently said, 'You don't have a baby here, you have a funeral expense,'" Mr. Holliman recounted being told.

He often told his early life story as a Hollywood parable of persistence and luck. "I wanted to be an actor since I was 6 years old," he said.

He spent his 15th birthday on the road while hitchhiking from Louisiana to Los Angeles seeking a shot in showbiz. He wore dark glasses all the time because he thought that made him look more like he belonged in the movies, he recalled.

He eventually headed home — only to be back in Southern California later that year as a Navy radio trainee during World



COLUMBIA PICTURES/ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

TOP: Earl Holliman, who had a rugged aura and a strong jawline, starred in Westerns as a journeyman actor; he also anchored the pilot of "The Twilight Zone" in 1959. ABOVE: Mr. Holliman, left, and Angie Dickinson star in a scene from "Police Woman" in the mid-1970s.

War II after lying about his age. During leave, he headed from Long Beach to the Hollywood Canteen, a popular mixing spot for servicemen and the movie industry. Mr. Holliman said he managed to once get a dance with Rita Hayworth. "I died and went to heaven," he said.

The Navy found out about his age and sent him home. He finished high school and reenlisted in the Navy, where he led some productions while stationed in Norfolk. After his discharge, he

went back to Los Angeles and studied acting at the Pasadena Playhouse.

He was signed to a contract at Paramount and had his first movie lines playing an elevator operator in "Scared Stiff" (1953), a Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin comedy.

His other work included playing a member of an extended Texas family in "Giant" (1956), starring Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean in his final film role; "The Sons of Katie

Elder" (1965) alongside John Wayne and Martin; and the 1981 detective thriller "Sharky's Machine," with Burt Reynolds in the lead role.

In television, he starred as gunslinger-turned-marshal in the western "Hotel de Paree," which ran for a season on CBS starting in 1959, and was the lead in NBC's "Wide Country" (1962-1963) as a rodeo star. He appeared in other series including "Gunsmoke," "Murder, She Wrote" and the 1983 ABC minise-

ries "The Thorn Birds."

Survivors include his husband, Craig Curtis. Mr. Holliman never spoke publicly about his personal life.

In recent decades, Mr. Holliman dedicated much of his time to animal rights advocacy as head of the group Actors and Others for Animals. He acknowledged a soft spot for pigeons.

"I feed at least 500 of them a day," he said. "In fact, it's like a pigeon McDonald's at my property."

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DEATH NOTICE

BARNES

JOSEPH W. BARNES (Age 77)
It is with regret that we notify the members of Steamfitters Local 602 of the death of Retired Brother Joseph W. Barnes on December 4, 2024. Private services were held by the family. Notice #1988. Christopher M Madello F.S.T.

DEATH NOTICE

DICKMAN

EVELYN DICKMAN
Evelyn Dickman of Silver Spring, Maryland (formerly of Baltimore, Maryland), beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and aunt, passed peacefully on December 6, 2024. She is survived by her three children: Ronda Cohen, Craig (Bonnie) Dickman, and Leslie (Harold) Frank, as well as grandchildren Danielle (Justin) Welsh, Brad (Lyndsey) Cohen, David (Allie) Dickman, Justin (Jenna) Dickman, Allyson (Dane) Johnson, Dorie (Mark) Fridman, Carly Frank, and Garrett (Marcie) Frank, and 14 great-grandchildren. A graveside service will be held Sunday, December 8, 2024, 10:30 a.m. at B'nai Israel Cemetery, 3701 Southern Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21214. Shiva will be held at Craig and Bonnie Dickman's residence Sunday and Monday with Minyan at 7 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations in Evelyn's memory may be made to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (jdrf.org) or a charity of your choice. Services entrusted to Sagel Bloomfield Danzansky Goldberg Funeral Care. sagelbloomfield.com

DEATH NOTICE

MAKINS

MARION E. MAKINS
The officers and members of the Ladies First Aid Union of Churches, Inc. are notified of the passing of Nurse Marion E. Makins on November 16, 2024. Wake 4 to 6 p.m. on December 8 at Marshall-March Funeral Home, 4308 Suitland Rd., Suitland, MD. Services will be held on December 9 at Beulah Baptist of Deanwood Heights, 5829 Dix St. NE, Washington, DC, viewing 10 a.m., Service 12 p.m. Yoshiko Johnson, President Bobbie Best and Emma Salter, Condolence Chair Persons

DEATH NOTICE

PARK



ELOISE I. PARK
Eloise I. Park "Ellie" age 99, passed away at her home in Columbia, MD on December 1, 2024. Born March 10, 1925 in Burtonsville, MD. Daughter of Carroll Iglehart and Rossie Link Iglehart, both deceased. Eloise was also predeceased by her husband of 60 years, Enver C. Park, two brothers, Norman Iglehart and John Iglehart, and a niece, Sheila Anderson. Eloise is survived by a nephew, Thomas Iglehart (Carolyn), and nieces, Julia Dunn, Carol Shelton, Kathy McCreless (Ken), Susan Diaz, Louise Ryman and Eleanor Miles and four great nieces and a great nephew. Services will be held at Liberty Grove United Methodist Church, Burtonsville, MD, on December 9 at 10 a.m. for visitation and 11 a.m. for the funeral service. Burial will be at Union Cemetery following the service. Memorial contributions may be made in honor of Eloise Park to Liberty Grove United Methodist Church, 15225 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD 20866 or the American Heart Association, PO Box 840692, Dallas, TX 75284-0692. Online condolences and livestreaming of services will be available through www.donaldsonfuneralhomes.com

When the need arises, let families find you in the Funeral Services Directory.

To be seen in the Funeral Services Directory, please call paid Death Notices at 202-334-4122.

The Washington Post

IN REMEMBRANCE



SHIRLEY RUTH MCDONNELL (Age 90) LCDR USN
Mrs. Shirley Ruth (Schoellkopf) McDonnell passed away at her home on December 7, 2023 at age 90. Shirley was born on February 6, 1933 in Quakertown, PA. Her parents were Ruth E. Gegan & W. Carl Schoellkopf. Shirley grew up in Perkaspie, PA, raised fondly by her Grandmother (Grammie) and mother after the death of her father at age 4. Shirley attended Sellersville-Perkaspie High School, Class of '51 and went on to attend the Hospital of University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, ROTC. She served as an officer in the US Navy Nurse's Corp from 1955-1966, her stations included: New York (Albany), California (Carmel), Guam, Hawaii, & Annapolis where she rose to the rank of Commander. One of her most memorable deployments was at Tripler Medical Center Hospital in Honolulu, Hawaii. She was very fond of the island's culture and the native people. She collected many Hawaiian artifacts, learned hula and religiously listened to Hawaiian music even returning several times to visit with her mother, Ruth C. Moyer (photo above). It was poignant that her death coincided with Pearl Harbor Day. She was proud of her service in the military and connection with HUP Alumni, Military Women's & Navy Memorials. She met her husband, Martin J. McDonnell, at the Officer's Club in New York. They married in Annapolis, MD on Aug 28, 1965 and moved to Queens, NY where Marty was a Federal Agent with the U.S. Treasury Department assigned to the Manhattan office. Soon, Shirley moved to Washington, DC with Marty where she raised her children, Brenda and Martin Jr. Shirley was very involved in the local Catholic Church, St. Martin of Tours, and Galtersburg-Washington Grove Garden Club. She loved nature, birdwatching in particular. Shirley was preceded in death by her loving husband, Martin, in 2009 and is survived by her children: Brenda (John), Kevin, and Marty (Patricia); her grandchildren: Mark, Conner, Reagan and John Patrick; Great Granddaughter: Oakly; Cousins: Michael Persons (Mina), Patricia White, Gerald Gegan (Susan); Sister-in-law: Dr. Oria M. McDonnell Shalvey (Michael d/c), Nora McDonnell (Michael d/c) and her niece: Linda Toomey, (Sean) nephews: Sean McDonnell (Amneris), & Barry McDonnell.

DEATH NOTICE

STEADMAN

JON STEADMAN "Beau"
Jon "Beau" Steadman died at home on November 24, 2024 surrounded by his family. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Laurie Sullivan Steadman, his three sons, John (Christina), Tim (Erica), and Patrick, five grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. Visitation will be on December 15, 2024 at Hines Rinaldi Funeral Home from 12 to 1 p.m. Memorial service to follow at 1 p.m. Hines Rinaldi Funeral Home, 11800 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

DEATH NOTICE

WEINSTEIN

JOHANNA CARTEE WEINSTEIN
Died on December 3, 2024, in Bethesda, Maryland. Born on September 19, 1938. She was the daughter of the late Lillian (Barron) Cartee and the late Charles Cartee. Beloved wife of the late Jack Minker. Johanna leaves behind: four sons, Larry (Patty) Weinstein, Chuck (Lisa) Weinstein, Steven (Yvonne) Weinstein, and Kenneth (Dana) Weinstein; 11 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. Johanna was executive director of administration and operations at the University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies for more than 30 years, retiring from the university in 2016. She was a dedicated TERPS fan, an avid book and newspaper reader, a Trader Joe's enthusiast, and a strong and caring woman who loved her family most of all! Funeral services will be held on December 9, 2024, at 1 p.m. at Norbeck Memorial Park, 16225 Batchellors Forest Road, Olney, Maryland 20832. Reception immediately following and Shiva will be held at her son Kenneth's house on December 9 and 10. The family requests any donations in Johanna's honor be made to Jewish Women International (jwi.org), Alzheimer's Association (alz.org) or charity of your choice.



DEATH NOTICES

MONDAY-FRIDAY 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
SATURDAY 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
SUNDAY - SELF-SERVICE ONLY
To place a notice, call: 202-334-4122
800-627-1115 ext 4-4122
EMAIL: deathnotices@washpost.com
Email and faxes MUST include name, home address & home phone # of the responsible billing party.
Email deadline - 3 p.m. daily
Phone-in deadline 4 p.m. Sa-Su
CURRENT 2024 RATES: (PER DAY)

MONDAY-SATURDAY
Black & White
1" - \$160 (text only)
2" - \$370 (text only)
3" - \$520
4" - \$575
5" - \$725
SUNDAY
Black & White
1" - \$191 (text only)
2" - \$405 (text only)
3" - \$580
4" - \$610
5" - \$790

6"+ for ALL Black & White notices \$160 each additional inch Mon-Sat \$191 each additional inch Sunday

MONDAY-SATURDAY
Color
3" - \$670
4" - \$725
5" - \$885
SUNDAY
Color
3" - \$710
4" - \$810
5" - \$985

6"+ for ALL color notices \$268 each additional inch Mon-Sat \$299 each additional inch Sunday

Notices with photos begin at 3" (All photos add 2" to your notice.)

ALL NOTICES MUST BE PREPAID

MEMORIAL PLAQUES: All notices over 2" include complimentary memorial plaque

Additional plaques start at \$26 each and may be ordered.

All Paid Death Notices appear on our website through www.legacy.com

LEGACY.COM included in all death notices Optional for In Memoriams

PLEASE NOTE: Notices must be placed via phone or email. Photos must be emailed. You can no longer place notices, drop off photos and make payment in person. Payment must be made via phone with debit/credit card.

The Washington Post

IN REMEMBRANCE

DEATH NOTICE

MCDONNELL



SHIRLEY RUTH MCDONNELL (Age 90) LCDR USN
Mrs. Shirley Ruth (Schoellkopf) McDonnell passed away at her home on December 7, 2023 at age 90. Shirley was born on February 6, 1933 in Quakertown, PA. Her parents were Ruth E. Gegan & W. Carl Schoellkopf. Shirley grew up in Perkaspie, PA, raised fondly by her Grandmother (Grammie) and mother after the death of her father at age 4. Shirley attended Sellersville-Perkaspie High School, Class of '51 and went on to attend the Hospital of University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, ROTC. She served as an officer in the US Navy Nurse's Corp from 1955-1966, her stations included: New York (Albany), California (Carmel), Guam, Hawaii, & Annapolis where she rose to the rank of Commander. One of her most memorable deployments was at Tripler Medical Center Hospital in Honolulu, Hawaii. She was very fond of the island's culture and the native people. She collected many Hawaiian artifacts, learned hula and religiously listened to Hawaiian music even returning several times to visit with her mother, Ruth C. Moyer (photo above). It was poignant that her death coincided with Pearl Harbor Day. She was proud of her service in the military and connection with HUP Alumni, Military Women's & Navy Memorials. She met her husband, Martin J. McDonnell, at the Officer's Club in New York. They married in Annapolis, MD on Aug 28, 1965 and moved to Queens, NY where Marty was a Federal Agent with the U.S. Treasury Department assigned to the Manhattan office. Soon, Shirley moved to Washington, DC with Marty where she raised her children, Brenda and Martin Jr. Shirley was very involved in the local Catholic Church, St. Martin of Tours, and Galtersburg-Washington Grove Garden Club. She loved nature, birdwatching in particular. Shirley was preceded in death by her loving husband, Martin, in 2009 and is survived by her children: Brenda (John), Kevin, and Marty (Patricia); her grandchildren: Mark, Conner, Reagan and John Patrick; Great Granddaughter: Oakly; Cousins: Michael Persons (Mina), Patricia White, Gerald Gegan (Susan); Sister-in-law: Dr. Oria M. McDonnell Shalvey (Michael d/c), Nora McDonnell (Michael d/c) and her niece: Linda Toomey, (Sean) nephews: Sean McDonnell (Amneris), & Barry McDonnell.

DEATH NOTICE

GRUM



ALLEN FREDERICK GRUM
BRIGADIER GENERAL, U.S. ARMY (RET.)
Brigadier General (Retired) Allen "Al" Frederick Grum, aged 93, passed away peacefully on October 17, 2024 at Ridewood Village, Silver Spring, MD. The oldest child, Al was born on October 6, 1931 at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center to his father, Major Allen Ferdinand Grum, and mother, Nathalie Cate Grum. As an Army Brat, the family moved often, but Al's formative years were spent in San Antonio, where his father was stationed. He attended Thomas Jefferson High School alongside his brother Clifford Grum and sister Sue (Grum) Redding. Al received a nomination to the United States Military Academy at West Point and graduated at the top of his class in 1953. He was commissioned into the Engineer Corps, and served in Korea, France, Germany, Vietnam, and various stateside assignments. Along the way, he earned a master's degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a PhD at Stanford University. His final assignment was the Head of the Engineering Department at the Academy. While stationed at Fort Campbell KY, Al met his future wife, Sydney Jane Patterson, on a blind date. She was a nursing student at Vanderbilt University, and they were married shortly thereafter in 1956 in Aiken, SC. Early in their marriage, they travelled throughout Europe in a VW bug while stationed in Bordeaux France and then Heidelberg Germa-

ny. They returned to West Point briefly, and then Jane moved their five young children to Aiken SC while Al was in Vietnam leading an Engineer battalion. The couple made numerous more moves during Al's 34-year career and at all stops along the way, kept an open door, open arms and open hearts to their many military friends. After his retirement from the Army in 1987, Al's next career combined his two passions: Teaching and Service to his country. Al, with Jane by his side, took on the challenge of starting a new Engineering school at Mercer University in Macon, GA. Al and Jane spent many happy years there, and his influence on the students he taught is immeasurable. He was also an active member of the Army Science Board and while on sabbatical worked at the Army Research Labs in Adelphi, MD and Raleigh, NC mentoring teams of world renowned scientists doing critical research for the military. Al and Jane eventually retired from Mercer University and moved to Atlanta, GA, before their final move to Ridewood Village in Silver Spring, MD. They enjoyed travelling, taking cruises throughout the world, and the company of their children, eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Al is preceded in death by his parents, Major Allen Ferdinand Grum and Mrs. Nathalie Cate Grum, as well as his brother, Clifford Julien Grum. He is survived by his sister, Sue Redding; his wife, Jane Patterson Grum; and his children Allen "Pete" Grum Jr (Jessica Grum), David Grum, Pat Grum (Mary Grum), Colonel (Ret.) Stacey Grum Koff (Jonathan Koff) and COL (Ret.) Carrie (Grum) Benton (RADM (Ret.) Bruce Doll). His grandchildren include Catelyn Koff Wood (Chris Wood), Isabelle Koff, Matthew Koff, Sydney Benton, Specialist Charlie Benton (Riely Benton), Captain Maxwell Grum, Nathaniel Grum, and Ian Grum. His great grandchildren include Atlas Benton and Jay Benton. He will be remembered for his significant career accomplishments and his patriotism, but more so for his love of his family, especially his wife Jane, his wonderful sense of humor, and the relationships he forged and cultivated throughout his long life. Al will receive a military burial at West Point on February 13, 2025. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Fisher House Foundation (<https://www.fisherhouse.org/>) in support of military families.

DEATH NOTICE

HILLMAN

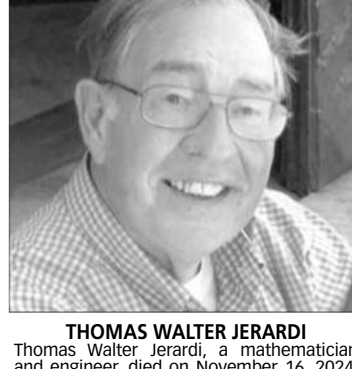


ARTHUR J. HILLMAN
On Wednesday, December 4, 2024, Arthur passed away peacefully surrounded by his wife and children in Washington, DC. He is predeceased by his parents Harry and Edith Hillman and his brother, Daniel (Mary Ellen). Arthur was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He is survived by his beloved wife of 67 years, Minette Walker Hillman; and his three cherished children, Todd (Deborah), Michael (Pam), and Liz (Gary) and his prized four grandchildren Matthew (Samar), Benjamin (Jaclyn), Adam, and Charles Hillman. He is also survived by his devoted nephew Jimmy (Deena).

Funeral services will be held on Sunday, December 8 at 1 p.m. at the Garden of Remembrance Chapel, 14321 Comus Road, Clarksburg, MD. Shiva to follow from 5 to 8 p.m. at the home of Minette Hillman. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the American Diabetes Association www.sagelbloomfield.com

DEATH NOTICE

JERARDI



THOMAS WALTER JERARDI
Thomas Walter Jerardi, a mathematician and engineer, died on November 16, 2024. The third son of Joseph V. Jerardi and Mary A. McGlannan Jerardi, he was born in Baltimore, Maryland on May 18, 1943 and resided in Columbia, MD. He was an engineer at the Johns Hopkins

University Applied Physics Laboratory for over 40 years. After retirement, he taught at Howard Community College and was active with local HAM radio groups. His three grandchildren were a source of tremendous joy. He lived with NET for over three years. He is survived by his wife Jean Litzten Jerardi, daughters Maria (Doug), Jane, Angela (Carl Johan), grandchildren Maeva, Fiorn, and Astrid, and brothers Joseph (Nancy) and Richard (Karen). His brother Jack preceded him in death last year. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made in Tom's honor to a memorial Math Scholarship at HCC or the Neuroendocrine Tumor Society at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore. Details are at: www.janejerardi.com/tomjerardi. A funeral mass will be held at noon on December 13, 2024 at St. John RC Church at the Mt. Interfaith Center in Columbia. The service will also be streamed live at: <https://sjcolumbia.org/streaming>. Burial following at Columbia Memorial Park. The complete obituary can be found here: www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/columbia-md/thomas-jerardi-12083202

DEATH NOTICE

WILEY



FOSTER WILEY
Beloved husband and father, Foster Wiley, passed peacefully at home in Alexandria, Virginia on November 22, 2024. He was born Bruce Foster Wiley II on August 24, 1940 in

Wichita Falls, Texas. He grew up in Bartlesville, Oklahoma and graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1963, after which he moved to the Washington, DC area. Foster enjoyed a long career as a nationally-recognized documentary filmmaker, recipient of 15 Emmy awards. He later became a still photographer and a painter of beautiful art. Foster is predeceased by his mother, Norene Eason Wiley and father, Bruce Foster Wiley. Survivors include first spouse Patricia Blecha Wiley, second spouse Dinah Gray Wiley; son Brett Wiley, stepdaughter Jessica Prentice, son-in-law Jacob Wright, stepson Joshua Prentice, daughter-in-law Ketaki Bhattacharya; sisters Ann Ray and Phyllis Wilson; and grandchildren Daisy Wiley, Cecilia Wiley, Sally Wiley, Zachary Prentice, Noah Prentice, and Thorston Wright. Foster's obituary is posted at <https://www.everywheatley.com/obituaries>. A celebration of his life will be held December 28, 1 p.m., at Hope United Church of Christ in Alexandria. Donations in memory of Foster may be made to the Insight Memory Care Center, www.insighttmc.org.

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THE WEATHER

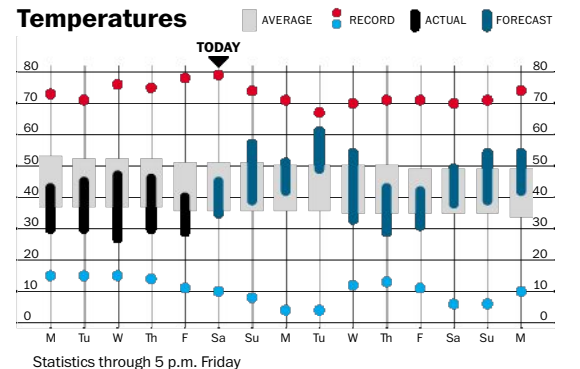
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A touch milder as wind abates

Perhaps the weather will be a hair milder, with highs making it to within a few degrees of 40. Breezes will be more moderate, but a few gusts from the west near 20 mph are possible. Clouds could fluctuate at times, filtering some sunshine, but skies will generally be bright. In the evening, it will be partly cloudy with low temperatures in the mid-20s to around 30 as our milder trend continues. Light but steady breezes should blow in from the southwest.

Today	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Partly sunny	Partly sunny, breezy	Rain	Showers	Rain	Mostly sunny
45° 35°	57° 39°	51° 42°	61° 49°	54° 33°	43° 29°
FEELS*: 42°	FEELS: 51°	FEELS: 48°	FEELS: 59°	FEELS: 47°	FEELS: 34°
CHNCE PRECIP: 5%	P: 0%	P: 90%	P: 60%	P: 90%	P: 0%
WIND: WSW 6-12 mph	W: WSW 10-20 mph	W: S 4-8 mph	W: S 6-12 mph	W: NW 7-14 mph	W: WNW 8-16 mph
HUMIDITY: Low	H: Moderate	H: High	H: Moderate	H: High	H: Low

OFFICIAL RECORD



REGION

Pollen: Low
Grass Low
Trees Low
Weeds Low
Mold Low

Air Quality: Moderate
Dominant cause: Nitrogen oxide

UV: Low
2 out of 11+

NATION

Weather map features for noon today

Yesterday's National High: Palm Springs, CA 87° Low: Gunnison, CO -14°

World High: Paraboruro, Australia 111° Low: Sebyan-Kuyol, Russia -43°

NATIONAL	Today	Tomorrow	Des Moines	54/32/s	54/34/pc	Oklahoma City	58/42/pc	61/40/pc	WORLD	Today	Tomorrow
Albany, NY	36/29/c	43/31/sn	Detroit	37/35/sn	43/36/pc	Omaha	57/30/s	57/31/s	Addis Ababa	72/44/c	72/46/s
Albuquerque	55/29/s	55/33/s	El Paso	57/39/pc	66/45/s	Orlando	71/49/pc	76/54/s	Amsterdam	50/42/r	45/40/c
Anchorage	33/26/c	36/30/r	Fairbanks, AK	16/2/c	24/17/pc	Philadelphia	41/35/pc	52/35/pc	Athens	64/50/sh	65/60/pc
Atlanta	56/37/c	62/50/pc	Fargo, ND	41/27/pc	37/25/sh	Phoenix	77/50/c	73/51/pc	Auckland	75/59/pc	74/66/c
Austin	49/46/t	63/51/sh	Hartford, CT	41/30/pc	51/30/sn	Pittsburgh	35/33/c	47/38/pc	Bangkok	74/37/pc	72/46/pc
Baltimore	43/33/pc	56/36/pc	Honolulu	84/69/pc	83/70/sh	Portland, ME	34/27/s	41/25/sn	Bahad	94/78/pc	92/76/t
Billings, MT	56/39/pc	48/31/sf	Houston	53/50/t	68/61/r	Portland, OR	48/43/s	50/39/sh	Beijing	42/23/s	43/18/pc
Birmingham	54/35/pc	56/51/sh	Indianapolis	43/33/s	51/44/pc	Providence, RI	38/29/s	47/29/c	Berlin	44/39/r	42/35/c
Bismarck, ND	45/26/pc	45/22/sh	Jackson, MS	58/43/s	60/57/r	Raleigh, NC	51/31/s	64/43/s	Bogota	68/50/r	68/43/r
Boise	41/30/pc	42/28/c	Jacksonville, FL	62/33/s	71/46/s	Reno, NV	55/30/pc	54/23/s	Brussels	51/42/r	45/39/r
Boston	38/32/c	47/34/c	Kansas City, MO	55/38/s	58/37/pc	Richmond	47/33/s	63/37/s	Buenos Aires	71/59/s	71/61/s
Buffalo	34/31/sn	40/34/c	Las Vegas	66/42/s	62/40/pc	Sacramento	61/40/c	65/39/pc	Cairo	73/55/pc	74/52/pc
Burlington, VT	29/25/c	39/26/sn	Little Rock	57/43/s	53/50/r	St. Louis	56/43/s	62/49/pc	Copenhagen	44/42/r	44/36/r
Charleston, SC	55/36/pc	68/46/s	Los Angeles	80/50/s	67/51/s	St. Thomas, VI	85/77/pc	85/77/sh	Dakar	85/72/pc	86/72/pc
Charleston, WV	43/33/s	55/43/pc	Louisville	48/37/s	57/49/pc	Salt Lake City	44/31/pc	46/28/c	Dublin	46/40/c	46/41/pc
Charlotte	52/32/c	61/46/c	Memphis	54/42/pc	56/52/r	San Diego	74/46/s	67/51/s	Edinburgh	45/39/r	46/36/pc
Cheyenne, WY	57/38/s	51/22/pc	Miami	77/63/pc	80/67/pc	San Francisco	61/49/pc	61/46/pc	Frankfurt	46/38/r	44/39/r
Chicago	43/35/pc	48/42/pc	Milwaukee	45/33/pc	46/39/c	San Juan, PR	87/76/pc	86/75/pc	Geneva	46/36/r	41/38/sn
Cincinnati	42/33/s	53/42/pc	Minneapolis	46/29/l	42/30/pc	Seattle	50/43/r	49/39/sh	Ham, Bermuda	66/59/s	66/63/pc
Cleveland	37/34/c	45/37/pc	Nashville	53/37/pc	57/50/r	Spokane, WA	37/32/l	36/26/pc	Helsinki	31/29/c	31/23/c
Dallas	53/46/r	60/49/sh	New Orleans	58/52/c	72/64/sh	Syracuse	35/31/sn	42/33/c	Ho Chi Minh City	90/74/r	92/76/t
Denver	61/37/s	59/26/pc	New York City	39/35/s	50/39/pc	Tampa	69/51/pc	75/60/s	Hong Kong	72/54/c	68/58/c
			Norfolk	46/36/s	59/42/s	Wichita	58/39/s	58/37/pc			

Precipitation

National	Dulles	BWI
Past 24 hours 0.00"	0.00"	Trace
Total this month Trace	Trace	Trace
Normal 0.69"	0.69"	0.75"
Total this year 34.69"	31.03"	34.16"
Normal 39.20"	40.73"	42.15"
Snow, past 24 hours 0.0"	0.0"	Trace
Snow, season total Trace	Trace	Trace

Moon Phases

Dec 8 First Quarter
Dec 15 Full
Dec 22 Last Quarter
Dec 30 New

Solar System

Rise	Set
Sun 7:13 a.m.	4:46 p.m.
Moon 12:09 p.m.	11:18 p.m.
Venus 10:27 a.m.	7:59 p.m.
Mars 8:21 p.m.	10:56 a.m.
Jupiter 4:43 p.m.	7:23 a.m.
Saturn 12:25 p.m.	11:35 p.m.

Blue Ridge: Today, partly sunny, not as cold. High 35 to 39. Winds west 8-16 mph. Tonight, mainly clear; not as cold. Low 33 to 37. Winds west 6-12 mph. Sunday, partly sunny, warmer. High 48 to 52. Winds west 12-25 mph. Monday, rain at times.

Atlantic beaches: Today, partly sunny. High 41 to 46. Winds west 8-16 mph. Tonight, partly cloudy. Low 33 to 37. Winds southwest 10-20 mph. Sunday, warmer. High 51 to 59. Winds west-southwest 10-20 mph. Monday, a couple of showers. High 52 to 56.

Waterways: Upper Potomac River: Today, partly sunny. Wind southwest 4-8 knots. Waves 2 feet or less. Visibility unrestricted. Lower Potomac and Chesapeake Bay: Today, mostly sunny. Wind west 8-16 knots. Waves 1-2 feet on the Lower Potomac; 1-3 feet on the Chesapeake Bay. River Stages: The stage at Little Falls will be around 2.90 feet today, with no change of 2.90 Sunday. Flood stage at Little Falls is 10 feet.

Today's tides (High tides in Bold)

Washington	6:59 a.m.	12:14 p.m.	7:13 p.m.	none
Annapolis	3:55 a.m.	9:19 a.m.	3:26 p.m.	10:02 p.m.
Ocean City	5:28 a.m.	11:48 a.m.	6:24 p.m.	none
Norfolk	1:20 a.m.	7:24 a.m.	1:41 p.m.	8:11 p.m.
Point Lookout	12:21 a.m.	5:31 a.m.	11:22 a.m.	5:59 p.m.

SPRING VALLEY \$7,495,000
3300 Nebraska Ave. NW, Washington, DC
Ben Roth 202-485-9836
Sassy Jacobs 202-276-5449

KALORAMA \$4,995,000
2120 Bancroft Pl. NW, Washington, DC
Liz D'Angio 202-427-7890
The NTB Group

WESLEY HEIGHTS \$4,699,000
2935 49th St. NW, Washington, DC
Joanne Pinover 301-404-7011

GEORGETOWN \$4,500,000
3314 Volta Pl. NW, Washington, DC
Nancy Taylor Bubes, Jamie Peva
Liz D'Angio 202-427-7890

CLEVELAND PARK \$3,995,000
3307 Newark St. NW, Washington, DC
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Chris Ittelag 301-633-8182

GEORGETOWN \$2,395,000
3253 P St. NW, Washington, DC
Nancy Ittelag 202-905-7762
Chris Ittelag 301-633-8182

HILLANDALE-BURLEITH \$2,295,000
4049 Mansion Dr. NW, Washington, DC
Cynthia Howar 202-297-6000

QUARRY SPRINGS \$2,225,000
8213 River Rd., Bethesda, MD
Marilyn Charly 202-427-7553

GEORGETOWN \$1,995,000
1401 33rd St. NW, Washington, DC
Heidi Hatfield 202-258-1919
Anne Hatfield Weir 202-253-2490

RIVER FALLS \$1,500,000
7822 Hidden Meadow Ter., Potomac, MD
Anne Kilken 301-706-0067

BROOKLAND \$1,125,000
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The scene at a Tennessee congressman's 15-minute Christmas soiree that featured Santos Claus



A DUI snag for Swifties heading to Canada

BY HANNAH SAMPSON

Amid Facebook-group discussions about friendship-bracelet-making, outfits and places to eat in Vancouver during the final shows of Taylor Swift's Eras Tour this weekend, Megan Flaspohler noticed some new and urgent kinds of posts in recent days.

She said one fan mentioned that they had a felony conviction and asked whether they would have a problem entering Canada from the United States. Then, Flaspohler said, several others said they had been cited for driving under the influence — often not a felony. Would that keep them out of Canada?

"Literally in the last two days it's been like, 'Wait, wait, wait, wait, I didn't know this was a problem,'" said Flaspohler, a Texas resident who has tickets for the tour's two closing shows, on Saturday and Sunday. "It's just kind of exploded in this group."

For people with criminal convictions or drunken-driving records, it's long been a problem. Canadian law says people who commit a crime involving impaired driving may not be allowed to enter the country, regardless of where the crime happened. Canada's drunken-driving rules became stricter in 2018, to the surprise of many Americans.

Foreign travelers who have committed offenses since then can visit only if they apply for and are granted criminal rehabilitation or a temporary resident permit (with a fee of around \$170). For earlier offenses, the rules vary depending on the person's record.

Marisa Feil, a Montreal-based attorney who works on post-DUI travel to Canada, said she's helped dozens of Swifties get approval to cross the border for last month's Toronto and this weekend's Vancouver concerts, starting when concert dates were announced last year.

Feil said it can take up to 18 months to process a criminal rehabilitation, in her experience. She says temporary resident permits usually can take three to six months. But travelers can also bring an application to the border and hope an agent will grant them permission in real time — the only option left for some people trying to make it to the three shows that start Friday.

"Bring a properly prepared TRP application to the border, smile, be kind and hope for the best," she said. **SEE SWIFTIES ON C3**

Capitol Hill is a very busy place with very important people, so what's the perfect Christmas celebration? Perhaps it was Thursday's speed-soiree in the Longworth House Office Building.

1:30 p.m.: The party had just started but was nonetheless in full swing. Rep. Tim Burchett's third annual bash had a strict time limit: 1:30 to 1:45.

"I came up with this idea because everybody has the Christmas parties and it's kind of obligatory," explained the Tennessee Republican. "They go on forever and the music's too loud and somebody's always got you cornered with wine breath. I just thought, 'How do I get out of this mess? Or how did I get into this mess?'" His solution? "I thought 15 minutes was just enough to get them in and get them out. They get a little Christmas cheer and they're out the door."

But Republican Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana arrived almost 10 minutes early, which was technically a violation of the rules but also a very big deal. Burchett ushered him in, made jolly small talk and offered him

A BRIEF HOUSE PARTY

STORY BY ROXANNE ROBERTS
 PHOTOS BY ALLISON ROBERT

At top, former congressman George Santos as Santa Claus at Rep. Tim Burchett's fete. At bottom left are, from left, House Speaker Mike Johnson and Reps. Andrew Ogles and Mariannette Miller-Meeks.

first dibs of the party menu: "Can I get you a Mountain Dew, peanut butter and jelly or maybe charcuterie?" That's Burchett's term for Cheez Whiz on crackers.

"None of the above," said Johnson, only half-kidding, which Burchett took not as an insult but a challenge: "When in Rome, baby?"

In the spirit of the season, Johnson cracked a can of Mountain Dew. He took a sip and loudly asked Burchett, "Holy smoke!" he yelled. A Burchett staffer jumped in: "Yeah, you're going to be on like a sugar high all day."

1:31 p.m.: Florida Democrat Jared Moskowitz walked in, saw Johnson in the crowd and loudly asked Burchett, "What vote did you promise the Speaker?" Laughs all around because the only thing the two Republicans really disagree on is cheese spray.

But this party is a bipartisan affair. In fact, Moskowitz not only played Santa at last year's party but brought his dogs dressed as

SEE PARTY ON C3

APPRECIATION

Frank Auerbach looked again and again. His paintings unlocked inner life.

BY SEBASTIAN SMEE

You have to be ready to receive a painting by Frank Auerbach. The receiving takes time — takes place over time. You look at one of his portraits and it's not immediately clear where the eyes are or how the head is oriented in space. Accretions of thick, arbitrarily colored paint, or greasy, inchoate blurs created by repeated erasures, sit beneath a handful of short, clinching notations for jaw, eyes, ear or some other structural particularity. These have been applied — or so it can seem — in a panic, at the very last moment, as if in quick response to something never seen before.

And so in fact they were. They were applied to the canvas after hours and weeks and months of looking and painting, and looking again and painting again, until something was seen in a way that had never previously been registered.

Style, Auerbach liked to say, is how you behave in a crisis. Less dramatically, it's what you decide to do (or simply do, outside of conscious decision-making) when you have banished habitual response and cliché.

There are many ways to make a painting, and Frank Auerbach's was only one of them. But when I think of painting as a verb and not just a means to the end of image creation — when I think of it as something someone might do as part of the attempt to connect inner life with the world around us, an activity that is all about keeping intimacy and emotion and a feeling of aliveness in play — I can't really think of anyone in recent times who did it at a higher level than Auerbach.

Auerbach died last month. In the United States, you tend not to hear much about him. But he was one of the most compelling painters on the international stage from the postwar period until



A gallery assistant views "Jake Seated," a Frank Auerbach painting, at Sotheby's in London in 2017.

now and ought by rights to have been the subject of retrospectives at the Met, or the Art Institute of Chicago, or the Museum of Modern Art.

He wasn't. But in Britain and Europe, Auerbach was revered — and increasingly understood as more than just an exemplar of the so-called School of London, a group of friends whose youths overlapped with World War II and whose members included Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud and Leon Kossoff.

Labels are convenient. But almost every designation of a school or movement creates rhetorical froth from diluted understanding. How meaningful is it to describe Edgar Degas as an impressionist? How much of a minimalist, really, was Frank Stella?

People who have heard the term at all tend to associate the School of London with drab interiors, thick paint, existential

SEE APPRECIATION ON C2

Auerbach's 'peculiar freshness'

APPRECIATION FROM CI

angst and postwar gloom. This is at best unhelpful. Just as we should immediately and until further notice uncouple the word “existential” from “angst,” so that we can recognize how enlivening and even erotic existentialist thinking was in the postwar years, we should register how specific, vital and unique was the work of each of these fiercely figurative, London-based painters.

Each alternative they posited to America's postwar tilt toward abstraction was persuasive on its own terms. Where the American approach seemed bent on transcending the world of appearances, those artists working in London thought it possible to arrive at something more powerful and convincing by digging deeper into the information received through the eyes.

Robert Hughes, the critic who wrote a brilliant early Auerbach monograph, detected in his work “the peculiar freshness of unmediated experience.” Paradoxically, this freshness was the result of something that bore all the hallmarks of staleness.

It was produced in a north London studio that Auerbach occupied for 70 years. Hughes called it “a troglodyte's den of internalization.” The floor, he said, was “encrusted with a deposit of dried paint so deep that it slopes upward several inches, from the wall to the easel.” In his more recent monograph, Auerbach's friend and frequent model William Feaver described Auerbach “doloping paint from five-liter cans, coaxing it, fingering it, picking at stickiness.”

Even today, it can be hard to key into Auerbach's stubbornly opaque and elusive idiom. The



EAMONN MCCABE/POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES



ESTATE OF ARTIST/FRANKIE ROSSI ART PROJECTS

Frank Auerbach, left, circa 2000 in his London studio, applied paint with gestures of wildly varying pressure and speed. Above is Auerbach's 1985 painting “Head of Julia.”

work itself can still look very radical. But it was the result of what Hughes called “exacerbation, doggedness, courage, rawness, and the slow formation of his own values.”

Those values were, in other words, fundamentally conservative, humanistic. Auerbach saw himself working in the tradition of Rembrandt, Goya, Manet and Constable. In the 20th century, his forebears were Giacometti, Soutine and De Staël and in Eng-

land, Walter Sickert and his student David Bomberg (who was also Auerbach's teacher).

Auerbach, whose parents were murdered by the Nazis two or three years after he, a young boy, was sent to safety in England, believed in intimacy — even as he understood the impediments that stood forever in its way. He grasped the unknowability of other people, the limits of love, the obstacles obstructing our longing for a secure place in the world. He

wanted to convey the urgency of the insecurity that he believed was fundamental to our human situation.

His early canvases were made from inordinately thick paint. The critic John Berger described the method as “like knitting with rope.” Later, the paint thinned out and was applied with gestures of wildly varying pressure and speed: sometimes jerky and jabbing, sometimes slow, sinuous, pooling or prodding. He gradual-

ly expanded his color palette, which became brighter, at times even buoyant, though it was never what you would call seductive. He had a particular fondness for rusty reds and clashing, acidic greens.

Feaver wrote that Auerbach's paintings “sometimes give the impression that they can't believe their luck.” One key to understanding his method — which can feel akin to one of those sudden spurts to Zen Buddhist enlightenment after 10 years' grueling meditation — is the famous account of a young Picasso requiring more than 90 sittings for his 1906 portrait of Gertrude Stein and then one day scraping it back and doing the whole thing over, all in one go.

“To paint the same head over and over,” said Auerbach, “leads you to its unfamiliarity; eventually you get near the raw truth about it, just as people only blurt

out the raw truth in the middle of a family quarrel!”

While we all have a single, unified idea of the achievements of, say, Agnes Martin or Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko, with Auerbach, no equivalent idea ever really crystallizes. There is only this painting by Auerbach, and then this one, and then the next one.

Before each of them, you feel that the person who made it proceeded as if no one had ever painted a head (or an urban landscape) before, as if inherited rules and conventions never existed, and so the whole thing had to be fixed, discovered or solved in the moment.

Presented with the dark and illegible lock of other human beings, Frank Auerbach set to work, day after day, creating keys out of paint. He was not compelled to see if any of these keys worked. He simply proceeded as if it might be possible that they would.

Grieving parents ‘shocked’ that surviving child plans a wedding two years later



Carolyn Hax

Adapted from an online discussion.

Dear Carolyn: My older sister, “Mandy,” died in an accident two years ago. She was 28. My parents and I are still deeply grieving.

I got engaged a few months ago to the most wonderful man, and we started planning our wedding. My parents were shocked. My mom said she can't believe I could even stand to have a big wedding (only 75 people) when we're still grieving, and it should have been Mandy getting married. She was engaged at the time of her death.

I will miss my sister for the rest of my life, but my fiancé and I want to have a nice wedding. My parents say they won't come and they'll never forgive me.

Should I do this even if it causes a rift with my parents? My future in-laws really want us to have a wedding, and we do, too, but I can't stand to cause my parents more grief.

— Engaged

Engaged: Oh, my. I am so sorry about your sister.

And I am sorry your parents are so stuck in grief, they're ready to sacrifice you to it.

I believe it is the duty of the living to throw ourselves into life. So anything I say to you arises from that. I believe you owe it to Mandy to surround yourself with love and with people who love you. I believe joining your life to someone else's widens the circle of people who carry Mandy's name with them.

I also understand you're in an impossible situation. You can ask your parents what wouldn't be “too soon” — as a point of



ILLUSTRATION BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

reference, not a promise — and plan to honor Mandy at your reception, and discuss what Mandy would have wanted. Gently, gently, work with them. Counseling, too, together. I hope they'll go.

But no, choosing happiness won't cause their grief.

Re: Mandy: My little brother

unexpectedly passed away the week I planned to go on vacation and ask my then-girlfriend to marry me. We canceled the trip and grieved with family. I felt tremendous guilt about proposing to her around my brother's death.

However, as certain as I was that I wanted to marry her before my brother passed, being

with her through that time made me want to marry her even more. And after losing a family member I loved, I had the urge to expand my family. I proposed a week after his funeral. It wasn't romantic like I had planned, but it was the most honest thing I ever did.

We delayed telling family for months, unsure if it was the right time. But most of our family was grateful for something good after something so terrible. The exception was my stepmother — understandably, as she had lost her only child (he was my half brother).

We honored my brother at our wedding. Three years on, I am grateful I did it. I can't give my little brother his life back, but I can keep living and keep his memory alive. I am beyond grateful we expanded our family, even though I miss my brother every day.

I am so, so sorry for the loss of your sister. I am sorry your family is not ready for you to move forward. I think being in love and starting your family is a good thing in the wake of loss and trauma. You deserve to love and be loved, and to celebrate that.

— Anonymous

Anonymous: Oh, my. Tears. Thank you. And:

• That was the kindest, sweetest, most true post about love and life and grief. You are lovely, and I hope Engaged comes into the same love you helped create.

Write to Carolyn Hax at tellme@washpost.com. Get her column delivered to your inbox each morning at wapo.st/gethax.

Join the discussion live at noon Fridays at washingtonpost.com/live-chats.

the GUIDE to the Lively Arts					
SHOW NAME	DATES & TIMES	DESCRIPTION	DETAILS	PRICE	ADDITIONAL
HOLIDAY EVENTS					
A Celtic Christmas The nostalgic hometown holiday favorite returns!	Saturday, December 7 Sunday, December 8 4:00 p.m.	We present to you the perennial Georgetown favorite, A Celtic Christmas . The Barnes and Hampton Celtic Consort transports its devoted audience back in time and across the pond with the skillful musical touch of Joe Cunliffe and Steve Bloom and the jocular poetic stylings of the inimitable Robert Aubry Davis.	Dumbarton Concerts 3133 Dumbarton St NW Georgetown For more information and to purchase tickets, visit: dumbartonconcerts.org	\$48 \$14 live-stream (Dec 8 only)	Parking available, free valet for Gold members Box Office: 202-965-2000
THEATRE					
Tiny Lights Tales for Chanukah	December 7-15, 2024, Weekends only	Perfect for kids! Three masterful storytellers take on more than 40 roles as they bring us into the magical world of Isaac Bashevis Singer's famed folktales.	Experience the magic of storytelling! TheaterJ.org	Price varies	
CHILDREN'S THEATRE					
NEW! The Holiday Time Travelers A show about kindness for families.	Dec. 6, 7, 13 at 7pm Dec. 8 and 14 at 1pm and 4pm	Join three siblings as they travel back in time with characters from <i>A Christmas Carol</i> to learn about generosity + kindness. Bring a food or toy donation for Konionia to share the joy of the season!	The Logan Loft, 3700 Burgundy Road in Alexandria, VA 22303. Call 703-624-9347 with questions. https://www.ACTheatre.com	\$15 General admission	Free parking and accessible location. Unwrapped donations of toys + food encouraged.

The Guide to the Lively Arts appears: • Sunday in Arts & Style. deadline: Tues., 12 noon
• Monday in Style. deadline: Friday, 12 noon • Tuesday in Style. deadline: Mon., 12 noon • Wednesday in Style. deadline: Tues., 12 noon
• Thursday in Style. deadline: Wed., 12 noon • Friday in Weekend. deadline: Tues., 12 noon • Saturday in Style. deadline: Friday, 12 noon
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PARTY FROM C1

reindeer. Burchett loved it. "I had some smart aleck reporter say, 'Tell me, congressman, you realize your Santa Claus is Jewish?' And I said, 'Well, my savior is Jewish so I think it's okay that my Santa Claus is Jewish!'"

Here's the thing: Burchett loves the holidays. He has sweet stories about Christmases with his wife and daughter. "I just love it. I can't tell you. I get so excited about Christmas." And he likes celebrating with his very busy colleagues. Just not for hours. Or even half hours.

About 20 members dropped by, each greeting by Burchett like one towards a best friend. He threw his arms around Michigan Democrat Debbie Dingell. "We've been buddies since I got to Congress," he said. "She was very kind to me when I first got here."

In the spirit of the moment, Johnson and Dingell shared a hug. Feeling festive? "I'm trying to get there," she said, smiling.

1:34 p.m.: Just in the nick of time, Santa Claus slipped in through a back entrance. Actually, make that Santos Claus.

Yes, we're talking expelled congressman George Santos, covered in red velvet and fur and *feeling it*. His appearance caused a frenzy of upheld phones eager to capture the hot holiday cameo. Burchett announced the rules: "Okay, everybody! You get one picture with Santos Claus."

Santos later explained why he accepted the invitation to appear at the party: "Life is too short not to have fun."

1:35 p.m.: Burchett asked the crowd to sing "Happy Birthday" to Arkansas Republican French Hill, who slipped in unnoticed. His present? A cracker with Cheez Whiz.

1:39 p.m.: In the crush to get selfies with Santa, the peanut butter and jelly bar has been inexplicably ignored — this is lunch time, after all. A young congressional staffer opened one of the two loaves of white bread, a jar of crunchy peanut butter and grape jelly, then made himself a sandwich.

"I don't want my parents to know I'm breaking my gluten free diet," said the staffer, who spoke on condition of anonymity for this reason. He took a bite. "I came here to eat."

Rep. Tim Burchett tries to bring bipartisan cheer in ¼ of an hour



PHOTOS BY ALISON ROBERT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

1:42 p.m.: The hall outside 1122 Longworth — decorated with inflatable trees and other colorful decor — was jammed with people with good intentions and poor planning, as if waiting to get in a club about to close. "That's *crazy*. That's insane, dude," said one guest, laughing. Some slipped in via the back office entrance, while Burchett's staffers watched the crowd with bemusement.

The selfie assembly line was still rolling, with Santos Claus dispensing hugs to former colleagues and staffers.

"Did you sit on his lap?" one teased his friend.

"I thought about it but didn't," he answered.

"You don't get your wish if you don't sit on the lap. That's what I've heard."

1:45 p.m.: Burchett had promised to flick the lights on and off and kick everyone out, like a dive bar at closing time. But the 15-minute mark came and went and he couldn't do it. "I'm violating my own rules," he sighed. "It's kind of like election day— if you're in line when the polls close, you still get to vote."

Not really: His staffers turned away stragglers and closed the door. Bah humbug.

1:51 p.m.: Two last photos with Santos Claus and then a shot with the entire office team. The outer office, now cleared, still had one unopened loaf of bread, the back-up can of spray cheese and a few plain supermarket sugar cookies. Someone had scooped up the fancy Christmas cookies with red and green sugars; the Chips Ahoy package remained untouched.

"It was a record crowd," said Burchett. "I don't think we can have fit any more people in."

All in all, a very merry 21 minutes — but who's counting?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Staffers pack into Rep. Tim Burchett's (R-Tennessee) Washington office. Refreshments at the party included a DIY peanut butter and jelly bar. Burchett, right, and former Rep. George Santos — dressed as Santos Claus — take a selfie with a party guest.

Champagne problems for some U.S. Swifties who want to see Canada shows

SWIFTIES FROM C1

best!" Feil advised in an email.

Feil has made a series of TikToks aimed at helping American Swifties with DUIs or other criminal records — to the chagrin of some commenters. She said she has worked with performers, athletes, business travelers and others who need to enter the country despite their records.

"Thanks for getting morally bankrupt individuals into our country so they can see our limited tour dates!" one person wrote, including an eye-roll emoji. "Doing the lord's work."

The sheer number of Americans traveling to the Vancouver shows has been a sore point even for famously polite Canadians, Feil said.

"These Americans are coming and they're taking our tickets," she said Canadians have complained. "Then when they found out that all these Americans have DUIs, they're like, 'What on Earth is happening?'"

For Swift fans, the three concerts in Vancouver represent the



RICHARD LAUTENS/GETTY IMAGES

Swifties are discovering Canada's strict border laws just before the final Eras Tour shows in Vancouver.

final chance to experience the tour that kicked off in early 2023, crossed 10 eras of her career and spanned five continents. A batch of cheap tickets went on sale early last week for seats behind the stage, giving more fans the opportunity to attend the shows with little notice.

That led to an uptick of questions on social media about passport requirements, travel arrangements — and DUI records, said Flaspohler, whose tweet about the topic has been viewed more than 2 million times.

"They just bought, and they're kind of thinking about the repercussions," she said. "People really, truly did not think it through when buying these tickets."

Flaspohler, a former teacher who is getting her master's degree in school counseling, said some people posted that they were going to sell their tickets, but others said they would bring paperwork to the border and try to get through.

Melissa Rivett, 39, said she was already aware of the border rules as a resident of Washington state.

She is attending Friday's and Sunday's shows and said she's seen the DUI conversation pop up, both in a Facebook group she moderates and the one Flaspohler referenced.

She said the issue has been more prevalent in recent days but had also come up much earlier.

"A few people posted before that, and I think they posted in a good enough time frame that they were able to contact the Border Patrol and figure out what they needed to do on their end," she said. But some have been coming to the realization that they or friends who they planned to travel with might not be able to go.

Rivett, who works in project administration and event security, said some of the responses to people's questions have been mean-spirited. But others have been helpful but honest.

"Why do we want to be mean right before the biggest concert of the last two years?" she said. "I think it's just kind of a reality check for so many people."

Eras Tour coffee-table book has massive debut

BY HERB SCRIBNER

Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour Book" needed less than a fortnight to become the fastest-selling new book of the year.

The book, a coffee-table hardcover that reflects on Swift's popular tour, sold 814,000 print copies over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, according to Circana Bookscan, a book-sales tracking platform. No other book has sold as well this year, the platform said in a news release.

Swift's book is now the fastest-selling new book of the year and the second-highest adult nonfiction book release in BookScan's history. Only former president Barack Obama's memoir "A Promised Land" did better with 816,300 print copies sold in its first week

in 2020, according to Bookscan.

"The Eras Tour Book," which cost \$39.99, was available only at Target's stores and the retailer's website, though, while Obama's was available at other major retailers.

Swift announced the new book on Oct. 15, saying it would coincide with the CD and vinyl release of her April album "The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology." All of the items, she said, would be available only at Target.

On Black Friday, people flooded Target stores in the wee hours of the morning to snag copies. The 256-page hardcover features hundreds of photos from the tour, along with behind-the-scenes sketches and reflections written by Swift, according to the book's



NATACHA PISARENKO/AF

Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour Book" sold 814,000 print copies over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

description on Target's website.

But in the days since its release, Swift's book garnered a new name online — the "errors tour" book, as some fans said the book was riddled with typos and other mistakes, like cutoff words and photos.

In one example shared by a TikTok who bought the book, the song title "this is me trying" from Swift's "Folklore" album is written as "this is me rying."

"I know I'm not the only one disappointed with the Eras Tour book, but I haven't seen anyone else talk about the glaringly obvious grammatical errors and clunky sentences within the pages," the fan wrote.

Swift released the book through Taylor Swift Publications without the help of a traditional publishing house. She did something similar with the "Eras Tour" concert film, sidestepping major distributors and working directly with AMC.

Swift's "Eras Tour" — which had more than 150 shows across five continents — comes to a close this weekend with three shows scheduled in Vancouver.

TELEVISION

Television schedule table for 12/7/24, listing channels, times, and program titles such as 'Swift', 'Humana', 'Dateline NBC', etc.

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers pre-filled, including 9, 1, 2, 5, 1, 3, 2, 5, 1, 6, 8, 7, 1, 4, 3, 2, 3, 8, 5, 3, 8, 4, 5, 6, 3.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★

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PREVIOUS SUDOKU SOLUTION

9x9 grid showing the solution to the previous Sudoku puzzle.

SCRABBLE GRAMS section featuring word racks (A1-E1, I1-P3, H4-C3, etc.) and a list of words like 'PAR SCORE 150-160', 'BEST SCORE 212', and 'FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN'.

JUMBLE CROSSWORDS section featuring a crossword puzzle grid, clues (e.g., 'Best, superior', 'numerical'), and answers (e.g., 'FSITNE', 'NOAMR').

PREVIOUS SCRABBLEGRAMS SOLUTION

Table showing solutions for previous Scrabble words, including racks and scores (e.g., RACK 1 = 84, RACK 2 = 60).

HOROSCOPE

BIRTHDAY | DECEMBER 7: You are forever youthful, playful and mischievous. You love to learn and share your knowledge. This is the final year of a nine-year cycle for you, which means it's time to take inventory of your life...

feelings that might be expressed in private, intimate ways, or they might be expressed through financial negotiations and discussions about shared property. You might choose to rethink some financial choices, which is your prerogative.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21). This is an upbeat, optimistic day! You'll find it easy to put a positive spin on anything. Nevertheless, be smart, and be ready to do a reality check. It's possible for things to look better than they are today.

LA TIMES CROSSWORD

By Rachel Fabi & Lewis Rothlein

ACROSS 1 Account shortcut, 7 Subatomic particle in the world's largest collider, 13 [Shrug], 14 Mitigate, 15 Not rare, 16 Beverage also called Silver Needle, 17 Michael Jordan's sch., 18 _ wit, 20 Mouth-squinting, 21 Observation observation, 23 Certain guest permits, 24 Heat from a vent, 25 Tweaks, 27 Extra-ordinary mark?, 29 From both sides, in a way, 30 Bring up, 31 Spy glasses?, 33 Some mats, 34 Doctors or nurses, 35 Best Play awards, 36 Addresses, 37 Salsa, or a salsa move, 38 Vales, 39 "Open at your own risk" indicator, 43 Protected, in a way, 45 Like no films released to theaters in 2023, 47 DeLaria of "Orange Is the New Black", 48 Plague in a Poe tale, 50 "Well, dang!", 52 Dramatic, 53 Thin, 54 Skippers on a lake, 55 Youngest, as a family member

12x12 crossword puzzle grid with numbers indicating starting points for clues.

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FRIDAY'S LA TIMES SOLUTION crossword grid with words filled in, including W O N K A, W A I L S, L A Y, I N O I L, A D F E E, O L E, S E T T O, S O F T T A C O S, P A T T E R, Y T T R I U M, S L O E, D I E, E L M, O N W A R D, R E O P E N, P O S S E, A B B E, R E D O, E D U, T S, Q U A R E, R I D, N O R M, W I R Y, C A F E S, A R E O L E, N O D U L E, U A E, S U N I C O N, S M A R T T V, A C T T W O, M E A N T T O B E, O T T E R, U G H, E E N I E, G L E N S, G A S, R A N O N, G L E N S E.

BRIDGE

WEST AKJ865, EAST 72, SOUTH 1094, NORTH (D) Q3, A942, J3, K10853. The bidding: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST Pass Pass 1♣ 1♠ 3♣ All Pass Opening lead — ♠ K

The biggest problem some people have (and this applies especially to some bridge players) is that their lips move when they think. They would do better to focus exclusively on thinking. Today's North-South stopped at three clubs, an accurate contract. West led the K-A of spades, and when East followed with the seven and deuce, West continued with the jack. Declarer thought it over, then ruffed with dummy's 10 of trumps, commenting that it might be right to ruff with the king instead. East overruffed with the jack and led a diamond to West's ace. South won the diamond return and drew trumps, but he couldn't avoid losing a heart. Down one. (Ruffing the third spade with the king of trumps would not have helped.) South should have thought a little longer. All he had to do was discard a heart from dummy on the third spade. If West shifts to, say, a heart, South can win, draw trumps and

force out the ace of diamonds. Then he can discard another heart from dummy on a winning diamond and lose only four tricks in all. DAILY QUESTION You hold: ♠ A K J 8 6 5 ♥ Q 10 3 ♦ A 10 4 ♣ 7 You open one spade, and your partner responds two hearts. The opponents pass. What do you say? ANSWER: Partner has at least 10 points — considerably more in a game-forcing 2/1 style. His response makes your hand quite powerful. You may have a slam, and even a grand slam if he holds 3 2, A K 9 8 4 2, 5 3, A 6 3. You have many reasonable options. Bid three diamonds, intending to bid four hearts next to suggest heart support, slam interest and club shortness.

— Frank Stewart ©2024, TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY, LLC.

CLASSIC DOONESBURY

GARRY TRUDEAU



PICKLES

BRIAN CRANE



RED AND ROVER

BRIAN BASSET



AGNES

TONY COCHRAN



FRANK AND ERNEST

TOM THAVES



WUMO

MIKAEL WULFF & ANDERS MORGENTHALER



CLASSIC PEANUTS

CHARLES SCHULZ



TAUHID BONDIA



RHYMES WITH ORANGE

HILARY PRICE



MARK TRAIL

JULES RIVERA



LIO

MARK TATULLI



MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

MIKE PETERS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

CHRIS BROWNE



BALDO

HECTOR CANTU & CARLOS CASTELLANOS



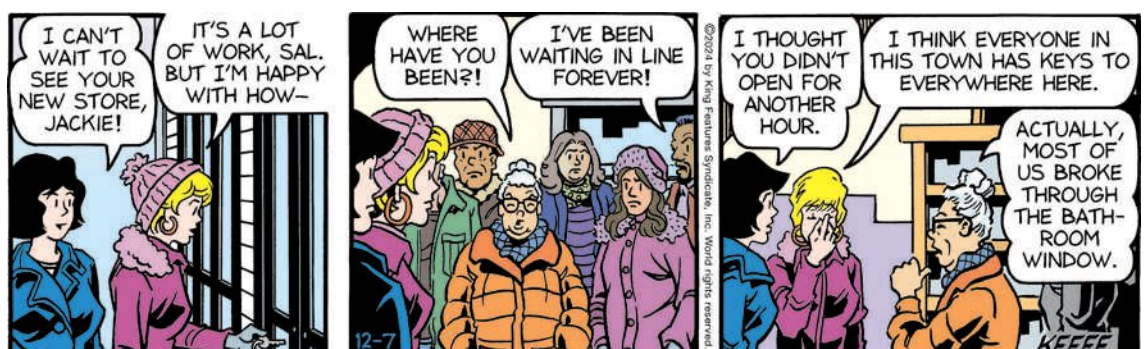
BLONDIE

DEAN YOUNG & JOHN MARSHALL



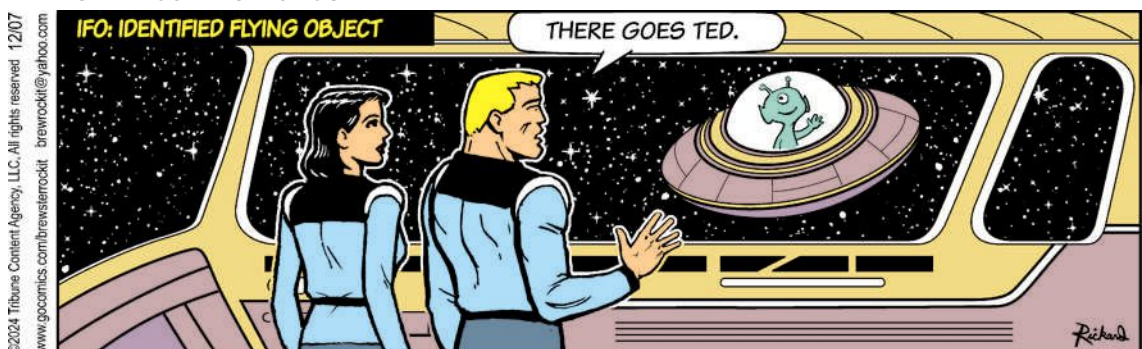
SALLY FORTH

FRANCESCO MARCIULIANO & JIM KEEFE



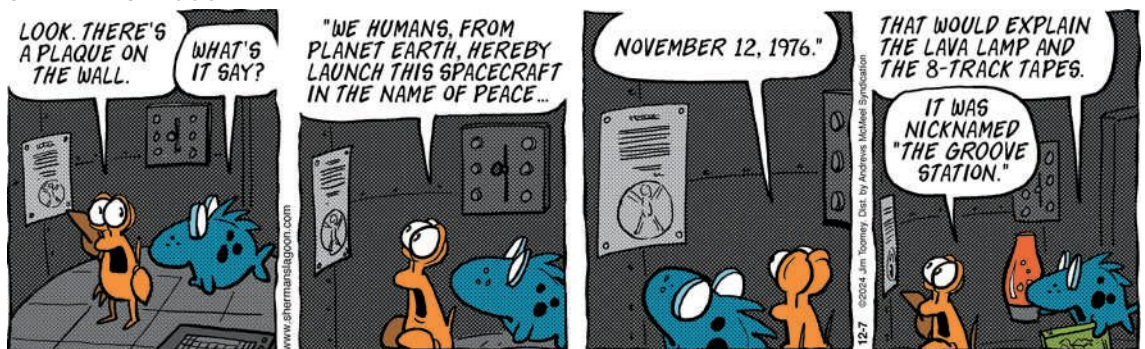
BREWSTER ROCKIT: SPACE GUY!

TIM RICKARD



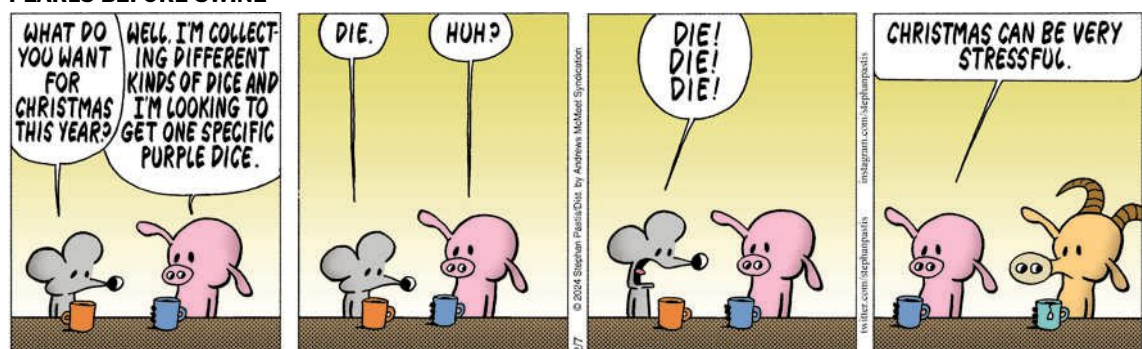
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

JIM TOOMEY



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

STEPHAN PASTIS



CURTIS

RAY BILLINGSLEY



MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

In a "measuring stick" game, Georgetown comes up short and sees its winning streak end at West Virginia. **D5**

SOCCER

Lionel Messi, with more than 40 percent of the vote from MLS players and media, is the league's MVP. **D5**

PRO BASKETBALL

The Mystics lose guard Julie Vanloo to Golden State as the WNBA's newest team starts to build its roster. **D6**

Quince Orchard brings another title back to Montgomery County



LUKE JOHNSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

In a clash of schools widely considered to be the two best public programs in Maryland, No. 4 Quince Orchard capped a 13-0 season with a 24-13 win over No. 5 Wise in the Class 4A football championship at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Annapolis. The win was the Cougars' third state title in four years and their sixth overall. In the 2A/1A championship, Patuxent knocked off Dunbar, 8-6. **Stories, D6**

Capitals maintain tradition, road streak

CAPITALS 3, MAPLE LEAFS 1

BY BAILEY JOHNSON

TORONTO — The tradition in the Washington Capitals' dressing room is that if the Capitals get a point in a game, whoever read the starting lineup keeps the role until they lose. On the mentors' trip in Florida, winger Andrew Mangiapane's father, Peter, read the lineup both games. Washington won both.

Nine days later, with the Capitals in Toronto, less than an hour from where Mangiapane grew up in Bolton, assistant coach Mitch Love invited Peter to Scotiabank Arena to read the lineup again. And with Washington's 3-1 victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs, the streak remains alive.

Goaltender Charlie Lindgren made 20 saves on 21 shots for the
SEE CAPITALS ON D4

Capitals at Canadiens
7 p.m., Monumental 2

Path to this MLS Cup full of waits, twists, turns

On Soccer CARSON, CALIF. — Taking into account the weird playoff parameters, the LA Galaxy and New York Red Bulls are worthy MLS Cup finalists.

The Galaxy, the league's most decorated club, blitzed through the Western Conference to earn its first championship appearance in a decade, while the Red Bulls, a No. 7 seed, rebounded from a slow finish in the regular season by winning three straight on the road to conquer the Eastern bracket.

The MLS founding members will collide Saturday afternoon at Dignity Health Sports Park, with the hometown Galaxy seeking a sixth crown and the Red Bulls their first. Given the playing styles, the match promises to entertain.
SEE ON SOCCER ON D5

MLS Cup: Red Bulls at Galaxy
4 p.m., Fox

A bounding pigskin comes for every Ohio State coach



Jerry Brewer

Football coaches seldom exit in triumph at Ohio State, the monster program that eats its own. They win, all of them. Since 1899, every Ohio State full-time head football coach finished his tenure with a winning record, and just one failed to win at least 60 percent of his games. The consistent success only makes the goodbyes more uncomfortable.

It is a coveted job and a torturous one, so no wonder Ryan Day occupies a sizzling seat now. The Buckeyes' throne comes with flammable cushions.

Back in the old days, sportswriters dubbed the program "the graveyard of coaches." Ohio State went through five coaches in the 1940s. The reasons ranged from the great Paul Brown leaving to serve during World War II to Wes Fesler, a former three-time all-American, quitting his alma mater and citing "excessive

pressure for winning football games."

The Ohio State Lantern, the school's student newspaper, wrote after Fesler's 1950 resignation: "We have managed, even though it took considerable effort, to lose a true gentleman and scholar, as well as a fine football coach, because of the unholy stress placed on a bounding pigskin in these parts."

And now that bounding pigskin is coming for Day's nerves.

Day still can't beat Michigan, if you haven't heard. He spent the past week trying to rationalize his biggest blemish, and time has only increased the awkwardness. It's like he had a giant zit on prom night, and now he's being forced to look at the photos.

Day has a 66-10 record, yet he can't win. The Buckeyes are certain to receive an at-large selection Sunday when the expanded 12-team College Football Playoff bracket is

SEE BREWER ON D4



TOM HAUCK/GETTY IMAGES

Nike co-founder Phil Knight, left, was among a group of donors that organized No. 1 Oregon's for-profit NIL collective in 2021.

Oregon is No. 1 in rankings — and perhaps in NIL, too

Nike's Knight is a quiet difference-maker for Ducks

BY JESSE DOUGHERTY

In a year of chaos, in which there has been an ongoing effort to explain the real, extreme parity atop college football, Oregon is 12-0 — the country's last undefeated team at the sport's top level — after leaping from the Pac-12 to the big, bad Big Ten.

The Ducks are No. 1 in the latest College Football Playoff and Associated Press rankings. On Saturday, they face No. 3 Penn State in the Big Ten championship game, with the winner earning a first-round bye in the inaugural 12-team playoff. As of Friday, the Ducks were 3½-point favorites. They are the closest thing 2024 has to a certainty.

That is all part of why the Ducks' name, image and likeness (NIL) operation — how much they spend, how involved Nike is, how much money Phil Knight has shelled out to recruit and retain players in recent years — is such a fascination around the sport. It's just not such a popular

topic with people who work for Oregon or run its booster-led NIL collective. They prefer a lower public profile, to the extent that's possible with a team that could wear a different Nike uniform combination for every day of the week.

And to be fair, it's not as if every other program brags about the exact amount its top boosters give. In fact, very few have, seeing that NIL — the broad business of paying college athletes — is an aboveboard practice still often treated like an illicit one. But to that end, no other team is backed by someone as famous as Knight, the 86-year-old Nike co-founder. The fascination matches the size of Knight's profile (and, you would think, the checkbook offered to Oregon, though attempts to better understand Knight's involvement and influence for this story were mostly rebuffed by those who would know).

"The biggest spenders in the
SEE OREGON ON D3

CHAMPIONSHIP SATURDAY: GAMES TO WATCH

Big 12
16 Iowa State vs. 15 Arizona State
Arlington, Texas, noon, ABC

SEC
2 Texas vs. 5 Georgia
Atlanta, 4 p.m., ABC

Big Ten
3 Penn State vs. 1 Oregon
Indianapolis, 8 p.m., CBS

ACC
17 Clemson vs. 8 SMU
Charlotte, 8 p.m., ABC

Champs: Boise State, Army capture conference titles. **D3**

THE DAY IN SPORTS

HOCKEY

Sliding Rangers trade Trouba to the Ducks

The Anaheim Ducks acquired New York Rangers captain **Jacob Trouba** in a trade for defenseman **Urho Vaakanainen** and a conditional fourth-round pick in 2025.

The trade ends Trouba's five-year tenure with the Rangers, who had lost six of their past seven games before Friday. The 30-year-old defenseman joined the Rangers in a trade with the Winnipeg Jets in 2019, and he became New York's captain before the 2022-23 season.

Trouba has been considered one of the NHL's best checking defensemen at the height of his talents. He has six assists in 23 games this year while struggling to produce offensively at the level of his best seasons, including a career-best 50 points with Winnipeg in 2018-19.

Trouba has been featured in trade rumors since the summer. New York General Manager **Chris Drury** didn't try to hide his desire for a roster reboot, but Trouba has a robust no-trade clause. He is completing the sixth season of a seven-year, \$56 million contract, and his hefty deal has been an impediment to movement.

The Ducks can accommodate the final 1½ years of Trouba's deal because they have one of the NHL's lowest payrolls and ample salary cap space after General Manager **Pat Verbeek** failed to land any top free agents last summer.

Trouba will immediately become a key contributor on the blue line for the Ducks, who are in last place in the Pacific Division. ...

Reilly Smith scored the go-ahead goal and **Artemi Panarin** scored twice as the Rangers beat the Pittsburgh Penguins, 4-2, in New York.

Smith put the Rangers ahead with his fourth goal this season at 9:53 of the third period.

Goaltender **Igor Shesterkin** snapped a personal five-game losing streak with 18 saves.

GOLF

After two months off, Scheffler keeps rolling

Scottie Scheffler birdied every hole but the par-3s on the front nine at Albany Golf Club and finished his bogey-free round with an 8-under-par 64 that gave him a two-shot lead in the Hero World Challenge in Nassau, Bahamas.

Two months off did nothing to slow the world's No. 1 player. Scheffler already has eight victories this year and is in position to get another before the end of the year.

Scheffler was at 13-under 131, two ahead of **Akshay Bhatia** (66) and **Justin Thomas** (67), both of whom had to save par on the 18th hole to stay in range going into the weekend.

Scheffler started with a lob wedge to two feet for a birdie and never slowed until after he went out in 29 to seize control of the holiday tournament against a 20-man field.

The tournament, hosted by **Tiger Woods**, is unofficial but offers world ranking points to all but the bottom three players because of the small field. It's the weakest field in 25 years, but Scheffler at No. 1 gives it enough cachet.

He is the first player since Woods in 2009 to start and finish a year at No. 1 in the world. And even after a layoff — giving him time to tinker with a new putting stroke — it looks like it might be a while before anyone changes that. ...

Julien Guerrier took a one-stroke lead after the second round of the Nedbank Golf Challenge in Sun City, South Africa, while defending champion **Max Homa** was two strokes back.

BASEBALL

Bieber and Guardians agree to one-year deal

Shane Bieber is returning to the Cleveland Guardians after making just two starts and undergoing Tommy John surgery last season, a person familiar with the negotiations told the Associated Press.

Bieber had been expected to leave the American League Central champions, but the right-hander will be back after he agreed to a one-year, \$14 million contract that includes a \$16 million player option for 2026, said the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the deal has not been announced. ...

Pitcher **Clayton Kershaw** and the

New York Mets agreed to a three-year, \$38 million contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told the AP. ...

Juan Soto appears on a timetable to decide on where to sign either before or during baseball's winter meetings, which begin Sunday in Dallas and run until Dec. 12.

Soto met with the Yankees, the Mets, the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Boston Red Sox and the Toronto Blue Jays, a person familiar with the negotiations said, speaking to the AP on the condition of anonymity because details were not announced.

Soto's agent, **Scott Boras**, asked teams to submit initial

offers by Thanksgiving and says Soto has started to eliminate clubs from consideration.

PRO BASKETBALL

Led by Tatum, Celtics spoil Middleton's debut

Jayson Tatum had 34 points and 10 rebounds, and the Boston Celtics held on to beat the visiting Bucks, 111-105, in **Khris Middleton's** season debut for Milwaukee.

Jaylen Brown added 25 points as the Celtics made 17 three-pointers to earn their 10th victory in 11 games.

Damian Lillard finished with

31 points for Milwaukee, which has lost two straight since it won a season-best seven in a row.

Giannis Antetokounmpo added 30 points and 11 rebounds on his 30th birthday.

Middleton had 11 points and five assists in 23 minutes after he missed the Bucks' first 21 games while recovering from offseason ankle surgeries. ...

Paul George had 21 points and nine assists in his second game since he bruised a bone in his left knee, leading the host Philadelphia 76ers to a 102-94 victory over the Orlando Magic. ...

Tyrese Haliburton had 23 points and eight assists, and

the visiting Indiana Pacers stopped a four-game slide with a 132-123 victory over the Chicago Bulls. ...

The NBA is returning to China next season, striking a deal to play preseason games there more than five years after the league was effectively banned over Commissioner **Adam Silver** not punishing **Daryl Morey**, then the GM of the Houston Rockets, for tweeting support of anti-government protesters in Hong Kong.

The Brooklyn Nets and the Phoenix Suns will play in China's gambling hub of Macao on Oct. 10, 2025, and again two days later.



SEAN M. HAFFEY/GETTY IMAGES

Pop the champagne

Swiss skier Justin Murisier got a celebratory spray from compatriot Marco Odermatt to go with his first career World Cup win.

SPOTLIGHT: WINTER SPORTS

Vonn's comeback bid is picking up speed

BY PAT GRAHAM

COPPER MOUNTAIN, COLO. — Word on the mountain has it that Lindsey Vonn is still fast through a downhill course, even at 40. Maybe even challenge-for-downhill-wins fast.

On a frigid Friday morning, Vonn darted through the shadows along the speed course at Copper Mountain and through the mist created by the snow makers. There was no clock at the bottom of the hill to measure just how speedy she was as she makes a comeback to skiing nearly six years removed from her last race. But she certainly looked the part of fast by dropping into a tuck position to become more aerodynamic and even banging through a few gates on several high-speed runs.

Vonn plans to enter lower-tier International Ski Federation (FIS) downhill and super-G races this weekend at Copper Mountain to gain the necessary results to lower her ranking so she can possibly enter World Cup races this season under a new wild-card rule.

It could be the first step toward seeing

Six years after her last race, three-time Olympic medalist will return to downhill skiing

her on the World Cup circuit again, maybe even on the podium.

"I honestly think she will win," retired ski racer Ted Ligety said in an interview with the Associated Press. "From what I've heard, she's been kicking [butt] and been really fast in training. Some of the women on the World Cup are going to be rudely awakened to have to compete against a Lindsey Vonn again."

Vonn declined to talk after her practice session Friday. She chatted with several racers on the hill and again inside the lodge, where her dog, Lucy, became the center of attention.

In a post Friday afternoon on Instagram, Vonn wrote: "Happy to be able to take another step this weekend! Technically tomorrow will be my first race but

I'm using it as a training opportunity to keep on building. ... It's been 6 years since I last raced so I still have a lot of equipment to test, finding my groove and really getting into racing form. I am having a lot of fun and want to keep on doing so!"

When she left the sport, Vonn's 82 World Cup race victories stood as the record for a woman and within reach of the all-time Alpine record of 86 held by Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark. The women's mark held by Vonn was surpassed in January 2023 by Mikaela Shiffrin, who now has 99 wins — more than any Alpine ski racer in the history of the sport. Shiffrin is sidelined after a crash in a giant slalom event in Killington, Vermont, last weekend. The next World Cup races for the women's circuit will be held in a week in nearby Beaver Creek, Colorado. There's no time frame for Vonn's return to racing.

Vonn's last competition was in February 2019, when she finished third in a downhill during the world championships in Sweden.

— Associated Press

TELEVISION AND RADIO

NBA	
7 p.m.	Denver at Washington » Monumental Sports Network, WTEM (980 AM)

NHL	
1 p.m.	Philadelphia at Boston » NHL Network
7 p.m.	Washington at Montreal » Monumental Sports Network 2, WJFK (106.7 FM)
7 p.m.	Toronto at Pittsburgh » NHL Network

COLLEGE FOOTBALL, SEE PAGE D3

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL	
11:30 a.m.	Kansas State at St. John's » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)
Noon	Syracuse at Notre Dame » WDCW (Ch. 50), WNUV (Ch. 54)
Noon	Boston College at Wake Forest » ACC Network
Noon	Clemson at Miami » ESPN2
Noon	Rutgers at Ohio State » Fox Sports 1
Noon	Nebraska at Michigan State » Big Ten Network
Noon	Providence at Rhode Island » CBS Sports Network
12:30 p.m.	South Florida at Loyola Chicago » USA Network
1 p.m.	Maryland Baltimore County at Towson » Monumental Sports Network
1:30 p.m.	Wisconsin at Marquette » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)
2 p.m.	Pittsburgh at Virginia Tech » ESPN, WJFK (106.7 FM)
2 p.m.	Tulane at George Mason » MASN
2 p.m.	Georgia Tech at North Carolina » ACC Network
2 p.m.	Iowa at Michigan » Fox Sports 1
2 p.m.	Southern Utah at Arizona » CBS Sports Network
2:15 p.m.	Virginia at SMU » WDCW (Ch. 50), WNUV (Ch. 54), WSBN (630 AM)
4 p.m.	Washington State at Boise State » WUSA (Ch. 9), WJZ (Ch. 13)
4 p.m.	Stanford at California » ACC Network
4 p.m.	Florida State at North Carolina State » ESPN2
4 p.m.	UNLV at Creighton » Fox Sports 1
5:30 p.m.	Butler at Houston » ESPN2
6 p.m.	Southern California at Washington » Big Ten Network
10 p.m.	Gonzaga vs. Kentucky » ESPN2

WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL	
2 p.m.	Maryland at Purdue » Big Ten Plus
4 p.m.	Southern California at Oregon » Big Ten Network
7 p.m.	Tennessee vs. Iowa » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)
9 p.m.	Louisville vs. Connecticut » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)

AUTO RACING

5:30 a.m.	Formula One: Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, third practice » ESPN2
9 a.m.	Formula One: Abu Dhabi Grand Prix qualifying » ESPN2

GOLF

4 a.m.	DP World Tour: Nedbank Golf Challenge, third round » Golf Channel
Noon	PGA Tour: Hero World Challenge, third round » Golf Channel
2:30 p.m.	PGA Tour: Hero World Challenge, third round » WRC (Ch. 4), WBAL (Ch. 11)

SOCCER

7:30 a.m.	English Premier League: Liverpool at Everton » USA Network
7:45 a.m.	CAF Champions League, group stage: Al Ahly SC at Orlando Pirates FC » BeIN Sports
9 a.m.	Italian Serie A: Torino at Genoa » CBS Sports Network
10 a.m.	English Premier League: Newcastle United at Brentford » USA Network
10:45 a.m.	Turkish Super Lig: Fenerbahce at Besiktas » BeIN Sports
Noon	Italian Serie A: Bologna at Juventus » WUSA (Ch. 9), WJZ (Ch. 13)
12:30 p.m.	English Premier League: Nottingham Forest at Manchester United » WRC (Ch. 4), WBAL (Ch. 11)
1 p.m.	French Ligue 1: Le Havre at Nice » BeIN Sports
3 p.m.	French Ligue 1: Lyon at Angers » BeIN Sports
4 p.m.	MLS Cup: New York at LA Galaxy » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)

TENNIS

8 a.m.	Ultimate Tennis Showdown: London Grand Final, second day » Tennis Channel
1 p.m.	Ultimate Tennis Showdown: London Grand Final, second day » Tennis Channel

MEN'S COLLEGE HOCKEY

8 p.m.	Michigan State at Wisconsin » Big Ten Network
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AUTO RACING

Leclerc's penalty hurts Ferrari's title hopes

A grid penalty for **Charles Leclerc** leaves him and Ferrari needing an "amazing recovery" to beat McLaren for the Formula One constructors' title.

Ferrari had to change the battery pack on Leclerc's car in the first practice session for the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. That means a 10-place penalty on the grid for Sunday's race.

Despite being exhausted after a bout of food poisoning, Leclerc was fastest in the first session by 0.221 seconds ahead of McLaren's **Lando Norris**, with **Levis Hamilton** third fastest for Mercedes. Leclerc's brother **Arthur** took over **Carlos Sainz Jr.**'s car and was 18th.

Norris was fastest in the second session by 0.234 seconds over teammate **Oscar Piastri**, while **Nico Hulkenberg** was a surprise third fastest for Haas, 0.462 seconds off the pace. Sainz was the fastest Ferrari in fourth.

McLaren goes into the race with a 21-point lead over Ferrari in the constructors' standings.

WINTER SPORTS

Murisier opens season with first Cup victory

Justin Murisier of Switzerland claimed his first World Cup victory by beating stellar teammate **Marco Odermatt** in the opening men's downhill race of the World Cup season in Beaver Creek, Colorado.

Murisier beat Odermatt, the defending World Cup overall and downhill champion, by 0.20 seconds. Slovenia's **Miha Hrobat** was third, 0.35 seconds behind Murisier, to earn a spot on the World Cup podium for the first time in his career. ...

World champion **Ilia Malinin** took a big stride toward retaining his figure skating Grand Prix Final title after building an imposing 12-point lead in the short program in Grenoble, France.

The 20-year-old American skater landed a quadruple flip, triple axel and quad lutz-triple toe loop combination in a near-flawless program to score 105.43 points for the lead, narrowly missing his personal best.

TENNIS

Kyrgios will make Grand Slam return

Former Wimbledon finalist **Nick Kyrgios** entered the Australian Open, which would be his first Grand Slam tournament in more than two years.

Australian Open organizers said Kyrgios had entered with a protected ranking, having been mostly sidelined with wrist and knee injuries since he reached the 2022 U.S. Open quarterfinals.

Kyrgios recently announced he will make his return at the Brisbane International beginning Dec. 29 after playing only one ATP Tour match in more than two years.

COLLEGES

UNC and Wake Forest reach College Cup final

Kate Faasse scored on an early penalty kick, **Olivia Thomas** added a first-half goal, and North Carolina eliminated top-seeded Duke, 3-0, in the nightcap of the College Cup semifinals in Cary, North Carolina.

North Carolina, which has appeared in all 43 NCAA tournaments and won 21 of them, will square off against first-timer Wake Forest on Monday. The Demon Deacons beat Stanford, 1-0, in the other semifinal.

Faasse staked the second-seeded and eighth-ranked Tar Heels to a 1-0 lead just 9:25 in after a foul on Duke defender **Nicole Chico**. Faasse leads the nation with 20 goals.

North Carolina took a two-goal lead into halftime when Thomas took a pass from **Bella Gaetano** and scored in the 24th.

Maddie Dahlien made it 3-0 in the 59th minute. In the first semifinal, **Emily Morris** scored her fourth goal of the season in the 73rd minute to give Wake Forest the lead. ...

Savannah Catalan scored a team-high 21 points and added six steals as the Seton Hall women's basketball team beat Howard, 87-63, in South Orange, New Jersey.

The Pirates (6-2) finished with five players in double figures.

Zennia Thomas led all scorers with 25 points and had 15 rebounds for the Bison (5-4).

— From news services and staff reports

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

ROUNDUP

Jeanty carries Broncos to playoff berth

BOISE STATE 21,
UNLV 7

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ashton Jeanty rushed for 209 yards and a touchdown as Boise State earned a spot in the inaugural 12-team College Football Playoff with a 21-7 victory over UNLV in Boise, Idaho, for its second straight Mountain West title.

The Broncos (12-1, No. 10 in the CFP rankings) are all but assured of a first-round bye in the playoffs if they maintain their ranking ahead of the Big 12 winner and finish as one of the four highest-ranked conference champions.

Jeanty, who had the spotlight to himself to state his Heisman case, didn't disappoint, ripping off an electrifying 75-yard touchdown run in the second quarter. It was his fifth touchdown run of 70 yards or more this season, tying LaDainian Tomlinson's Football Bowl Subdivision single-season record.

Jeanty also surpassed 1981

Heisman winner Marcus Allen of Southern California to move into fourth place on the FBS single-season rushing list and needs 132 more to pass record-holder Barry Sanders of Oklahoma State.

• **ARMY 35, TULANE 14:** Bryson Daily rushed for four touchdowns to tie the American Athletic Conference championship game record as the No. 24 Black Knights (11-1) completed a perfect first season in the league by thumping the Green Wave (9-4) in West Point, New York.

Kanye Udoh rushed for 158 yards, including a 72-yarder to set up a Daily touchdown, and a score. Daily added 126 yards on the ground for Army, which overwhelmed AAC opponents with a bruising, clock-eating rushing attack during its first go-around the league, then ran it to perfection in the championship game. Army won the first conference title in its 134-year history.

Daily had runs of five, three, four and seven yards. The 221-pound quarterback's four rushing scores gave him 29 this season to break

the AAC record of 25 set by Navy's Will Worth in 2016.

• **JACKSONVILLE STATE 52, WESTERN KENTUCKY 12:** Tre Stewart ran for 201 yards and three touchdowns and Tyler Huff threw for two touchdowns and ran for a third as the Gamecocks rolled to their first Conference USA championship with a blowout of the Hilltoppers in Jacksonville, Alabama.

Jacksonville State (9-4) won the conference title in just its second season as an FBS member and avenged a 19-17 loss to Western Kentucky (8-5) in its regular season finale.

Mendenhall on the move

Bronco Mendenhall agreed to a six-year deal to become the football coach at Utah State.

The 58-year-old Mendenhall comes to the Aggies from New Mexico, where he guided the Lobos to a 5-7 mark in his first and only season at the school.

Before coaching at New Mexico, Mendenhall spent six seasons at Virginia and 11 seasons at BYU.



BRIAN LOSNESS/IMAGN IMAGES

Heisman hopeful Ashton Jeanty ran for 209 yards as No. 10 Boise State won the Mountain West title.

SATURDAY'S CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

EARLY SHIFT

Noon **Big 12: Iowa State vs. Arizona State** » WJLA (Ch. 7), WMAR (Ch. 2)
Noon **Mid-American: Ohio vs. Miami (Ohio)** » ESPN

The **Iowa State-Arizona State** winner in the Big 12 title game probably needed a UNLV victory on Friday in the Mountain West championship game to have a shot at a first-round playoff bye, though there was also an outside chance the Runnin' Rebels, who lost to Boise State, would have eclipsed both with a big win. Iowa State was at least a little fortunate to emerge from the clump of Big 12 teams that were vying for a spot in the championship game. The Cyclones needed a touchdown with 1:31 left to beat Utah on Nov. 23, and they were outgained by Kansas State by nearly two yards per play (a substantial number for just one game) in a 29-21 win this past weekend. Arizona State will be without wide receiver Jordyn Tyson, who suffered a shoulder injury in last weekend's blowout of Arizona. He had 75 receptions for 1,101 yards and 10 touchdowns this season, by far the team's best numbers in those departments.

SWING SHIFT

4 p.m. **SEC: Georgia vs. Texas** » WJLA (Ch. 7), WMAR (Ch. 2)

The **Texas-Georgia rematch** in the SEC championship game may come down to the defenses. The Longhorns led the nation in stop rate (the percentage of opposing drives that ended in a punt, turnover or turnover on downs — in other words, with zero points), while the Bulldogs ranked just 64th. Naturally, Texas also was tops in points allowed per drive (0.86). Georgia has found both success and struggle against similarly strong opponents in recent weeks. The Bulldogs put up 31 points and averaged more than six yards per play against Tennessee (No. 4 in stop rate) on Nov. 16, but the week before, they managed only 10 points and 3.8 yards per play against Mississippi (No. 6 in stop rate).

NIGHT SHIFT

8 p.m. **Big Ten: Penn State vs. Oregon** » WUSA (Ch. 9), WJZ (Ch. 13)
8 p.m. **ACC: Clemson vs. SMU** » WJLA (Ch. 7), WMAR (Ch. 2)

In the old Big Ten, Penn State had the misfortune to be stuck in a division with Michigan and Ohio State and had advanced to the conference title game only once under Coach James Franklin. The Nittany Lions got over that hump this year, but **Penn State's reward is a matchup with top-ranked Oregon.** The Ducks swept their conference schedule as a Big Ten newcomer, with seven of those nine wins decided by double digits. Both of these teams seem likely to make the College Football Playoff, with the winner receiving a first-round bye and the loser likely to get a first-round home game, so it will be interesting to see how adventuresome each team's game plan will be. ...

SMU enters its ACC championship game matchup with Clemson as the nation's third-ranked team in terms of expected points allowed per rush and fourth-ranked team in terms of rushing yards allowed per game. Tigers running back Phil Mafah topped 100 rushing yards in six of Clemson's first nine games, but over his past three he is averaging only 32.3 yards and 2.4 yards per carry, leading to speculation that he is not 100 percent healthy. SMU's Brashard Smith averages nearly six yards per carry and 100 yards per game, and he has 14 carries of at least 20 yards this season (tied for sixth nationally). The Tigers' defense has allowed 24 such runs, which ranks 125th in the nation (only Oklahoma State allowed more among power-conference teams).

— Matt Bonesteel



MARK J. REBILAS/IMAGN IMAGES

Wide receiver Derek Eusebio caught one pass for Arizona State all season, but it went for a 64-yard touchdown against rival Arizona.



TOM HAUCK/GETTY IMAGES

Oregon Coach Dan Lanning and quarterback Dillon Gabriel have led the Ducks to the top of the College Football Playoff rankings.

Oregon tries to keep a low profile as NIL powerhouse

OREGON FROM DI

country are Ohio State, Texas and Oregon, then probably Texas A&M, maybe Miami, maybe LSU, before you start going down to the rest," said one agent, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of past and future dealings with the Ducks. "And Oregon is only in that mix because of Phil Knight."

Just months after the NCAA first permitted athletes to profit off their NIL in 2021, Knight and other major Oregon donors organized a for-profit collective called Division Street. They appointed Rosemary St. Clair, a former Nike executive, as its CEO. Soon, if they weren't already, schools around the country were scrambling to figure out their NIL strategy. Many set up still-active nonprofit collectives, hoping to score big with tax-deductible donations that fund de facto player salaries. Some collectives closed as quickly as they opened. Super fans — lawyers, accountants, even some doctors — were slipping out of their day jobs to fundraise, then negotiate with 20-year-olds and their fly-by-night agents.

Meanwhile, Division Street had its own apparel brand and was using non-fungible tokens (NFTs) to get athletes paid.

Division Street's leaders declined multiple interview requests through a spokesman. The basic structure, according to many people familiar with how the collective works, looks like this: If an athlete for any Oregon sport signs a contract with Division Street, they earn their money by promoting the collective's apparel brand, Ducks of a Feather (or DOAF). But because DOAF sells Nike-branded products, the

athletes also sign away their ability to partner with competing apparel companies. The money and exposure are obvious benefits, plus access to a lot of successful and influential people for networking purposes. Some agents, though, questioned Division Street locking so many athletes into restrictive apparel deals, pointing to how Nike and DOAF can't promote all of them in a meaningful way.

But agents with athletes on Oregon's football team only raved about the setup. Steven Smith represents Dillon Gabriel, the star quarterback who transferred from Oklahoma before this season. Above all else, he has liked how Division Street is always organized and on time. That's the Knight and Nike influence at work.

"When they ask for something from the athletes, they provide every detail you need right away," Smith said. "The money comes when they say it's going to. Every photo they take and share with the athletes for promotion, they look great. It's just a very sound operation, which is really no surprise."

How does such a professional shop, run by pros with immense sports apparel and marketing experience, specifically help Oregon football? Asked this week, Coach Dan Lanning kept his answer general. After last season, Alabama courted Lanning before he recommitted to the Ducks. The 38-year-old is considered one of the best coaches in the country.

"Anytime you have great alignment throughout your organization and you do things the right way, I think that's going to create advantages in all aspects," Lanning said. "I say the way you do

anything is the way you do everything, and everything here at Oregon is first class. I've been really impressed with the alignment of the top of the university all the way down throughout our organization. But that's certainly a benefit."

To be fair again, Lanning had already spent at least a bit of his summer responding to curiosity — and in some cases, publicly professed jealousy — about Knight's NIL spending. Along with his wife, Penny, Knight has made massive donations to Oregon for decades. That hasn't just been for athletics, either. The Knight family has spent hundreds of millions on the Knight Law Center, the Knight Library and the Knight Campus in Eugene, Ore., among other academic buildings and initiatives.

So, yeah, opposing coaches took some offseason potshots. At Oregon's first Big Ten media days in July, UCLA Coach DeShaun Foster said that while Oregon doesn't have a salary cap with NIL money, the Bruins do (a self-imposed one, to be clear). At SEC media days, Georgia's Kirby Smart, Lanning's former boss, said: "I wish I could get some of that NIL money that [Knight is] sharing with Dan Lanning." Right around then, Ohio State Athletic Director Ross Bjork told a reporter that the Buckeyes would spend about \$20 million on their 2024 roster.

(After Oregon beat Ohio State in October, Washington Coach Jedd Fisch called the game a "battle of two \$20 million rosters." Oregon had never stated its football spending for the season.)

To defend his program back in July, Lanning went on "The Pat McAfee Show" and cracked: "I think it's impressive that guys

like Kirby have been signing the number one class in the nation without any NIL money this entire time." But he also told the Oregonian he doesn't see much value in sharing NIL specifics. The program has followed that lead, including but not limited to the topic of Knight.

Generally, annoying your most influential booster by whispering about their generosity — even in a complimentary way — would be bad strategy. Oregon players have affectionately referred to Knight, a self-professed Ducks super fan, as "Uncle Phil." But multiple agents say they have dealt with Oregon a lot and never spoken with him. One agent, also speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Knight did call the agent when his player was deciding between Oregon and one other school. In that case, the player wound up in the SEC.

Take that, Kirby. Lanning and his staff don't always win.

But even this week, the Knight influence was way out in the open. Na'eem Offord, a five-star cornerback from Birmingham, Ala., flipped his commitment from Ohio State to Oregon on Wednesday. At Offord's announcement, Knight appeared in a video of Lanning breaking down why Offord will fit with the Ducks, according to CBS Sports' John Talty. Offord then told Talty that Knight "played a big role — like, a huge, big role. He's actually waiting on me to get up there. He's got a lot of stuff planned for me. He's going to help me make my shoe."

Days before Oregon would meet Penn State in the Big Ten title game, 247 Sports ranked its 2025 high school recruiting class as the third best in the country.

ANALYSIS

Eighteen teams are fighting for 12 playoff spots. Here's how they can make it.

BY PATRICK STEVENS

Hope, as the saying goes, is not a strategy. Yet it's pretty much all teams such as Alabama and Miami had heading into the nine conference championship games on the schedule this weekend before the College Football Playoff selection committee renders its verdict Sunday afternoon.

The Crimson Tide (9-3) and the Hurricanes (10-2) were the teams on either side of the cut line when the committee offered up its latest rankings and bracket projection Tuesday night for the expanded 12-team event. Neither advanced to a conference title game, so *theoretically* they would remain that way.

But the committee often does what it does, most famously last year when it vaulted both Texas and Alabama over undefeated Florida State, which saw its offensive potency dwindle after quarterback Jordan Travis's season-ending injury.

But at least all three of those teams actually participated in (and won) conference title games, providing additional data to ponder. It was a similar case in 2014, when Ohio State hopscotched TCU (which hammered 2-10 Iowa State the same weekend the Buckeyes clobbered Wisconsin, 59-0, in the Big Ten title game).

Could Miami, which didn't face a single team playing this weekend, actually nose ahead of Alabama? Could a Georgia loss to Texas in the SEC championship game somehow diminish the Crimson Tide's most noteworthy victory enough to lead to a change? Or is this order cemented, and is the real question whether Alabama would get the nod over an 11-2 SMU if the Mustangs lose in the ACC title game to Clemson?

And is it possible the committee looks at things at so many angles that it decides Mississippi or South Carolina warrants clemency and a place in the proceedings over Alabama and Miami? That probably won't happen — neither the Rebels nor the Game-



MICHAEL AINSWORTH/ASSOCIATED PRESS

SMU guarantees itself a spot in the playoff with a victory Saturday but could be in trouble with a loss.

cocks play this weekend, either — but is there a nonzero chance it could?

From the looks of things, most of what will be sorted out by the end of Saturday will be seeding and first-round byes, but you truly never know.

Here is a conference-by-conference breakdown of the teams still in the playoff picture heading into championship weekend:

ACC (one or two teams)

Conference championship game: Clemson vs. SMU in Charlotte, Saturday, 8 p.m.

Might survive a loss: No. 8 SMU (11-1).

Must win: No. 17 Clemson (9-3).

Deep in prayer: No. 12 Miami (10-2).

SMU is a fine story, running the table in conference play in its first season in the ACC to clinch a spot in Saturday's title game. It also does not have a victory over a team in the committee's latest top 25, though you could argue 9-3 Duke should be in there. It's tough to quibble with the Mustangs' loss (by three to 10-2 BYU),

but there just might not be enough oomph on the profile to survive a loss to Clemson.

As for the Tigers, last week's loss to South Carolina (to go with getting thumped by Georgia and Louisville earlier in the season) leaves one pathway to the playoff. Unlike SMU, which would be one of the top four conference champions and earn a bye to the quarterfinals, Clemson would be in danger of having to play a first-round game on the road.

That's a dream scenario for Miami at the moment thanks to its 42-38 loss at Syracuse last week. The Hurricanes have a superficial case: They're a two-loss team whose defeats have come by a combined nine points. But they also barely escaped Virginia Tech, California and Louisville and didn't beat a current committee top-25 team (again, Duke stands out as the top victory). It really isn't a persuasive argument.

Big Ten (four teams)

Conference championship game: Penn State vs. Oregon in Indianapolis, Saturday, 8 p.m.

appear to be safely slotted into an at-large berth.

Big 12 (one team)

Conference championship game: Iowa State vs. Arizona State in Arlington, Texas, Saturday, noon

Must win: No. 15 Arizona State (10-2), No. 16 Iowa State (10-2)

The chaotic Big 12 will send only one team into the playoff: the winner of Saturday's title game. The big question here is whether whoever emerges from that game is the fifth-highest-ranked conference champion (and therefore has to play a first-round game) or the fourth- or even third-highest-ranked champ (and is assured of a bye to the quarterfinals).

With Boise State winning the Mountain West, that shut off one path to a bye. And if SMU takes care of Clemson in the ACC, that would shut off the other. Clemson could also get enough of a bump to leapfrog the Big 12 champ should the Tigers turn in a dominant showing Saturday night.

SEC (three or four teams)

Conference championship game: Georgia vs. Texas in Atlanta, Saturday, 4 p.m.

In: No. 2 Texas (11-1), No. 7 Tennessee (10-2)

Probably survives a loss: No. 5 Georgia (10-2)

Deep in prayer: No. 11 Alabama (9-3), No. 13 Mississippi (9-3), No. 14 South Carolina (9-3)

Texas will be the No. 1 seed in the playoff with a win and an Oregon loss and the No. 2 seed with a win and an Oregon win. Even if it drops a second game to Georgia in the SEC championship game, it will be in fine shape to earn an at-large berth and probably host a first-round game. Just imagine comparing the Longhorns (with their victory at Michigan) at 11-2 with Ohio State (and its home loss to Michigan) at 10-2.

Tennessee looks ticketed for the No. 9 seed at this stage, earning an at-large bid behind the Big Ten runner-up, the SEC runner-up (remember, Tennessee

lost to Georgia), Notre Dame and Ohio State. A possible exception? Penn State gets drubbed by Oregon and free-falls past the Vols.

Georgia would be the No. 2 seed if it defeats Texas for a second time, and its first defeat of the Longhorns (to go with knocking off Tennessee and Clemson) should serve it well. But hypothetically, if the Bulldogs are 10-3 and are compared with the 9-3 Alabama and Mississippi teams they lost to, could that create a conundrum?

That's probably the best hope for Mississippi. As for South Carolina? Could it get a bump from a Clemson victory? Certainly. But the Gamecocks' head-to-head losses to Alabama and Mississippi sure don't help.

Alabama sits at the front of that line, but it's not hard to poke holes in its case. It beat Georgia but also dropped games to a pair of 6-6 teams (Oklahoma and Vanderbilt). That's better than Mississippi's home loss to 4-8 Kentucky. Still, this isn't a Nick Saban-era Death Star, and the Crimson Tide would probably rather not see SMU lose a tight, riveting ACC title game to Clemson and bring some doubt into how that last at-large spot gets decided.

Mountain West (one team)

Conference championship game: Boise State beat UNLV, 21-7, on Friday night to lock up a spot.

Independent (one team)

Conference championship game: N/A

In: No. 4 Notre Dame (11-1)

The Fighting Irish's independence means they can't secure a bye into the quarterfinals, but it also means they can't lose this weekend and diminish their résumé in a 13th game. The No. 5 or No. 6 seed and a first-round home game await Marcus Freeman's team, which has won 10 in a row. That's a good deal for a program that has only one win over a team now in the top 25 (Army) and lost at home to 7-5 Northern Illinois.

JERRY BREWER

Coaching at Ohio State never ends well

BREWER FROM D1

revealed, yet Day enters the postseason with pressure to prove his worth. On Wednesday, he announced the signing of another high school recruiting class widely lauded as one of the nation's top five. Yet in the aftermath of a fourth straight loss to the rival Wolverines, Day had to stand in front of a microphone and answer two depressingly pressing questions.

Do you expect to be at Ohio State next year?

"Yes," Day replied, letting the curt answer loiter in silence.

Now, excuse my paraphrasing, but this is what the follow-up question sounded like to me: *Dude, you sure you don't want to be proactive and bounce somewhere else? You sure you want all this smoke? Do you understand you can depart Columbus, Ohio, by foot, car, bus, train, helicopter or plane?*

"This is a wonderful place," Day insisted. "I have one of the best jobs in America. I'm disappointed more than anybody. We'll continue to move and figure out what it is and overcome this obstacle."

Basic compassion dictates you feel bad that a coach with an .868 winning percentage seems to have a precarious future. It goes beyond whether you like Day or think he's a trust fund coach living off what Urban Meyer established. It's unsettling to imagine the impact it would have on a fickle industry if Ohio State, as stable as it gets, made Day the first Buckeyes coach since 1950 to last fewer than seven seasons.

You don't want to live in a college football world that fires or runs off a coach whose worst season is his current 10-2 record. Day is a first-time head coach with plenty of areas to nitpick — including how soft Michigan keeps making the Buckeyes look and some noticeable clock management gaffes — but he doesn't seem terminally flawed. If he's at risk of making an early exit, then every prominent, paranoid coach in the sport will carry on wondering, "If winning almost nine out of every 10 games isn't good enough ..."

Since Fesler, the Buckeyes haven't been a coaching graveyard. In the past 74 years, six men have held the job on a non-interim basis. Woody Hayes

replaced Fesler and spent 28 seasons resetting the standard. But even though coaches have lasted, their departures still have been controversial. Hayes's temper led to his ouster. Earle Bruce didn't have the gravitas and extreme highs of Hayes. John Cooper went 2-10-1 against Michigan. Jim Tressel resigned amid an NCAA scandal. Meyer is the only Ohio State coach during this span to exit on his terms, but he also retired after being suspended for three games his final season for the shameful manner in which he handled an assistant coach's domestic abuse scandal.

At Ohio State, you arrive on a red — or scarlet — carpet. Then you leave through the back, smelling all the dumpsters.

Day is a different kind of curious case, a winner ridiculed for untimely losses, a 45-year-old coach perfect for today's cumbersome free-market era, an ideal program manager except in the moments that people most remember. Until Day wins a national championship, he will have a tenuous grip on the Buckeyes' wheel.

Ohio State Athletic Director Ross Bjork gave Day the obligatory vote of confidence this week, declaring, "He's our coach." But such support is rickety in this capricious sport, in which loyalty is merely a suggestion and sensibility stands no chance against passion.

Barring a playoff catastrophe, he should be fine for another season. That's partly because, with all the loose transfer rules, late-cycle coaching changes can decimate programs. But from now until he wins a fair share of the big ones — until he improves that 1-4 record against Michigan and that 2-4 mark in bowl games — every high-stakes setback will continue to fuel the referendum on whether Day can take a team all the way.

He doesn't deserve some of the extreme criticism he has received, including premature calls to be fired and toxic fan reactions that, as he has vaguely alluded to, cause him to worry for his family. He makes \$10 million a year because the Buckeyes want to win every game. And for all the heat he faces, his contract includes a \$37 million buyout that guarantees him either patience

or a lucrative dismissal.

"There's no way to defend losing four years in a row, but I can tell you this, we're going to play really hard in this game," Day said. "We're going to swing as hard as we possibly can."

"I get the frustration. I know what comes with this job. But we've won a lot of games around here, too. We've lost some key ones, but we are right there. When you are really close and feel frustrated, you have to push through."

As a top-notch quarterback mentor, skilled recruiter and good talent evaluator, Day offers plenty to appreciate. In six seasons, he has lost two games before late November. But around Thanksgiving, his teams keep turning into pumpkin pie.

The playoff is a true playoff now, swelling from four teams to 12. In the old system, 7-5 Michigan would have been the ultimate spoiler, concluding a difficult 2024 regular season by crushing Ohio State's championship dreams. That's part of what made the post-Thanksgiving rivalry week so special, the fact that the team that hates you the most could ruin your season. In the first three years of this four-game winning streak against Ohio State, the Wolverines essentially knocked the Buckeyes out of playoff contention twice. Both teams made the playoff after the 2022 season, but after getting destroyed by Michigan in a matchup of undefeated rivals, the Buckeyes dropped to the No. 4 seed and had to face eventual national championship Georgia. Ohio State recovered, but it still lost a 42-41 classic in a national semifinal.

With greater margin for error, Ohio State suffered more of a flesh wound this time. The Buckeyes will be among the three or four favorites to win the tournament. But something about them seems broken again. It's hard to heal in an environment so toxic that Meyer felt the need to issue a statement saying that, despite the speculation, he's not interested in returning to Ohio State.

Meyer also mentioned he has "full confidence" in Day. That's good to know. The man is 66-10 and still needs a reference for a job he already has. This gig may not end soon, but at Ohio State, it never ends well.

Caps keep tradition, road streak going

CAPITALS FROM D1

Capitals, who won a franchise-record eighth consecutive game on the road. Anthony Stolarz stopped 23 of 25 for Toronto.

"It was a great hockey game from our standpoint," said Washington Coach Spencer Carbery, who spent two years as an assistant with the Maple Leafs. "As good as we've played all year, from staying with it, on the road, the place that we're playing. They're playing as well as anybody in the National Hockey League right now at home."

A tightly contested first period featured four combined penalties: a full power play for each team and a four-on-four stretch after Toronto forward Pontus Holmberg and Washington defenseman John Carlson took penalties just 21 seconds apart. What it didn't feature? A goal.

Both sides had chances — center Pierre-Luc Dubois created a dangerous one for his line early in the frame, and William Nylander had a breakaway for Toronto midway through — but the stingy defenses kept most of the chances from reaching the goaltenders.

"From the drop of the puck, I thought that's about as good of a road game as you're going to find," Lindgren said. "Making all the right plays. Didn't give them too much. I thought we were all over the puck tonight."

Just 1:06 into the second period, though, center Nic Dowd broke through for the Capitals. The 34-year-old worked his way to the front of the net to tip home a point shot from defenseman Matt Roy, his eighth goal and third in the past four games.

Within the defensive zone structure, Washington's defenders held strong against the Maple Leafs' talented forwards for much of the game. But the Capitals proved vulnerable to breakaways in the first two periods. After Dowd's goal, Nylander shot wide on his second breakaway of the game, and midway through the period, Chris Tanev found John Tavares with a stretch pass that sent him in alone on Lindgren.

Tavares waited for Lindgren to bite on his first move and drop down, then elevated a backhand shot under the bar over Lindgren's shoulder to tie the game at 11:31.

The Capitals went back on the power play late in the middle frame after Nicholas Robertson cross-checked winger Ivan Miroshnichenko but couldn't convert on the man advantage, which was split between the end of the sec-



NICK TURCHIARO/IMÁGN IMAGES

The Capitals' Nic Dowd scored in the second period, his third goal in his past four games.

ond period and the beginning of the third. Washington also couldn't convert on an opportunity early in the third period when Oliver Ekman-Larsson slashed defenseman Jakob Chyhruch.

"Our power play wasn't great," Carbery said. "It could've deflated our team. I felt like we just stuck with it."

Unlike the third period of the teams' first meeting, when the Capitals let a two-goal lead evaporate in the final minutes before losing in overtime, Washington was the better team in terms of puck possession in the third period Friday as both teams sought the go-ahead goal.

But Toronto's airtight defense collapsed into the middle of the ice and broke up nearly every chance the Capitals created. When the puck did get through to the net, Stolarz stopped it.

Washington did the same to the Maple Leafs at the other end of the ice, though less frequently because Toronto created fewer chances.

With just over 10 minutes left, the Capitals found their way back into the lead. The tightly fought nature of the game suggested that something unconventional might be required for one of the teams to break through, and Washington was on the receiving end of a fortuitous bounce off referee Corey Syvret in the corner. The deflection off Syvret sent the puck to the front of the net, where Dubois had the first crack at it and forward Connor McMichael cleaned up the rebound for his 15th goal of the season.

"To me, we earned that bounce because we're constantly in their

CAPITALS' NEXT THREE

at Montreal Canadiens
Saturday 7 Monumental 2

at Columbus Blue Jackets
Thursday 7 Monumental

vs. Buffalo Sabres
Dec. 14 7 Monumental

Radio: WJFK (106.7 FM), WFED (1500 AM)

zone," Carbery said. "We're constantly putting pressure on them. We're constantly playing in their end for a good portion of the game. ... There wasn't a lot of real estate out there. It's tight. And that's the most challenging thing for teams in those games. You just have to stay with it."

McMichael grew up in Ajax, Ontario, on the eastern edge of the greater Toronto area, dreaming of playing in the NHL on the very ice sheet where he scored the game-winning goal.

He was named the first star of the game — a special moment for a hometown kid off to a blistering start this season.

"I thought we did a really good job tonight of just keeping it simple," McMichael said. "It was a great road win for us. We were pushing. We had chances. Sometimes that's just hockey, the way it goes. You get a lucky bounce, and you just have to capitalize on it. Thankfully, that happened."

The Capitals clearly learned from their previous experience with a third-period lead against the Maple Leafs. Instead of sitting back and attempting to absorb wave after wave of pressure from Toronto, Washington made a concerted effort to stay on the front foot.

That effort didn't produce a goal until there were just 56 seconds left, after Stolarz had been pulled for a six-on-five advantage, but the shift in mentality was evident long before winger Aliaksei Protas hit the empty net. According to NaturalStatTrick, Washington generated seven high-danger scoring chances in the final frame. Toronto had just one.

"It's a tough building to come into," winger Tom Wilson said. "They're playing really well at home. They've got a lot of danger up front. We knew we had to play a good road game, and I think for the full 60 minutes, we didn't give them much. ... We did enough to kind of shut them down and be opportunistic on the other end."

In 'measuring stick' game on road, Hoyas play out of tune and come up short

WEST VIRGINIA 73,
GEORGETOWN 60

BY PATRICK STEVENS

MORGANTOWN, W.VA. — In Ed Cooley's ideal world, the most lyrical part of his Georgetown basketball team's trip to West Virginia would have been a fluid offense defined by sublime passes, wise choices and slick shooting.

Instead, the most notable music of the night came as the Mountaineers celebrated after a 73-60 victory to "Country Roads" as the Hoyas dropped their first road game.

Jayden Epps scored 17 points for Georgetown (7-2), which saw its five-game winning streak snapped after West Virginia used a 16-0 spurt in the second half to energize the 11,522 at WVU Coliseum and surge to a triumph over

its old Big East rival.

"Anytime you have tough shots, people get transition offense and they get energy from the stop," Cooley said. "When the ball has music, when the ball is singing, unbelievable music happens. The music is the play. The music is body movement and screening an open shot. We didn't have good music today."

Javon Small scored 26 points and Tucker DeVries had 13 of his 15 points in the second half for the Mountaineers (6-2), who were coming off beating Gonzaga and Arizona in overtime during a three-game run at the Battle 4 Atlantis in the Bahamas.

There was no need for an extra period against Georgetown, mainly because of one five-minute stretch.

Freshman center Thomas Sorber established his importance to Georgetown — both now and in the future — with his work on the court during the Hoyas' opening

homestand. Sometimes an absence delineates value as well.

Sorber picked up his fourth foul with 11:44 to go at the offensive end, and Cooley understandably pulled him in a tie game in the hopes Georgetown could survive with him on the bench.

It couldn't.

Toby Okani got a second-chance basket and a wide-open layup on consecutive trips for the Mountaineers to make it 47-43, prompting Cooley to call a timeout. Epps then launched a long, errant three-pointer, and Small and DeVries buried three-pointers on back-to-back trips to nudge Cooley into another timeout to send Sorber back in with the Hoyas down 10.

In some ways, West Virginia was due to make a couple of timely outside shots. But it wasn't hard to look at Georgetown's empty offensive possessions as an even greater culprit in the run.

"The ball wasn't moving," Epps

said. "We weren't connected offensively. I feel like they went on a little stretch where they made some tough shots and we didn't come down and we didn't make them guard and execute. We're going to go back and clean that up and get right."

With and without Sorber, the Hoyas spluttered at the offensive end. And while Georgetown scrapped back within six by the final television timeout, DeVries made a three right out of the stoppage to halt the rally.

Not helping matters for Georgetown was its inability to cope with West Virginian reserve forward Eduardo Andre, who blocked four shots (three in the second half) to deny the Hoyas what initially looked to be clean looks.

The Hoyas were held to a season-low eight assists.

"I would grade my defense probably a B-plus," Cooley said. "I don't think our defense beat us

today. Our offense beat us, for sure."

It wasn't a perfect first half for the Hoyas, but it was exceptionally competent compared with many of their high-major misadventures in recent years. Georgetown built a 30-28 lead and was far sharper than the 84-63 loss to Notre Dame on Nov. 16, a game in which Georgetown's considerable youth was badly exposed.

That wasn't as much of an issue against the Mountaineers, a welcome sign with a trip to Syracuse coming up Dec. 14 and the start of Big East play following four days later at home against Creighton.

"We've shown we've grown since the Notre Dame game," Peavy said. "I think we'll continue to get better, and I think we'll show that at Syracuse."

There was a brief scuffle after the final buzzer, something Cooley downplayed afterward and offered a possible solution for moving forward.

"Because of how things have changed in college sports, I don't think you should shake hands after games," Cooley said. "It's too much emotion into it, and kids are going to be kids. There were a couple technical fouls. That's where you have to read the room a little bit. We don't want to be the NBA, but I like what they do. They do the wave and they keep it going."

That might not change fast enough for Cooley's liking. But the Hoyas' quality of play did improve from their last serious test.

"Obviously, I'm disappointed in the loss, but I'm very proud of how hard our kids played," Cooley said. "I thought we were connected. We made a couple of mistakes, and that's going to happen. We don't want this loss to deteriorate how far we've come. This was a great measuring stick for us as a staff."

Georgetown at Syracuse
Dec. 14, 2:30 p.m., ACC Network



NATHAN RAY SEEBECK/USA TODAY SPORTS VIA REUTERS.COM

Lionel Messi played in just 19 of Inter Miami's 34 matches but tied for second in MLS in goals (20) and tied for third in assists (16).

Inter Miami's ageless Messi is named league MVP

BY STEVEN GOFF

CARSON, CALIF. — Lionel Messi's first full season in MLS ended without the championship trophy, but his remarkable campaign garnered the league's top individual honor.

MLS on Friday announced Inter Miami's Argentine superstar won the MVP award, finishing ahead of Columbus Crew forward Juan "Cucho" Hernández.

Messi was first in the media and player voting with 43.2 percent and 40.8 percent, respectively. He was second on ballots submitted by team officials with 31.3 percent and had an overall average of 38.4 percent. Hernández won the team vote (37.5 percent) and finished with an aver-

age of 33.7.

Portland Timbers forward Evander (9.2 percent overall) was third, followed by D.C. United striker Christian Benteke (7.1) and Miami forward Luis Suárez (2.2).

"I would have liked to receive this award in another situation, being able to play the final. But that's also what football is about, overcoming yourself every day," Messi said. "We had a big dream of being MLS champions. It didn't happen, but next year we'll come back stronger to try again."

Messi, 37, led the league in goal contributions with 36 on 20 goals and 16 assists. What made that total more remarkable was his limited availability because of injuries and national team call-ups. He played in 19 of Miami's

34 matches, starting 15, but his 2.18 goal contributions per 90 minutes were the best in MLS history.

Messi tied for second in goals, three behind Benteke, and tied for third in assists behind FC Cincinnati's Luciano Acosta, the 2023 MVP.

He was the third player in league history with at least 20 goals and 15 assists in a season.

Miami set the single-season points record (74) with a 22-4-8 record but lost to No. 9 seed Atlanta United in the Eastern Conference quarterfinals, two games to one. In regular season games Messi did play, Miami was 12-1-6.

"On behalf of our entire league, all our country and everybody

that loves the game here and throughout the world, we're honored to have you in our league," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said.

Messi is the third Argentine in eight seasons and fifth overall to win the MVP award. An American has not won it since Chicago Fire forward Mike Magee in 2013.

Messi, Hernández, Evander, Benteke and Acosta were named to the Best XI all-league team. They were joined by goalkeeper Kristijan Kahlina (Charlotte FC); defenders Jordi Alba (Miami), Yeimar Gómez Andrade (Seattle Sounders) and Steven Moreira (Columbus); midfielder Riqui Puig (Los Angeles Galaxy); and forward Denis Bouanga (Los Angeles FC).

NFL NOTES

Latest probe of Watson closed without discipline

FROM NEWS SERVICES
AND STAFF REPORTS

The NFL closed its investigation into the latest allegations of sexual misconduct against Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson without finding cause to pursue disciplinary measures, citing a lack of evidence that Watson violated the league's personal conduct policy.

The investigation began after a woman in Texas filed a lawsuit in September accusing Watson of sexual assault and battery in 2020 while he was with the Houston Texans.

"The matter is closed," NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said in a written statement Friday. "There was insufficient evidence to support a finding of a violation of the personal conduct policy."

Attorney Anthony Buzbee, who represents Watson's accuser, announced in October that the woman had reached a settlement with Watson.

Buzbee wrote Friday in an email to The Washington Post: "We don't meet with the NFL. We settled the case. We have nothing else to say about it."

The NFL made multiple attempts to speak to the woman about the allegations, but she was not made available to the league's representatives, according to a person familiar with the NFL's investigation. Buzbee previously said the woman would meet with NFL representatives about the case.

Watson and his attorney, Rusty Hardin, denied the allegations.

"We are delighted to put this issue behind us so that Deshaun can concentrate on recovering from his injury and preparing for next season," Hardin said in a written statement Friday.

The Browns declined to comment through a spokesman.

Watson served an 11-game suspension and was fined \$5 million in 2022 for violating the personal conduct policy under a settlement reached by the NFL and the NFL Players Association. The punishment was based on more than two dozen lawsuits filed by women who accused Watson of sexual misconduct during massage therapy sessions.

Watson also has denied the previous allegations and has not been charged with a crime. He previously reached settlements with 23 of his accusers, and one lawsuit

was withdrawn, according to Buzbee, who also represents those women.

Watson is sidelined for the remainder of this season after he ruptured the Achilles' tendon in his right leg during an Oct. 20 game against the Cincinnati Bengals in Cleveland. He has two seasons remaining on his five-year contract with the Browns worth a guaranteed \$230 million.

—Mark Maske

•**JETS:** Cornerback Sauce Gardner and running back Breece Hall are doubtful to play for New York against the Miami Dolphins on Sunday because of injuries.

Interim coach Jeff Ulbrich said both players probably will sit out, "barring something magical happening the next couple of days." Neither Gardner nor Hall practiced during the week. Gardner left the Jets' loss against the Seattle Seahawks on Sunday late in the game with a strained hamstring. Hall was questionable last week with a knee injury but played and had 60 yards on 12 carries. He was then hindered at practice this week by what Ulbrich said was "a little bit of [a medial collateral ligament], a little bit of a hyperextension — so a little bit of both."

•**GIANTS:** Leading receiver Malik Nabers suffered a hip injury in practice, and his status for Sunday's game against the New Orleans Saints is uncertain.

New York originally added the rookie to the injury report after practice Thursday with a groin issue. Coach Brian Daboll amended that Friday, calling the injury a hip flexor and adding that Nabers would not practice.

Nabers, who has 75 catches for 740 yards and three touchdowns, had an MRI exam Friday.

•**VIKINGS:** Minnesota cornerback Stephon Gilmore was ruled out of Sunday's game against the Atlanta Falcons because of a hamstring injury.

Gilmore was hurt in the second quarter last weekend against Arizona and didn't return. He was held out of practice all week.

•**MISC.:** Hall of Fame wide receiver Randy Moss is stepping away from his ESPN analyst role for an extended time to focus on a personal health challenge, the network said in a statement.

The 47-year-old Moss revealed last week that he is dealing with a health issue and asked fans to pray for him and his family.

—Associated Press

ON SOCCER

The MLS Cup finalists had to navigate twisty playoffs

ON SOCCER FROM DI

How the teams got here, though, required navigating a labyrinth of rounds and rules, plus long pauses both within and beyond the league's control.

Playoffs run counter to global soccer's tradition of crowning the team that finishes first over the course of a grueling season. Earn the most points over nine months, hoist the trophy. It's not complicated.

MLS does things differently, which is fine, because sports in this part of the world decide championships through playoffs. The league does toast the regular season champion with the Supporters' Shield, but it does love playoffs, so much so that it has been tinkering with, overhauling and expanding the format for 29 seasons.

Implemented last year, the latest version begins with a single first-round game in each conference involving the No. 8 and No. 9 seeds. Tied games after 90 minutes go straight to penalty kicks. In the East, neither team had a winning record. In the West, the higher-seeded Vancouver Whitecaps ceded home field because of motocross racing at BC Place.

The conference quarterfinals were best of three, largely over three weekends, thus fulfilling MLS's aim of providing a home match — and game-day revenue — to the top 16 teams. Again, tied games skipped extra time and went straight to the shootout.

Here's where the scheduling issues kicked in: A team advancing after two matches had to wait about three weeks before playing again. That is what happened to the second-seeded Galaxy, which swept the Colorado Rapids, leaving the third weekend empty. It then waited another week because of a FIFA window for national team matches. Much of the year, MLS thumbs its nose at the international calendar but not during the playoffs.

The inactivity prompted Galaxy star Riqui Puig to tweet: "Insane ... Come on MLS."

The league could have made things easier by playing the conference quarterfinals over a week (Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday, for instance), thus contracting the layoff for teams that breeze through the round and shortening the overall playoff calendar. In most markets, though, midweek



GARY A. VASQUEZ/IMAGN IMAGES

The Red Bulls' John Tolkin attended a World Series game and said, "We have to avenge the Yankees."

games don't drive as much revenue as those held on the weekend.

The conference semifinals and finals reverted to single matches with, if necessary, 30 minutes of extra time and penalty kicks. MLS Cup — which will take place less than six weeks before 2025 training camps open — will operate the same way.

Got all that? Given MLS's history, there is no reason to believe the format will remain in place. Over the years, the league has increased the percentage of participants, though in fairness, expansion has pushed the number of members to 29, an increase of 10 since 2014. San Diego will join in 2025, and two others are expected in the coming years. The NBA now invites 20 of 30 to the postseason, with eight involved in play-in games.

"Coming from Europe, probably the first few years, I couldn't really wrap my head around" crowning a champion through playoffs, said Red Bulls forward Lewis Morgan, a Scotsman. "At first, I would maybe fight with the idea, thinking the [season] is the real prize. But the more I've been here ... the playoffs is what everyone wants to win — and it's

the one the Red Bulls haven't won."

The playoffs have proved treacherous for record-setting teams. In 2021, the New England Revolution earned the most points in MLS regular season history, then flopped in the conference quarterfinals, which at that time was a single game.

This year, Inter Miami, fueled by MVP Lionel Messi, surpassed the Revolution by one point, then lost a three-game quarterfinal to No. 9 seed Atlanta United. MLS is more than Messi, but his early exit surely shook MLS headquarters, which has turned to the Argentine wizard to expand U.S. mainstream appeal and global reach, as well as sell subscriptions to Apple TV's season package.

Miami not only failed to make the final, its immediate departure deprived the league of an opportunity to attract casual sports fans who, beyond Messi, know little — or care little — about MLS. Messi was gone, and so was curiosity.

MLS did get the next-best thing: For the first time, teams from the largest markets will collide in the final.

After winning three titles between 2011 and 2014, the

Galaxy missed the playoffs four times and did not get past the quarterfinals until this year. The Red Bulls have a long history of mistakes and misery.

Red Bulls homegrown left back John Tolkin was once a team ballboy. "To play in a final, to play for probably some of those fans that were there in that stadium [in Harrison, New Jersey, when he was a ballboy], it's really cool," he said.

The New York-Los Angeles element also looms large.

"I was actually at the Yankees-Dodgers [World Series] Game 5" this fall, Tolkin said. "It was such a good game until it wasn't. ... I don't want our fans to feel that way. We have to avenge the Yankees."

Both teams have been overshadowed by their young in-market rivals: Hatched in 2018, Los Angeles FC won the MLS Cup two years ago and finished second last year. A 2015 newcomer, New York City FC won it all in 2021.

The Red Bulls' only other MLS Cup appearance came in 2008 — as Western Conference champions. Because the format that year had an uneven number of teams from each division, New York hopped west.

Only in MLS.

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MARYLAND CLASS 4A FOOTBALL FINAL

All the way back: Cougars run past Pumas in showdown to reclaim supremacy

QUINCE ORCHARD 24,
WISE 13

BY MATT COHEN

Senior quarterback Travon Jackson pointed to his ring finger as he lined up to shake hands. Chris Koffi, the senior linebacker, walked to the end zone and wiped the tears off his face with his shirt. But Iverson Howard, the senior running back who had been there through it all, remained stoic. Standing back, away from his team, he stood holding a wrestling-style championship belt.

He looked up to the scoreboard. It showed Quince Orchard had beaten Wise, 24-13, in Friday's Maryland Class 4A final. It showed Howard was a champion again.

"These guys from Day One when we started practicing did exactly what we asked them to do," Quince Orchard Coach John Kelley said. "They had a fire inside their belly; I could feel it."

No. 4 Quince Orchard (13-0) and No. 5 Wise (11-2) had been considered the top public schools in Maryland all season, two storied programs on a collision course.

Early on Friday night, the Cougars burst onto the field through a red paper banner that featured the words "We're Back." After missing out on the Maryland 4A title game last year, the Montgomery County powerhouse had made it back to Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium for another championship appearance. The Cougars made the most of their return, earning their third state title in four years and sixth overall.

As much as the Cougars are accustomed to playing on this



LUKE JOHNSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Quarterback Travon Jackson helped Quince Orchard, which lost in the second round last season, win its third state title in four seasons.

stage, they showed up in Annapolis on Friday with a purpose. Under Kelley, Quince Orchard's seasons are meant to end in this game. But the Cougars lost to rival Northwest in the second

round last season, cutting the campaign well short. It was Quince Orchard's earliest playoff exit since 2015. In every year since, Quince Orchard (13-0) had advanced to at least the state

semifinals.

So "We're Back" was about more than just playing in the state championship. It signified redemption.

With a point to prove, the

Cougars relied on their defense. The unit shut down a Wise offense that had averaged 43 points per game ahead of Friday's meeting. In the second half, the Pumas (11-2) had to play without star

running back DeCarlos Young, who went down with an injury.

"You can't say enough about losing your team leader," Wise Coach Steve Rapp said.

Entering this game, Howard hadn't shaken off the sting of last year's upset. No one on for Quince Orchard had.

"I can read people; they gave off this aura that they refuse to lose," Kelley said.

Howard, a four-star recruit, signed with Maryland this week. Even after sitting out the second halves of numerous blowouts this season, he entered the state title game with more than 1,100 rushing yards. He ran wild against a stout Wise defense Friday, scoring two touchdowns.

Since 2015, only Wise and Quince Orchard have won the 4A title. Season after season, the state's most dominant public schools have handed this trophy back and forth. Quince Orchard's win Friday was the fifth time since 2012 it has faced Wise in the championship game. The two also met in the 2018 semifinals, a Quince Orchard win. Across those six matchups, the programs are tied at 3.

Friday's win was a bookend for Howard and the other Quince Orchard seniors who lifted a trophy as freshmen in 2021.

When Kelley and his players arrived at the postgame news conference, the coach told them to take 30 seconds and enjoy the moment. He said it was the next best thing to getting married and having kids.

Howard sat next to his coach, the championship belt slung over his shoulder.

"I'm pretty nonchalant, so it hasn't hit me yet," he said. "This is the part where I usually say my job is not finished. But I'm a senior now. So I guess I finished the job."

MARYLAND CLASS 2A/1A FOOTBALL FINAL

Do-it-all Blouir makes sure Panthers break through vs. three-time champs

PATUXENT 8,
DUNBAR 6

BY NOAH FERGUSON

All season, Evan Blouir did exactly what Patuxent asked him to do: everything. He passed for 2,665 yards. He ran for 2,215 more. He became the team's ball-hawking safety on defense and both the punter and punt returner on special teams. He left his imprint on nearly every aspect of the Panthers' undefeated run to the Maryland Class 2A/1A state championship game.

On Friday afternoon at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium, the only thing left for Blouir to do was bring his team an elusive state title. In a gritty 8-6 win over three-time defending champion Dunbar, Blouir delivered one last time.

"This is the best feeling ever," Blouir said afterward, smiling. "I really couldn't ask for anything better than this."

The victory ended Dunbar's dominant reign over the classification. The Poets entered Friday's title game on a 51-game winning streak, having knocked out the Panthers in each of their past two playoff runs. Two years ago, Blouir threw four interceptions in the second half of an eventual 22-13 loss. Last year, Dunbar beat



LUKE JOHNSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Patuxent's Evan Blouir, who ran for 107 yards and passed for 106, said, "This is the best feeling ever."

Patuxent in the state semifinals.

This year, given a third shot at the Poets, Blouir passed for 106 yards and a touchdown and rushed for 107 yards, including several tough first-down runs late in the fourth quarter to salt the game away. Blouir also helped captain an impressive Patuxent defense that held the Poets to a season-low six points and clinched the Lusby program's second state title and first since 2015.

"Evan Blouir is the greatest quarterback I've ever coached," Coach Steve Crouse said. "He was going to be a great quarterback, record-setting quarterback, All-Met quarterback, all those things. ... But for me, this was the greatest thing ever because it's the one thing that the kid didn't do. ... This is the cherry on top."

The Panthers (14-0) entered Friday's final having passed every test this season. The smallest program by enrollment in the Southern Maryland Athletic Conference was the only team to win each of its regular season games. Led by Blouir, a Navy commit, Patuxent's offense averaged over 44 points per game as it climbed The Washington Post's local rankings throughout the fall.

The Panthers didn't run up the score on a chilly evening in Annapolis — the cold temperatures largely grounded both offenses throughout the title game, making it a showcase for two domi-

nant defenses. Patuxent's only score of the game came in the first quarter, when Blouir launched a deep ball to wide receiver Keiden Gutierrez for a 71-yard touchdown strike. Blouir then powered his way into the end zone for a two-point conversion, a run that proved pivotal in the low-scoring affair. At halftime, the Panthers led 8-0.

Dunbar's defense hardened in the second half, clogging Blouir's running lanes. Patuxent's high-flying offense was shut out in the final two quarters of its season, but it wouldn't matter. A third-quarter touchdown for the Poets (13-1) was followed by a failed two-point conversion. That made the game 8-6 entering the fourth, setting the stage for what was poised to be a thrilling finish to the season.

Instead, with 5½ minutes left in the final quarter, Patuxent did what it had done all year: trusted its quarterback. Blouir ran the ball seven straight times into the teeth of the Dunbar defense, plowing his way forward to clinch a title. Time and again, Crouse put the ball in the hands of the man who willed the team to this stage in the first place. In return, Blouir delivered a long-sought title.

"I was anxious at first [if I could do it]; I didn't really tell anyone that," Blouir said. "That was a big self-confidence boost."

Mystics' Vanloo is selected by the Valkyries in the WNBA's expansion draft

Washington loses guard
who flourished as rookie
to club that debuts in '25

BY KAREEM COPELAND

The new-look WNBA took another step forward Friday night, finally stocking its latest expansion team with a roster of players. The Golden State Valkyries now have everything they need to take the court for the 2025 season — players, coach, general manager and violet-and-black uniforms the club debuted this week.

League rules allowed each of the existing 12 teams to protect six players, leaving the rest eligible to be selected by the Valkyries, who

were limited to one pick from each organization. The process could have been as simple as Golden State submitting a list of players, but this was an ESPN event as much as it was a roster-building moment. The result: The selections were announced by Bay-area celebrities such as golfer Michelle Wie West, rapper E-40 and former NBA player Baron Davis.

The Valkyries official roster includes Atlanta Dream center Iliana Rupert, Chicago Sky forward Maria Conde, Connecticut Sun guard Veronica Burton, Dallas Wings guard Carla Leite, Indiana Fever center Temi Fagbenle, Vegas Aces guard Kate Martin, Los Angeles Sparks forward Stephanie Talbot, Minnesota Lynx forward Cecilia Zandalasini, New York Liberty forward Kayla Thornton, Phoenix Mercury forward Mo-

nique Billings and Washington Mystics guard Julie Vanloo. They did not select anyone from the Seattle Storm. The league did not announce which players teams opted to protect.

"There's a lot of unknown in building a team in a blank canvas. You just don't know," Valkyries GM Ohemaa Nyanin said. "And so the competitive spirit that each of these individuals have individually and now hopefully collectively is what we focused on."

"We [also] just wanted to give ourselves as much flexibility to be able to go and get athletes in the near future."

The group has a heavy international feel, and the Valkyries still have the No. 5 pick in the draft and are expected to be involved in free agency. After the selections, the organization still has the most cap

room in the WNBA, according to HerHoopsStats.com, a salary cap website. Coach Natalie Nakase told ESPN she wants her team to play with pace and have no hesitation to shoot threes.

"I have three non-negotiables," Nakase said on the broadcast. "No. 1, they have to be ultra competitive. They have to really love winning, and they have to hate to lose. No. 2, they have to be high character. So that means that they have to sacrifice for the greater good of the team always. And then the last one is they have to have a never-satisfied mindset. Meaning, I like players that like to play with, like, a little chip on their shoulder."

The addition of the Valkyries continues the transformation of the league. Two more expansion teams are due to arrive in 2026 —

from Portland and Toronto, which announced its name (the Tempo) and logo this week. Commissioner Cathy Engelbert has stated a desire to have a 16th team ready to play no later than the 2028 season, with bids expected from ownership groups in Austin; Cleveland; Houston; Kansas City, Missouri; Milwaukee; and Philadelphia.

Additionally, players have opted out of the collective bargaining agreement, paving the way to create a new financial structure after the league secured a \$2.2 billion media rights deal over the summer.

As the Valkyries build their roster, the Mystics remain in the process of their reset. Vanloo, a 5-foot-8 guard, moves on after starting 34 of 40 games in her one season in Washington, during which she was the league's oldest

rookie at 31. She averaged 7.4 points and 4.3 assists and set the franchise record for three-pointers.

Point guard was already an expected need heading into free agency and the draft. The team still has veteran Brittney Sykes and retained 22-year-old Jade Melbourne, who also showed significant potential in her first year in Washington.

The Mystics, who cut ties with general manager Mike Thibault and coach Eric Thibault after the season, have been working with the Nolan Partners search firm to fill both openings. The team hopes to do so by the first of the year, a person with knowledge of the process explained. The new general manager and coach will initially report to Monumental Basketball president Michael Winger.



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PRO FOOTBALL

NFL										
NFC										
	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA				
EAST										
Philadelphia	10	5	0	.633	320	218				
Washington	6	6	0	.500	376	296				
Dallas	5	7	0	.417	248	339				
N.Y. Giants	2	10	0	.167	183	279				
SOUTH										
Atlanta	6	6	0	.500	257	291				
Tampa Bay	6	0	0	.900	335	296				
New Orleans	4	8	0	.333	276	281				
Carolina	3	9	0	.250	217	366				
NORTH										
y-Detroit	12	1	0	.923	417	234				
Minnesota	10	2	0	.833	297	219				
Green Bay	9	4	0	.692	349	274				
Chicago	4	8	0	.333	241	240				
WEST										
Seattle	7	5	0	.583	272	265				
Arizona	6	6	0	.500	266	259				
L.A. Rams	6	6	0	.500	254	290				
San Francisco	5	7	0	.417	270	295				

AFC										
	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA				
EAST										
z-Buffalo	10	2	0	.833	355	224				
Miami	5	7	0	.417	232	266				
N.Y. Jets	3	9	0	.250	225	268				
New England	3	10	0	.231	221	307				
SOUTH										
Houston	8	5	0	.615	308	288				
Indianapolis	6	7	0	.462	267	298				
Tennessee	2	9	0	.250	221	332				
Jacksonville	2	10	0	.167	228	339				
NORTH										
Pittsburgh	9	3	0	.750	296	224				
Baltimore	8	8	0	.500	383	313				
Cincinnati	8	0	0	.923	395	240				
Cleveland	3	9	0	.250	218	308				
WEST										
y-Kansas City	11	1	0	.917	289	235				
L.A. Chargers	8	4	0	.667	260	188				
Denver	8	0	0	.923	305	234				
Las Vegas	2	10	0	.167	223	333				

y-clinched playoff spot; z-clinched division

WEEK 14 THURSDAY RESULT										
at Detroit 34, Green Bay 31										
SUNDAY'S GAMES										
Atlanta at Minnesota (-5½), 1										
Carolina at Philadelphia (-13½), 1										
Cleveland at Pittsburgh (-6½), 1										
Jacksonville at Tennessee (-3¼), 1										
Las Vegas at Tampa Bay (-6½), 1										
N.Y. Jets at Miami (-5½), 1										
New Orleans (-5½) at N.Y. Giants, 1										
Seattle at Arizona (-2¼), 4:05										
Buffalo (-3½) at L.A. Rams, 4:25										
Chicago at San Francisco (-3½), 4:25										
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City (-3½), 8:20										
BYE: Baltimore, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, New England, Washington										
MONDAY'S GAME										
Cincinnati (-5½) at Dallas, 8:15										
WEEK 15 THURSDAY'S GAME										
L.A. Rams at San Francisco, 8:15										
SUNDAY, DEC. 15										
Washington at New Orleans, 1										
Baltimore at N.Y. Giants, 1										
Cincinnati at Tennessee, 1										
Dallas at Carolina, 1										
Kansas City at Cleveland, 1										
Miami at Houston, 1										
N.Y. Jets at Jacksonville, 1										
Buffalo at Detroit, 4:25										
Indianapolis at Denver, 4:25										
Pittsburgh at Philadelphia, 4:25										
Tampa Bay at L.A. Chargers, 4:25										
Green Bay at Seattle, 8:20										
MONDAY, DEC. 16										
Chicago at Minnesota, 8										
Atlanta at Las Vegas, 8:30										

NFL PASSING LEADERS										
Through Thursday.										
NFC										
Goff, DET	326	TD	25							
Smith, SEA	324	13								
Cousins, ATL	305	17								
Mayfield, TB	304	17								
Stafford, LAR	298	25								
Darnold, MIN	295	12								
Daniels, WAS	281	19								
Love, GB	274	21								
Purdy, SF	267	13								
Ca. Williams, CHI	210	14								
AFC										
Burrow, CIN	333	TD	30							
L.Jackson, BAL	329	29								
Stroud, HOU	317	19								
Mahomes, KC	279	19								
Nix, DEN	284	17								
Allen, BUF	269	20								
Rodgers, NYJ	267	19								
Hendrick, LAC	251	12								
Tavajola, MIA	212	15								
Lawrence, JAX	204	11								

GOLF										
PGA TOUR										
HERO WORLD CHALLENGE										
At Alibon in Nassau, Bahamas										
Purse: \$5 million										
SECOND ROUND										
Scottie Scheffler	67	64	-131	-13						
Akshay Bhatia	67	66	-133	-11						
Sam Burns	68	67	-135	-9						
Ludvig Aberg	67	70	-137	-7						
Sungjae Im	68	68	-137	-7						
Sepp Straka	69	68	-137	-7						
Patrick Cantlay	67	71	-138	-6						
Sahithi Theegala	67	71	-138	-6						
Tom Kim	74	65	-139	-5						
Robert MacIntyre	67	71	-139	-5						
Cameron Young	64	75	-139	-5						
Sam Burns	68	72	-140	-4						
Russell Henley	69	71	-140	-4						
Nick Dunlap	68	72	-141	-3						
Bryan Harman	70	72	-142	-2						
Aaron Rai	71	71	-142	-2						
Wyndham Clark	73	70	-143	-1						
Jason Day	75	70	-145	-1						
Matthieu Pavon	74	73	-147	+3						

World Golf Ranking										
Through Monday.										
1.	Scottie Scheffler	15.97								
2.	Xander Schauffele	9.66								
3.	Rory McIlroy	8.25								
4.	Collin Morikawa	6.70								
5.	Ludvig Aberg	5.53								
6.	Wyndham Clark	5.15								
7.	Hideki Matsuyama	5.04								
8.	Viktor Hovland	4.70								
9.	Tommy Fleetwood	4.20								
10.	Bryson DeChambeau	4.00								
11.	Patrick Cantlay	3.78								
12.	Sahithi Theegala	3.76								
13.	Russell Henley	3.73								
14.	Robert MacIntyre	3.58								
15.	Cameron Young	3.49								
16.	Tyrell Hatton	3.44								
17.	Billy Horschel	3.42								
18.	Jon Rahm	3.16								
19.	Adam Scott	3.10								
20.	Sam Burns	3.10								

Formula One POINTS LEADERS										
Through Sunday.										
1.	Max Verstappen	429								
2.	Charles Leclerc	241								
3.	Oscar Piastri	291								
4.	Carlos Sainz Jr.	272								
5.	George Russell	225								
6.	Lewis Hamilton	211								
7.	Sergio Perez	152								
8.	Nico Hulkenberg	37								
11.	Pierre Gasly	36								
12.	Yuki Tsunoda	30								
13.	Lance Stroll	24								
14.	Esteban Ocon	23								
15.	Kevin Magnussen	16								
16.	Alexander Albon	12								
17.	Daniel Ricciardo	12								
18.	Oliver Bearman	12								
19.	Franco Colapinto	5								
20.	Guanyu Zhou	4								
21.	Liam Lawson	4								
22.	Valtteri Bottas	0								
23.	Logan Sargeant	0								

PRO BASKETBALL										
NBA										
EASTERN CONFERENCE										
ATLANTIC										
Brooklyn	14	8	0	.636	4%					
Brooklyn	10	13	0	.435	9					
Philadelphia	7	16	0	.304	12					
Philadelphia	6	15	0	.286	12					
SOUTHEAST										
Orlando	16	9	0	.640						
Atlanta	13	11	0	.545	2½					
Miami	10	16	0	.385	3½					
Charlotte	6	10	0	.375	8½					
Washington	2	18	0	.100	11½					
CENTRAL										
Cleveland	20	3	0	.870	—					
Milwaukee	11	11	0	.500	8½					
Indiana	10	14	0	.417	10½					
Chicago	10	14	0	.417	10½					
Detroit	9	15	0	.375	11½					
WESTERN CONFERENCE										
SOUTHWEST										
Houston	15	8	0	.652	—					
Dallas	15	8	0	.652	—					
Memphis	15	8	0	.652	—					
San Antonio	11	12	0	.478	4					
New Orleans	5	18	0	.217	10					
NORTHWEST										
Oklahoma City	17	5	0	.773	5					
Denver	11	9	0	.550	5½					
x-Minnesota	11	10	0	.524	5½					
x-Portland	8	14	0	.364	9					
x-Utah	4	17	0	.190	12½					
PACIFIC										
x-Golden State	13	8	0	.619	½					
L.A. Clippers	14	10	0	.583	1½					
Phoenix	12	9	0	.571	1					
L.A. Lakers	12	11	0	.522	2					
Sacramento	11	13	0	.458	3½					
x-Late game										
THURSDAY'S RESULTS										
Dallas 137, at Washington 101										
Cleveland 126, Denver 114										
Oklahoma City 127, at Toronto 92										
at New York 125, Charlotte 104										
at New Orleans 126, Phoenix 124										
Chicago 139, at San Antonio 124										
at Memphis 115, Sacramento 110										
at Golden State 99, Houston 93										
FRIDAY'S RESULTS										
at Philadelphia 102, Orlando 94										
at Atlanta 134, L.A. Lakers 132 (OT)										
at Boston 111, Milwaukee 105										
Indiana 132, at Chicago 123										
Sacramento 140, at San Antonio 113										
Minnesota at Golden State, late										
Utah at Portland, late										
SATURDAY'S GAMES										
Denver at Washington, 7										
Cleveland at Charlotte, 1										
Oklahoma City at New Orleans, 7										
Dallas at Toronto, 7:30										
Portland at New York, 7:30										
Memphis at Boston, 8										
Phoenix at Miami, 8										
SUNDAY'S GAMES										
Memphis at Washington, 7										
Philadelphia at Chicago, 1										
Milwaukee at Brooklyn, 3:30										
Charlotte at Indiana, 5										
Cleveland at Miami, 6										
Denver at Atlanta, 6										
Phoenix at Orlando, 6:30										
New Orleans at San Antonio, 7										
Minnesota at Golden State, 8:30										
Houston at L.A. Clippers, 9										
Utah at Sacramento, 9										
Portland at L.A. Lakers, 9:30										
New York at Toronto, 7:30										

WIZARDS' NEXT 3H										
vs. Denver Nuggets										

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615 Legal Notices


815 Legal Notices
Notice of Public Hearing
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Proposed Vent Shaft Modification to Gallery Place-Chinatown Metrorail Station
Washington, DC
Docket R25-01

815 Legal Notices

815 Legal Notices

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WHAT IS PROPOSED
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) proposes to modify a vent shaft of the Gallery Place-Chinatown Metrorail station (Proposed Project), which serves the Capital One Arena and Chinatown neighborhood of Washington, DC. The vent shaft modification for the Gallery Place-Chinatown Metrorail Station would allow for future construction activity over the existing vent sidewalk grate.

Vent Shaft Modification
The proposed project is located within the construction perimeter of the Capital One Arena Modernization project that includes the Gallery Place Expansion. WMATA's Gallery Place - Chinatown Metrorail Station is within the vicinity of this project. The WMATA vent shaft is proposed to be modified, however there will be no significant changes to the operational aspects to the vent shaft system of the Gallery Place-Chinatown Metrorail station.

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Lincoln Westmoreland Apartments is accepting online applications for the HUD Section 8 program for efficiency-, one-, two- and three-bedroom units beginning Monday, December 9, 2024, at 9:00am, and will close at 2:00pm on Friday December 13, 2024. Please log into <https://waitlistcheck.com> and complete your pre-application. The online application portal will be available 24 hours a day while the waiting list is open. Paper applications will only be accepted on Friday December 13, 2024, between the hours of 10:00am and 2:00pm at 1730 7th Street NW, Washington, DC 20001. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age at the time of application.

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HOW TO REGISTER TO SPEAK AT THE PUBLIC HEARING
All organizations or individuals desiring to be heard with respect to this docket will be afforded the opportunity to present their views, make supporting statements and to offer alternative proposals. Public officials will be allowed five minutes each to make their presentations. All others will be allowed three minutes each. Relinquishing of time by one speaker to another will not be permitted.

REFERENCE MATERIAL AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION
The docket consists of this Notice of Public Hearing, an environmental report, and general plans for the Vent Shaft Modification to the Gallery Place-Chinatown Metrorail Station. These documents are available online at <https://wmata.com/plansandprojects> and may be inspected during normal business hours at the following location:
WMATA, Office of the Secretary
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
202-962-2511
(Please call in advance to coordinate)

WMATA COMPACT REQUIREMENTS
WMATA's Compact requires that the Board, in amending the mass transit plan, consider current and prospective conditions in the transit zone should the project be built. The transit zone includes DC and considerations include, without limitation, land use, population, economic factors affecting development plans, existing and proposed transportation and transit facilities, any relocation of families or businesses; preservation of the beauty and dignity of the DC Metro Area; factors affecting environmental amenities and aesthetics, and financial resources. The mass transit plan encompasses, among other things, transit facilities to be provided by WMATA, including stations and parking facilities, and the character, nature, design, location and capital and operating cost thereof. The mass transit plan, in addition to designating the design and location of transit facilities, also provides for capital and operating expenses, as well as "various other factors and considerations, which, in the opinion of the Board, justify and require the projects therein proposed" all as more particularly set forth in WMATA's Compact.

260 Furniture
HP DesignJet T1200 Printer \$2500
OBO, cash only. Lightly used, good working condition. You must pick up. danpurush@gmail.com

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HOW TO REGISTER TO SPEAK AT THE PUBLIC HEARING
All organizations or individuals desiring to be heard with respect to this docket will be afforded the opportunity to present their views, make supporting statements and to offer alternative proposals. Public officials will be allowed five minutes each to make their presentations. All others will be allowed three minutes each. Relinquishing of time by one speaker to another will not be permitted.

HOW TO SUBMIT TESTIMONY NOT AT A PUBLIC HEARING
Testimony about this proposal may be submitted at <https://wmata.com/plansandprojects>. This website will open by 9 a.m. on Saturday, December 7, 2024, and will close at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, January 21, 2025. The website will also provide the opportunity to upload documents and submit freeform comments. This is in addition to your ability to speak at a public hearing. For those without access to computers or internet, testimony may also be mailed to the Office of the Board Corporate Secretary, SECT 2E, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, P.O. Box 44390, Washington, DC 20026-4390. All comments must be received by the Office of the Board Corporate Secretary by 9 a.m. on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, to be included in the public record. Please reference "Gallery Place Vent Shaft" in your correspondence.

WMATA COMPACT REQUIREMENTS
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Cavachon Puppies Absolutely adorable cavachon puppies ready for their forever homes. Our puppies are raised with tender, loving care in our home in Northern Virginia by Reputable Breeder with over 36 yrs exp. We provide a five-year health warranty, immunizations, check and options. Take place in our home. Call us today at 703-362-8718 or visit our website at www.DCdogfinders.com for more info.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Rooms for Rent
DC, NE: Furnished rooms for rent \$1,000/month, utilities included. Call 202-441-8941 for more info.

602 Found
FAIRFAX CO. ANIMAL SERVICES if you have lost an animal in the Fairfax County/Washington Metro area: Please call the Fairfax Co. Animal Shelter at 703-830-1100 or online for found animals at fairfaxcounty.gov/animalsshelter

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MARYLAND Roommates
CAP HGHTS Sub-Sr/dis. rehab home. rms avail. 2 BA/2 kit. \$650+SD, w/d, utlis inc. 202-568-0792

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