



ERIN SCHAFF/THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Solemn Moment

President Trump observed Veterans Day at the Tomb of the Unknowns on Wednesday, his first public appearance in almost a week.

Millions Facing  
Dire New Year  
As Aid Expires

By BEN CASSELMAN

Two critical unemployment programs are set to expire at the end of the year, potentially leaving millions of Americans vulnerable to eviction and hunger and threatening to short-circuit an economic recovery that has already lost momentum.

As many as 13 million people are receiving payments under the programs, which Congress created last spring to expand and extend the regular unemployment system during the coronavirus pandemic. Leaders of both major parties have expressed support for renewing the programs in some form, but Congress has been unable to reach a deal to do so. It remains unclear how the results of last week’s election will affect prospects for an agreement.

That means that for now at least, people like Randy Williams must prepare for the possibility that they are weeks away from losing their only income.

Mr. Williams, 56, lost his job as a manager at a Memphis-area Cracker Barrel in the first weeks of the pandemic. His state jobless benefits ran out last month, leaving him to rely on a 13-week extension under the federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which ends in late December.

Already, Mr. Williams is struggling to get by on his \$275 weekly benefit check, the maximum allowed in Tennessee. He has fallen behind on rent, racked up thousands of dollars in credit card debt and turned to a food pantry run by a church.

Continued on Page A18

Biden Has Plans, but Georgia Will Have Its Say

By JIM TANKERSLEY

WASHINGTON — President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s transition team is preparing multiple sets of policy proposals for the economy, health care, climate change and other domestic issues, including the ambitious agenda Mr. Biden laid out in his winning campaign, while acknowledging it may have to be pared back in recognition of divided government.

Where the incoming administration

Senate Power Rides on  
Two Runoffs, as Does  
Ambitious Agenda

tration lands depends heavily on two Senate runoffs in Georgia in early January.

If Democrats win both races, close aides to Mr. Biden and economists who helped advise his campaign say the president-elect will try to push through a large stimulus plan for the flagging economic recovery — most likely along the lines of the \$2.2 trillion

that House Democrats approved this fall. His stimulus plan in that situation would include hundreds of billions of dollars for state and local governments that have lost tax revenue amid the pandemic recession, extended unemployment benefits for people who lost jobs during the crisis and a new round of aid for small businesses.

His team is also developing a government employment program — called the Public Health Jobs Corps — that would put 100,000 Americans to work on virus testing and contact tracing.

A narrow majority in the Senate would also give Mr. Biden the

Continued on Page A18



ANTHONY KWAN/GETTY IMAGES

Purge in Hong Kong

After China ousted four elected lawmakers, 15 others said they would quit in solidarity. Page A10.

Global Firm Casts Big Oil’s Messages as Grass-Roots Campaigns

By HIROKO TABUCHI

In early 2017, the Texans for Natural Gas website went live to urge voters to “thank a roughneck” and support fracking. Around the same time, the Arctic Energy Center ramped up its advocacy for drilling in Alaskan waters and in a vast Arctic wildlife refuge. The next year, the Main Street Investors Coalition warned

that climate activism doesn’t help mom-and-pop investors in the stock market.

All three appeared to be separate efforts to amplify local voices or speak up for regular people.

On closer look, however, the groups had something in common: They were part of a network of corporate influence campaigns designed, staffed and at times run by FTI Consulting, which had been hired by some of the largest

Fake Facebook Persona  
Monitored Protesters

oil and gas companies in the world to help them promote fossil fuels.

An examination of FTI’s work provides an anatomy of the oil industry’s efforts to influence public opinion in the face of increasing

political pressure over climate change, an issue likely to grow in prominence, given President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s pledge to pursue bolder climate regulations. The campaigns often obscure the industry’s role, portraying pro-petroleum groups as grass-roots movements.

As part of its services to the industry, FTI monitored environmental activists online, and in

Continued on Page A24

As Resurgence of Virus  
Overwhelms the States,  
Washington Pulls Back

Scramble for Supplies Creates the Feeling  
That It’s ‘March All Over Again’

This article is by Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Noah Weiland, Sharon LaFramiere and Andrew Jacobs.

WASHINGTON — When senior Food and Drug Administration officials held their morning call one day this week, they received a sobering warning from the agency’s chief, Dr. Stephen M. Hahn, who had just gotten off the phone with the White House: Block out “all the craziness” afoot and stay focused on fighting the pandemic, he said.

There are plenty of distractions. President Trump is pushing to overturn the results of the election and his only public statements about the coronavirus in the last few days were to make clear his pique that good news about a vaccine had not come until after Election Day — even as the number of new daily infections on Wednesday topped 140,000, average daily deaths shot past the 1,000 mark, and Covid-19 hospitalizations hit a record high of 65,368.

Vice President Mike Pence canceled a vacation at the last minute as the virus numbers grew worse, but the White House coronavirus task force that he leads has been all but publicly silent. Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff who is infected with the virus, declared last month, “We are not going to control the pandemic,” and said the focus should instead be on the longer-term goals of developing vaccines and treatments.

Since then, the White House political director, Brian Jack, has be-

come the latest administration official to test positive for the virus, two people familiar with the diagnosis said on Wednesday.

The pandemic caught the nation flat-footed in March, but epidemiologists have been warning for months of a fall and winter wave as people are driven indoors, schools resume in-person classes and Americans grow tired of months of precautions. Yet



MADDIE MCGARVEY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Before the rush at a testing site in Columbus, Ohio, last week.

shortages of personal protective equipment are back, especially among rural hospitals, nursing homes and private medical practices that lack access to the supply networks that serve larger hospital chains.

The Strategic National Stockpile, the nation’s emergency reserve, has only 115 million N95

Continued on Page A9

Trump Borrows  
Election Tactics  
From Autocrats

By ANDREW HIGGINS

MOSCOW — When the strongman ruler of Belarus declared an implausible landslide victory in an election in August, and had himself sworn in for a sixth term as president, the United States and other Western nations denounced what they said was brazen defiance of the voters’ will.

President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko’s victory, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last month, was “fraud.” Mr. Pompeo added: “We’ve opposed the fact that he’s now inaugurated himself. We know what the people of Belarus want. They want something different.”

Just a month on, Mr. Pompeo’s boss, President Trump, is now borrowing from Mr. Lukashenko’s playbook, joining a club of truculent leaders who, regardless of what voters decide, declare themselves the winners of elections.

That club counts as its members far more dictators, tyrants and potentates than leaders of what used to be known as the “free world” — countries that, led by Washington, have for decades lectured others on the need to hold elections and respect the result.

The parallel is not exact. Mr. Trump participated in a free and fair democratic election. Most autocrats defy voters before they even vote, excluding real rivals from the ballot and swamping the airwaves with one-sided coverage.

But when they do hold genuinely competitive votes and the result goes against them, they often ignore the result, denouncing it as the work of traitors, criminals and foreign saboteurs, and therefore invalid. By refusing to accept the results of last week’s election and

Continued on Page A19

Atop Pentagon,  
A Fresh Group  
Of Hard-Liners

By DAVID E. SANGER  
and ERIC SCHMITT

WASHINGTON — President Trump’s abrupt installation of a group of hard-line loyalists into senior jobs at the Pentagon has elevated officials who have pushed for more aggressive actions against Iran and for an imminent withdrawal of all American forces from Afghanistan over the objections of the military.

Mr. Trump made the appointments of four top Pentagon officials, including a new acting defense secretary, this week, leaving civilian and military officials to interpret whether this indicated a change in approach in the final two months of his presidency.

At the same time, Mr. Trump named Michael Ellis as a general counsel at the National Security Agency over the objections of the director, Gen. Paul M. Nakasone.

There is no evidence so far that these new appointees harbor a secret agenda on Iran or have taken up their posts with an action plan in hand. But their sudden appearance has been a purge of the Pentagon’s top civilian hierarchy without recent precedent.

Administration officials said the appointments were partly about Afghanistan, where the president has been frustrated by what he sees as a military moving too slowly to fulfill his promise that all American troops will be home by Christmas. The Pentagon announced on Wednesday that Douglas Macgregor, a retired Army colonel and fierce proponent of ending American involvement in Afghanistan, would serve as a senior adviser.

The hires come as Mr. Trump and some of his aides have been pressing to declassify documents

Continued on Page A21

DISTORTIONS

A Twitter post tagged #MaidenGate, offering no evidence or verifiable examples, set off rumors that maiden names were being used to steal votes. State election officials say that there is no proof and that no complaints have been filed.

PAGE A15



NATIONAL A14-25

Ballot Trove in Puerto Rico

Nearly 200 boxes of uncounted votes have surfaced, possibly affecting several tight races on the island. PAGE A22

Swans, Trains and Automobiles

A woman with the right training noticed a bird’s sickly behavior, and a 23-mile New York City odyssey began. PAGE A14

TRACKING AN OUTBREAK A4-9

‘Yellow Zone’ on Staten Island

The borough has bristled at coronavirus restrictions and prevention measures, but now has the highest positive test rate in New York City. PAGE A8

INTERNATIONAL A10-13

Interview With a Princess

Decades after Diana admitted infidelity, the BBC is again investigating how Martin Bashir got the scoop. PAGE A12

Tanks Before Clinics in Egypt

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi promised better health care. The virus proved the military always comes first. PAGE A13

SPORTS THURSDAY B8-10, 12

Escape From Augusta National

The club’s green jackets — awarded to its members and Masters winners — are not supposed to leave its grounds. But a rare few have. PAGE B8

ARTS C1-6

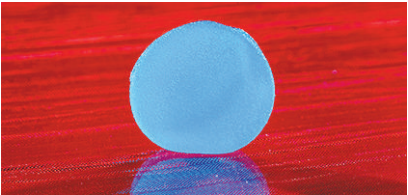
A Parade of Performers

The Macy’s parade won’t have a live audience, but it will have performances by the casts of a number of Broadway shows that went dark in March. PAGE C1

EDITORIAL, OP-ED A26-27

Nicholas Kristof

PAGE A26



BUSINESS B1-7

After the Vote, Pass the Edibles

Sales surged for cannabis-infused goodies as people turned to gummy bears, cookies and chocolates to help soothe their Election Day jitters. PAGE B1



0 354613 9