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Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025 • \$4

Beneath the Kremlin's portrayal of unity, resentment and fatigue fester in Russia



FRANCESCA EBEL/THE WASHINGTON POST

Wounded Russian soldiers in Olkhovatka, Russia, on Nov. 20, where they stopped for a break on their way to the hospital.

War's grind corrodes a society

BY FRANCESCA EBEL

OLKHOVATKA, RUSSIA — The bus from the front lines ground to a halt outside the roadside kitchen, and the soldiers on board limped out into the winter mud.

Most were missing feet or a leg.

A water bottle filled with blood swung precariously from a plastic tube attached to one soldier's stomach as he was helped toward a bench. Another stared blankly at the blood-

ied stump where his right hand had once been.

"I would never have signed a contract if I'd known what it's like out there. Our television is lying to us," said Fyodor, a young soldier from Siberia. Like others in this article, The Washington Post is not identifying him by his full name to protect him from any repercussions for criticizing the war.

Fyodor had his lower leg blown off by a mine two days previously during

an advance on Lyman in Ukraine with what remained of his unit. He said he was one of just 10 people left of the 110-strong unit he joined two years ago.

He had no regrets over the loss of his leg. "It means that I can finally go home — alive."

"We're fighting for fields that we cannot even take," interjected a fellow soldier, Kirill, also in his 20s, laughing wryly. "This war will never

SEE RUSSIA ON A12

SEE RUSSIA ON A12

Citing safety, DHS wants quick razing at site in D.C.

BY PAUL SCHWARTZMAN

The Department of Homeland Security is seeking to fast-track the demolition of more than a dozen historic buildings at St. Elizabeths in Southeast Washington, asserting that the conditions of the vacant structures represent an "emergency" and pose potential security risks, according to documents obtained by The Washington Post.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi L. Noem, in a Dec. 19 memo to the General Services Administration, said the buildings "constitute a present risk to life and property" on the 176-acre West Campus, a fortified complex that Homeland Security has been transforming into its new headquarters over the past 15 years.

"Demolition is the only permanent measure that resolves the emergency conditions," Noem wrote in the memo. A risk assessment report undertaken by her agency "supports immediate corrective action," she wrote.

The assessment report, which Noem included with her memo, concludes the vacant buildings "may be accessed by unauthorized individuals seeking to cause harm to personnel." The structures "provide a tactical advantage for carrying out small arms or active shooter scenarios," the report states.

DHS's proposed demolition is

SEE DEMOLITION ON A8

RICHARD SMALLWOOD 1948-2025 A soaring voice of gospel music

He crafted melodies that reflected his church upbringing and love of Bach

BY ETHAN BECK

Richard Smallwood, a singer-songwriter and pianist who became a chart-topping stalwart of gospel music, writing songs that were performed by artists including Destiny's Child and Whitney Houston, died Dec. 30 at a nursing center in Sandy Spring, Maryland. He was 77.

The cause was complications from kidney failure, said his publicist Bill Carpenter.

A longtime Washingtonian who fused music and ministry, Mr. Smallwood wrote uplifting, classically informed church songs that spread a message of faith and love. He was perhaps best known for "Total Praise," a church choir staple covered by Destiny's Child and Stevie Wonder, and "I Love the Lord," a soaring anthem that Houston popularized on the soundtrack of the 1996 film "The Preacher's Wife."

As a songwriter, Mr. Smallwood crafted melodies that bridged past and present, reflecting his upbringing in the church (he played piano for his step-father's Baptist congregations); his love of baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach; and his interest in the Motown soul that blanketed the radio in his youth.

Even with those pop influences, he considered himself far more than an entertainer.

"This is not about making money," he told The Washington Post in 2015. "It's about winning souls and encouraging people

SEE SMALLWOOD ON A8



Gospel singer-songwriter Richard Smallwood, seen in 2015, was perhaps best known for the church choir staple "Total Praise."

MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

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CORRECTION

• A Nov. 22 Metro obituary of Dorothy Vogel included a photo caption that mistated where she and her husband lived. Together they lived on the Upper East Side, not Upstate New York.

The Washington Post is committed to correcting errors that appear in the newspaper. Those interested in contacting the paper for that purpose can:

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5 of the best good news stories from 2025

Tales of rescued animals, a hiking record and more all made the list

BY MAGGIE PENMAN

The news can feel heavy. But this year also brought moments of hope, including heartening advances in dementia research and heroic rescues. Here are five of our favorite optimistic stories from 2025.

1. Schools are banning phones — and remarkable things are happening

For the past few years, the lunchroom at Ballard High School was a hushed place.

"You'd walk in there and everybody had their heads down," Principal Jason Neuss told me this fall. "Just scrolling."

This year, the school in Louisville implemented a bell-to-bell phone ban. Neuss said the change was immediate: The lunchroom is loud again.

Something else happened, too. In the first month of school, students took out 67 percent more books than the same month last year. That trend has continued for the rest of the school year so far.

Even my library aides who do the bulk of the circulating were like, 'Gosh, there's a lot of kids checking out books,' said Stephanie Conrad, the school's librarian.

Ballard is just one of a growing number of schools that are banning cellphones. We interviewed psychologist Jean Twenge about bell-to-bell phone bans, which she advocates for because of the academic, social and mental health benefits of spending less time on social media.

Read the full story: wapo.st/4qwy3zL

2. An 80-year-old woman hiked the entire Appalachian Trail

Here at The Optimist, we write a lot about people who break world records. But the story of Betty Kellenberger was one of my favorites — because she wasn't motivated by that at all.

Kellenberger finished hiking the entire 2,197-mile Appalachian Trail this year at 80 years old, and she had no idea she was about to become the oldest woman to ever do so.

"We put all kinds of limitations on ourselves," Kellenberger told my colleague Sydney Page. "Sometimes the biggest one is we don't get up and try it."



ILLUSTRATION BY CHELSEA CONRAD/THE WASHINGTON POST

Kellenberger had been interested in hiking the Appalachian Trail since she was a kid.

"I was just fascinated by the idea that you could walk from Georgia to Maine," said Kellenberger, who grew up on a farm in Howell, Michigan. "It was a dream more than anything else, because I never had the time."

Kellenberger was a middle school teacher for decades, and when she retired, she started checking off her bucket list. Now that she has completed the trail, she hopes to go hiking in Iceland and perhaps even tackle the North Country National Scenic Trail, which runs from North Dakota to Vermont.

"I'll do it as long as I'm able," she said.

Read the full story: wapo.st/45r22R9

3. A bodega manager found a way to get kids excited about studying

In 2023, Wail Alselwi made a bet with a young customer. He told Zamier Davies, then 12, that if he got good grades on his report card, Alselwi would give him anything in the store he wanted — free.

The motivation worked. Zamier

came back with an 88 percent average and got a free Oreo milkshake. With the permission of Zamier's parents, Alselwi posted on TikTok about it, and other kids flocked to the bodega with their report cards, too. Alselwi paid for the goodies out of his own pocket — until commenters on his TikTok asked to contribute. Some of the kids choose special treats, but others buy staples such as milk and eggs for their families.

Alselwi said he plans to keep it up, and he hopes that others are inspired to encourage kids in their own communities.

"I see the progress the kids make," he said. "... It pushes them toward greatness."

Read the full story: wapo.st/44ThLZg

4. A bear cub was rescued and is being raised by humans in bear suits

In April, campers in Los Padres National Forest found a tiny baby bear alone. He was crying, and his mother was nowhere to be found.

At just about three pounds, experts at the San Diego Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center said the cub was "extremely fragile." But after just five weeks in their care, he was thriving. He

gained weight and had reached several developmental milestones — including learning to climb.

The cutest part, though, was that the staff who cared for him did so while dressed as bears.

The costumes weren't just for the incredible photos. The wildlife center staff said that it was important to prevent the cub from forming an attachment to humans that could be dangerous when he is reintroduced to the wild.

In June, the baby bear cub was moved to Sonoma County Wildlife Rescue to continue his rehabilitation with two other bear cubs.

"Growing up together will give these cubs the chance to learn from one another and develop critical natural behaviors they'll need to thrive in the wild," Nina Thompson, who's with the San Diego Humane Society, said in an email to The Post. "That's our most important goal of all: to see these bears go home."

Read the full story: wapo.st/4jgu45I

5. A nurse saved a drunk raccoon from a dumpster — using CPR

Drunk raccoons are having a

moment.

Recently, a raccoon ransacked a Virginia liquor store, passing out in the bathroom after making some "poor life choices," according to authorities.

When I saw this story, I immediately thought of another couple of drunk raccoons my colleague Kyle Melnick wrote about earlier this year.

After indulging in too many fermented peaches from a nearby distillery, the pair were rescued from a dumpster in Kentucky by local nurse Misty Combs.

One ran off, but the other was in bad shape — soaking wet, barely breathing and reeking of moonshine. Her colleagues thought the raccoon was dead.

"Not on my watch," Combs recalled thinking. "I'm going to try to do whatever I can."

Combs ended up performing CPR on the little guy, then calling local animal control. She and her colleagues nicknamed the raccoon Otis Campbell after the "town drunk" on the "The Andy Griffith Show."

After a vet helped the raccoon recover, Combs was able to set Otis free, back into the wild.

Read the full story: wapo.st/3KWWPPo

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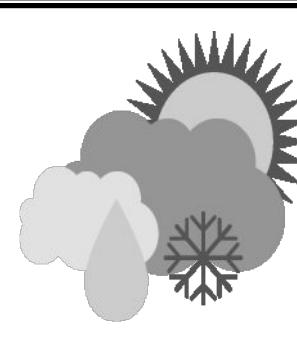
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POLITICS & THE NATION

In Missouri, a building's fed-up tenants stop paying rent

Strikes are popping up in U.S. areas where they've been almost unheard of

BY CAROLINE O'DONOVAN

RAYTOWN, MO. — In the two years she has lived at Bowen Tower, Cynthia Barlow's apartment has flooded, been plagued by mold and been infested with cockroaches. The building's heat stopped working. When the elevators broke over the summer, emergency workers carried a sick neighbor down 10 flights of stairs.

Meanwhile, Barlow's rent for the two-bedroom unit increased from \$993 per month to \$1,213.

Growing frustrated, she hung fliers in the elevators and hosted potlucks, persuading a majority of tenants in the 90-unit building to join the Bowen Tower Tenant Union and stop paying rent until conditions improved. So far, they've won a meeting with the landlord, and a judge has knocked thousands of dollars off the rent debt of one resident facing eviction.

"I got tired of being treated the way I was treated," Barlow said.

The rent strike is part of a strategy that housing activists have started to replicate in mid-size cities across the country. Tenant organizing is more common in liberal coastal metropolises like Los Angeles and New York — which recently elected Zohran Mamdani, a former tenant organizer, as its mayor.

But rent strikes have been almost unheard of in places like Kansas City, Missouri, where according to Zillow the median rent increased 4.4 percent in the last year twice the rate of the national average. Now, tenants in at least three buildings around the city have formed unions. Similar groups have popped up in Bozeman, Montana; Louisville; and New Haven, Connecticut.

The country's renters are at a "total breaking point," said Tara Raghuvir, founding director of the Kansas City Tenants Union, also known as KC Tenants, an activist group. "When you get displaced from Chicago as a tenant, you might end up in a place like Kansas City. When you get displaced from Kansas City, you might end up in a Raytown, Missouri. When you get displaced in Raytown, Missouri, I do not know where ... you're supposed to go."

Raghuvir said her group, which launched in 2019, has recently honed its focus on using tenants' economic leverage — their rent checks — to extract broad improvements and protections, not just for individual buildings but on a wide scale.

"If we are only organizing block by block, we are going to lose," she said. "We can't let ourselves be wholly consumed by getting the elevator fixed or even by getting a collectively bargained lease agreement — as important as those things are to the material realities of the tenants that we're organizing. We have to be focused ... on much larger-scale economic disruption."

But there are risks. In Missouri — and most of the country — renters lack legal protections, and tenants like Barlow face eviction and homelessness if their strategy fails. The California-based real estate company Alta/CGHS, which owns Bowen Tower, has sent eviction notices to 28 tenants since the rent strike started and is refusing to renew some leases.

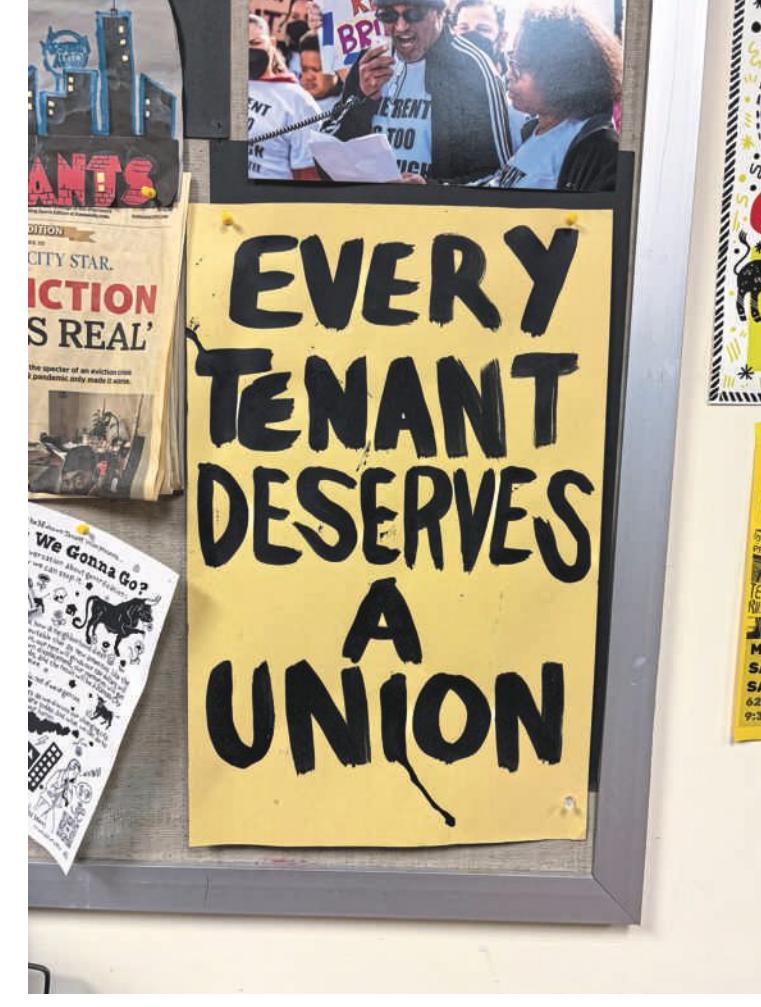
If tenants don't pay their rent, eviction is inevitable, said Greg Salyers, a minority partner in the firm. Without rent checks, "you can't pay your mortgage, you can't pay a staff to fix things," he said. "It's a business."

Salyers acknowledged the building's maintenance issues, including with its heating and cooling systems, elevators, mold, plumbing and pests. But he said the owners have spent more than \$1 million making repairs since 2024, including \$250,000 on plumbing. About five units did not have working heat as of mid-December, but residents were told they could be placed in a hotel or compensated while they waited for window units to be installed, he said. They received a similar offer when the elevators stopped working for five days over the summer.

"We want this to be a well-run building with tenants who are happy," Salyers said.



PHOTOS BY CAROLINE O'DONOVAN/THE WASHINGTON POST
TOP: Bowen Tower residents and their supporters protest the condition of their apartment complex in Raytown, Missouri, on Oct. 17. ABOVE: Cynthia Barlow in her Bowen Tower apartment. She helped organize a rent strike at the complex, where her rent has risen despite issues with heating, mold, roaches and broken elevators. RIGHT: A poster at the KC Tenants office in Kansas City, Missouri.



If we are only organizing block by block, we are going to lose. ... We have to be focused ... on much larger-scale economic disruption.

Tara Raghuvir,
founding director of the
activist group KC Tenants

resident, was among them. "I had mold, mildew, water coming in from between the walls, soaking in the carpet," Kelley said. When "a water pipe busted on the side of my kitchen and water ran all out the wall," he did the repairs himself.

He stopped paying rent because the property manager didn't fix her leaking, moldy sink, Washington told the judge, and she had been feeling sick for months.

"I need my health to take care of me and my husband. ... I'm almost 70, and he's 74. We can't do this," she said on the steps of the courthouse after the trial.

A few weeks later, the judge ruled that the landlord had "violated the warranty of habitability by failing to address" maintenance issues "in a timely manner." Washington's apartment was worth only \$500 a month, not the \$1,058 the building had charged, according to the ruling, which ordered her to pay just \$5,000 in back rent.

The building is now refusing to renew Washington's lease. "I'm not going to get put out," Washington said. "The Lord is not going to allow that to happen."

A judge reduced a second Bowen Tower resident's back rent in late December; five more tenants are awaiting rulings, with another three scheduled to appear in court in January.

Barlow is scheduled for eviction court in January, and Bowen Tower management hasn't renewed her lease. She hopes to move to Virginia someday to be near the beach and her grandchildren. But for now, "am I giving up?" Barlow said, sitting in her living room, where a piece of unfinished plywood covers a vent where drywall was removed to fix a leak. "Nope."

Salyers said the company is eager to work with tenants individually, but the company refuses to acknowledge the Bowen Tower Tenant Union. And he described KC Tenants, which has been working with the group, as an "unethical" third party that is "muddying" the company's communication with tenants and spreading falsehoods to "smear" the owners. He also accused tenants of delaying repairs by intentionally concealing issues in their units from building management so they could be photographed and shared on social media to encourage the rent strike effort.

Barlow, 59, said that when she moved to Bowen Tower, it was advertised as a quiet place for people 55 and older on the border of Kansas City. But she found the red brick building, which stands out as the lone high-rise in an otherwise flat, suburban landscape, to be home to children and recently homeless families. Promised perks, including free internet and shuttle service, never materialized, Barlow said.

Many tenants spend 60 percent of their income on rent, according to an analysis by KC Tenants.

Salyers said that he has been to the building several times and that some young children may live there, but he wasn't aware of it. Those types of issues are handled by the property management company, Lynd Living, he said. Lynd Living did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Late last year, Barlow said, she

came home to find her apartment floor wet. A pipe in the wall was leaking, she said, and the walls and carpet were damp. Days later, as she waited for the building manager to make repairs, she said, she learned that one neighbor's leak was so bad, they had an overflowing barrel of water.

"I don't care if you are homeless," she said. "You don't put nobody in no conditions like that — period."

Around that time, Barlow said, she watched a news report about tenants at an apartment building in nearby Independence who refused to pay rent for eight months because of dangerous living conditions. That strike, which KC Tenants helped organize, ended after tenants secured a new contract that froze rent levels and prohibited the building from being sold without tenant approval.

Sitting on the couch she would later throw away because of mold, Barlow watched and rewatched news clips about the nearby rent strike.

"It kind of inspired me," she said.

She started talking to other residents about the building's problems. At first, many were reluctant to confront the landlord and afraid of being evicted, she said.

Then the heat in the building went out. To warm his apartment, one of Barlow's neighbors, who is partially blind, turned on his oven and left its door open. After that, Barlow said, "people started speaking out."

Herbert Kelley, a Bowen Tower

TATIANA SCHLOSSBERG, 35

Granddaughter of JFK was an environmental journalist

She announced cancer diagnosis in New Yorker essay last month

BY SCOTT NOVER

Tatiana Schlossberg, a journalist who told stories of the changing climate and the ways humans can help protect the environment, and whose terminal illness and position in the Kennedy family thrust her into the national spotlight late in life, died Dec. 30. She was 35.

Her family announced the death in a social media post shared by the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation. The post did not say where she died.

Ms. Schlossberg published a New Yorker essay in November revealing that she had been diagnosed with a rare form of acute myeloid leukemia, a cancer of the blood and bone marrow. Between reflections on her family and mortality, she harshly criticized her cousin Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the secretary of health and human services, for his opposition to government-funded medical research and vaccines.

As an environmental journalist, Ms. Schlossberg was drawn to stories that humanized sprawling and complicated policy issues — often while offering her a chance to participate in the action herself.

While chronicling the impact of climate change, she jumped in a cranberry bog in Massachusetts. She later spent nearly eight hours skiing the Birkebeiner, a cross-country race in Wisconsin threatened by warm weather and a lack of snow.

"On the lake, my cross-country skis began to skate in a rhythm, something that had eluded me for much of the day," she wrote in a dispatch for Outside magazine. "I felt like I was flying."

Ms. Schlossberg studied at Yale and Oxford before launching her journalism career at the Record newspaper in New Jersey, covering crime and local affairs. She joined the New York Times in 2014 as an intern and was named a staff writer on the paper's Metro desk before moving to the science section, where colleagues regarded her as a curious, hardworking reporter who wore her privilege lightly.

A granddaughter of President John F. Kennedy and first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Ms. Schlossberg was the second child of Caroline Kennedy, a former U.S. ambassador to Australia and Japan, and Edwin Schlossberg, an artist and designer.

"She was a total delight," said Henry Fountain, a longtime climate and science reporter at the Times. Ms. Schlossberg "just researched her butt off on stories," he added.

After leaving the Times in 2017, Ms. Schlossberg began freelancing and, in 2019, published "Inconspicuous Consumption: The Environmental Impact You Don't



Tatiana Schlossberg speaks at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston in 2023.

STEVEN SENNE/AP

Know You Have." The book examined the hidden costs of everyday activities — streaming videos, buying jeans, eating burgers — and was honored by the Society of Environmental Journalists.

"Using history, science and a personal narrative, Schlossberg provides a better understanding of both individual and systemic drivers of ecological destruction," the judges said in awarding her the Rachel Carson book prize. "Readers will find solace, humor and a route to feeling empowered with possibilities for positive change, rather than drained by an accumulation of bad news."

Ms. Schlossberg had been planning to write a second book, on the oceans, when she was found to have cancer in May 2024, while in the hospital for the birth of her second child.

In her New Yorker essay, she wrote of her shock at getting the diagnosis — "This could not possibly be my life" — and of the turbulent 18 months that followed, in which she received stem cell donations from her sister as well as a stranger in the Pacific Northwest; underwent chemotherapy; and participated in a clinical trial, testing a new type of immunotherapy.

In recounting her experience, Ms. Schlossberg implicitly acknowledged that her family, and her mother in particular, had dealt with years of grief. Her mother was only 5 when her father, President Kennedy, was assassinated in Dallas in 1963.

She was 10 when the same fate befell her uncle, Robert F. Kennedy, while he was campaigning for president in Los Angeles. Her younger brother, John Jr., died in



Ms. Schlossberg with her mother, Caroline Kennedy; father, Edwin Schlossberg; and brother, Jack.

a plane crash in 1999.

"For my whole life, I have tried to be good, to be a good student and a good sister and a good daughter, and to protect my mother and never make her upset or angry," Ms. Schlossberg wrote. "Now I have added a new tragedy to her life, to our family's life, and there's nothing I can do to stop it."

Ms. Schlossberg recalled that she was in her hospital bed when her cousin "Bobby, in the face of logic and common sense, was confirmed" as health and human services secretary, "despite never having worked in medicine, public health, or the government."

Kennedy had previously run for president as an independent, in what Ms. Schlossberg called "an embarrassment to me and the rest of my immediate family." He faced blowback when he acknowledged that he had placed a dead bear in Central Park a decade earlier, a bizarre episode that — in an odd twist of fate — Ms. Schlossberg had reported on for the Times, writing in 2014 that state investigators concluded that the bear had died after being struck by a car but did not know how it ended up in the park.

"Like law enforcement, I had no idea who was responsible for

this when I wrote the story," Ms. Schlossberg told the Times last year.

In her New Yorker essay, Ms. Schlossberg wrote that her cousin's health policy decisions threatened her own survival and that of "millions of cancer survivors, small children, and the elderly."

"I watched as Bobby cut nearly half a billion dollars for research into mRNA vaccines, technology that could be used against certain cancers; slashed billions in funding from the National Institutes of Health, the world's largest sponsor of medical research; and

threatened to oust the panel of medical experts charged with recommending preventive cancer screenings," she wrote.

She also noted that the drug misoprostol, which she had received to stop a postpartum hemorrhage that nearly killed her, was "part of medication abortion, which, at Bobby's urging, is currently 'under review' by the Food and Drug Administration."

"I freeze when I think about what would have happened if it had not been immediately available to me and to millions of other women who need it to save their lives or to get the care they deserve."

'I was not just a sick person'

Tatiana Celia Kennedy Schlossberg was born in Manhattan on May 5, 1990. She was raised on the Upper East Side with her older sister, artist and filmmaker Rose Schlossberg, and her younger brother, Jack Schlossberg, who is now running for Congress in New York.

Ms. Schlossberg studied history at Yale University, where she received a bachelor's degree in 2012 and served as editor in chief of the weekly Yale Herald. She later earned a master's in American history from the University of Oxford.

As a freelance journalist, Ms. Schlossberg contributed to publications including The Washington Post, the Atlantic and Vanity Fair. She wrote a weekly newsletter, News From a Changing Planet, until 2024.

Juliet Eilperin, The Post's deputy Futures editor, called her "one of the least pretentious journalists I have ever dealt with."

"Tatiana had an intense desire to be out in the field, immersing herself in nature and talking with scientists," Eilperin said. "She was meticulous and exhaustive in her research, scrutinizing environmental problems and what might be done to fix them."

In 2017, Ms. Schlossberg married George Moran at her family's home on Martha's Vineyard, in a ceremony officiated by former Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick. Moran, a urologist, was a resident at Columbia-Presbyterian when Ms. Schlossberg was diagnosed with cancer at the hospital.

"George did everything for me that he possibly could," she wrote in her essay. "He talked to all the doctors and insurance people that I didn't want to talk to; he slept on the floor of the hospital; he didn't get mad when I was raged on steroids and yelled at him that I did not like Schweppes ginger ale, only Canada Dry."

In addition to her husband, survivors include their two children; her parents; and her brother and sister.

While battling cancer, Ms. Schlossberg held her profession up as a point of pride. "My son knows that I am a writer and that I write about our planet," she wrote. "Since I've been sick, I remind him a lot, so that he will know that I was not just a sick person."

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GOP lawmaker draws a line after political killings

Julia Coleman is tired of conspiracy theories on Kirk, Hortman deaths

BY ANNA LISS-ROY

To Julia Coleman, Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk were just "Melissa" and "Charlie."

Coleman, a Republican state senator, knew Hortman, a Democrat, through their work in the Minnesota legislature. The two had discussed reopening the Capitol day care center, while sitting in Hortman's office sharing tequila and Milano cookies. Coleman was Turning Point USA's first Minnesota employee, and Kirk, her first boss, became her friend.

On June 14, Melissa was shot dead.

On Sept. 10, so was Charlie. Coleman, 34, watched in horror as her social media feeds became clouded with a thickening haze of baseless and speculative ideas about her former colleagues' deaths.

"When I see people spreading horrible conspiracy theories that are completely based out of nothing and dishonor the person who passed away, I feel compelled to say something," Coleman said. "More elected officials have to stop sitting on their hands and start calling it out."

More elected officials have to stop sitting on their hands and start calling it out.

Julia Coleman, on the conspiracies swirling about her colleagues' deaths

Coleman saw the governor at a bill signing shortly after Hortman was killed. Walz had lost weight. She noticed pain in his eyes. "It's got to be hard that people are sitting there thinking he did that or would order that to be done just because a crazy man said it to be true," Coleman said.

A spokesperson for Walz did not respond to a request for comment.

After Hortman and Kirk were killed, Coleman had panic attacks. She questioned whether she should quit her job to protect her three young boys. "It was a rough summer and fall. Losing two people to assassinations — I just never thought that sentence would even come out of my mouth," Coleman said. "The initial reaction was: I have to get out of this if I want my kids to grow up with a mother."

Then, Coleman thought about who would be left to speak up if people like her were intimidated out of politics. She said she decided she did not want to let fear drive her from public office — but knows the experience will never be the same.

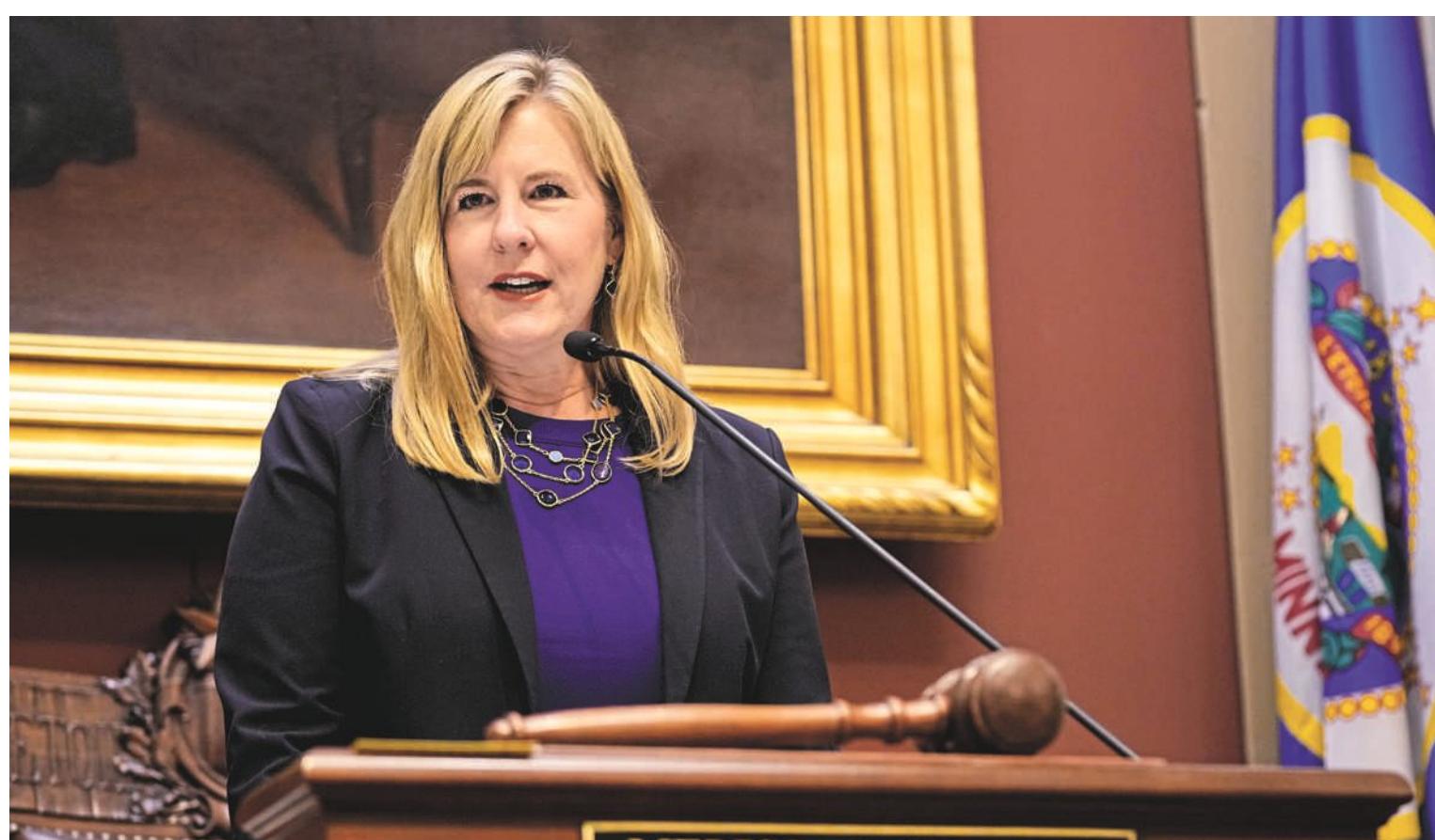
"It feels like all the magic that was in this job got sucked out of it on June 14," Coleman said. "Long-standing grudges have been erased because a lot of us just are in the trenches now together."

When legislators walk into the House chamber, they see Hortman's photo and roses on her desk.

When the doorbell rings at home, they now check their security camera before answering.

"I've seen some people start to speak up, and I hope that my actions [Sunday], which came from a moment of frustration standing in my kitchen, will encourage others to do the same," Coleman said.

Hours after her first post, Coleman followed up: "I've learned two things today 1) invest in tinfoil (for hats on both sides of the aisle) 2) buy a bunch of jumbo crayons and construction paper for explaining basic concepts to people this upcoming year." Others, including former Minnesota Senate majority leader Paul Gazelka, a Republican, have also



Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman (D) addresses the chamber after her reelection on Jan. 3, 2023. Hortman was killed June 14.

ABBIE PARR/AP



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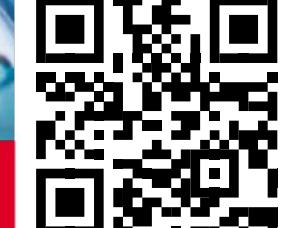
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Turning Point USA founder and conservative activist Charlie Kirk onstage in Grapevine, Texas, in June. Kirk was killed Sept. 10.

SAM HODDE/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Interviews reveal how Kennedy has upended public health

KENNEDY FROM A1

tion."

"This was a newly reconstituted committee, and the secretary was providing a North Star to make sure suggestions were communicated to the members for consideration," Nixon said.

Over the course of the year, Kennedy's actions have alarmed public health experts, medical associations and current and former health officials, who say he is eroding trust in science and dismantling confidence in long-standing public health measures.

"I do feel shocked by how quickly he has been able to implement these things that he has clearly been pretty passionate about for many years," said Kerry Kennedy Meltzer, Kennedy's niece and a physician who this year released email exchanges with her uncle in an attempt to foil his Senate confirmation to lead HHS.

Kennedy has challenged years of public health messaging on vaccines, including instructing the CDC to contradict the long-settled scientific conclusion that vaccines do not cause autism. His once-fringe views have moved to the center of the nation's health strategy amid a growing distrust in the medical establishment after the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is now acceptable to talk about all these issues," said Leslie Manookian, a leader in the "medical freedom" movement, which opposes vaccine mandates. "The person that we have most to thank for that is Bobby Kennedy, together with President Trump."

Kennedy has maintained the backing of the White House and a warm relationship with President Donald Trump, whom he speaks to often, as the two aligned on their Make America Healthy Again initiative to encourage better nutrition and address chronic disease and childhood illness, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Besides his heavy focus on immunizations, Kennedy has also taken on the food industry. Next year will test, ahead of the midterms, whether he can deliver sweeping change on this more broadly popular agenda.

This account of Kennedy's ascent and leadership since becoming HHS secretary is based on interviews with almost 100 current and former federal health officials, Kennedy allies, public health experts and others. Many spoke on the condition of anonymity to detail private conversations, internal deliberations or out of fear of retaliation.

In response to an interview request, Kennedy said in a text message: "Wapo has been more consistently unfair, biased, and inaccurate, and it's reporting about me than any other major outlet. I'm not inclined to validate that bias with an interview."

He referred the request to Stefanie Spear, a top aide, who said Kennedy wanted to share a Substack article with a Post reporter that described the "invisibility of vaccine injury," adding Kennedy could perhaps do an interview after the first of the year.

The HHS media relations office did not answer detailed questions for this article, but did comment on the email from Anderson and identified what Kennedy has done so far in a statement.

"Under Secretary Kennedy's leadership, HHS is exercising its full authority to deliver results for the American people," Nixon said.

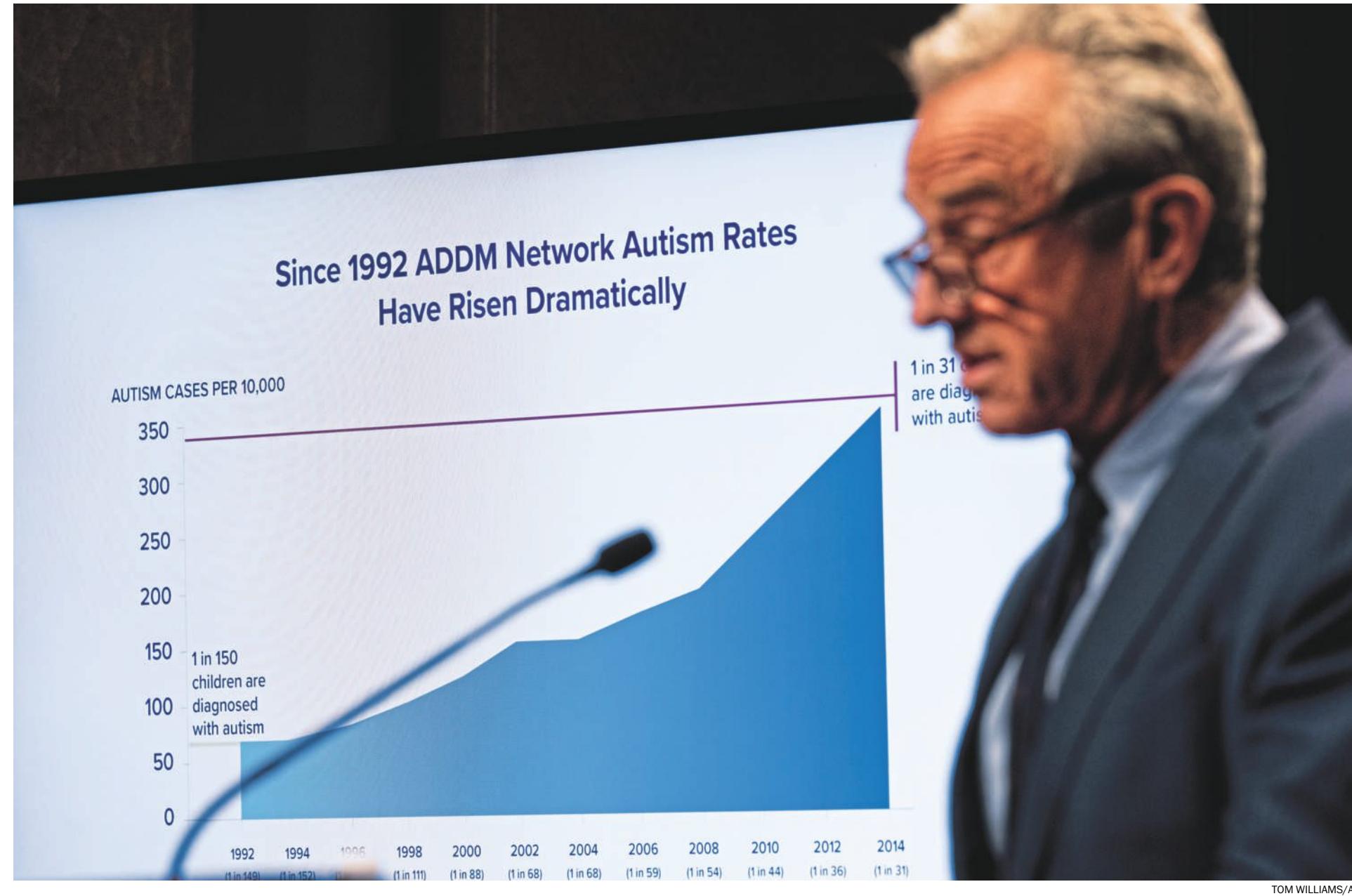
"In 2025, the Department confronted long-standing public health challenges with transparency, courage, and gold-standard science — eliminating petroleum-based food dyes from the nation's food supply, removing the black box warning for many menopause hormone therapies, lowering drug prices, advancing [Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network] reform, streamlining prior authorization, investing in rural health, accelerating biosimilars, doubling funding for childhood cancer research, launching an agency-wide AI strategy, and increasing transparency in drug advertising," Nixon added. "HHS will carry this momentum into 2026 to strengthen accountability, put patients first, and protect public health."

RFK Jr.'s rise to power

In August 2024, Kennedy strode onto a stage in Arizona to suspend his long-shot independent presidential bid. Flanked by American flags, he explained why the scion of a famous Democratic family was endorsing a Republican, Trump.

"I asked myself what choices must I make to maximize my chances to save America's children and restore national health," Kennedy said.

Kennedy quickly became



Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. presents data showing an increase in the incidence of autism at an April news conference in Washington.

TOM WILLIAMS/AP

viewed as one of the campaign's top surrogates, bringing along some voters who might not have backed Trump. Before winning the presidency, Trump promised to let Kennedy "go wild on health."

Although some Trump aides had weighed making Kennedy a lawyer, a White House health czar, Kennedy told Trump he wanted to be considered as HHS Secretary, according to three people familiar with the matter. Donald Trump Jr. and Charlie Kirk, a conservative activist who was fatally shot this year, advised Kennedy that he needed to be in charge of an actual bureaucracy to make lasting change and avoid being sidelined, one person said. Trump Jr. and Turning Point USA, Kirk's organization, did not respond to requests for comment.

Just over a week after Election Day, Trump tapped Kennedy to helm the nation's sprawling health department, an almost \$2 trillion portfolio responsible for administering health insurance, approving drugs and medical devices and responding to infectious-disease outbreaks.

The luxury Florida beach house of Mehmet Oz — a physician and the former daytime television star who is now the nation's Medicare and Medicaid chief — quickly became ground zero for pushing MAHA's agenda and securing Kennedy's position in Washington, according to multiple attendees. Those weeks forged an alliance among some who challenged the medical establishment, including Del Bigtree, head of the anti-vaccine group Informed Consent Action Network (ICAN), and Spear, a longtime ally to Kennedy in his environmental



MAXINE WALLACE/THE WASHINGTON POST
Portraits of President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, Kennedy and Mehmet Oz, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, at CMS headquarters.

and anti-vaccine advocacy, and newer people in Kennedy's orbit, such as Calley Means, a health entrepreneur.

One night, several of those at the beach house bonded over listening to the Grateful Dead, according to Michael Caputo, who was Trump's HHS spokesman in 2020. They viewed the best-selling book "Good Energy" written by now-surgeon general nominee Casey Means along with her brother Calley, that promotes healthy eating and exercise to optimize metabolic health — as MAHA's bible, he said.

"Food expanded the movement overnight," Bigtree, who was Kennedy's communications director during his presidential campaign, said in an interview. "Was an easier topic to sell to moms across America?"

On Capitol Hill, Kennedy's

messaging pushing for healthier, less-processed foods proved far more popular than his views on immunization.

Kennedy's confirmation largely hinged on Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana), a physician and chair of the Senate health committee who begged Kennedy to disavow his false claims linking vaccines and autism and raised concerns about Kennedy's involvement in vaccine safety litigation.

"[Does a] 71-year-old man who has spent decades criticizing vaccines and who's financially vested in finding fault with vaccines, can he change his attitudes and approach now that he'll have the most important position influencing vaccine policy in the United States?" Cassidy asked during Kennedy's confirmation hearing.

As Cassidy vacillated, Vice

President JD Vance stepped in to help negotiate his eventual support, according to two people familiar with the matter.

In a speech on the Senate floor, Cassidy detailed the commitments he received from Kennedy in exchange for his vote, including to protect the nation's vaccine infrastructure. All but one Republican voted yes: Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, a childhood polio survivor who said he would "not condone the re-litigation of proven cures." A week later, McConnell announced he would not seek reelection.

Cassidy's doubts proved prescient. Within months, Kennedy found ways to bypass some of his pledges.

A fierce critic becomes the boss

Kennedy has called for the ouster of what he describes as "corrupt, industry-captured" federal health officials, arguing the health department had failed to keep Americans healthy.

"I'm not scared to disrupt things," Kennedy said at a recent event at George Washington University.

Since February, health agencies have been inundated by continuous waves of departures of more than 30 high-ranking senior career leaders — representing decades of experience on managing infectious-disease outbreaks, administering billions in research dollars and overseeing the nation's drug supply, according to a Post review.

Thousands more staffers were laid off in what some called the "April Fools' Day massacre," a sweeping purge and proposed reorganization of the health agen-

cies. Some including lead poison specialists and lab scientists were rehired, but many administrative support staff, communications and program officers are among those who remain laid off.

As secretary, Kennedy brought in fierce critics of the public health covid response and federal health agencies more broadly. Bigtree told The Post that candidates for top health roles were questioned to see whether they agreed with some of Kennedy's longtime vaccine safety priorities.

Under Kennedy, prominent figures in the anti-vaccine movement have been working within the department on vaccine safety issues, including Lyn Redwood, a former leader of the anti-vaccine group Kennedy founded, Children's Health Defense, and David Geier and Mark Blaxill, two long-time proponents of false claims that vaccines can cause autism. The three did not return requests for comment.

In a statement, White House spokesman Kush Desai said Kennedy and his team at HHS are restoring "Gold Standard Science and accountability to our public health bodies" after the medical establishment pushed "unscientific lockdowns and mask mandates" during the coronavirus pandemic.

Kennedy has accused public health agencies of being dishonest during the pandemic. He repeated that criticism, arguing the government overreached on covid vaccines, when a reporter asked how to avoid the violence the CDC witnessed in August, when a gunman incensed by coronavirus vaccines attacked the agency's Atlanta campus.

Public health and medical experts say the turnover in staff and leadership has hollowed out the federal government's scientific capacity to anticipate and respond to health threats.

"For people who are still left at the [CDC], there is chaos and confusion, and morale is at an all-time low," Aryn Melton Backus said at a November rally in support of public health. She was a health communication specialist placed on administrative leave as part of pending layoffs from the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, which has funded state tobacco control programs.

The reduction of CDC staff and programs is being felt across the country. In Georgia, where smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, state officials cut a tobacco control and prevention program. An online concussion training that many school youth sports coaches must complete will no longer be updated with the latest research. Local officials who want to fluoridate their drinking water to improve oral health no longer have access to technical experts who can help calibrate the proper levels.

As Kennedy upended the public health workforce, he leaned into his more broadly popular messaging around overhauling the food industry. He has posted on social media more than twice as frequently about food and vaccines while in office, according to The Post's analysis of his personal



KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS
HHS employees line up outside agency headquarters in D.C. in April as the Trump administration begins mass layoffs at health agencies.



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Protesters join the March for Health and Science in D.C. in November after a rally, delivering petitions calling for Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s removal.

accounts and official HHS accounts. Last summer, almost 1 in 3 social media posts focused on food.

He often highlights posts about companies pledging to remove artificial dyes from food products, which has been one of his signature efforts.

Some in the food sector have been trying to accommodate Kennedy and downplay differences with his initiatives, in hopes of avoiding MAHA criticism, according to two people involved in the industry. That's a stark shift for an industry accustomed to viewing the GOP as an ally.

"Wanting to eat simpler foods, more real foods, look at the ingredients, all of that is not a Democrat hippie thing anymore," said Vani Hari, an author, activist and Kennedy ally who also writes under the name of the Food Babe. "It's a Republican thing now."

Kennedy returns to his core issue: Vaccines

As Kennedy sought senators' support to become health secretary, he told them he supported the childhood immunization schedule, including the shot for measles, which he had previously falsely described as increasing the odds of spreading the virus.

In the past, Kennedy had derided the "exploding vaccine schedule," claiming that the series of vaccines recommended to children is linked to the rise of autism, chronic disease and food allergies. Medical experts have argued these purported links have no basis in evidence and that the increase in vaccinations has successfully combated more disease. He wrote a book in 2014 calling for removal of the mercury-based preservative thimerosal from vaccines. He questioned why newborns should get the hepatitis B vaccine, which health authorities say is safe, claiming on an online show that it "poisoned" kids.

Kennedy faced his first big test on vaccines soon into his tenure. A measles surge had started in an under-vaccinated region of Texas, driving the country's largest annual case tally in at least 32 years and threatening to end the nation's measles elimination status.

At first, Kennedy downplayed the severity of the outbreak and later, under pressure, acknowledged vaccines prevent the virus's spread. But he muddled that message by also falsely claiming the vaccines were not safety tested and contained aborted fetal debris — a stark contrast from the first Trump administration's unequivocal support for vaccination during a 2019 outbreak.

He repeatedly offered to send Texas vitamin A doses, an unproven measles treatment in the U.S. embraced by vaccine skeptics as an alternative to immunization, even though the vitamin is primarily used for malnourished children abroad and public health workers and doctors said their focus was vaccination, according to a top state health official, Jennifer Shuford.

In June, he fired every member of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which

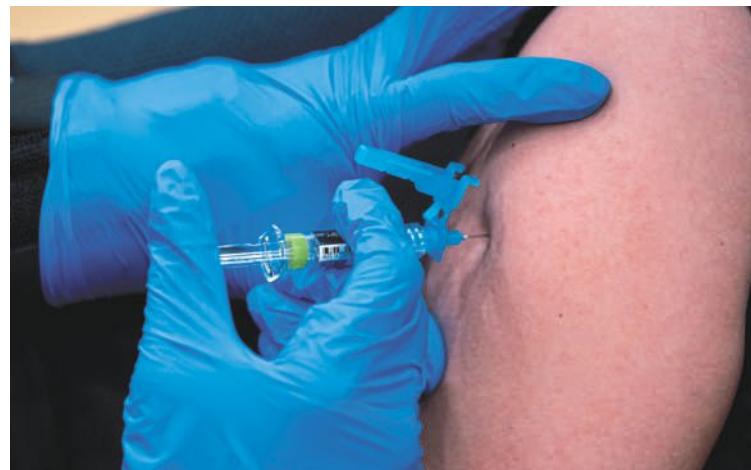
makes vaccine recommendations, setting in motion plans to remake the vaccine system. Kennedy argued the panel had become "little more than a rubber stamp for any vaccine" with members too closely tied to the pharmaceutical industry. He selected new members, some of whom had histories of criticizing vaccine guidance. The former CDC director, Susan Monarez, said she was fired in August for refusing to be a "rubber-stamp" to the new committee.

The panel has voted on some of Kennedy's requests detailed in the May email from Anderson, who is no longer with HHS and did not respond to requests for comment.

The vaccine panel voted in June to remove thimerosal — which the CDC had concluded is safe but Kennedy and his allies have decried as unnecessarily exposing children to mercury — from the rare multidose flu shot vials that contain it. In that same meeting, they vowed to form a work group to look at vaccines that have not been subject to review in more than seven years, in line with Kennedy's request.

The panel over several months grappled with how to revise the guidance for all newborns to receive a hepatitis B vaccine. It ultimately voted in December to stop recommending the shot when the mother tests negative and to instead encourage those parents to consult doctors about whether and when to begin vaccination.

José Romero, who began serving on ACIP in 2014 and chaired the panel from 2018 to mid-2021, described Kennedy's asks to the committee as "extremely" unusual.



SARAH L. VOISIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

A student is vaccinated in Bowie, Maryland, in August. Kennedy has challenged years of public health messaging on vaccines.

al.

"The secretary is within his legal rights to make these suggestions or requests, but it's unheard of as far as I know," said Romero, who was a top health official in Arkansas during the pandemic and then at the CDC. He now consults for the pharmaceutical industry on vaccines and is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics infectious diseases committee.

The panel over several months grappled with how to revise the guidance for all newborns to receive a hepatitis B vaccine. It ultimately voted in December to stop recommending the shot when the mother tests negative and to instead encourage those parents to consult doctors about whether and when to begin vaccination.

In reference to the May email, the official said HHS officials worked with the CDC's administrative officer for the vaccine panel to communicate the suggestions to the members, but those

suggestions were not directives.

Joseph Hibbeln, a neuroscientist who has become a dissenting voice on the vaccine panel, said committee members have not been given clear answers when they have asked who is determining which vaccines they are scrutinizing.

Robert Malone, a prominent critic of coronavirus vaccines who is now the panel's vice chair, said he did not know how the agenda items were developed but that there would be nothing "nefarious" about Kennedy or other top Trump administration officials "contributing" to agenda items because the panel's job is to provide advice.

During the panel's December meeting, Kirk Milhoan, chairman of the vaccine committee, was overheard telling another member that he felt "a little bit like puppets on a string as opposed to really being an independent advi-

sory panel," according to a transcript of the exchange captured by videoconferencing software and reviewed by The Post. He later told The Post he was referring to pressure from outside groups critical of changes to vaccine recommendations, not the administration.

'Raise the risk, bury the benefits'

Kennedy and his aides have repeatedly said the Trump administration is not limiting access to vaccines for those who want them, but is instead working to help people make informed decisions. Critics say they are exaggerating the downsides and obfuscating the value of immunization.

"The secretary and his committee have stopped doing the hard job of balancing the risks and benefits of vaccines," said Dan Jernigan, who oversaw the CDC's vaccine safety office. He described their playbook as "raise the risk, bury the benefits, sow confusion, drive down use."

In the late summer, Jernigan and two other high-ranking officials resigned in protest over what they called an unscientific and politicized approach to vaccines.

In one instance that alarmed career staff, Kennedy wanted Aaron Siri, a top lawyer for the anti-vaccine movement, and perhaps Paul Offit, a scientist who is a prominent proponent of vaccines and critic of Kennedy, to speak publicly during the June meeting of the new vaccine advisers, according to three former health officials familiar with a meeting where a CDC senior adviser relayed the secretary's request. Siri has been involved in legal chal-

lenges to school vaccine mandates and petitioned the government to reconsider its approval of Sanofi's stand-alone polio vaccine.

But the plan to invite Siri fell apart after objections from career CDC staff and legal advisers who raised concerns about providing a platform to a man who has repeatedly sued the agency seeking data about vaccine safety on behalf of ICAN, the anti-vaccine group. Kennedy was informed of those concerns, one of the officials said.

After almost six months and an exodus of CDC leaders, Siri was invited to the agency's headquarters for the December meeting of the vaccine advisers and spent more than 90 minutes arguing that the history of childhood immunization in the U.S. is marred by insufficient research and improperly performed vaccine clinical trials. HHS did not answer questions from The Post about Siri's appearance.

Siri said he has a "significant knowledge base" about vaccines based on his legal work, including regularly suing health authorities and deposing and cross-examining leading vaccinologists. "If you were standing in my office with me right now, you would be looking at a bookshelf that is filled with medical textbooks on vaccinology, immunology, infectious-disease and pediatrics," he said.

Cassidy, the Republican senator, reacted with shock to Siri's appearance at ACIP.

It was his latest frustration with the health department's handling of vaccine issues under Kennedy, including the revisions to the CDC website language on autism. The page includes an asterisk after the header "Vaccines do not cause Autism," explaining that the header was not removed as part of an agreement with Cassidy. But the revised webpage also claims the assertion that vaccines do not cause autism is not evidence based and that health authorities ignored studies supporting a link.

Cassidy's office declined repeated requests for a formal interview. Approached at the Capitol and asked about Kennedy's vaccine commitments, Cassidy said, "You can compare those actions to those commitments I enumerated in my floor speech, and I'll let you draw your own conclusions."

But what were his conclusions? "I'll leave it at that," he said.

The looming fight

Kennedy has spent much of this year laying the groundwork for bigger changes to the nation's vaccine and food policy.

Investigations Kennedy commissioned into the causes of autism, safety of vaccines and whether fluoridated water harms children are expected to release findings.

The Trump administration is weighing plans to shift the federal government away from directly recommending most vaccines for children and to more closely align with Denmark's immunization model of suggesting fewer shots, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Kennedy plans to release revised federal dietary guidelines for healthy eating habits early next year, which will be partly tied to when Americans are making New Year's resolutions, according to a federal health official. Kennedy has said the guidelines will focus on eating whole foods.

The health department is also hoping to finalize a plan as soon as next year to require labels on the front of food and drink packages to alert Americans about unhealthy foods. Under Kennedy, health officials are working internally to determine the best approach to the labels first proposed in the Biden administration, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Meanwhile, Kennedy has crisscrossed the country to support governors who have restricted using food stamps to buy soda and candy and have signed bills to remove artificial dyes from school meals. Some MAHA proponents want to see another wave of policies next year that would promote nutrition education and also challenge long-standing public health practices such as vaccine mandates. The nonprofit advocacy group MAHA Action has met with almost 20 top state officials as it pushes for states to embrace the movement.

"Bobby Kennedy is doing the work he was put on the planet to do," said Tony Lyons, president of MAHA Action.

Kennedy's allies say he's just getting started. They hope he'll be secretary for eight years.

Caitlin Gilbert, Carolyn Y. Johnson, Paige Winfield Cunningham and David Ovalle contributed to this report.



SARAH L. VOISIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Family waits at a vaccine clinic in Bowie in August. Kennedy's once-fringe views have moved to the center of the nation's health strategy.

THE WORLD

Berlin's wild New Year's Eve tradition fuels annual debate

Over 2 million Germans have signed petitions calling for a ban on private fireworks after five died during 'Silvester' celebrations last year

BY KATE BRADY

BERLIN — In a country known for its rule-abiding ways — quiet Sundays, meticulous recycling, orderly lines and an aversion to jaywalking even in the wee hours of the morning — there is one night each year when restraint collapses into sanctioned mayhem.

On New Year's Eve, known as "Silvester," Germans of all ages flood the streets armed with fireworks. But for some, it's not about lighting up the sky, but often firing rockets directly at friends and unsuspecting strangers.

What was long considered a raucous celebration has increasingly turned violent. In recent years, Silvester has left behind a trail of serious injuries, fires, and assaults on police and emergency workers, fueling a ferocious national debate over whether private fireworks should be banned altogether.

Nowhere is the debate more intense than in the German capital.

Last New Year's, five people were killed across the country in fireworks-related incidents, while in Berlin alone, more than 360 people sustained fireworks-related injuries, according to the city's health administration. Among the injured were emergency services workers. More than 50 attacks on police officers were recorded, leaving 17 officers injured through criminal acts and eight by fireworks. A paramedic was also targeted.

"We are attacked massively with firecrackers and rockets from a distance," Jochen Kopelke, federal chairman of Germany's Police Union, said in an interview. "[The perpetrators] stand 30 or 40 meters [100 feet] away and attack police officers from afar, which makes arrests almost impossible."

Compared with most global capitals, New Year's Eve in Berlin is unusually wild, with private fireworks taking center stage. Although a public event is scheduled to host 20,000 people at Berlin's iconic Brandenburg Gate this year, that figure is tiny compared with London's roughly 100,000, New York's 1 million or Sydney's 1.5 million-plus at those cities' main New Year's Eve events.

The heated debate in Germany has since morphed into a broader political and cultural argument about citizen freedoms — on par with the country's decades-long dispute over imposing a speed limit on the Autobahn.

In the wake of last year's Silvester, Germany's former justice minister Marco Buschmann said in January that a complete ban on private fireworks would equate to "collective punishment."

"Once a year, people should be given the freedom to observe this tradition," he told German media group RedaktionsNetzwerk Deutschland at the time.

Private fireworks are banned year-round in Germany, except for a short window around New Year's Eve. By midafternoon on Dec. 31, the first explosions echo through Berlin neighborhoods. Dog owners unable to escape the city squeeze in a final long walk of the year. By dusk, firecrackers — known as "böller" — explode on sidewalks, forcing pedestrians to dodge stray sparks as they hurry home, or toward parties. The advice to newcomers and visitors is simple: If you don't have to go out, don't. Navigating parts of the city center becomes nearly impossible as midnight approaches.

As the clock strikes 12, the sky erupts in cascades of color as



Fireworks light up the sky above the Quadriga at the Brandenburg Gate during New Year's celebrations shortly after midnight in Berlin on Jan. 1, 2025.

EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

rockets streak overhead. But beneath the spectacle, the oohs and aahs of onlookers are drowned out by sirens and the concussive booms of illegal pyrotechnics. What begins as celebration often curdles into what some residents describe as a night of terror. Even watching from a balcony can be a gamble, as stray fireworks whiz by, sometimes landing on terraces and even setting entire apartments ablaze.

To many Germans, the fireworks are a menace. To some newcomers, they can pose an even greater risk. In December 2015, months after hundreds of thousands of Syrian asylum seekers arrived in Germany, authorities warned that excessive fireworks could retraumatize refugees suffering from post-traumatic stress from the war they had

just fled.

By early New Year's Day, a gray smog hangs over Berlin, and streets are littered with spent shells and debris.

The debate over banning private pyrotechnics is as much a part of modern Silvester as the fireworks themselves. A recent Forsa poll found that about 60 percent of Germans would support a ban on private fireworks on New Year's Eve. Now,

low thousands of people to be injured every year for the amusement of a very small minority, cities to be buried in particulate matter, and millions of animals to flee in panic," Jürgen Resch, federal managing director of Environmental Action Germany, said in a statement.

Animal welfare advocates emphasize the toll on wildlife and pets. "Every year, New Year's Eve fireworks cause stress and mortal fear for thousands of animals — pets, wild animals and farm animals experience days of extreme distress around the turn of the year due to the loud explosions, flashes of light and dense smoke," said Volker Gaßner, managing director of Four Paws Germany.

"The number of firecrackers

and rockets imported into Germany is at a record high this year, promising a particularly horrific and distressing night," he added.

Both petitions were submitted to the state Interior Ministers' Conference in early December to spur legislative change, but states less affected by firework-related violence have been reluctant to act. A nationwide ban would require changes to the federal Explosives Ordinance, and interior ministers have yet to agree. Critics say a blanket ban would be difficult to enforce, legally complicated, socially unpopular and ineffective at curbing violence.

But it's what happens on hospital floors and city streets that has sharpened the debate. Berlin created several small firework-free zones after years of injuries, fires and attacks on emergency workers in densely built neighborhoods. The restrictions aim to protect residents, reduce risks from crowds and narrow streets, and limit extreme noise where celebrations have repeatedly spun out of control. But emergency services still find themselves in the line of fire, with 58 such cases recorded last Silvester. In total, Berlin police recorded 1,453 New Year's Eve-related crimes a year ago — 125 more than the previous year.

The operation requires months of preparation. In 2024, roughly 3,000 police officers and 1,500 firefighters were deployed across the capital.

Despite calling for a blanket ban, German Police Union chief Kopelke acknowledged that many people want a peaceful firework celebration, especially in quieter suburbs.

"A calm New Year's Eve with the neighborhood is something wonderful," he said. "But for the police, New Year's Eve is extremely difficult."

He advocates rethinking the tradition: "We have to find a way to redesign New Year's Eve with a

firework ban — while creating legal alternatives so people can still celebrate safely."

Hospitals like Berlin's Accident Hospital are bracing for another busy night. Georg Osterhoff, director of trauma surgery and orthopedics, recalls his first Silvester shift nearly two decades ago. "The hand surgeon cried because she was simply overwhelmed by the number of patients who came and by some of the images you see," he said.

"Even for us as experienced surgeons, a mangled hand or a shattered face, especially in children, is something that is very distressing," Osterhoff said. The hospital reinforces staff by about 20 percent for the night.

Despite his frontline experience, Osterhoff is skeptical that a blanket ban would solve the problem. "Personally, I believe that a ban won't change the fact that some people don't follow the rules," he said. "And the rule already exists, so the vast majority of blast injuries we see are a result of improper, rule-breaking behavior, and therefore I believe that a ban wouldn't achieve much."

Opponents of a ban argue that critics focus too narrowly on violence, ignoring the social value of Silvester fireworks. Germany's Federal Association for Pyrotechnics and Artistic Fireworks rejects a blanket ban, instead calling for stricter enforcement against illegal devices and better safety education.

"We live in societies that are highly individualized, digitized, and where direct physical contact plays an increasingly smaller role," said Felix Martens, head of the association. On New Year's Eve, "we see our neighbors, greet them, wish them a happy new year and, above all, look together at this illuminated sky. And I think if that were to disappear, we would lose one of those very rare moments of social harmony."



Berlin paramedics guide high school students through an exercise in which a person hit by a firecracker is taken to a trauma room for treatment, during an awareness day at a hospital on Dec. 18.

DIGEST

SOMALIA

Protests after Israel recognizes Somaliland

Tens of thousands of Somalis gathered across the country Tuesday to protest Israel's recognition of the breakaway region of Somaliland, a move condemned by more than 20 countries as an attack on the East African nation's sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud arrived in Turkey on Tuesday for talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, following Israel's announcement.

At a U.N. Security Council emergency meeting Monday, Somalia protested the recognition, saying it poses

regional security issues. The Israeli representative decried those comments as a double standard because other nations have recognized a state of Palestine.

Somaliland, a territory of more than 3 million people in the Horn of Africa, declared independence from Somalia in 1991 during a period of conflict that left the country fragile. Despite having its own government and currency, Somaliland had never been recognized by any nation until Israel did so Friday.

In the Somali capital, Mogadishu, crowds gathered at the main stadium for a rally led by prominent religious figures who condemned Israel's recognition and called for unity in defense of Somalia's territorial

integrity. Similar protests were reported in other towns.

The combined demonstrations marked the largest turnout of protesters since Israel's declaration.

— Associated Press

SOUTH AFRICA

Circumcision rituals blamed in 41 deaths

At least 41 young men have died as a result of circumcision procedures as part of traditional initiation activities in South Africa in November and December, authorities said Tuesday.

Traditionally, young men are isolated at initiation schools, where they are taught cultural

values and responsibilities as they become adults. The circumcision part of the initiation results every year in the deaths of some initiates, forcing the government to intervene through legislation.

The laws force initiation schools to be registered with authorities, but this has not stopped the proliferation of illegal initiation schools where many of the deaths are reported. Initiation periods typically run during winter (June-July) and summer (November-December) school holidays.

South Africa's traditional affairs minister, Velenkosini Hlabisa, told local broadcasters Tuesday that 41 initiates died during this year's summer initiation. He blamed negligence

on the part of both the initiation schools, including registered ones, and parents for not adhering to safety standards and medical advice.

Eastern Cape Province has been identified as a hot spot for the death of initiates, totaling 21 so far.

Hlabisa said 41 people have been arrested in relation to illegal initiation schools, including parents who supplied wrong ages for their children to be admitted.

— Associated Press

The number of shootings in Sweden has more than halved since hitting a peak in 2022, reflecting new policing approaches introduced by the right-wing government. Shooting incidents fell to 147 so far this

year, a 49 percent decrease compared with 2024. The number of fatalities, however, was unchanged from last year at 43.

Israel says it is suspending humanitarian organizations

that have failed to meet its new rules to vet international groups working in the Gaza Strip. They include some of the world's most prominent and outspoken aid organizations, including Doctors Without Borders. The suspension begins Jan. 1. International organizations have said Israel's rules are arbitrary and could endanger staff. Israel has accused militant groups of operating under the cover of international organizations, something the groups deny.

— From news sources

Persian Gulf tensions spike with bombing of Yemen port

Saudi strike on alleged UAE weapons shipment indicates emerging rift

BY CLAIRE PARKER
AND ABBIE CHEESEMAN

Saudi Arabia carried out an airstrike on the southern Yemen port city of Mukalla early Tuesday, targeting what it described as weapons shipments bound for a separatist force backed by the United Arab Emirates that has moved to consolidate further control of southern Yemen in recent weeks.

The strike marked an unprecedented escalation of tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, two Persian Gulf heavyweights that are ostensibly aligned in the fight against the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen but whose goals in that war-torn country, and the wider region, have increasingly diverged.

Saudi Arabia "stresses that any threat to its national security is a red line, and the Kingdom will not hesitate to take all necessary steps and measures to confront any such threat," its Foreign Ministry said in a statement Tuesday, in a sharp rebuke of its erstwhile ally.

Brig. Gen. Turki al-Malki, a spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition of forces backing Yemen's internationally recognized government, said the strike was conducted after two ships that departed from the Emirati port of Fujairah arrived in Mukalla without permits over the weekend and turned off their transponders.

"The port was closed and all local workers and employees were evacuated," Malki said, after which the ships' crew members unloaded "a large quantity of weapons and armored vehicles." He said the weapons were destined for the separatist Southern Transitional Council in the eastern provinces of Hadramawt and Mahra and that Saudi authorities warned "high-level officials in the UAE" against allowing the transfer to move forward.

When they didn't comply, Malki said, "the Coalition Air Forces conducted a limited military operation targeting weapons and combat vehicles unloaded from the two ships at the port of Al-Mukalla." Videos circulating on social media and verified by Storyful show smoke rising from the blackened husks of several military vehicles at the port.

In a statement Tuesday, the UAE Foreign Ministry disputed Saudi Arabia's characterization



Damaged military vehicles are seen Tuesday after a Saudi airstrike on the southern Yemen port city of Mukalla.

AFP/GTET IMAGES

of its role in Yemen and rejected claims that it had pressured "any Yemeni party to carry out military operations" that threaten Saudi Arabia or its borders.

The statement expressed surprise at the strike and denied that the shipment to Yemen had contained weapons. It said the vehicles within were not destined for "any Yemeni party" but rather for UAE forces in Yemen. Later, the UAE Defense Ministry said it was planning to pull its remaining counterterrorism teams from Yemen. The UAE withdrew most of its troops from the country in 2019.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with his Saudi counterpart about developments in Yemen, the department's deputy spokesman, Tommy Pigott, said in a statement Tuesday.

The Trump administration has mostly remained quiet as tensions between its gulf allies heated up in recent weeks. On Friday, Rubio said the United States was "concerned by recent events in southeastern Yemen."

"We urge restraint and continued diplomacy, with a view to reaching a lasting solution," he said in a statement.

The escalation comes after STC forces swept across Hadramawt

and Mahra earlier this month, driving out Saudi-backed forces in a takeover of vast swaths of Yemen that border Saudi Arabia and Oman. The STC, established in 2017, is part of the Presidential Leadership Council, an uneasy alliance of political figures in southern Yemen that together form the executive body of the internationally recognized government.

Members of the council — and their Persian Gulf backers — share the aim of countering the Houthis, the Iranian-backed rebel movement that took control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014, sparking a civil war. But Saudi Arabia supports a unified Yemen, while the Emirati-backed STC seeks to reestablish a separate state in southern Yemen that existed for about two decades before its dissolution in 1990.

The STC's lightning offensive this month appeared to have caught Saudi Arabia by surprise, and tensions continued to simmer as Saudi Arabia weighed its response.

Late last week, Saudi Arabia hit an area of Hadramawt where STC forces were attempting to advance, in what Saudi-aligned media described as a "warning airstrike." On Saturday, Malki

threatened that the Saudi-led coalition would intervene unless the STC withdraws from the territory it seized.

Last-ditch diplomatic efforts to contain the crisis failed, Ahmed Nagi, a senior Yemen analyst for the International Crisis Group, said in a phone interview after meeting last week with Saudi and Yemeni officials in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

The Saudi statement Tuesday, in which Riyadh directly accused the Emirati government of being behind the STC offensive, was the most strongly worded warning to the UAE from the kingdom to date.

"The steps taken by the UAE are considered highly dangerous, inconsistent with the principles upon which the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen was established, and do not serve the coalition's purpose of achieving security and stability for Yemen," it said, referring to the Saudi-led military coalition.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry also endorsed Tuesday a call from Yemen's internationally recognized government for Emirati forces to leave the country within 24 hours, demanding the UAE "halt any military or financial support to any party within Ye-

men."

President Rashad al-Alimi, the Riyadh-backed head of the internationally recognized government, canceled a joint defense agreement with the UAE, declared a 90-day state of emergency in Yemen, and announced an air, sea and land embargo on all ports and border crossings for 72 hours. He called on all forces in Hadramawt and Mahra to withdraw and hand over their positions to a Saudi-backed force.

Four members of the Presidential Leadership Council condemned Alimi's moves to cancel the defense pact and expel Emirati forces from the country.

Hisham al-Jabri, chief of staff for one of the council members, Faraj Salmin al-Bahsani, said in a text message that he expected Tuesday's strike to accelerate efforts by the STC to declare an independent state in southern Yemen.

The emerging rift between Saudi Arabia and the UAE would be consequential for the region, according to Farea Al-Muslimi, a research fellow at Chatham House, a London-based think tank.

"They are countries that are powerful," he said. "They have weapons. They have no parlia-

ments. There is no way to hold them accountable, and they have big egos. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have never gone after each other like this in the past. This is very dangerous."

While Saudi Arabia and the UAE "share a close strategic alignment with the U.S." said Adam Baron, future security fellow at New America, a D.C.-based think tank, "their own regional strategies have increasingly clashed with each other."

"We've seen this in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia," he said in a phone interview. "We've seen this in the Red Sea, and now we're seeing the — far from inevitable and, as of yet, still relatively limited — conflagration of these tensions."

Those differing regional strategies have publicly come to a head on multiple fronts in recent weeks, Baron said, pointing to recent developments in Sudan and Somalia. President Donald Trump said last month that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had requested that Washington work toward a solution to the conflict in Sudan, where Riyadh and the UAE government back opposing forces.

Israel's formal recognition last week of Somaliland, a breakaway region that seceded from Somalia more than three decades ago, is also likely to have incentivized Riyadh to rebalance power dynamics, Baron said. The UAE maintains a military presence there and abstained from an Arab League statement condemning Israel's move.

Arab states — and the broader international community — are likely to take Saudi Arabia's side in Yemen, Muslimi said.

An early sign of support came in the form of a statement Tuesday from Ahmed Aboul Gheit, secretary general of the Arab League. It expressed "profound concern over the rapidly escalating and dangerous developments," including the STC's "failure to respond" to the Saudi-backed government's demands.

Oman, which borders Mahra in southeastern Yemen, also called Tuesday for de-escalation and dialogue to resolve the crisis.

In Yemen, Muslimi said, ordinary citizens will pay the price as regional powers pursue their own aims.

"Yemenis will continue to be caught in the middle of enemies — and even worse, of friends," he said.

Parker reported from Dublin and Cheeseman from Beirut. Suzan Haidamous in Beirut, Heba Farouk Mahfouz in Cairo and Adam Taylor in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump sends Israeli 'wartime prime minister' into election year with a boost

Leaders' Mideast-focused visit was also a domestic power play for Netanyahu

BY LOVEDAY MORRIS
AND LIOR SOROKA

Standing side-by-side with President Donald Trump outside his residence in Palm Beach, Florida, dressed in a twinning suit and tie, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu grinned as the U.S. leader responded to a question from a reporter about whether his Israeli counterpart should be pardoned in his trial for bribery and fraud.

"He's a wartime prime minister who is a hero," Trump said. "How do you not give a pardon? I think it's a very hard thing not to do it."

While the meeting on Monday at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate focused on pressing Middle East issues such as Iran and Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza, for Netanyahu, it was also a domestic power play.

The premier's visit to the United States, which is expected to conclude on Thursday, paused his cross-examination in Case 4000, in which Netanyahu is charged with bribery and fraud for allegedly advancing regulatory decisions in exchange for favorable press coverage. Netanyahu has denied all charges and described the case as a "witch hunt."

The trip also gave Netanyahu a public relations boost ahead of elections in Israel in the new year. They will be the first since the Hamas-led attacks on Oct. 7, 2023, which shattered his security credentials in the eyes of much of the public. During their joint news conference, Trump repeatedly praised Netanyahu, saying that if there had been another leader in place on Oct. 7, it's possible "Israel would not exist" right now.



President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Mar-a-Lago on Monday.

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

"Trump gave him his campaign for the next elections," Gershon Baskin, an Israeli commentator and former back-channel negotiator with Hamas, said of Trump's praise, describing the news conference as "bewildering."

"All he has to do is keep repeating: 'Without Netanyahu, Israel doesn't exist,'" Baskin said.

Netanyahu's critics have accused him of dragging out regional conflicts and amping up alleged threats from Iran to distract from his legal woes and the deeper probing of the security failings that led to the Hamas attacks.

Out of 60 scheduled hearings since Netanyahu's trial testimony officially began in June, only 15 have gone ahead without being canceled or cut short, according to a count by Israeli newspaper Haaretz. The prime minister has blamed ongoing conflicts or security concerns for canceling more

than a dozen sessions.

But ever a political survivor, Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, has managed to cling to his position as a seemingly endless slew of domestic scandals and investigations have nipped at his heels.

In recent days, Israeli media outlets have published reports detailing what they said were missed warnings from Egypt about the security situation in Gaza ahead of Oct. 7. At the same time, what is known in Israel as "Qatargate" — an allegation that members of the prime minister's office were paid by Qatar to promote its interests — has returned to haunt Netanyahu as potential new details were leaked online.

Opposition politicians in Israel have described the Qatar-related accusation as an act of treason and demanded Netanyahu's resignation.

Ahead of the meeting in Florida, there was an expectation that "Trump is going to let Bibi have it"

over Gaza, said Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the United States. But the appearance by the two leaders appeared to be "pretty much a love fest," he said.

Oren said one of the most remarkable comments came from Trump when he pledged potential military action against Iran. "I hope they're not trying to build up again," Trump said of Tehran's missile arsenal. The U.S. also carried out strikes against Iranian nuclear sites in June. "Because if they are, we're going to have no choice but very quickly to eradicate that buildup," he said.

Despite criticism from his MAGA base that he is prioritizing foreign policy over domestic issues, "Trump put a credible military threat back on the table," Oren said, adding that Netanyahu's decision to tell Trump he had been awarded the Israel Prize, the state's highest cultural honor, appealed to the president's ego.

"It's one of these Bibi strokes of brilliance that he does occasionally," Oren said, employing a commonly used nickname for Netanyahu.

The prime minister is legally obliged to hold elections this year. His right-wing Likud party took a beating in public opinion polls after Oct. 7, but has clawed its way back to the top spot, with a slim lead over its nearest rival.

"Netanyahu will conduct polls over the weekend, and if the needle moves even slightly, I believe he will trigger elections," said Gayil Talshir, a political scientist at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. "He won't find a better jumping-off point than this."

But while his appearance with Trump appeared outwardly as a win for Netanyahu, it was unclear exactly what took place at the meeting behind closed doors. Trump said that Hamas would be given a "very short period to disarm," or there would be "hell to pay" if the militant group did not comply. Other countries, he said,

are prepared to go in and "wipe them out."

Trump has struggled, however, to get countries to sign onto a stabilization force for Gaza, which would monitor the enclave's demilitarization. The few nations that have expressed some willingness to join were clear that they do not want to confront Hamas.

Still, the president and his team are committed to rolling out the next phase of the plan and establishing a Palestinian technocratic committee for Gaza, Baskin said.

On Iran, while Trump said he would support military action, he also said that the missile buildup was not confirmed.

"The American method is to provide public backing while dictating what will happen behind closed doors, and in my estimation, that is exactly what occurred," Talshir said. Netanyahu has little ability to resist U.S. demands conveyed behind the scenes, she said.

"Excessive compliments come with a price," Yossi Verter, a political analyst and columnist at Haaretz, wrote.

He pointed to Trump's break with Netanyahu on the role of Turkey in Gaza. Israel is adamantly opposed to allowing Turkish forces enter the enclave as part of the stabilization force. But Trump waved away those concerns, saying Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is "a very good friend of mine."

"I do respect him and Bibi respects him, and they're not going to have a problem," he said.

In the meantime, Netanyahu invited Trump to Israel to receive his award in April, an opportunity for the prime minister to get another boost for his campaign, critics said.

"It will be a massive festival, which Netanyahu will milk for all it's worth," Verter wrote. "Just a few months before the elections,"

Chinese monument in Panama toppled amid canal tussle

Washington, Beijing have exerted influence over the key waterway

BY TEO ARMUS

A scenic historical monument overlooking the Panama Canal appears to have become the latest casualty in President Donald Trump's simmering contest with China for influence over the key waterway.

The small park meant to honor the Central American nation's large ethnic Chinese population had been slowly decaying, despite the objections of community leaders. Its crumbling obelisk and taped-off friendship arch became a symbol of Panama's shift away from Beijing under pressure from Washington.

Now, local authorities have toppled both structures.

The Mirador de las Américas was torn down late Saturday night under municipal orders, sparking an end-of-year scandal in Panama that has roped in Chinese foreign officials and prompted the Panamanian president to call for an investigation.

The episode has further escalated tensions in Panama over foreign influence by the United States and China over the canal, which serves as a key waterway for some 40 percent of U.S. container traffic.

Trump in January repeatedly claimed that Beijing runs the waterway and vowed to "take back" control — including by force, if necessary.

Stefany Peñalba, the mayor of the bedroom community where the overlook is located, characterized the decision to take down the monument as a technical, preventative measure and said it was "not in response to any political pressure."

But Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino, who vowed to probe Peñalba over the legality of the incident, called it an "unforgivable, irrational act" in a statement that echoed some of the concerns lodged by China's Foreign Ministry.

Panama's Chinese community has "been established in our country for generations and deserves



ENEAL LEBRUN/REUTERS

What remains of the monument that stood to honor Panama's ethnic Chinese population, seen Monday. The fixture overlooking the Panama Canal was removed Saturday.

our full respect," he wrote on social media on Monday.

The U.S. Embassy in Panama and the State Department did not respond to requests for comment.

In Panama, Mulino has pushed back against some of Trump's most aggressive rhetoric on the canal but generally aligned himself with the United States.

Over the summer, he rejected the notion that the overlook site was getting roped into geopolitical tensions — even as he and his top officials have taken moves to align themselves with Washington.

After Secretary of State Marco Rubio threatened action over the canal, Panama in February became the first Latin American

country to pull out of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's signature foreign infrastructure program.

His government made deals to let the U.S. take down telecommunications towers owned by a Chinese company and to allow U.S. military forces to return to three largely vacant training facilities near the waterway.

That agreement, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said, was meant to keep Panama from "capitulating to coercion by the communist Chinese."

The canal was built by the U.S. and controlled by Washington until 1999, when it was handed over to an independent authority linked to the Panamanian government.

At his inaugural address, Trump accused Panama of charging U.S. ships and firms higher fees to transit the canal — a claim the authority denies.

Neither he nor his ambassador to Panama have explicitly brought up the overlook site, but some Chinese Panamanian community leaders raised skepticism about how that geopolitical battle might be influencing the fate of the monument — and, as a consequence, their ethnic community's standing.

Peñalba, the mayor, posted renderings earlier this year of the canal overlook on Instagram showing the park without the arch or obelisk. When Chinese Panamanian community groups sent

multiple pleas seeking permission to repair the site, she did not answer.

Tony Jiang, the president of one such group, the Fayen Beneficiary Society, said the monument's removal seemed to confirm their worst fears.

"This monument belongs to the Panamanian people. She doesn't have the right to change Panamanian history," he told local news reporters by the overlook the night it was toppled. "For us as Panamanians of Chinese descent, it's painful. For all Panamanians, it's painful."

Groups like his have walked a fine line — and sometimes faced internal divisions — between separating themselves entirely from

Beijing and advocating for Beijing's political or economic presence in Panama, particularly because some members maintain business ties to China.

But his words appeared to echo those of the Chinese ambassador to Panama, Xu Xueyuan, who said the fallout over the monument's removal was "at once indignant and inspiring" and suggested it could help boost Chinese influence in Panama.

The pushback from Mulino and others had shown "the national will and generous culture in Panama of respecting history and valuing diversity and solidarity," she said in a statement. "As the Chinese proverb says: Fortune and misfortune go hand in hand."

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PHOTOS BY FRANCESCA EBEL/THE WASHINGTON POST

Dysfunction, paranoia seep into Russian society

RUSSIA FROM A1

end... It feels like it's only just begun."

Scenes like this one remain invisible to most Russians, erased by state propaganda and glossy government projects supporting returning veterans. But inside the country, fatigue and resentment are festering beneath the suppression of dissent.

There is no outlet for public frustration and no relief from the mounting national exhaustion with a nearly four-year-long war that is corroding the country from within and making society more dysfunctional, broken and paranoid, according to observers and those interviewed for this article.

Over the past year, the Russian economy has lurched from spectacular growth to near stagnation. Russia's digital repression and isolation are deepening as more apps and platforms are banned. According to Western intelligence, more than a million Russian fighters have been killed or wounded — many in battles for marginal gains. And as Moscow's search for internal enemies intensifies, its machine of repression is turning on its own children and patriots.

During Russian President Vladimir Putin's meeting with his Human Rights Council this month, film director Alexander Sokurov spoke out against censorship, the country's suffocating foreign agent laws, the rising cost of living and the lack of opportunities for young people. "If Russia doesn't change how it works with young people, it faces a dead end," he said. Putin said he would respond later to his grievances.

A former senior Kremlin official told The Post that he was "very worried" about the dark picture inside Russia."

"We can't turn the clock back easily; political will is needed to reverse this, and it simply does not exist," the former official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss sensitive matters.

Bearing the brunt

In Belgorod, a Russian border city that once enjoyed close links to Ukraine's Kharkiv — just 46 miles to the southwest — the price of this war is particularly tangible.

Daily drone attacks have long become part of the routine here. Mud-spattered ambulances and camouflaged air-defense units tear through the center of town. The city's volunteer networks — an integral part of the war effort that has supported the troops with clothing, food and equipment where the government has failed — continue to work around-the-clock, with retirees sewing anti-drone netting and 3D-printing plastic bomb casings for drones.

Despite the suffering and mass destruction taking place just across the border, Belgorod regards itself as the main victim of this war. The city illustrates the widening gap in Russian society between the indifferent, metropolitan majority and the "warring" few.

On a cold November afternoon, a group of volunteers helping deliver supplies to the army huddled around a table to eat soup. They told The Post that they felt abandoned by Moscow.

"They have absolutely no idea what is going on here!" exploded Edik, 52. "In Moscow there

FROM TOP:
Wounded Russian soldiers stop at a volunteer kitchen in Olkhovatka, Russia, on Nov. 20 on their way to the hospital. Most were missing feet or a leg.
Active-duty Russian soldiers outside a warehouse deliver aid and support to the front line in Belgorod, Russia. Volunteer networks in Belgorod, a border city, work around-the-clock to support the war effort.
Dmitry, a deputy commander of a grenade-launcher platoon, says Russia will fight "with sticks, if necessary."



are parties, people having fun, going on vacations. How is that possible? Here blood is being spilled, and there they're celebrating. How can they reconcile that?"

Several volunteers said they had noticed a lull in donations since the start of the year, as many expected the war to end soon. Yevgenia Gribova, 35, who coordinates a center in Belgorod, said the volunteer movement is facing a crisis. In the first year, she said, people were spending the last of their rubles to support the troops, working constantly, without days off or vacation.

"Now people want to rest. They want to spend money on themselves rather than on materials for the front lines," she said.

But while people said they want to see an end to the conflict, some also spoke of their desire to keep fighting and the need to end the war under the "right" conditions.

"Everyone still wants to take Odesa. It's a

common opinion: People want to go to Odesa on vacation again," Gribova said. "For us, this is a civil war between Russians and Russians who have forgotten a bit that they are Russians, that's all."

Belgorod and residents of Russia's regions bordering Ukraine form part of what pro-Kremlin sociologist Valery Fyodorov, the director of VCIOM polling institution, has defined as "warring Russia": a minority of the country — roughly 20 percent — consisting of soldiers, their families, patriotic volunteers and workers in military factories who consider the war vital for Russia's survival and who are pushing for victory. The rest, he says, are either passively loyal, indifferent to the war, opposed to it but taking refuge in their private lives, or living in exile.

Dmitry, a deputy commander of a grenade-launcher platoon in Russia's 116th special purpose brigade, said that Russia would fight

for a very long time and "with sticks, if necessary."

"Everyone wants to go home. Everyone wants all of this to end. But even tired people carry out their tasks," he said.

Return of the heroes

How does a nation sell to its people a war that is destroying the country — and how does it ensure that it continues?

To keep the war effort rolling and to stave off discontent, the Kremlin has poured money into projects supporting soldiers and veterans, including the nationwide Defender of the Fatherland State Foundation, which was established in 2023 by Putin and is led by his niece, Deputy Defense Minister Anna Tsivaleva.

For their sacrifice, soldiers are rewarded with financial benefits, social prestige, and significant employment and education opportunities for themselves and their children.

Denis Poltavsky lost the sight in his right eye after he was swarmed by drones in battle last year. Unwilling to share many details about his time on the front, Poltavsky said he suffered from extreme PTSD, haunted by nightmares and insomnia.

But without a doubt, he says his life has materially improved since returning home. "The support is very extensive. The state is doing everything for veterans and soldiers. ... They didn't abandon us. They keep track of you and provide everything."

Poltavsky was paid an initial \$51,000 for his injury, plus insurance and a military pension. He has access to free transport, and tickets to museums and theaters. He recently completed Belgorod's Time of Our Heroes management and leadership training, and hopes to soon receive a grant for his metalworking business.

Veterans also have access to round-the-clock support from psychologists, doctors, caregivers and volunteers; they are given tax breaks and secure employment, even with disabilities. Belgorod's program is even offering veterans free land on which to build a





PHOTOS BY FRANCESCA EBEL/THE WASHINGTON POST



FROM TOP:
Schoolchildren visit an exhibition glorifying the air defenses of Belgorod, Russia. Volunteers sew anti-drone nets and pack pillows in Belgorod. Several volunteers said they had noticed a lull in donations since the start of the year, as many expected the war to end soon. Denis Poltavsky, who lost sight in his right eye in battle last year, says his life has materially improved since he returned home to Russia.

the guitarist, fist-bumped one of his friends as he exited the courthouse. Officially, they stood accused of blocking the entrance to a metro station during an impromptu street concert this autumn, but their true crime was their viral performances of anti-war songs.

To many, the consequences of Stoptime's performances were inevitable. But the young musicians' case sent a chill through this still-liberal Baltic city, where street performances are an integral part of local culture.

Copycat acts and musicians performing in solidarity with the imprisoned band members in the Urals and other cities in Russia were also arrested and charged as security services moved swiftly to crack down on the slightest flicker of dissent. Now, even singing the wrong kind of music can get you jailed, a development many regard as a return to the days of the Soviet Union.

The hearing in St. Petersburg was tense, at times Kafkaesque, as the defense lawyer unpacked the details of the performance in question. "There are approximately 47 meters between the entrance to the metro and the spot where they were performing. It is therefore impossible that the people who stood in a circle around Stoptime could have blocked that space," she said.

Loginova, known by her stage name, Naoko, spent the last 20 minutes in the courtroom clasping her mother's hands. "I really hope this is the last time they arrest me," she whispered. Irina, her mother, smiled and held her daughter close, looking dazed. "Don't you remember that they said that they would let you go on the first night? It's now been a month."

What made Stoptime's rebellious music performances so striking was that they came at a time when free, creative spaces and opportunities to escape are fading fast.

"The very fact that they performed such songs was captivating," said Ivan, 26, a history teacher, who attended many of their performances. "It was like an echo of normal life in our time. These are songs you want to listen to: They are kind, they're meaningful, they promote universal human values, they remind that you can overcome things."

He said in Russia right now the state is trying to build a strict loyalty based on behaving a certain way "in order to simply exist." Around him he's watched people accept a situation they were once horrified by and shift into a survival mode.

On Nov. 23, the Stoptime musicians were secretly and unexpectedly released, and they immediately fled the country. They were spotted in early December in Yerevan, Armenia, still performing the same opposition songs that got them arrested.

Others have not been so lucky.

Tatiana Balazeikina's 19-year-old son, Yegor, is three years into his seven-year sentence for terrorism after he attempted to throw a molotov cocktail at a local military registration office in 2023. Yegor is one of hundreds of teenagers and children arrested for anti-war protests, sabotage or treason since the war.

"Stoptime were singing what so many people already had on the tip of their tongues," said Balazeikina from her home an hour south of St. Petersburg. "This is dissent. And the only way for this state to remain what it is to cut off all these signs of dissent right at the root."

She believes young people present a special kind of threat to the Kremlin.

"These young people who essentially have nothing to lose except their freedom are very dangerous," she said. "And if those young people are not only capable of thinking but can also sing what they think ... that's an even bigger threat."

Natalia Abbakumova in Riga, Latvia, contributed to this report.

house.

Middlebury College professor Will Pyle, who studies Russia's economy, has found that in some regions a larger share of Russians report being satisfied with their lives than at any time during the decade preceding the February 2022 invasion. The finding is based on analysis of data from the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, which is maintained by Moscow's Higher School of Economics.

According to Pyle's research, conducted with the Bank of Finland, the increase in reported life satisfaction is especially pronounced in regions whose economies have benefited from wartime and military-adjacent industrial production.

This mirrors Fyodorov's research. "The more depressed the region, the more people have noticed their improvement in life," he said.

But underneath the lionizing of the soldiers and this temporary uptick in prosperity is the darker impact of returning veterans and the longer-term social consequences of the invasion. Already, horrific murders, rapes and crimes have been committed by returning soldiers, and many of the convicted criminals who signed contracts to win their freedom have returned home to commit more crimes.

"Every governor in Russia knows that a wave of problems is coming with the soldiers returning home from the front with serious post-traumatic stress disorder," said a Kremlin insider, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. "And they know the responsibility to deal with this will fall to them."

The patriots and the teens

Since the start of the war, Russia has gone after its dissenters, pursuing LGBTQ+ people, artists and opposition figures, and made criticism of the conflict and the military illegal. But now, some of the state's most fervent supporters are running into trouble as well.

The vocal, ultrapatriotic "Z" military bloggers, initially a backbone of support for

Putin's invasion, have gone on to criticize corruption and shortcomings in the army. The most radical of their leaders, such as ultranationalist hawk Igor Strelkov, were initially jailed. But this fall, they saw their ranks swept by an unexpected purge as the whole movement became the focus of repression.

In September, authorities branded Roman Alyokhin, a prominent blogger with 151,000 subscribers on Telegram, a foreign agent, a label usually reserved for liberal opposition figures. In October, blogger Tatyana Montyan was declared "terrorist and extremist." Another, Oksana Kobeleva, was detained by the police. All had publicly criticized senior officials or other propagandists. The Z community has since turned on itself, with bloggers racing to denounce one another.

The moment of unity did not last very long, and after almost four years, we are

seeing how people begin to oppose each other as well, deciding which of them is more patriotic," said military blogger Mikhail Zvinchuk, the founder of the Rybar Telegram channel, which has links to the Defense Ministry.

He added that the movement became corrupt and embezzled funds that were raised to support the troops. "Over the years, there have been a number of crooks who are trying to exploit the war."

In Russia's second city of St. Petersburg, security services have found a different target: teenagers.

At the Izmaysky courthouse last month, masked police officers escorted two teenage musicians from their hearing to the secret service cars waiting outside. The pair, 18-year-olds Diana Loginova and Alexander Orlov — from the street band Stoptime — had just had their arrest extended for a third time. Orlov,



How the global right is pulling from the militaristic, and flawed, ancient Sparta

WorldView

ISHAAN THAROOR
Faced with increasing pressure from much of the world over Israel's bombardment of Gaza and the sprawling humanitarian disaster that resulted, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invoked a vision of a vanished Greek city-state.

With some Western governments restricting weapons transfers to Israel, the country must adopt a "super Sparta" mentality in the face of increasing isolation, summoning the famed self-reliance and martial resolve of ancient Sparta to boost the Israeli arms industry and hunker down, Netanyahu said in a September address.

But that was not the complete vision he set out: "We're going to be Athens and super Sparta combined," he said, unwilling to abandon entirely the more enlightened, democratic mythos of Sparta's historical rival.

The emphasis on "super Sparta" stuck in the news cycle and provoked a backlash. Netanyahu was laying out a vision for a more militarized society that, like Sparta, would also be more closed to the outside world. His Israeli opponents despaired for what that would entail.

Even if Sparta's autarky — its lack of a reliance on trade and economic ties to others — underlay its fierce reputation, that's hardly a virtue in a globalized age, critics in Israel argued. Instead, they viewed it as a recipe for decline. Their contention, like Netanyahu's own reach for Sparta's legacy, has a long lineage. Writing in the Federalist Papers in 1787, as U.S. Founding Fathers debated the shape of their new polity against precedents in classical antiquity, Alexander Hamilton scoffed at the example of Sparta as "little better than a well-regulated camp," addicted to war and lacking the economic vigor needed for a successful, sovereign republic.

Heading into 2026, there's still something curiously potent about the allusion to Sparta. In many countries, the steady advance of illiberal, right-wing nationalist politics has come with border walls and military budgets to match. The waning of the postwar "rules-based" order and the apparent retreat of globalization — sped, in part, by President Donald Trump's trade wars — has returned us to a kind of "Spartan" moment, some analysts say.

Swedish economic historian Johan Norberg's new book, "Peak Human: What We Can Learn From the Rise and Fall of Golden Ages," points to the eternal clash of Spartan and Athenian ideals. "The Greek historians talked about the Athenians always going out to explore, to acquire something new, to trade," he said of the city-state remembered for seeding trade routes and amassing



ILLUSTRATION BY ZACHARY BALCOFF/THE WASHINGTON POST; ISTOCK

maritime power across the eastern Mediterranean. "The opposite is the Spartan ideal that you stay at home to try to protect what you already have." The latter, he argued, is "a very appealing idea in times of trouble, when the world seems like a dangerous place."

A sense of peril stalks the political discourse in the West and elsewhere. The White House and ideological fellow travelers in Europe cast migrants and the feckless liberal establishments that welcomed them as the drivers of a "civilizational" crisis. Myths of Sparta shadow that rhetoric.

Some rioters who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, wore Sparta-themed helmets. They also flew flags emblazoned with the Spartan idiom "Molon Labe" — the laconic phrase that means "come and take it," popularized through generations of Hollywood films that tell the story of Spartan defiance of a Persian emperor who would have them surrender their weapons. Almost 25 centuries after 300 Spartan hoplites and their allies tried to thwart the advance of the Persians at the Battle of Thermopylae, their sacrifice is still a canonical event in the Western imagination — and a constant font of memes for the West's far right.

U.S. gun rights activists invoke "Molon Labe" as a slogan, a rejection of anyone who would contravene their Second Amendment freedoms. Martin Sellner, the Austrian neofascist who helped popularize the concept of "remigration" — that is, the mass removal or deportation of non-White

migrants, whatever their status, echoed by Trump and other right-wing leaders — adopted a "Spartan shield" as the image of his movement. In 2022, Don Bolduc, a Republican senatorial candidate in New Hampshire, carried around a similar version of the shield (stuck full of arrows, for further dramatic effect) during his failed campaign.

In Greece itself during the previous decade, the neofascist Golden Dawn party staged annual rallies at the historical site of Thermopylae. They would bear torches and flank a statue of legendary Spartan king Leonidas, chanting "Greece belongs to the Greeks!"

Golden Dawn was banned as a political party in 2020 for criminal offenses, but it was succeeded by a wave of influential far-right factions that entered Greece's Parliament after elections in 2023. One of the more controversial parties in this cadre is named the Spartans.

Spartan themes have run through modern nationalism all along. "The Spartan chant, 'We are what you were; we will be what you are,'" 19th-century French philologist Ernst Renan wrote in his seminal treatise on the idea of a nation, "is, in its simplicity, the abridged hymn of every fatherland." The Spartan reputation for strict discipline, obedience and respect for hierarchy shaped the ethos of military cadet schools in mid-19th-century Prussia.

A half-decade ago, U.S. military planners cheered the United Arab Emirates as "little Sparta," a recognition of the

small kingdom's ability to punch above its weight in the Middle East (and not, one imagines, its hierarchical social system that separates Emirati citizens and wealthy expats from a vast underclass of foreign laborers). Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth openly channels supposed Spartan values when he extols the newfound "warrior ethos" of the Trump administration, tightens the Pentagon's standards for grooming and physical fitness, and links the mission of the U.S. military more closely to the White House's political agenda.

Hegseth's approach, warned Bret Devereaux, a historian of ancient armies, jeopardizes a more democratic civil-military tradition. "Hegseth's ideal army is one quite a bit more like those of Russia or Belarus: focused on the pageantry of physical fitness, prone to atrocity, and ultimately the tool of one man's power rather than the shield of a free country," Devereaux writes.

Spartan, separately, described societies like that of Russia and Belarus as inimical to innovation and beholden to the barracks — "all Sparta, no Athens."

Proponents of neo-Spartanism see a world where "you're better off if you stay at home, not engaging too much with others," Norberg told me. "There's very much the Spartan mentality — that the world is a zero-sum game, and if somebody else benefits, you're worse off. And that seems to be the Trumpian worldview as well, and why Sparta is an ideal for people on the MAGA right."

But it's not just the right. Uncertain about the strength of

U.S. commitments, European governments of various political persuasions are steeling themselves for the prospect of conflicts and investing in their defense capabilities.

In November, Finnish President Alexander Stubb declared that "the decade of the army is about to begin." German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said this month that "the decades of the 'Pax Americana' are largely over for us in Europe, and also for us in Germany. It no longer exists as we knew it and nostalgia won't change that.... The Americans are now very, very ruthlessly pursuing their own self-interests." It was time, Merz suggested, for Europe to do the same.

Classical historians quibble with such blunt analogies. The past is always more complicated than how it's remembered.

Far from being the civilizational bulwark some on the Western right envision, Sparta was "reliant on naval subsidies from the Persian Empire" in the latter wars against Athens, Barry Strauss, a professor emeritus at Cornell and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, told me. "So it's not entirely the image we have of Sparta as this autarkic place."

Right-wing idealization exaggerates the degree to which Sparta was isolated and also underestimates the degree to which corruption was a problem in Sparta," Strauss said.

Sparta did not have the grand public architecture of Athens that has survived through the ages to shape its memory. But it enforced a rigid social system

that was a subject of fascination even in its day, interest in which has endured: A small class of citizens who did not engage in agriculture or commerce trained as warriors from childhood, with men living in communal barracks, supported by a vast class of enslaved farmers.

Many resources were held in common by the citizen elites. Paul Cartledge, a British historian of ancient Greece and professor emeritus at Cambridge University, noted how Spartan women "somewhat break the mold in terms of the oppression or subjection of women in ancient Greece."

Still, even by the standards of its own time, Cartledge argued, Sparta was notorious for its brutality. "Sparta is not a role model," he told me. "It's a slave state, and it's extremely unpleasant to its unfree population."

Cartledge pointed to the echoes of Sparta in Europe's darkest chapter. "The Spartans were very cautious about whom they reared and whom they cast out," he said, referring in part to their purported practice of exposing unfit infants. "They were, presumably, eugenicists."

The Nazis remembered them as such. "Sparta must be regarded as the first völkisch state," Adolf Hitler once said, referring to a racially ordered polity. "The exposure of the sick, weak, deformed children, in short, their destruction, was more decent and in truth a thousand times more human than the wretched insanity of our day which preserves the most pathological subject."

Nanyahu's "Athens and super Sparta" speech tapped into a long tradition. Cold War policymakers raised the parable of Sparta and Athens in regard to the Soviet-U.S. contest: The former, in its communalism and closed economic order, more "Spartan" in nature; the latter, with its maritime dominance and capitalist zeal, more "Athenian."

Harvard political scientist Graham Allison updated the paradigm for the 21st century when he brought into the mainstream the idea of the "Thucydides trap," mulling the inevitability of conflict between the United States and China. In this analogy, Washington is like Sparta, a great status quo power threatened by the rise of an ambitious, increasingly assertive Athens.

Allison is an avowed practitioner of "applied history," sifting through precedents for modern-day lessons. The contemporary resonance of Sparta "is very interesting," Allison told me, but, he added, there are limits to the power of the metaphor given the "profound differences" separating us from the city-state.

"When people cherry-pick one or two features of an analogy," he said, "that will frequently tell you more about the person and their views than it will about the illumination of the world."

U.S. engages in multiple missions against ISIS since killing of 2 soldiers in Syria

SYRIA FROM A1

mained at large in the two countries.

In Syria, Kurdish-led fighters, supported by the United States, guard Islamic State detainees as well as two camps that house tens of thousands of dependents that security experts worry are ripe for recruitment.

U.S. Central Command said in a statement that, in 2025, the Islamic State inspired at least 11 plots or attacks against targets inside the U.S., though it did not provide details.

In response, it has conducted dozens of operations this year that have killed or captured as many as 300 Islamic State fighters, Centcom said. One of those missions included a September operation that killed senior Islamic State operative Omar Abd al-Qader.

U.S. forces there will continue "to hunt down terrorist operatives, eliminate ISIS networks, and work with partners to prevent an ISIS resurgence," Adm. Brad Cooper, Centcom's commander, said in a statement, using the acronym for the Islamic State.

But the fledgling Syrian security services have also been a concern — accused of perpetrating atrocities during sectarian fighting that killed thousands of people in the country's coastal regions and in southern Syria. The new government's forces have absorbed the constellation of rebel factions that fought for more than a decade against Assad — among them, foreign fight-



U.S. forces were wounded in the ambush.

The revelation that the gunman was a member of Syria's security services was a blow to Sharaa's government, which has made strong relations with the U.S. a priority as the country emerges from a long civil war.

During a visit by Sharaa to the White House in November, the Trump administration announced that Syria had joined the anti-Islamic State global coalition — a stunning turn for Sharaa, who was once imprisoned by U.S. forces in Iraq and went on to lead Syria's al-Qaeda affiliate until his rebel formation, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, severed ties with the transnational extremist group in 2017.

Since the Palmyra assault, Syria's Interior Ministry has announced series of raids targeting the Islamic State in several provinces, including operations it said swept up several leaders in Damascus province and in the country's southwest.

The group is seen as a grave threat to Syria at an especially critical time, as the government is trying to attract foreign investment and prevent sectarian tensions. Two shadowy recent attacks have stirred fears among minorities: the deadly bombing of a church outside Damascus in June that officials blamed on the Islamic State and the bombing of a mosque that killed eight people on Friday in an Alawite neighborhood in Homs. The authorities have not identified the perpetrator in the mosque attack.

The remains of Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, 25, and Sgt. William Nathaniel Howard, 29, are moved during a transfer in Iowa last week.

ers and hard-line Islamists.

In the Palmyra attack, Centcom said a lone Islamic State militant who had been absorbed into Syria's security forces fired

on U.S. troops as they were conducting a "key leader engagement," similar to the force development missions U.S. troops conducted in Iraq and Afghani-

stan.

The attack killed two members of the Iowa National Guard — Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, 25, and Sgt. William Nathaniel How-

ard, 29 — along with Ayad Mansoor Sakat, 54, an Iraqi-born interpreter who lived in Michigan. Three other U.S. soldiers and two members of Syria's secu-

KHALEDA ZIA

First woman to serve as prime minister of Bangladesh

BY FRANCES VINALL

Khaleda Zia, the first female prime minister of Bangladesh, died Dec. 30, her Bangladesh Nationalist Party said.

The BNP said she died at a hospital in the capital, Dhaka, with her son and other family members present. The statement did not provide a cause of death but said that she suffered from multiple health problems, including cirrhosis, arthritis and diabetes, and that she was admitted in November with infections in her heart and lungs.

She was 80, according to the statement, though her age was contested in Bangladesh, and the BNP in her biography listed her date of birth as Aug. 15, 1946. It did not immediately respond to a request for clarification.

Ms. Zia was first elected in 1991 and served as prime minister of Bangladesh until 1996. She was reelected that year but stepped down the following month because of an opposition boycott, which meant 90 percent of voters had abstained from participating in the election. She was elected again in 2001 and governed until 2006.

Ms. Zia was the first woman to lead the country and the second woman to govern a Muslim-majority country, the first being Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto.

Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser of Bangladesh's interim government, said in a statement shared on social media that Ms. Zia was a "symbol of the democratic movement."

"Her role in the struggle to establish democracy, a multi-party political culture, and the rights of the people in Bangladesh will be remembered forever," he said, adding, "The nation will remember her contributions to the country and its people with respect."

Ms. Zia became the leader of the BNP in 1984, three years after her husband, Ziaur Rahman, the former leader and the founder of the party, was killed in an attempted military coup. She be-



AJAZ RAH/AP

Khaleda Zia, seen in 2012, served as prime minister of Bangladesh from 1991 to 1996 and again from 2001 to 2006.

came an outspoken advocate for democracy and was voted prime minister in elections found to be free and fair by international observers.

She was imprisoned multiple times throughout her long political career, including in 2018 on corruption charges. She was also put under house arrest by the military regime that ruled before she became prime minister.

Ms. Zia spent the first part of her life as a quiet, high-school-educated wife of the relatively popular general. The Washington Post reported in 1991. But the events of her life transformed her

"Her role in the struggle to establish democracy, a multi-party political culture, and the rights of the people in Bangladesh will be remembered forever. ... The nation will remember her contributions to the country and its people with respect."

Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser of Bangladesh's interim government, in a statement shared on social media

into a key political figure in Bangladeshi politics.

She was the longtime rival of Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's second female prime minister, who was ousted by protesters last year and fled to India after ruling the country for 15 years. Ms. Zia's and Hasina's parties — the latter called the Awami League — have been the two main political groups in Bangladesh since 1991.

Ms. Zia was freed from house arrest last year after protesters took control of the country. Her party had long dismissed the charges against her — among them, that she had embezzled

tens of thousands of dollars in donations meant for an orphanage trust — as false and politically motivated.

The U.S. State Department said in a 2023 report on human rights in Bangladesh that "international and domestic legal experts noted the lack of evidence to support the conviction and suggested a political ploy to remove the leader of the opposition from the electoral process."

Ms. Zia was born before the partition of India at the end of the British colonial period and grew up in what was then East Pakistan, an entity split from the western portion of the country by a thousand miles of Indian territory.

East and West Pakistan shared a majority religion, Islam, but were ethnically and culturally distinct. The eastern part was majority Bengali, while the western part — where the national government and military leadership were located — was majority Punjabi.

In 1960, Ms. Zia married Rahman, who would become a military commander during Bangladesh's war for independence from West Pakistan in 1971. Rahman read out Bangladesh's declaration of independence on a radio broadcast in March of that year, an important moment in the conflict.

Hundreds of thousands — up to 3 million, by some estimates — of Bengalis died during the war, as West Pakistan fought to prevent its eastern portion from breaking away.

Rahman founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and was the country's sixth president, ruling from 1977 until he was assassinated while in office in 1981.

The couple had two children, Tarique and Arafat. Arafat Rahman died of cardiac arrest in Malaysia in 2015, according to Bangladeshi media. Tarique Rahman, 60, the current BNP acting chairperson, returned to Bangladesh this month after 17 years in exile, ahead of elections scheduled for February.

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OPINION

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

EDITORIALS

Zohran Mamdani accidentally honors the private sector

THE SUBWAY STATION WHERE THE SOCIALIST MAYOR WILL TAKE THE OATH WASN'T BUILT BY GOVERNMENT.

ZOHRA MAMDANI will be sworn in as New York City's mayor just after the clock strikes midnight on New Year's. The socialist has decided to take the oath of office during a private ceremony in the old City Hall subway station, which has been abandoned since 1945. The Gilded Age marvel features magnificent arches, colored glass tiling, brass chandeliers and bronze plaques.

It's an inspired choice, though not in the way he intends.

Mamdani explains that, when the station first opened in 1904, "it was a physical monument to a city that dared to be both beautiful and build great things that would transform working peoples' lives." He added in a statement that such "ambition need not be a memory confined only to our past." He forgot to mention that this beautiful monument was a triumph of capitalism, not government.

The Interborough Rapid Transit Company was a private corporation from its founding in 1902 until its purchase by the city in 1940. The original IRT line, of which City Hall station was the crown jewel, ran 9.1 miles and included 27 other stations. It was built in four years and seven months at the equivalent cost of \$1.2 billion in today's money.

Compare this with the government's



Spencer Platt/Getty Images
A homeless person rides the subway in Manhattan on Monday.

performance on the Second Avenue subway project. That cost \$2.5 billion per mile, and construction of the 1.8-mile first phase took a decade, after decades of fits and starts.

Little of the subway system would exist if not for private enterprises that the city later took over. These entrepreneurs were more concerned with building a railroad that people would want to ride than placating public-sector union bosses and environmental activists. Once all that infrastructure was there, government got involved in managing and operating it, with price-controlled fares that starved the system of funding. It was under city control until the state created a bloated Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 1965.

Mamdani's transportation agenda

risks worsening nearly every problem with the system. "Free" buses, which would actually cost New Yorkers about \$800 million a year, will make them magnets for crime and vagrancy. That's also what will happen to the subway if he moves ahead with his plan to repurpose vacant newsstands in the 100 busiest stations for homeless outreach centers, with the goal of providing "triage" for the mentally ill.

The incoming mayor is right that the Big Apple's subway is a good "monument," but it's to what happens when government thinks it knows better than private firms. Those interested in the city's flourishing should want more things to look like the private skyscrapers above ground than the public transit below it.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medicare-for-all would not resemble Britain's NHS

The Dec. 26 editorial "Socialized medicine can't survive the winter" criticized the United Kingdom's National Health Service and falsely suggested that Britain's system resembles Medicare-for-all, legislation that I have introduced in the Senate and which has 17 co-sponsors. That comparison is inaccurate and obscures a more important truth: Many of the problems The Post attributed to the NHS are far more prevalent in the United States.

The Post describes the U.K. system as costly but conveniently ignores the fact that the United States spends far more on health care per capita than any major country on Earth — \$14,885 per person each year — more than double what the United Kingdom, Canada and France do.

The result: More than 27 million Americans are uninsured. About 1 in 4 have difficulty affording prescription drugs. And an estimated 500,000 people go bankrupt each year because of medical debt.

The Post also called the NHS inefficient. In reality, it's the American health care system that is bureaucratic and wasteful.

Medicare-for-all is not a government-run, British-style National Health Service system. It is a government-funded universal insurance program. Medicare-for-all would simply expand Medicare — a program that has worked extremely well for more than six decades — to cover every American, eliminate premiums and out-of-pocket costs, give people the freedom to choose their doctors, and ensure no one is denied care.

Every other major nation has figured out how to provide universal health care at far lower cost. The question is whether the United States will finally do the same.

Bernie Sanders, Washington
The writer, an independent,
is a senator from Vermont.

Liberties Act of 1988, they did not view reparations for Japanese Americans as "foolish" or "too complicated." Nor did the Florida legislature view reparations as "foolish" or "too complicated" when in 1994 it approved them for survivors and descendants of the Rosewood Massacre of 1923.

Maryland legislators deserve praise for the courage of their convictions in advancing reparations as long-overdue simple justice.

Donald K. Tamaki, San Francisco

A verification failure

The Dec. 25 Metro article "New U.Va. leader's past DEI efforts draw conservative ire," on Scott C. Beardsley's revised curriculum vitae should be read as a presidential-search problem: a failure of basic verification.

For more than a decade, my research has examined how presidential searches are conducted, how candidates are vetted and why some searches produce leaders who succeed while others lead to avoidable crises. The most consistent finding is that process matters. A search insulated from independent scrutiny invites preventable error.

In well-designed searches, vetting is a discipline built into every stage — documentation review, reference gathering and campus engagement — because the risks of presidential appointment are high and long-lasting. Search firms can help coordinate that work, but they cannot substitute for the independent scrutiny that comes from a broadly constituted search committee and meaningful faculty participation.

Faculty involvement is not symbolic; it is quality control. Faculty and senior staff know the institution's public record, identify inconsistencies in language and claims and are more likely to ask the questions that an overly managed search is designed to avoid. They compare public materials across versions, test narratives against observable performance and insist on explanations when something doesn't add up.

The changes in Beardsley's public CV are exactly the kind of discrepancy a serious search process would have surfaced immediately.

When a candidate's documented record can be materially misrepresented during an active search without triggering inquiry, the problem is not the candidate's editing. The problem is the search architecture.

Judith Wilde, Albuquerque
The writer is a research professor at George Mason University.

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Don't play politics with pension funds**NEW YORK CITY'S OUTGOING COMPTROLLER IS REBUFFED IN A PLOY TO DROP BLACKROCK OVER CLIMATE CONCERNs.**

Fidelity and PanAgora oversee \$384 million and \$358 million respectively. Lander decided to spare PanAgora from his climate crusade when the manager coughed up "an enhanced net zero plan."

Fortunately for New Yorkers, Lander appears to have been foiled — at least for now. The board of the New York City Employees' Retirement System, one of the boards, voted at Lander's final meeting on Dec. 17 to table his recommendation until January. It's a welcome signal that the fad of ESG investing (short for Environmental, Social and Governance) continues to fade.

BlackRock accused Lander of taking part in the "politicization of public pension funds" while Lander argues that "the systemic risk of the climate crisis threatens the long-term value of New York City's pension funds."

BlackRock and its leader Larry Fink

leaned into ESG during a different political moment. But that changed after Texas passed a law blacklisting BlackRock for its fossil fuel "boycott," and GOP state attorneys general accused it of manipulating energy markets with its ESG approach. In February, the Securities and Exchange Commission issued guidance aimed at limiting the consideration of ESG factors when investing.

No doubt climate change will have an effect on markets for decades to come, but savvy asset managers will be able to address it without allowing nebulous climate goals to undermine their fiduciary responsibilities. There's a difference between prudent investment calculations and political posturing.

Under New York's previous comptroller, Scott Stringer, the city's pension funds dropped \$4 billion of investments in fossil fuel companies. Two years ago, Lander got three of the city's five pension funds to adopt plans to zero out emissions from their portfolios by 2040. The police and firefighter pensions refused to go along.

This is part of a trend, from Albany to Brussels. After setting unrealistic net-zero emissions goals, governments continue to recalibrate.

New York realizes it cannot afford its green promises

NEW YORK'S crusade against gas stoves is being placed on the back burner: Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) recently delayed the implementation of a 2023 ban on running gas in new buildings before it took effect in January.

That hasn't been Hochul's only climate backtrack. In November, she agreed to a Trump-backed gas pipeline, marking the Empire State's first pipeline in at least a decade — and the first since they passed their hallmark climate law in 2019 requiring the state to cut carbon emissions 40 percent by 2030. Hochul also signed an agreement granting permits to a gas-powered crypto mining facility, on the condition the plant nearly halves its pollution by 2030.

When asked in October about the mandate for no gas in new buildings, the governor said she's "going to look at this with a very realistic approach and do what I can, because my number one

focus is affordability." Hochul's U-turn is an admission that the anti-energy agenda pushed by far-left environmental groups was always unaffordable.

Climate activists accuse Hochul of being a traitor, but maybe the governor has finally realized that there's rarely any upside to pursuing unrealistic decarbonization plans. At the very least, it looks like she's paying attention to voters during a reelection cycle. Polling shows 61 percent of New Yorkers — including 54 percent of Democrats — "somewhat" or "strongly" agree that keeping energy affordable in the state is more important right now than reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The state's residential electricity prices have risen 36 percent since New York passed its decarbonization legislation in 2019, according to a Progressive Policy Institute study. That's almost three times faster than the rest of the country. Still, nearly half of New York's electricity is supplied by fossil fuels. That study con-

cludes that New York's energy strategy is driving up costs, constraining reliable supply and jeopardizing the political viability of the state's climate agenda. Other blue states face similar pain.

It's no coincidence that most of the states with the highest prices also have the most ambitious decarbonization mandates. Even though the federal government can dish out all kinds of subsidies for renewable energy, the states largely get to regulate how they generate and sell their electricity.

Florida has chosen to base its energy generation on reliability and affordability, instead of ideology. Despite intense energy demands driven by a subtropical climate, Florida's electricity prices are two percent lower than the national average. The state gets about 75 percent of its energy from natural gas.

Symbolic climate gestures please activists, but they become a political liability when the bills come due.

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OPINION



Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza celebrates after the Big Ten championship in Indianapolis on Dec. 6.

This playbook got Indiana to a Rose Bowl. It can improve college education.

BY PAMELA WHITTEN

As No. 1 seed Indiana prepares to face No. 9 Alabama in the Rose Bowl on Thursday, the Hoosiers are focusing on coach Curt Cignetti's mantra that drove the team's remarkable rise to the top in college football this year: Fast. Physical. Relentless.

It's a standard defined by a clear vision, preparation and results — attributes that universities striving for success would do well to embrace. Public confidence in higher education has risen modestly from its recent low of 36 percent, but the measure remains far below the 57 percent recorded just 10 years ago. Many Americans continue to question whether universities are still capable of delivering on their core promises.

The best answer will come from institutions willing to prepare rigorously, execute decisively and measure themselves by results, as I work to do at Indiana University, the institution I lead. The goal for administrations in higher education must not be to reclaim trust for our own sake, but for how we drive talent and innovation to help solve tomorrow's pressing problems and power the next decade of American ingenuity.

The headwinds are real. State budgets are constrained. Federal policymakers are making sweeping changes to how research grants are structured and awarded. And there are clear limits to what students and families are willing to pay in tuition and fees even as the pool of traditional college-going students is declining.

Recent decades offer examples of some of America's most competitive companies facing similar moments of constraint and pressure, from postrecession General Motors to post-DVD Netflix. They emerged stronger by prioritizing performance in a new environment, without sacrificing ties to tradition.

Similar dynamics have played out at a small number of public universities, such as Georgia Tech and Arizona State, that have focused on streamlining and relevance to engage more directly with industry, establish reputations for innovation and deliver greater access at scale — increas-

ing trust even amid disruption.

Universities that flourish in the coming years will see opportunity in this moment, not because they're blind to the challenges but because they refuse to be paralyzed by the uncertainty.

Execution is ultimately a matter of culture. On the football field, success is rarely about a single play or star athlete — even one as hardworking and determined as Hoosier quarterback Fernando Mendoza, Indiana's first Heisman Trophy winner. Instead, it's about daily preparation and accountability. The same is true in higher education. Institutions that succeed will be those that build cultures where vision is matched by follow-through, and where performance is measured consistently and accountability is embedded in daily practice.

Administrations in higher education need to reclaim trust, not for our own sake, but for how we drive talent and innovation to help solve tomorrow's pressing problems.

The best institutions will seek and generate investment that creates returns not just for the university, but also for the communities they serve. At Indiana University, that includes \$138 million from the Lilly Endowment to create the IU Launch Accelerator for Biosciences, a bet on our ability to engage entrepreneurs and other partners to accelerate research initiatives that yield new cures and treatments. The test of such investments will ultimately be whether they effectively shrink the period from discovery to deployment.

Universities that succeed will unapologetically place a priority on student needs. They will align degree offerings with student demand. At IU, that means hard choices about consolidating low-enrolling degree programs — some with proud

histories — while launching new offerings in microelectronics, business intelligence and data science, bioengineering and more. Universities should also ensure that graduates have been prepared for the workplace. That includes fostering creativity and judgment while teaching students to use technology such as artificial intelligence effectively and responsibly.

At the same time, the strongest educational institutions will become truly nimble research and workforce partners to industry, breaking down long-standing bureaucratic barriers and fostering productive collaboration that drives alignment with critical industries. Industry is — Cignetti-style — fast and relentless, with little patience for plodding timelines or duplicative processes. Universities must adapt accordingly.

Of course, public universities must also meet this fiscal moment, prioritizing affordability for students and good stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

And finally, the institutions that thrive will be clear-eyed about the rapid evolution in collegiate athletics. Alignment between university leadership and athletics has arguably never been more important. We must look past escalating spending and headlines to drive disciplined strategy that yields not only on-field success and alumni pride but coherence with our broader academic mission.

I see Indiana University as an institution working to put these approaches into practice. We are a work in progress. Our scale — nearly 90,000 students across nine campuses — is both a strength and a hurdle, particularly in building culture. We have work to do to further improve on-time graduation rates, reimagine general education requirements and broaden our sources of research funding.

But as the Hoosiers take the field in Pasadena, California, on Thursday, I hope observers see more than a football team that leveraged hard work and humility for IU's first Rose Bowl appearance since 1968. I hope they see a public research university grateful for its historic strengths even as it is determined to build new ones.

The writer is president of Indiana University.

States, get marijuana off the road

BY KEITH HUMPHREYS
AND BEAU KILMER

This holiday season, police departments across the country will repeat their laudable annual efforts to deter drunken driving. Yet more than a decade after states began legalizing recreational marijuana, or cannabis, effective policies to counter driving while high on it don't exist. There are several reasons why the danger from cannabis-impaired drivers has so far gone largely unaddressed, and why the threat is increasing.

The first challenge is that when police stop a driver suspected of driving under the influence, they have no equivalent of a roadside breathalyzer test for detecting cannabis intoxication. There is no widely agreed-upon, valid standard for rapidly and accurately measuring the amount of THC — cannabis's psychoactive agent — in a person's body. Even taking a suspected THC-intoxicated driver to the police station for a blood or urine test would be pointless: THC is lipophilic, meaning it hangs around in fat cells long after it has been consumed. That can skew testing, producing a positive result in a blood or urine test even though the person who consumed the cannabis is no longer high.

The second challenge: Getting high has become incredibly cheap in some states. For example, the median retail price for a gram of cannabis flower in Oregon is now \$3.33 — about a 70 percent drop since 2016. It used to be the case that a gram would make about three joints, but these days it's common to see one-gram pre-rolled joints in dispensaries. Some stores in Michigan have advertised ounces for \$25, which, including taxes, works out to about \$1 per gram.

Third, policymakers and advocates in many states did not follow up marijuana legalization with adequate regulations for the industry they created, the higher-potency products it produced or the aggressiveness or accuracy with which those products were marketed. How states would detect and deter cannabis-impaired driving is one of many policy problems that did not receive sufficient thought.

The consequences are easy to see. A 2024 survey indicated that at least 11.7 million people in the United States had driven under the influence of cannabis in the prior year. That's not far below the 14.2 million estimated to have driven under the influence of alcohol. Another national study found that in the month before being surveyed, 13 percent of high-school student drivers had driven when they had been using cannabis.

The lore persists in some circles that cannabis makes people safer drivers because they drive slower. Whether this was true in the era of weak weed that averaged 5 percent THC, it is clearly not true today, when the average flower sold in legal markets is closer to 20 percent THC, and concentrated products typically range between 60 and 90 percent THC. The

Policymakers and advocates in many states did not follow up marijuana legalization with adequate regulations for the industry they created.

resulting driving impairment is generally not as bad as that of alcohol, but still raises the risk of traffic crashes. And when someone drives both drunk and stoned, it can amplify the risk even further.

What could be done?

Multiple measurement technologies including oral swabs, urine screens and behavioral tests are being developed to better measure cannabis impairment, but none is yet as valid and simple to use as an alcohol breathalyzer. This would be an excellent target for incentivizing a "breakthrough prize" from the government. A public-private partnership might help arrive at an answer more urgently. Cities might also experiment with increasing the availability of driverless-car technology to reduce impaired driving of all sorts.

But possible solutions extend beyond technologi-

cal fixes.

Mass media campaigns to discourage people from driving after consuming cannabis — or riding in vehicles with these drivers — seem appropriate, especially since an expert panel concluded that "well-funded media campaigns are an important component of alcohol-impaired driving enforcement policy interventions." Indeed, a recent National Academies report on cannabis policy and public health called on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help develop and evaluate education campaigns.

Alcohol offers other lessons. For example, in the 24/7 Sobriety program used in several states, an individual with multiple impaired driving arrests has their right to use alcohol at any time suspended. The penalty is enforced with frequent testing and immediate sanctions after a positive test. Jurisdictions could pilot and evaluate 24/7 Sobriety programs focused on cannabis, and possibly augment them to incorporate positive incentives for compliance.

Also, mandating a floor price for alcohol has been shown to reduce alcohol use by heavy drinkers while little affecting moderate drinkers. Because cannabis sellers profit by encouraging and maintaining heavy use, imposing adequate regulation and counteracting large price decreases (for instance, with minimum unit pricing) could have the side effect of making the roads safer.

A key challenge will be to generate political interest in the hard work of writing and enforcing the regulations needed to make our roads and highways safer. Congress recently took the step of closing the "intoxicating hemp loophole," which had created a large THC industry particularly in states without legal cannabis. Perhaps this is a harbinger, and more policymakers will begin taking cannabis regulation seriously. The benefits of doing so would be significant for road safety as well as for public health more generally.

Keith Humphreys is a professor of psychiatry at Stanford University. Beau Kilmer is codirector of the Rand Drug Policy Research Center.

The best and brightest scientists won't put up with this

BY CHRIS R. GLASS

America's scientific dominance was never inevitable; in the 1920s, serious PhDs went to Europe. World War II changed everything. Afterward, the United States built an unmatched innovation ecosystem with massive federal investment in basic science coupled with risk-tolerant capital markets to commercialize new discoveries.

American policymakers grasped a crucial insight: They were investing in people, not just research. As scientists became strategic national assets, immigration policy was redesigned to recruit them.

America's advantage persists. But bureaucratic ossification now threatens it, as our global rivals pick off the best and brightest that we have trained but can't retain — unless we change our visa system.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine warned last year that the U.S. lacks a "whole-of-government talent strategy" for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Though U.S. universities rank first globally on research quality, our visa system is among the slowest and least predictable in the developed world. Our talent policy assumes that top researchers will endure any visa lottery or processing delay to stay in the U.S. That assumption is obsolete.

Both our allies and our adversaries have created visa systems that are faster, simpler and more certain. China's new K-visa targets young STEM talent, and its Qiming Program recruits top scientists with \$420,000 to \$700,000 signing bonuses and full housing subsidies. Germany's Opportunity Card allows skilled workers in before they find jobs. Britain's High Potential Individual visa requires no job offer, just a top university degree. Japan's J-Find gives recent PhD graduates two years to job-hunt or launch companies. And there are more.

Open Doors, an annual survey tracking international student enrollment in the U.S., reports significant growth in international PhD enrollment (up 25 percent over the past decade). Yet the Organization for Economic and Commercial Development's 2023 Talent Attractiveness indicators ranked the United States eighth among OECD countries for highly skilled workers but note that it would have ranked second if not for its visa policies. Competitors have noticed and are happy to accept the talent we train but fail to keep.

Case in point: Between 2017 and 2021, Canada issued permanent residency invitations to about 45,000 U.S.-educated graduates, according to a Niskanen Center analysis. This outflow is roughly equivalent to losing the combined graduating classes of MIT, Stanford and Caltech every year for five years.

Presidents have the authority to modernize aspects of the U.S. visa system. Here's what President Donald Trump could do:

First, update Schedule A, the Labor Department's list of shortage occupations that fast-track green cards. Largely unchanged since the 1990s, it should immediately include artificial intelligence and machine learning researchers, quantum computing scientists and semiconductor engineers — and establish a data-driven process for regular updates. Adding these fields cuts red tape and provides the predictability necessary to recruit top scientists.

Second, unlock the O-1A visa for researchers and entrepreneurs. Britain and Singapore offer dedicated "founder tracks." America can match this: Direct U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to recognize citation metrics and venture capital backing as "extraordinary ability." This visa is uncapped yet underused (only about 4,500 STEM approvals in 2023). The bottleneck is how narrowly we define who counts as "extraordinary." Academic journals and private capital markets efficiently identify breakthrough talent. Clearer guidance would unlock the category for scientists creating knowledge and founders building companies.

Third, establish a presumption of eligibility for National Interest Waivers for U.S.-trained STEM PhDs — a reform with bipartisan backing. This uses existing authority to retain research university graduates who are most critical to our industrial base. Many PhD graduates leave as green card backlog prevent them from starting companies, changing jobs freely or establishing long-term security for their families.

Finally, allow renewable STEM OPT extensions for high earners in Schedule A fields with salaries above the 75th percentile in the industry, or at prevailing institutional rates for research positions at universities. These renewable periods create stable pathways for high-value talent while scientists navigate establishing permanent residency. This regulatory certainty would counter British and Canadian offers that scientists accept while facing H-1B lottery uncertainty and 12- to 18-month processing delays.

Critics may argue that these actions threaten American workers. But the policies target PhD holders in STEM fields with documented domestic shortages. Georgetown University's workforce projections show that the U.S. needs 4.5 million additional workers with bachelor's degrees or higher through 2032, with acute shortages in engineering, computer and mathematical occupations, and health care.

The choice isn't between domestic and foreign talent; the nation was built on both. Investing in domestic STEM education is essential. But building homegrown capacity takes years. China graduated 3.57 million STEM students in 2020; the U.S. graduated 820,000. Closing that gap domestically would require quadrupling university STEM capacity and reversing current demographic trends.

America's post-World War II scientific leadership emerged from a powerful ecosystem that recruited the world's best minds. But our current visa system, built for 1990s labor markets, obstructs rather than accelerates growth.

Great presidents are remembered for the infrastructure they build. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System unlocked commerce and opportunity on a large scale. President Trump can secure a different kind of infrastructure legacy: a talent pipeline that will power American innovation for generations to come.

The writer, a professor of the practice at Boston College, researches international student mobility and global talent flows.

ECONOMY & BUSINESS

Home builders hoped for a 2025 boom. It didn't happen.

BY RACHEL SIEGEL

Home builders thought this year was going to bring a boom. They were wrong.

Single-family construction starts — a crucial measure of how many new homes are being built — are expected to come in 7 percent lower in 2025 than last year, according to forecasts from the National Association of Home Builders. Among new homes built for rent, starts were down 16 percent in mid-2025 compared to the year before. Home builders are offering more and more perks to get buyers off the sidelines, and a closely watched sentiment survey showed builders stayed glum throughout the year.

"The expectations for 2025 were better than the actual results," said Robert Dietz, chief economist at NAHB. Some data won't be complete until early next year. But big-picture, the industry's hopes were "leaning too far into some of the optimism that we saw building in 2024."

Indeed, last year ended on a relatively high note. Single-family starts in 2024 totaled 1.01 million, up 6.5 percent from 2023, according to NAHB. Hundreds of thousands of homes that started construction on the heels of the pandemic hit the market last year, giving buyers and renters more options. And even though prices still ticked higher, the sense among many builders, housing economists and real estate agents was that 2025 — and in particular, President Donald Trump's return to the White House — would usher in more momentum.

Many builders hoped the new administration would cut a slew of environmental and permitting regulations that can slow construction. They also expected broader economic growth and that, as inflation simmered down, the Federal Reserve would keep lowering interest rates, which in turn would help lower mortgage rates for buyers.

The U.S. economy did grow at its fastest pace in two years in the third quarter. But many of those other hopes haven't materialized.

One key regulation — which prohibits building homes near water or roadside drainage ditches that connect to creeks and streams without first obtaining a federal wetlands permit — hasn't been updated yet. And while the Fed trimmed its benchmark rate three times this year, officials are increasingly split over how to respond to stubborn inflation and a softening labor market. For now, they only have one cut penciled in next year, which may not do much to nudge mortgage rates down. Last week, the 30-year fixed rate mortgage averaged 6.18 percent, according to Freddie Mac, down from 6.85 percent this time last year.

Trump's policies are weighing on builders, too. Sixty percent of builders say that their suppliers have already raised prices for materials, or that they will, because of tariffs, according to NAHB surveys. And across the country, the administration's immigration crackdown has resulted in mass detentions and deportations of foreign-born workers, a population that makes up about a third of the construction workforce. There isn't precise data on how many workers have been deported. But contracting and construction trade groups have long been worried about workplace raids and random pickups, coaching employers on what to do if immigration officials show up at a site or start inquiring about paperwork.



Sixty percent of builders say their suppliers have already raised prices for materials because of President Donald Trump's tariffs.

In the Orlando area, Hardwick General Contracting had a full slate of projects to stay busy, said president and owner Greg Hardwick. But the ripple effects from a weakening job market, immigration policies and tariffs kept popping up. To keep construction on track, Hardwick said, he's leaning

more into subcontracting on larger businesses that employ dozens or hundreds of people, rather than hiring smaller mom-and-pop shops that can have a harder time filling vacancies. Still, he's gotten calls this year letting him know drywall or stucco crews wouldn't be able to show up because they were down too many workers, possibly because some had been detained or were too afraid to come to work, he said.

Hardwick also said suppliers were constantly reaching out about price increases — but without clear explanations.

"We were getting letters from suppliers that tariffs were increasing prices, but if you would call with a question and say, 'What specific tariff was increas-

ing the pricing here?' they really couldn't tie it to anything," he said. "It was really the anticipation."

Near Denver, high borrowing costs are the biggest hurdle for Jeff Jacob. Construction loans can hover one percentage point higher than regular 30-year loans. And at more than 7 percent, Jacob said his rates are well above what he could secure from 2017 to just a few years ago.

About half of his buyers purchase homes in all cash, Jacob said, and he just finished the largest house he's ever built. But the president of Jacob Custom Homes also sees the ways Colorado's market responds to interest rates. One client put off a project because an old house hadn't sold. Jacob has also stopped building homes that don't have buyers lined up because demand is so low.

"I've been in this business for 30 years. I've seen it go up and down," Jacob said. "And always, always, always, the one big factor is always interest rates."

Builders did see some bright spots. Construction for townhouses — which are often more affordable for first-time buyers — is growing, with newly built townhouses accounting for more than 18 percent of all single-family starts for the second quarter, according to NAHB. Custom home building — where a house is built on a lot owned by the owner, not the builder — was up 4 percent in the second quarter compared to 2024. Wealthier customers who are less sensitive to inter-

est rates and have more wealth in the stock market may account for that rise, Dietz said.

There's also hope for more momentum in 2026. Existing-home sales are expected to clinch a small but meaningful gain over 2025, rising about 1.7 percent, to 4.13 million, according to Realtor.com. The number of homes for sale could also rise nearly 9 percent year over year. And while mortgage rates aren't expected to fall much, more construction will give buyers more options, which could help lower prices and drive sales. The Mortgage Bankers Association expects total single-family mortgage origination volume to rise to \$2.2 trillion in 2026, up from the \$2 trillion forecast for 2025.

New construction is giving breathing room to places like Nashville, where home values were up 45 percent in November compared to right before the pandemic, per Zillow data. Ashley Luther, a local real estate agent, said builders have been so eager to turn over properties that they're keeping incentives for buyers flowing, at times even offering temporary buydowns that could take a mortgage rate as low as 4.99 percent. In a surprising twist, that has meant new homes are sometimes cheaper than existing ones, helping lure skeptical buyers back into the market.

"Buyers are just not confident in where our economy is headed," said Luther, owner and broker of CHORD Real Estate. "And that gives them pause."

BY SHIRA OVIDE

It's my annual tradition to take stock of big themes in technology, with a focus on positive developments for you in the past year. Here is the tally of the mostly good, but occasionally crummy, year in technology for 2025.

AI that's useful and less creepy

I love the motto of Gabriel Weinberg, the CEO of the web search and browser company DuckDuckGo: AI should be "useful, private, and optional."

DuckDuckGo lets you access chatbots including ChatGPT but insists that the AI companies can't access your data. (The Washington Post has a content partnership with ChatGPT owner OpenAI.)

You can turn off AI features in DuckDuckGo, too. I'm hoping that DuckDuckGo inspires more AI kill switches across the internet.

I'm declaring DuckDuckGo the best technology company of 2025. Even if you never use its products, DuckDuckGo shows that people and companies can challenge the Silicon Valley conventional wisdom that AI is inevitable, inescapable and insatiable.

I'm also curious about the just-announced encrypted chatbot from Moxie Marlinspike.

I haven't tried it yet, but Marlinspike helped create the gold standard encryption that's used by the Signal app, WhatsApp, Meta Messenger and Google's texting app for Android phones. If he can likewise establish a usable, private chatbot standard, that's a boon for you.

And I never thought I'd say this, but I'm a convert to AI search technologies for questions and research that don't work in standard web searches.

I asked ChatGPT recently for the Stephen King novel featuring a character that carves into the skin of another. ("It.") I used

Google's AI Mode to poke into technology stock returns since the 2010s. It wasn't perfect, but it was useful to guide more intensive research.

Using AI search tools isn't life-changing. And AI still has the same problems. It risks draining precious resources, preying on vulnerable minds, wiping out jobs or choking your favorite websites.

The worst technology of 2025 is a no-brainer: AI "agents," the chatbots or AI browsers that promised you could just tell AI what to do — order groceries or find the best mattress. Outside a

handful of tasks such as software coding, agents are an overhyped mess.

It became glaring this year that many Americans mistrust, reject or feel pessimistic about AI even as we use the technology more. That's not a contradiction. It's a warning sign.

The companies that make AI, and those of us who use it, must focus on judicious deployment of AI. We can insist that AI be useful, private, optional and open about its shortcomings. And we must be clear-eyed about when AI is the wrong tool for the job.

A technology that beat inflation and got cheaper

Government inflation figures show that prices of wireless phone service have fallen this year. It shows that corporate warfare can actually help you.

Mobile phone carriers are increasingly fighting one another for customers. That has showered many people with steeply discounted new smartphones. There's also a flourishing market for alternative mobile service providers that can save you loads of money.

The bad news: You can probably expect price increases in 2026

for laptops and some other electronics. Blame AI.

Gen Z protests and government workers showed technology's empowering promise

In the United States, federal government workers who were stunned by the tumultuous start to the second Trump administration swarmed to Signal and Reddit to discuss what was happening, buck each other up and share their experiences.

And in countries such as Nepal and Indonesia, young people disappointed in their political lead-

ers used apps such as TikTok, Discord and WhatsApp to spread memes, organize protests and even appoint new political leaders.

These twin movements felt like an echo of the Arab Spring. Those early 2010s uprisings helped cement the idea that people could harness social media to unite against entrenched power.

As with the Arab Spring, 2025's technology-aided movements might not bring lasting change. But they did remind us of technology's promise to empower the little guys.

The most important technology of 2025 is ...

YouTube. It's the place to understand where our culture, technology and media are headed.

Google-owned YouTube remains America's most popular social media service among adults and teens. It tops Facebook, TikTok and Instagram by a country mile.

Americans also spend more time watching YouTube on TV than anything else. Netflix is a distant second, according to Nielsen.

YouTuber has spawned news and entertainment empires that couldn't have existed before, including MrBeast and Ms. Rachel. It's also increasingly the home for big events such as football games and the Oscars. That combination has grabbed your time, advertisers' dollars and cultural influence away from traditional Hollywood and media gatekeepers.

That makes YouTube the most consequential technology in our lives and — with apologies to Netflix and the Ellison family — the most disruptive force in media and entertainment.

Runner up: Smartphones. There will be more attempts in 2026 at AI-dedicated smart glasses and other gadgets intended to displace the smartphone as the primary computer for billions of people. But it may be that the killer AI device is still the smartphone.

DIGEST

WALL STREET

Stocks fall heading into new year

Stocks fell slightly Tuesday on Wall Street as trading for 2025 nudges closer to the finish line.

With one trading day left before the year ends, most big investors have closed out their positions and volume has been thin. Every major index is headed for a double-digit gain for the year.

The S&P 500 fell 9.5 points, or 0.1 percent, to 6,894.24. Even with three straight days of small losses, the S&P 500 is on track for an annual gain of more than 17 percent.

The Dow Jones Industrial

Average fell 94.87 points, or 0.2 percent, to 48,367.06. The Nasdaq composite index fell 55.27 points, or 0.2 percent, to 23,419.08.

The biggest weights on the market remained technology companies, especially those focused on advancements for artificial intelligence.

Treasury yields were mixed in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.12 percent from 4.11 percent late Monday. The yield on the two-year Treasury, which moves more closely with expectations for what the Federal Reserve will do, held steady at 3.45 percent from late Monday.

Overall, Treasury yields have fallen significantly through the

year, partly because of the market's expectations for a shift in interest rate policy at the Fed. The central bank cut interest rates three times late in 2025, most recently at its meeting in December.

Nvidia fell 0.4 percent, and Apple fell 0.2 percent. Both companies have outsize values that have a greater overall impact on the market's broader direction.

Inflation remains stubbornly high while the jobs market slows down. The Fed can cut interest rates to help the economy weather a slower jobs market. But that could add more fuel to inflation that is still solidly above the Fed's 2 percent target. Hotter inflation could stunt economic

growth. U.S. markets will be closed Thursday for New Year's Day.

— Associated Press

TRANSPORTATION

Undersea tunnel service interrupted

Power problems and a stuck train interrupted rail services through the undersea Channel Tunnel connecting the United Kingdom and continental Europe on Tuesday, operators said, stranding passengers during the busy end-of-year direction.

Eurostar blamed "overhead power issues in the Channel Tunnel" and a failure

aboard a train operated by LeShuttle.

On Tuesday afternoon, Eurostar said the tunnel was partially reopening but with only one of its two train lines, allowing Eurostar services to resume in the evening — although with expected delays and longer journey times than usual.

— Associated Press

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Meta buys platform based in Singapore

Meta is buying artificial intelligence start-up Manus, as the owner of Facebook and Instagram continues an

aggressive push to amp up AI offerings across its platforms.

The California tech giant declined to disclose financial details of the acquisition, but the Wall Street Journal reported that Meta closed the deal at more than \$2 billion.

Manus, a Singapore-based platform with some Chinese roots, launched its first "general-purpose" AI agent earlier this year.

A Meta spokesperson confirmed on Tuesday that the platform would also discontinue its services and operations in China. Manus reiterated that it would continue to operate in Singapore, where most of its employees are based.

— Associated Press



SPORTS

From a terrible trade to a cloned dog, we revisit the year's worst decisions. **B7**



METRO

Remembering residents of D.C., Maryland and Virginia who died in 2025. **B13**

The Washington Post Style

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025

EZ RE

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NBC/EVERETT COLLECTION

Allison Janney as C.J. Cregg and Martin Sheen as President Josiah "Jed" Bartlet in Season 6 of the NBC drama "The West Wing," which aired from 1999 to 2006.

The forgotten cynicism of 'The West Wing'



Becca Rothfeld

In Season 3, Episode 7 of the television show "The West Wing," which originally aired in November 2001, White House press secretary C.J. Cregg (Allison Janney) exults when a contender for the presidency flubs the all-important question: Why do you want to be president? Yet moments after C.J. finishes gloating, she realizes that her boss, the sitting president, may not have a better answer. When she anxiously questions President Josiah "Jed" Bartlet (Martin Sheen) about his motivations,

he shrugs her off. "I've been thinking about it for the last couple of hours," he tells her. "I almost had it." A beat passes, and the episode ends. By the time the next one begins, Bartlet's nonresponse is long forgotten. The bustling denizens of "The West Wing" are too consumed by the crises of the hour to note that their employer has failed to answer the guiding question of his political career.

Almost a quarter-century after Bartlet failed to justify his presidential ambitions to C.J., "The West Wing" occupies a curious place in the American imagination. It is remembered as the premier liberal artwork of the early aughts and touted as a nostalgic relic —

an endearingly utopian artifact of a softer, purer time. If its fusillades of rapid-fire dialogue and its famed walk-and-talk shots of characters in motion remain as propulsive as ever, its political outlook is canonized as anachronistically earnest. "The West Wing" was also a full-throated argument (perhaps too full-throated) for the essential goodness of government and a celebration of the talented people who fill its ranks," Ian Crouch wrote in the New Yorker in 2012. In the episode "Bartlet's America," the New York Times's James Poniewozik wrote in a thoughtful reappraisal last year, "voters reward you for fighting lies and

fearmongering with facts and reason. Good intentions and great oratory win the day. Well-meaning people reach across the aisle and reason with their colleagues. Politics is an earnest battle of ideas, not a consuming war of all against all."

But "The West Wing" is a vastly more cynical show than many of its admirers remember, which is why it is also a more compelling work of art than many of its skeptics assume. It is not, in fact, a paean to good government and the dedication of White House bureaucrats, nor is it an homage to good-faith debate or a portrait of political rationality.

SEE ROTHFELD ON B2

Kennedy Center revised bylaws before name vote

Under change, only board members appointed by the president could take part

BY JANAY KINGSBERRY AND KELSEY ABLES

The Kennedy Center adopted bylaws earlier this year that limited voting to presidentially appointed trustees, a move that preceded a unanimous decision this month by board members installed by President Donald Trump to add his name to the center.

The current bylaws, obtained by The Washington Post, were revised in May to specify that board members designated by Congress — known as ex officio members —

could not vote or count toward a quorum. Legal experts say the move may conflict with the institution's charter.

Trump took over the Kennedy Center in February, purging its board of members he had not appointed. The months that followed saw struggling ticket sales and programming changes that began to align the arts complex with the Trump administration's broader cultural aims, culminating with the annual Kennedy Center Honors hosted by the president.

Days later, on Dec. 18, the board voted to add the president's name to the institution, and within 24 hours it was on the website and the building itself: "The Donald J. Trump and John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts."

Several artists have announced SEE BOARD ON B3



People visit the Kennedy Center, recently renamed the "Trump Kennedy Center," in Washington on Friday. The institution said bylaw changes were in line with precedent.

Jazz group cancels NYE shows at Kennedy Center

The Cookers' decision comes amid the addition of Trump's name to venue

BY FRITZ HAHN AND KELLY KASULIS CHO

Two more artistic groups announced that they have canceled upcoming performances at the Kennedy Center, adding to a growing list of acts that have chosen not to perform at the storied institution after its board of directors announced earlier this month that it would add President Donald Trump's name to the venue.

Jazz supergroup the Cookers, scheduled to perform two concerts at the Kennedy Center on Wednes-

day as part of "A Jazz New Year's Eve," have canceled both shows, the band announced on Monday. Doug Varone and Dancers, a decades-old performance group, also said on Monday that they had decided to cancel two performances scheduled for April.

"While we totally disagreed with the takeover by the Trump Administration at the Kennedy Center, we still believed it was important to honor our engagement out of respect for both Jane Raleigh and Alicia Adams, who curated a first-rate dance season, as well as for the dance audiences in DC," the dance company said on social media, referencing two prominent former employees who are reportedly no longer with the institution. "However, with the latest act of Donald J. Trump renaming the Center after SEE KENNEDY CENTER ON B3

BECCA ROTHFELD

Nostalgia for 'West Wing' more potent than its answers

ROTHFELD FROM B1

Rather, it is an honest and often quietly wrenching exploration of the Machiavellian maneuvering that corrupts even the most well-meaning people in politics.

The show's main protagonists — Clegg, Communications Director Toby Ziegler (Richard Schiff), Deputy Communications Director and speechwriter Sam Seaborn (Rob Lowe), Chief of Staff Leo McGarry (John Spencer), Deputy Chief of Staff Josh Lyman (Bradley Whitford) and President Bartlet — spend most of the show fretting over PR disasters and comparatively little time worrying about matters of political substance. In the episode after Bartlet brushes C.J. off, Sam tries to persuade an official from the Office of Management and Budget to recalibrate the poverty index — not because he believes that the agency's calculations are wrong but because the new measure would deem an additional 4 million people impoverished, which would look bad for the administration. In another episode, Josh agrees to append a provision to a health care reform bill — not because he thinks it is a good idea (indeed, he has not researched the proposal) but because the addition will persuade a recalcitrant senator to sign on. When Bartlet's staffers take a more active role in shaping legislation, it is almost always by negotiating with politicians on the president's behalf and almost never by advocating for policies on their own merits.

Often, the characters go so far as to concede that the administration's critics are right, at least behind closed doors. At one point, Sam finds himself at loggerheads with a Democratic senator intent on eliminating the penny — a proposal he comes to regard as reasonable but ends up rejecting on the grounds that it will make the president look foolish and piddling. (Just last month, the penny was retired

without much outrage; it turns out Sam was wrong to worry.) But it is C.J., the face of the administration, who is most often tasked with defending policies she despises. She is the one who escorts Native American protesters out of the White House lobby, even though she finds herself indignant on their behalf; she is the one who talks the parents of a murdered gay man out of criticizing Bartlet's inadequate gay rights policies in public, even though she ultimately regards their complaint as righteous. When the administration makes an arms deal with Qumar, a fictional stand-in for Saudi Arabia, C.J. stands at the lectern, smiling and quipping through her feeble excuses. Behind the scenes, she fumes.

Though C.J. finds herself rationalizing Bartlet's failures more often than her colleagues do, all of the show's main characters are called upon to manage their ambivalence when they discover that the president has multiple sclerosis, a diagnosis that he concealed from the public throughout his campaign and tenure in office. His staff is outraged by the cover-up — Toby denounces it as a "deception of massive proportion" — but, ultimately, everyone chokes back their reservations and helps the administration navigate the inevitable fallout.

It isn't that the wonks of "The West Wing" are villainous. On the contrary, they are winningly dedicated and endearingly well-intentioned. They also happen to be calculating and scheming, as their jobs often oblige them to be. At their best, they are bruised idealists; at their worst, they are jaded operators. In short, they are believably conflicted and inconsistent — and therefore interesting. Their tragedy consists in the ease with which their principles are compromised by the pressures of the job. They joined the Bartlet campaign because of their egalitarian aspirations, but several years into his presidency,

PHOTOS BY NBC/EVERETT COLLECTION
Martin Sheen, left, and John Spencer in an episode of "The West Wing."

From left, Moira Kelly, Richard Schiff and Allison Janney during a Season 1 episode from 1999.

they have perfected a politics of placation. Despite their nominal values, they spend their days managing and mollifying the public.

"The West Wing" aired from 1999 to 2006, and there is good reason to believe that it inspired a generation of influential pundits, a cohort that *Vanity Fair* dubbed the "West Wing Babies" in 2012. Its orientation no doubt colored the tenor of the Obama administration and the subsequent Democratic Party, encouraging campaigns to focus less on policy and more on public relations. There are many reasons the Biden-Harris campaign went up in flames, but one of them is surely its air of knowing better without deigning to articulate exactly what it knew.

What, in the end, are the actual political commitments of the Bartlet administration? What are its signature policies? Beyond its embrace of polite platitudes and its veneration for norms, beyond its reverence for civility and its penchant for symbolic displays of bipartisanship, does it have a vision? It would be too generous to describe Bartlet even as an advocate of efficiency, since there is nothing in particular he cares to be efficient about. His is a politics of folksy charisma and, above all, of winning — of saying whatever is likely to poll well on any given occasion and leaving the rest to the experts.

Just after 9/11, that was enough; it was presented and interpreted as inspirational. But if rewatching "The West Wing" in our debased era teaches us anything, it's that we have come to demand more from our politicians in the intervening decades. What struck contemporary viewers as utopian — and subsequent commentators as nostalgic — now strikes us tellingly vacant; what once seemed like bipartisan flexibility now looks like squishy evasion. In 2026, a more definite answer to C.J.'s question is required.

Poker friend's outburst over jokes ruined game night, and I can't figure out why

Asking Eric

R. ERIC THOMAS

Dear Eric: A group of seven elders — men and women, ages 60 to 90 — have gotten together once a week to play

poker at my unit in our condo building for almost two years. As my husband and I are the only couple, we provide the food, set up the game with chips. My husband is disabled and an introvert, so this is the only way that entertaining works for us.

We eat, play, tell jokes (sometimes adult jokes). We have such a good time every week.

Last Saturday, "Martha" decided to stop us from telling jokes. She yelled out "enough is enough!" We were totally shocked.

My husband gently asked her if it offended her; she said "no, but enough is enough."

The game broke up, and everyone went home. We felt

angry. It's our house, and they are our guests. How dare she do that?

I stopped inviting her; no apology, no remorse from her. She always tended to put me down. I can endure that, but putting my guests and my husband through this embarrassment is too much. Are we too tough?

— Party Host

Host: As hosts, you're endeavoring to create a space that's welcoming and fosters connection. Those things depend upon good communication. Of course, if a guest is made uncomfortable by something at a gathering, from conversational content to food to other guests, a good host is going to hear them when they express it and try to make a change.

But from your telling, Martha didn't give you much of anything to work on. It's hard to tell if

there was some offense that she didn't want to explain or if she was just feeling cantankerous. Or something else entirely. But your response isn't too tough.

If you have a desire to close this loop, you can reach out to Martha one-on-one. Try saying something like: "I wanted to talk to you about what happened at the poker game the other day. Could you tell me more about what was frustrating you?"

You may not feel compelled to change the way the group plays just to suit her. But what she says can give you more insight, and with that insight you can decide on the best path forward for your friendship. It may be that she's had enough of the poker group, and so it's just not a good match anymore.

Dear Eric: My husband and I have been together for 11 years. He has one daughter, 43, with two young children I adore and

have been close to until last summer when the volcano erupted.

Since the beginning of our relationship, I have made every effort to be loving and generous to his daughter. She acts entitled and ungrateful to me.

It's my fault for not standing up for myself early in my joining the family. For example, I wish to be thanked for gifts, babysitting, making holidays happen, having them over for dinner and so on.

She doesn't seem to care about me at all. Her father will not stand up to her and seems scared of her.

Last summer I blew up at her in a text and let her know how I feel about her behavior.

I called her a manipulative user and let her know my truth, which is certainly not her truth. I apologized twice in two letters for being so harsh, but she will not forgive me, allow a repair or let me see the grandkids. Her

father will not help. This is hurting our marriage.

I miss the little ones terribly and cried for months about this. Yes, I am in therapy and hoping my husband will go to couples counseling together. Funny, he is a psychotherapist. I would be most appreciative if you can offer us your help.

— Missing Family

Family: Ask yourself what you have the power to change and what you need to accept, even if you don't like it.

For instance, you probably should accept that the relationship with your husband's daughter is not serving either one of you right now. And it's probably because her

relationship with your husband is not healthy. It's likely that some of the frustration you're feeling stems from a desire to change something that's outside of your control.

You write that your husband won't help you. If you want him to compel his daughter to accept your apology, that might not actually be useful. Unfortunately, even though your relationship with the grandkids was, perhaps, healthy, the other relationships supporting it are less so.

So, what can you change? Well, you're doing the most important first step by working on yourself in therapy. If your husband won't go to couples counseling (which he should), ask him why and ask him how he proposes to help you both communicate better.

Send questions to R. Eric Thomas at eric@askingeric.com or P.O. Box 22474, Philadelphia, PA 19110. Follow him on Instagram and sign up for his weekly newsletter at rericthomas.com.

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Are there any etiquette guidelines about raising a glass of water for a toast?

Miss Manners

JUDITH MARTIN

JACOBINA MARTIN AND NICHOLAS IVOR MARTIN

Dear Miss Manners: At a company holiday party, one of my colleagues decided not to partake of the wine that was offered. During a round of toasts, she was admonished — in a good-natured way — by co-workers, for raising her water glass. They said toasting someone with water is bad luck.

Aside from the luck angle, is there an etiquette rule covering what is in the glass used during a toast?

Technically — a qualifier Miss Manners uses to emphasize that

there are more important issues to consider — technically, tradition does say that you are not supposed to toast with water. But now the more important issues: First, it is rude to correct another person's manners. And second, in a work environment, when you may not know every co-worker's personal situation, it is also foolish to draw attention to someone abstaining from alcohol.

Whoever did the admonishing will find that claiming it was good-natured will be of no help to them as a defense for their infractions.

Dear Miss Manners: One of my friends endlessly plays with the food she does not want to eat, without ever signaling by the

position of her cutlery that she has finished. So all of her fellow diners have to watch her shift the items to and fro, waiting for her to eat them.

Once, a waitress finally asked if she had finished, and my friend was offended by the "impertinent" question.

Since asking whether she has finished is not an option, apparently, how can I politely make her stop playing with her food? It is unnerving to watch.

Other people seldom behave exactly the way we would wish. However, etiquette strictly limits our ability to correct such annoyances for a very basic reason: We would then have to reciprocate — and who knows

what we are doing that others find irritating.

Miss Manners therefore offers three gentle suggestions. 1. When you are the meal's host, you can offer to clear a plate, simply explaining you were trying to be helpful when caught out. 2. You can disrupt the fidgeting by passing her items such as bread, or by asking if your friend would like to order something else. Or, 3.

You can go on with the conversation and try not to notice.

Dear Miss Manners: I received a frosty email from an administrator at a performing arts institution where I teach, taxing me with not having responded to an invitation to an

event.

In fact, I had tried to respond, but the language and mechanics of the response form were so confusing that it was actually impossible to decline (which was what I needed to do).

The administrator noted that faculty had been asked to state whether we wished to "request an RSVP," by which he meant "a complimentary ticket."

While I know it can be obnoxious to correct other people's language use, I am confident that my adored Miss Manners can thread this needle adroitly.

While she appreciates the adoration and deplores the incoherent instruction you

received, Miss Manners feels compelled to point out that for all the possible responses you suggest, you omitted the obvious one: apologizing.

They asked you to attend — or at least to tell them if you were unavailable — and you failed to do so. They made that difficult and expressed themselves inarticulately, but you knew what they meant.

New Miss Manners columns are posted Monday through Saturday on washingtonpost.com/advice. You can send questions to Miss Manners at her website, missmanners.com. You can also follow her @RealMissManners.

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The Washington Post



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Dance troupe also steps away from Kennedy Center dates

KENNEDY CENTER FROM B1

himself, we can no longer permit ourselves nor ask our audiences to step inside this once great institution."

The board of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts voted earlier this month to rename the institution the Trump Kennedy Center, an unprecedented change for the U.S. presidential memorial that drew swift condemnation from Kennedy family members and Democratic leaders. Trump's name was added to the exterior of the building a day after the board's vote. Some legal experts have said that only Congress can change the center's official name.

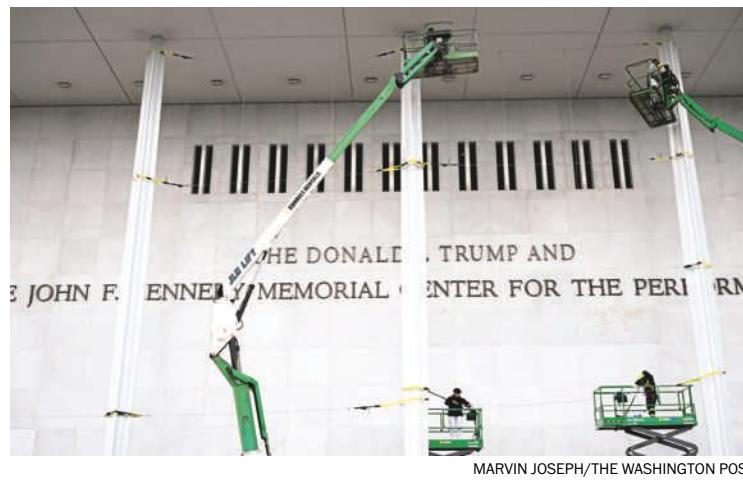
The cancellations on Monday came days after musician Chuck Redd pulled out of his annual Christmas Eve jazz concert, and

after folk singer Kristy Lee announced she had canceled a concert scheduled for mid-January.

"When American history starts getting treated like something you can ban, erase, rename, or rebrand for somebody else's ego, I can't stand on that stage and sleep right at night," Lee wrote on social media last week.

A production of the musical "Hamilton," a concert by Grammy and Pulitzer Prize-winning folk musician Rhiannon Giddens and a show by comedian and television producer Issa Rae that were set to take place at the center were canceled earlier in the year, after Trump's takeover of the institution in February.

A statement posted on the Cookers' website did not explicitly mention Trump or the Kennedy Center, but said, "Jazz was born from struggle and from a



Workers update the name on the Kennedy Center on Dec. 19.

relentless insistence on freedom: freedom of thought, of expression, and of the full human voice."

"To everyone who is disappointed or upset, we understand

and share your sadness. We remain committed to playing music that reaches across divisions rather than deepening them," the statement read.

Cookers band member David Weiss declined to comment further when reached by email.

Saxophonist Billy Harper, a member of the Cookers who played in groups with Art Blakey and Max Roach, was more explicit about not wanting to perform at the Kennedy Center in an interview quoted on the Facebook group Jazz Stage on Saturday.

"I would never even consider performing in a venue bearing a name (and being controlled by the kind of board) that represents overt racism and deliberate destruction of African American music and culture," he said. "... After all the years I spent working with some of the greatest heroes of the anti-racism fight like Max Roach and Randy Weston and Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Stanley Cowell, I know

they would be turning in their graves to see me stand on a stage under such circumstances and betray all we fought for, and sacrificed for."

Kennedy Center President Richard Grenell, a Trump appointee, responded to the cancellations with a post on social media Monday evening, saying, "The arts are for everyone and the left is mad about it."

"The artists who are now canceling shows were booked by the previous far left leadership. Their actions prove that the previous team was more concerned about booking far left political activists rather than artists willing to perform for everyone regardless of their political beliefs," he said in a statement. "Boycotting the Arts to show you support the Arts is a form of derangement syndrome."

Critics say bylaw change may go against charter

BOARD FROM B1

cancellations at the center as the unprecedented move drew public scrutiny and backlash. Democratic lawmakers and legal experts said it is illegal to alter the name of the living memorial to Kennedy that Congress established. Democrats also claimed that one ex officio member, Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio), was muted when she attempted to speak out during the Dec. 18 vote.

Roma Daravi, the center's vice president of public relations, told The Post that ex officio members have never voted.

"The bylaws were revised to reflect this longstanding precedent and everyone received the technical changes both before the meeting and after revisions," Daravi wrote in an email to The Post. "Some members (including ex officio) attended in person, others by phone, and no concerns were voiced, no one objected, and the bylaws passed unanimously."

The Kennedy Center lists 34 presidentially appointed board members, including Trump himself as chair, and 23 ex officio seats. The center's president, Richard Grenell, is also an officer of the board.

The federal law that established the Kennedy Center designates specific government and federal positions — including the Librarian of Congress, the mayor of Washington, D.C., the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and the majority and minority leaders of the Senate — to serve as ex officio members.

The law identifies them as part of the board of trustees, which it directs to maintain and administer the facility as a living memorial. But it does not distinguish between voting and nonvoting members, which has been a point of ambiguity in the days following the Kennedy Center renaming vote.

The center's original bylaws didn't distinguish voting powers, either. But its most recent tax filings list 59 "voting members" of its governing body — a total that includes both general and ex officio members.

A former Kennedy Center staffer with knowledge of board proceedings, who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution, told The Post that ex officio members were "always included in debate and discussion"

during their tenure, but the person did not recall a time when those members' votes were counted.

"Theoretically they could vote, but our practice was not to have them vote or count toward quorum," the person said, noting they were not aware of the new leadership's practices at the center.

For this report, The Post reached out to all ex officio members with questions about their voting authority and any known changes to it. Some told The Post or other outlets that they understood their current role to be non-voting, though none addressed whether they were aware of any prior changes to that status.

"Like a lot of things, this seems to be in dispute," said one person with knowledge of board proceedings, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on that matter.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-South Dakota) told a reporter Dec. 18: "I don't have a vote. I don't know enough about it."

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-Rhode Island) told The Post that he became an ex officio member this year after he became the lead Democrat on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works — another ex officio seat designated by Congress — but was not invited to board meetings until his committee began investigating the Kennedy Center last month.

Whitehouse said the statute "makes no distinction between ex officio and presidentially-appointed Trustees when it comes to members' rights and responsibilities on the board, including voting," and he accused the Trump-appointed board of attempting to "illegally change the bylaws to silence dissent."

A spokesperson for the Smithsonian Institution said that Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III does not vote or attend the meetings. It was unclear whether he had since assumed his role in 2019, but it is not uncommon for high officials serving on influential Washington boards to attend by proxy or not at all.

Copies of the Kennedy Center's May and September board meeting minutes, obtained by The Post, showed that many ex officio members were absent or sent a staffer in their place.



MAXINE WALLACE/THE WASHINGTON POST



TOP: Protesters gather Dec. 20 at the Kennedy Center in D.C. after President Donald Trump's name was added to the facade. ABOVE: Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio) speaks at the Capitol this month.

Beatty, who sued the Kennedy Center's board of trustees Dec. 22 to stop it from adding Trump's name to the institution, declined to comment for this story. But her lawsuit argues the center's statute makes her a "full voting member."

Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland), who is listed as an ex officio member on the Kennedy Center's website, said he is no longer part of the board. "I was on the Kennedy Center board ... in the last Congress," he told The Post. "So their website is not caught up because I was told when Democrats lost control of the Senate and the Republicans became the majority that I fell off." (The charter calls for three additional Senate members appointed by the president of the Senate and three House members appointed by the speaker to serve in ex officio seats.)

Many in high-ranking roles, in-

cluding Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-New York), did not respond to requests for comment.

The offices of D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) and the acting librarian of Congress, Robert Newlen, declined to comment.

Other changes from the May revision state that the general trustees "serve at the pleasure of the President." (Previously, that language appeared in the bylaws and the federal statute only in reference to the Advisory Committee on the Arts, a separate body that makes recommendations to the board.) They also added language about the ability of officers to make certain appointments, including stating that the chair may appoint the center's president to act as chief executive.

The vote by the Kennedy Center's board to add Trump's name to

the institution marked the most overt effort to date by the president and his allies to remodel the storied performing arts center in his image.

In the days since his name was added to the building, several lawmakers have vowed to fight the change.

During a rally outside of the Kennedy Center on Dec. 20, Van Hollen said he and his colleagues would work to "reverse" the move when Congress returns to session in January. "The day we get back, we can put an amendment on the ... Interior appropriations bill to reverse this outrage," he told the crowd.

Beatty's lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, claimed that the vote exceeded its statutory authority and requested that a judge declare it to be void.

"Because Congress named the center by statute, changing the Kennedy Center's name requires an act of Congress," the lawsuit says, adding that "Congress intended the Center to be a living memorial to President Kennedy—and a crown jewel of the arts for all Americans, irrespective of party."

Last week, Rep. April McClain Delaney (D-Maryland) said she would introduce legislation to remove Trump's name.

Rep. Chellie Pingree (Maine), the top Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the Kennedy Center, along with more than 70 lawmakers in Congress, called for Trump to reverse the renaming effort and remove his name from the building immediately.

"No board vote nor social media post has the legal authority to

change the name without an act of Congress," the members wrote.

"We'll be working to block this disgraceful renaming effort at every possible opportunity and restore the Kennedy Center's rightful place as our nation's cultural center without the burden of vanity projects or political influence," they wrote.

Roger Colvinaux, a law professor at Catholic University, said his read of the statue establishing the center was "not quite as demonstrative" as Beatty's, but "I'd argue that the statute does not differentiate among types of trustees in terms of powers and obligations, which would include voting."

Colvinaux added that "basic governance principles" "do not allow for the 'muting' of members" of an entity's governing body, which is a "deliberative body."

Phil Hackney, a law professor at the University of Pittsburgh and a specialist in nonprofit tax-exempt organizations, said it's worth noting "how ex officio trustees have traditionally operated" at both the Kennedy Center and the Smithsonian, of which the Kennedy Center is technically a bureau. He said that a court would also need to consider whether trustees are supposed to be able to remove ex officio members' powers by amending bylaws.

That said, the statute says the trustees "have the usual powers," and "it still strikes me, under what I see so far, that it is reasonable to believe that ex officio trustees might have the right to vote," he said.

Ellen April, senior scholar at UCLA School of Law, who has written about the Kennedy Center's legal status, said even if the bylaws limit voting to general board members appointed by the president, "I believe there is a strong argument that such a bylaw provision violates the Kennedy Center's charter."

April stressed that the charter includes a variety of public servants, and both majority and minority members of Congress in the Kennedy Center's governance. "Clearly the intent of the charter provisions was to entrust Kennedy Center guidance to a broad group, not just those appointed by the president," she said.

Still, the Kennedy Center's relatively ambiguous legal status as a public-private entity "makes it difficult to predict how a judge faced with the issues in the case beyond standing would decide," she said, noting the situation "is likely to give any judge a great deal of freedom in making any decision."

Travis M. Andrews contributed to this report.

Beyoncé is a billionaire, becoming third female musician to make Forbes list

The superstar's 'Cowboy Carter' album and tour spurred her wealth

BY JENNIFER HASSAN

Beyoncé is officially a billionaire, according to Forbes, making her the third female musician in history to cross the threshold.

She becomes the fifth musician in the magazine's billionaire club, joining Taylor Swift, Rihanna, Bruce Springsteen and her husband, Jay-Z.

Forbes said the release of the star's 2024 album, "Cowboy Carter," and her accompanying tour — which was the world's highest-grossing of 2025 — fueled her 10-figure fortune, along with a sprawling business empire, music catalogue and new commercial opportunities from the genre-shifting record.

The "Cowboy Carter" Tour grossed more than \$400 million in ticket sales, according to trade

publication Pollstar. Forbes estimated that she made \$50 million from merchandise sold at the shows.

The star's 2023 Renaissance World Tour grossed more than \$579 million, and her 2016 Formation World Tour more than \$320 million, The Washington Post reported.

In December 2024, Beyoncé performed live during halftime at Netflix's first Christmas Day NFL game, earning her an estimated \$50 million, Forbes said, noting that she also capitalized on the country album's aesthetic to bring in \$10 million through Levi's commercials.

Forbes estimated that Beyoncé earned \$148 million this year before taxes — making her the third-highest-paid musician in the world.

The magazine also cited her company, Parkwood Entertainment, as a key to her financial success. The business produces her music, documentaries and concerts, giving the star in-house control over her empire. She stopped being managed by her



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Beyoncé, seen in 2024, earned \$148 million this year before taxes, according to estimates by Forbes.

father in 2010.

"When you get to this point in your career, you don't have to go sign with someone else and share your money and your success — you do it yourself," she said in 2013 at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

It's been quite a year for the star, who won the album-of-the-year Grammy for "Cowboy Carter" in February after four unsuccessful bids for the top prize and picked up the award for best country album.

Ahead of the record's release in March 2024, Beyoncé debuted two country-infused songs, becoming the first Black woman to top Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart.

"Cowboy Carter" is an ode to Black Americans' contributions to country music and was a hit with fans, who often donned cowboy hats and boots as they supported the Houston native. She has long celebrated her country roots despite ongoing scrutiny from some in the industry who say she does not belong in the genre and fierce debate

over what truly defines country music.

Beyoncé was shut out of the 2024 Country Music Association Awards nominations despite being one of the year's biggest industry stories.

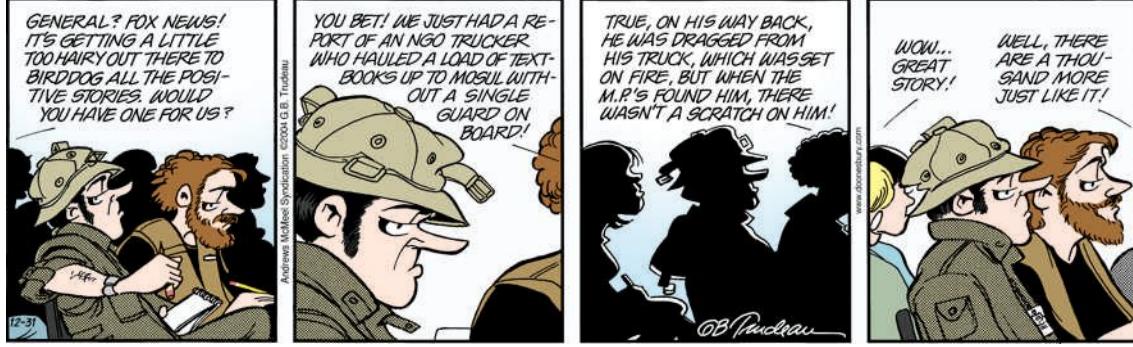
"The criticisms I faced when I first entered this genre forced me to propel past the limitations that were put on me," the star wrote in an Instagram post last year, seemingly citing the backlash she received in 2016, when CMA viewers slammed her performance of her country song "Daddy Lessons."

The star said that it took more than five years to create the album and that it stemmed from a time when it was "very clear" she was not welcome.

"Because of that experience, I did a deeper dive into the history of Country music and studied our rich musical archive," she wrote.

"My hope is that years from now, the mention of an artist's race, as it relates to releasing genres of music, will be irrelevant," she added.

CLASSIC DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUEAU

PICKLES



BRIAN CRANE

RED AND ROVER



BRIAN BASSET

TONY COCHRAN

AGNES



TONY COCHRAN

FRANK AND ERNEST



TOM THAVES

WUMO



MIKAEL WULFF & ANDERS MORGENTHALER

CLASSIC PEANUTS



CHARLES SCHULZ

CRABGRASS



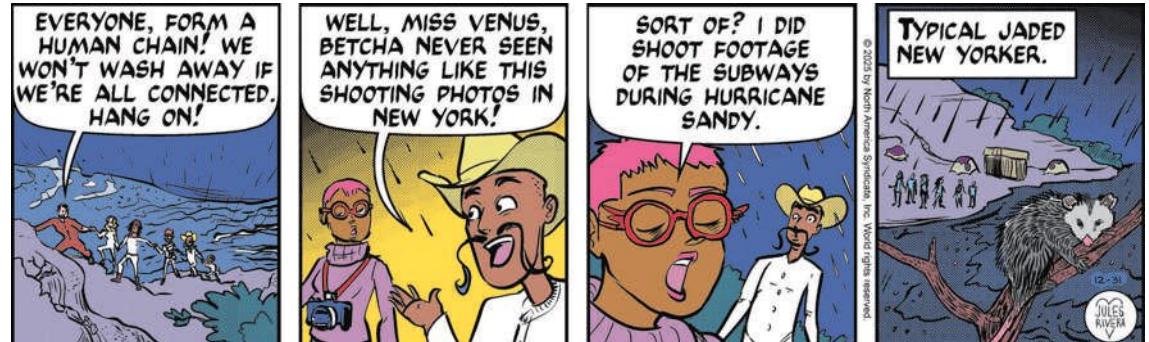
TAUHID BONDIA

RHYMES WITH ORANGE



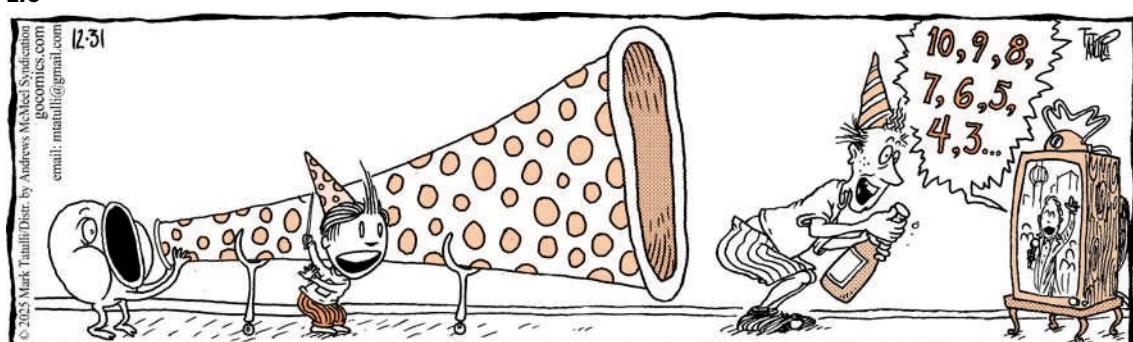
HILARY PRICE

MARK TRAIL



JULES RIVERA

LIO



MARK TATULLI

MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM



MIKE PETERS

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CHRIS BROWNE

BALDO



HECTOR CANTU & CARLOS CASTELLANOS

SALLY FORTH



FRANCESCO MARCIULIANO & JIM KEEFE

BLONDIE



DEAN YOUNG & JOHN MARSHALL

SHERMAN'S LAGOON



TIM RICKARD

JIM TOMEY

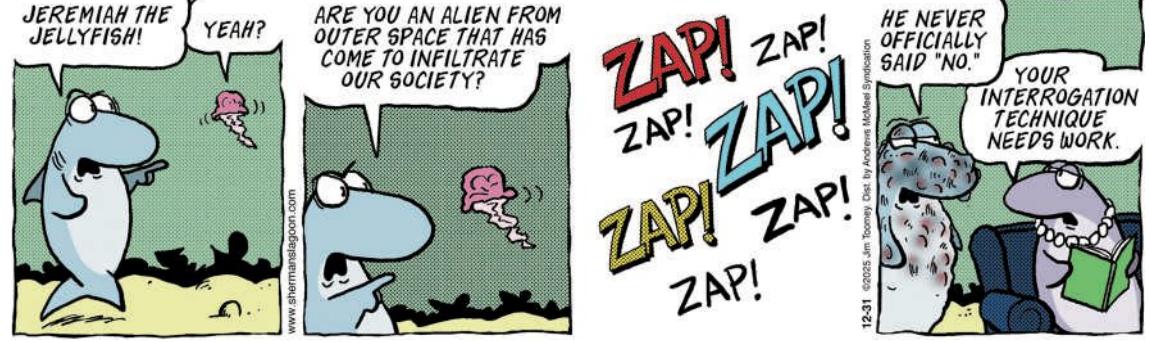
BREWSTER ROCKIT: SPACE GUY!



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STEPHAN PASTIS

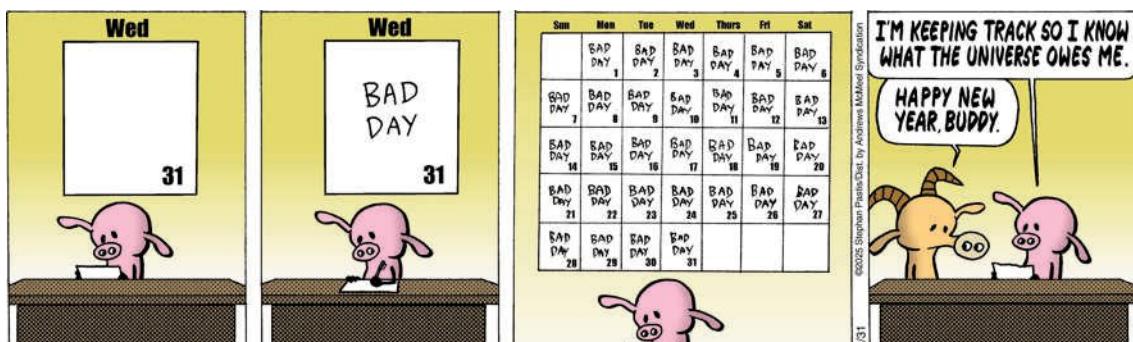
CURTIS



TIM RICKARD

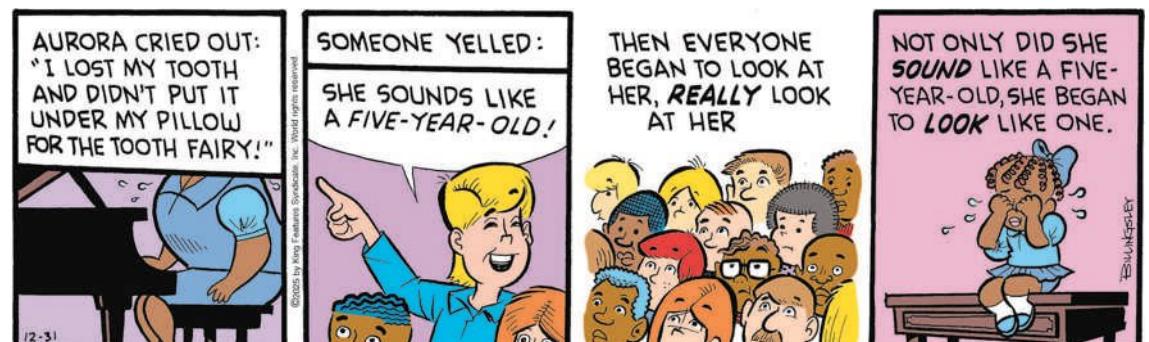
RAY BILLINGSLEY

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



STEPHAN PASTIS

CURTIS



RAY BILLINGSLEY

RAY BILLINGSLEY

MUTTS



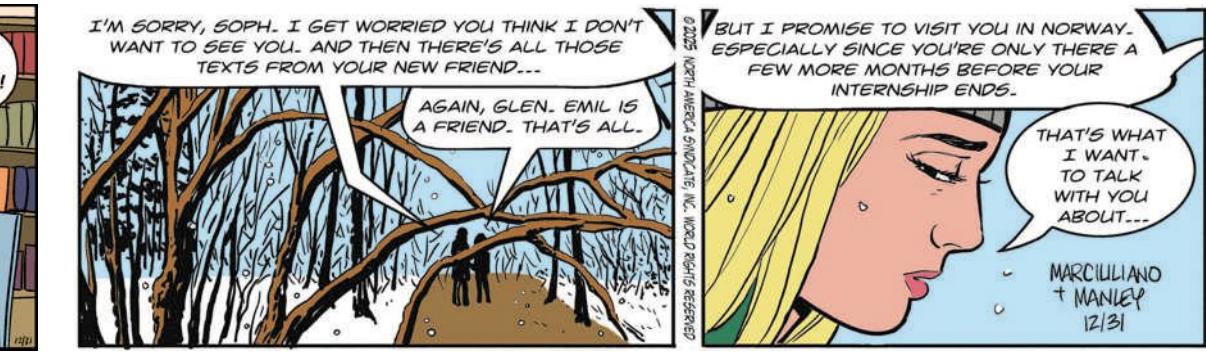
ZITS



HEART OF THE CITY



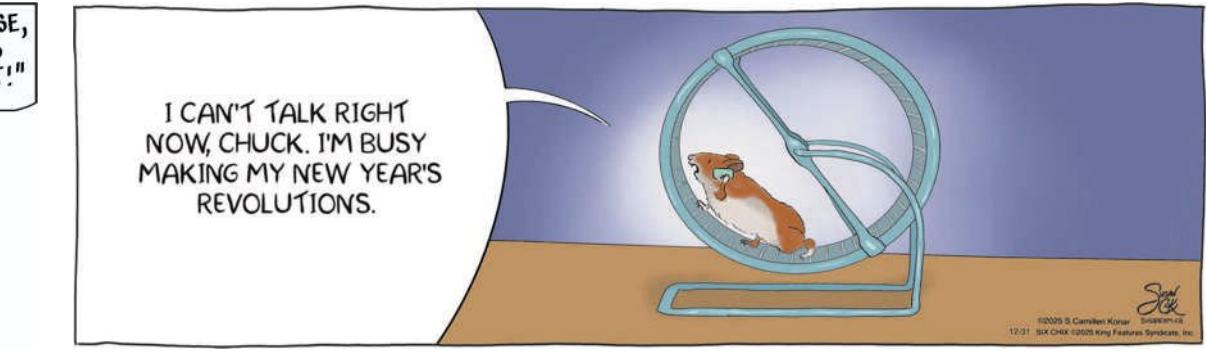
STEENZ



FRAZZ



SIX CHIX



GARFIELD



BARNEY AND CLYDE



DUSTIN



FLASH GORDON



PRICKLY CITY



LOOSE PARTS



NON SEQUITUR



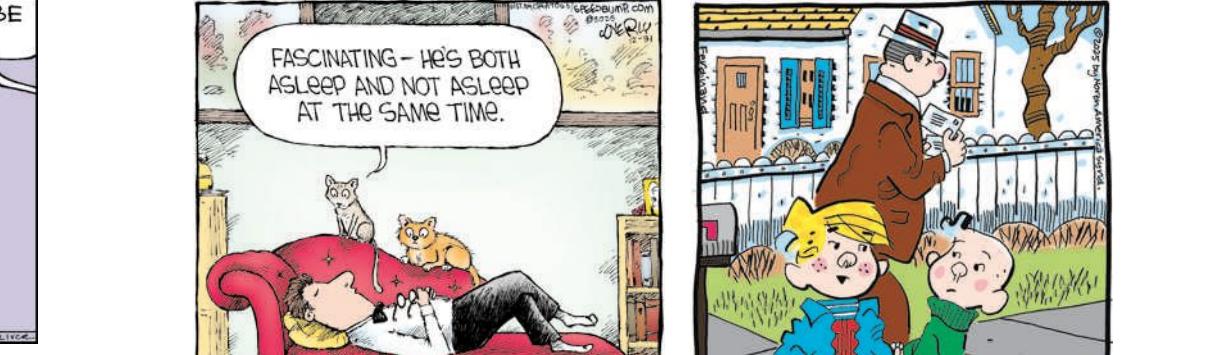
BABY BLUES



BIG NATE



SPEED BUMP



ON THE FASTRACK



DENNIS THE MENACE



BEETLE BAILEY



FAMILY CIRCUS



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TELEVISION

	12/31/25	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
4.1 WRC (NBC)	• NBCNe..	• 2025:	• Wicked: One Wonderful Night		• News	• A Toast to 2025!				
4.2 WRC (IND)	King	King	King	King	King	King	King	George	George	George
5.1 WTTG (Fox)	• Fox 5	• TMZ	• Hell's Kitchen	• Doc	• Fox 5 at 10	• Fox 5				
7.1 WJLA (ABC)	• Wheel	• Jeopardy!	• Dick Clark's PrimeTime New Year's (Live)		• 7News ..	• Dick Clark's (Live)				
9.1 WUSA (CBS)	• InsideEd..	• ET	• New Year's Eve Live (Live)		• 9 News	• New Year's (Live)				
14.1 WFDC (UNI)	(55) • Un año de	(55) • ¡Feliz 2026! (Live)								
20.1 WDCA (MTV)	• FamFeud	• FamFeud	• Fox 5 News	• FamFeud	• FamFeud	• Dateline	• Dateline			
22.1 WMPT (PBS)	• Fork	• MotorW..	• Great Performances			• American Masters				
26.1 WETA (PBS)	• PBS News Hour		• Great Performances			• Joni Mitchell				
32.1 WHUT (PBS)	• Fat Boy-Billy		• DC Street Jocks	• NEXT		• Dmv-The Beat	• Dmv-Be..			
50.1 WDCW (CW)	• Friends	• Friends	• The '90s Boy Band Boom		• DC News Now	• Coast				
66.1 WPXW (ION)	• Blue Bloods		• Blue Bloods	• Blue Bloods	• Blue Bloods	• Blue Bloods	• Blue Blo..			
A&E	Alaska-Trooper	Alaska-Trooper	Alaska-Trooper	Alaska-Trooper	Alaska-Trooper	Troopers	Troopers			
AMC	(5:45) Movie: P... Movie: teenager's parents forget her birthday.	(45) Movie: Sixteen Candles ★★ (1984) A (45) Movie: The Breakfast Club ★★★ (1985)								
Animal Planet	Tanked	Work on the	Work on the	Work on the	Work on the	Work	Work			
BET	(6:00) Movie: Friday Af...	Movie: Usher: Rendezvous in Paris (2024)	Martin	Martin	HBCU					
Bravo	(5:30) Movie: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban ★★★ (2004)	Movie: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone ★★★ (2001) An orphan attends a school of witchcraft and wizardry.								
Cartoon Network	Burgers	Burgers	Burgers	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Rick Morty		
CNN	(2:45) CNN New (Live)	CNN's New Year's Eve Live with Anderson (Live)								
Comedy Central	Movie: Grown Ups ★ (2010)	(15) Movie: Grown Ups 2 ★ (2013)								
Discovery	Expedition Unknown	Expedition Unknown		Expedition Unknown	Expedition Unknown	Expedition				
Disney	Big City	Big City Greens	(40) Place	(05) Place	Electric	Electric	Vampirina	Vampirina		
E!	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	Office	Office	Office	Office		
ESPN	Drive	CFP Cotton Bowl Classic	Miami vs. Ohio State (Live)			RamTrucks/ (10) S..				
ESPN2	Drive	CFP Cotton Bowl Classic	SkyCast: Miami vs. Ohio State (Live)			RamTrucks/ (..				
Food Network	Guy's Grocery Games	Guy's Grocery Games	Guy's Grocery Games	Guy's Grocery Games	Grocery					
Fox News	To Rescue the	Who Can Forget?	A New Year With Kat	The Five	Jimmy					
Freeform	(6:00) Movie: Home Alone ★★★ (1990)	(25) Movie: Home Alone 2: Lost in New York ★★ (1992)	The 700 Club							
FX	(6:00) Movie: Avengers: Age of Ultron ★★★ (2015)	Movie: Avengers: Infinity War ★★★ (2018) Iron Man, Thor and the rest of the Avengers battle Thanos.								
Hallmark	(6:00) Movie: Time for Them to Come Home...	Movie: Time for Him to Come Home for Christmas (2022)	Movie: Time for Her to Come Home for Christmas (2023)							
Hallmark M&M	(6:00) Movie: A Bramble House Christmas (20...	Movie: Making Spirits Bright (2021)	Movie: This Time Each Year (2024)							
HBO	(6:05) Movie: Heretic ★★★ (2024)	Movie: Materialists ★★★ (2025)	Movie: Friendship (2025)							
HGTV	DreamHo..	DreamHo..	DreamHo..	DreamHo..	DreamH..	DreamH..	DreamH..			
History	American Pickers	American Pickers	American Pickers		(05) Pickers	Pickers				
Lifetime	The Equalizer	The Equalizer	The Equalizer		(05) The Equalizer	(05) The Equalizer				
MASN	Baseball 2025 Perfect Game All Star Game	Wall to Wall Baseball	Sportico	Pro Football Plus						
Monumental	Building	Wizards	Basketball Washington Wizards at Milwaukee Bucks	Postgame (Live)						
MSNBC	(6:00) R. Maddow	Rachel Maddow Joins Heather Cox	The Rachel Maddow Show							
MTV	Movie: Pitch Perfect ★★★ (2012)		Movie: Pitch Perfect 2 ★★ (2015)							
Nat'l Geographic	Catch a Smuggler	Catch a Smuggler	Catch a Smuggler	Smuggler	Smuggler	Smuggler				
Nickelodeon	Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends	Big Bang			
NWSN	NewsNation Pr. (Live)	NewsNation Pr. (Live)	NewsNation Pr. (Live)	NewsNati.. (Live)	NewsNat.. (Live)	NewsNat..				
Paramount	Yellowstone	(10) Yellowstone	(15) Yellowstone	Yellowstone						
Paramount+Sho	(6:25) Movie: Guns Up (2025)	Movie: Ocean's Eleven ★★★ (2001)	Movie: Ocean's Twelve ★★★ (2004)							
Syfy	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone			
TBS	Big Bang	Big Bang	Wrestling	Dynamite New Year Smash 2025	Big Bang	Big Bang	Big Bang			
TCM	(6:45) Movie: Duck Soup ★★★★ (1933)	Movie: Bridget Jones's Diary ★★★ (2001)	Movie: Only You ★★ (1994)							
TLC	My 600-Lb. Life	My Strange Addiction	My Strange Addiction	My Strange Addiction	My Strange Addiction	My Strange Addiction	My Strange			
TNT	(4:35) Movie: Independence Day (1...)	(05) Movie: Avengers: Endgame ★★★ (2019)	The Avengers prepare for an epic showdown with Thanos.							
Travel	Paranormal Cam.	Paranormal Cam.	Paranormal Cam.	Paranormal Cam.	Paranormal Cam..	Paranormal..				
TruTV	Movie: Varsity Blues ★★ (1999)	Wipeout	Wipeout	Wipeout	Wipeout	Wipeout				
TV Land	Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	(20) Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	King			
TV One	Fatal Attraction	Fatal Attraction	(05) Fatal Attraction	(05) Fatal Attraction	(05) Fatal Attraction	Attraction				
USA Network	Law & Order: SVU	Law & Order: SVU	Law & Order: SVU	Law & Order: SVU	Law & Order: SVU	Law-SVU				
VH1	Hip Hop	Basketball Wives	Basketball Wives	Basketball Wives	Basketball Wives	Basketball				
WNC8	Paid Prog.	RateEsca..	America	Paid Prog.	SportsTalk	WorldNe..	National	Closet	National	

LEGEND: **Bold** indicates new or live programs • High Definition

Movie Ratings (from TMS) ★★★ Excellent ★★★ Good ★★ Fair ★ Poor No stars: not rated

HOROSCOPE



BIRTHDAY | DECEMBER 31:
You're pragmatic and idealistic. You seek better ways of doing things. You're reasonable and fair. This is a year of learning and teaching. Take time to renew your spiritual or religious beliefs. Explore philosophies that give you better self-awareness. This year gets more exciting as it wears on.

Moon Alert: Avoid shopping (except for food and gas) or important decisions from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. today. After that, the Moon moves from Taurus into Gemini.

ARIES
(March 21-April 19)
Today you have strong feelings and views about certain issues, which is why discussions with siblings, relatives and neighbors will be lively! Oh yes. You will say what you mean and mean what you say!

TAURUS
(April 20-May 20)
You are the financial wizard of the zodiac, and today you have strong feelings about financial matters. This might be about earnings or a big expenditure. It might even be about something that you own. Be careful, because today it's easy to become obsessed.

GEMINI
(May 21-June 20)
Today the Moon is in your sign dancing with Pluto, which makes your feelings intense and your discussions charged with emotion. Take a breath and get things in perspective. The world is not going to end today. In fact, it's already tomorrow somewhere else on the planet.

CANCER

(June 21-July 22)
Be cooperative with partners and close friends today because three planets are opposing your sign. This means it's in your best interests to "go along to get along." If you have an intense reaction to something, you'll be quiet about it. (Just for today.)

LEO
(July 23-Aug. 22)
Remember to listen when talking to friends and members of groups today. Listen with genuine interest and be polite, because it's all too easy for conversations to become so intense they're off the charts. Today is an emotionally charged day for many people. Keep it light.

VIRGO
(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
You are high-viz today, which means people notice you more than usual. Be aware of the fact that discussions with bosses, parents and authority figures – which might be intense – will also be more public than usual. You might end up hissing at someone in an elevator filled with others. Stay chill.

LIBRA
(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
You are an excellent debater, and today you might get caught up in intense discussions about politics, religion or something about foreign countries. (These could be exhausting.) Remember that you need harmony in your surroundings for your own peace of mind. You come first.

SCORPIO
(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
Today the Moon is dancing with your ruler Pluto, which will create intense feelings in you and others, especially if you're dealing with inheritances and

issues about banking, debt, taxes or shared property. Don't come on too strong with others, because you are very powerful right now.

SAGITTARIUS
(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
The best advice for you today is to cooperate with spouses, partners and close friends – even members of the general public – because the Moon is opposite your sign. Feelings are running high. Naturally, with Mercury in your sign, you have something to say. Easy does it.

CAPRICORN
(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
It's the last day of the year, and you hold all the cards with the Sun, Venus and fiery Mars all in your sign. Avoid disputes or emotional discussions with co-workers, which might arise. Do your best to keep things on an even keel so that everyone benefits, including you.

AQUARIUS
(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
Today has mixed messages for you. One message is that you want to party and socialize. You have strong feelings and expectations! However, the other message is that you might be best served by being low-key and staying quiet – alone or behind the scenes. You choose.

PISCES
(Feb. 19-March 20)
Relations with friends and groups are positive today. However, discussions with family members, especially parents, might be too emotional because both parties are obsessed about their point of view. Go gently.

— Georgia Nicols

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BRIDGE

"My hairpiece cost a lot, but it was a small price toupee." — graffiti.

Grapefruit, our odious club member, gets his name from his head (as bald as a mountaintop in winter) and his sour disposition. He was today's East, and at four hearts, South took the ace of spades, led a club to the ace and returned a trump: spade from Grapefruit, jack, queen. West then led his last spade. South ruffed, took the top diamonds, ruffed a diamond in dummy, ruffed a club and ruffed a diamond.

South next ruffed a club and ruffed his last diamond for 10 tricks. He lost the last two tricks to West's A-10 of trumps, and Grapefruit had his say.

"If idiots could fly," he snarled, "this place would be an airport."

When West takes the queen of trumps, he prevails by leading the ace and 10. He loses a trump trick but gains two tricks by stopping two ruffs in dummy. South survived a

misplay: If he never leads a trump but starts a crossruff immediately, he can actually make an overtrick.

DAILY QUESTION
You hold:

♦ J 7 5 3 ♠ 9 6 4 2

♦ 4 ♣ A 9 6 2

Both sides vulnerable. The dealer, at your left, opens one club. Your partner bids one spade, and the next player passes. What do you say?

ANSWER: Bid three spades, preemptive. With a stronger hand, you could start with a cue bid of two clubs. You have enough trumps and distribution to bid to the three level,

The Washington Post

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025

SU

B7



MIKE CHRISTY/GETTY IMAGES



MICHAEL REAVES/GETTY IMAGES



YUKI IWAMURA/ASSOCIATED PRESS



EVAN VUCCI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

They seemed like good ideas at the time

From a bad trade to a cloned dog to a fight over parking, poor decisions abounded in 2025

BY DES BIELER

The past year in sports was full of choices that worked out swimmingly, such as boxer Anthony Joshua taking a fight on relatively short notice. The fight, of course, was against Jake Paul, it earned Joshua a massive payday, and he finished it with a knockout of someone a lot of people wanted to see get knocked out. ¶ Other choices didn't work out quite so well, and a few were unfortunate enough to make this roundup of 2025's thoroughly regrettable sports decisions. It's a non-comprehensive list, but it should be enough to have us all looking to ring in a less misguided new year.

SEE DECISIONS ON B10

Clockwise from top left: Luka Doncic found a happy home as Mavericks fans mourned, marathoner Ruth Chepngetich had to take her medicine, President Donald Trump made peace with FIFA, and Chauncey Billups faced a federal case.

A former pro's arrival proves college hoops can't police itself



At this point, we just have to accept it: College basketball is trolling us.

Right? What else would explain how this game keeps creating the kind of content that even parody social media accounts wouldn't touch? College basketball has pushed boundaries so far that it's only tangentially related to its amateur roots. The game is clearly trying its best to out-crazy the craziness of college football.

I see your graduated seniors suing for an extra year and junior college transfers who want eligibility for eternity, and I raise you James Nnaji.

Two years ago, Nnaji was a raw 6-foot-11 teenager out of Nigeria who drew comparisons to NBA big men Clint Capela and Mitchell Robinson. Since then, he was drafted in the second round by the Detroit Pistons, played overseas as well as in the NBA summer league — most recently with the New York Knicks — and apparently grown an inch. Soon, he will head to a college court near you to play for the Baylor Bears.

In new weirdness for college sports, an NBA draft pick has signed with Baylor. Though the 7-footer never signed an NBA contract or appeared in an NBA game, he has spent the past two

years playing as a professional — such as when he matched up against Victor Wembanyama in the summer after they came out of the 2023 draft.

Wait a minute. What in the name of image and likeness is happening here? What happened to the days when players declared for the draft and abandoned their amateur status, leaving the college game to the next generation of young athletes?

Maybe it's NCAA President Charlie Baker, who released a statement Tuesday emphasizing the NCAA will not grant eligibility to "prospective or returning student athletes" who have signed an NBA contract. "I will be working with [Division I] leaders in the weeks ahead to protect college basketball from these misguided attempts to destroy this American institution," Baker wrote.

The way Baker made it sound, college basketball is experiencing a crisis. One thing can help: The NCAA needs to hire separate commissioners to oversee Division I football and men's basketball. We need leaders who would bring clarity and install guardrails on these multimillion-dollar industries that are overflowing with media rights and marketing deals but short on good sense. These enterprises need enforcement

SEE BUCKNER ON B9



Denver's Nikola Jokic, a three-time MVP, will miss at least four weeks with a hyperextended left knee.

Jokic-less Nuggets face an unfamiliar path

On the NBA

BEN GOLLIVER

Nikola Jokic collapsed to the court and turned a backward somersault as he writhed in pain from a knee injury that seemingly put the rest of his season in jeopardy. The Denver Nuggets' giant center curled into a ball near the baseline; the

best player in basketball was now at the mercy of medical imaging.

The Nuggets announced Tuesday that Jokic will miss at least four weeks after suffering a left knee hyperextension the night before; that would be the longest health-related absence of his 11-year NBA career. The diagnosis was greeted with deep

sighs of relief in Denver, where Jokic has blossomed from a 2014 second-round draft pick into a three-time MVP who delivered the franchise's first championship in 2023. After all, Jokic had avoided a dreaded ACL tear, which would have required season-ending surgery and sent the Nuggets spiraling.

SEE ON THE NBA ON B9

Anthony Rendon

On Baseball
CHELSEA JANES

played 257 games for the Los Angeles Angels — about a season and a half's worth,

at least for everyday types.

The problem for the Angels, who had hoped he would be their third baseman for most of this decade, is that Rendon was not an everyday type. And six years into a seven-year contract, he is also no longer an active member of the Angels: Rendon and his agent, Scott Boras, reached an agreement with the team to end his contract a year early, according to multiple people with direct knowledge of the settlement who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the move had not been announced. Rendon, 35, hit 22 home runs in six years with the Angels, a dozen fewer than he hit for the Washington Nationals in the 2019 regular season alone.

Back in 2019, when Rendon was fresh off a World Series title and was one of the best right-handed hitters in baseball, one team or another was going to pay him. So the fact that the Angels committed \$245 million to him over seven seasons did not necessarily seem absurd.

Still, Rendon was not a no-brainer: For example, with Stephen Strasburg also headed to free agency, Nationals ownership felt it had a clear choice between the two, and the team handed the same contract to Strasburg instead. The right-hander appeared in just eight games over three seasons of that deal and retired at 35 because of

SEE ON BASEBALL ON B9

THE DAY IN SPORTS

SPOTLIGHT: SOCCER

COLLEGES

Texas Tech's Morton at full strength for CFP

Texas Tech is 11-0 when quarterback **Bethen Morton** plays this season, which is an obvious reason the Red Raiders made the College Football Playoff.

Here's more good news: Morton said he's fully healthy again.

The Red Raiders' starter said Tuesday that he is 100 percent going into Thursday's College Football Playoff quarterfinal against Oregon at the Orange Bowl. He had worn a walking boot for about two months while dealing with a hairline fracture in his right leg.

It wasn't a question about whether he would play — that was not in doubt — but the fact that he has been full go in bowl prep is a key development for the Big 12 champions. ...

Former Oregon and Philadelphia Eagles coach **Chip Kelly** was hired as Northwestern's offensive coordinator. ...

Clemson is moving on from offensive coordinator **Garrett Riley** and longtime defensive assistant **Mickey Conn** after a disappointing season. ...

David Olano kicked a 29-yard field goal as time expired as Illinois beat Tennessee, 30-28, in the Music City Bowl in Nashville, clinching back-to-back nine-win seasons for the first time. ...

Trey Kukuk followed his fourth-quarter touchdown pass with a big run to set up **Andrew Burnette**'s go-ahead plunge in a 17-point fourth quarter as Louisiana Tech rallied to beat Coastal Carolina, 23-14, in the Independence Bowl in Shreveport, Louisiana. ...

Nick Martinelli's 32 points and six rebounds powered the Northwestern men's basketball team (8-5) to an 80-60 win over Howard (9-6) in Evanston, Illinois.

Traville Bryson led the way for the Bison with 19 points and six rebounds. **Ose Okojie** added 13 points for Howard, which had won five straight games. ...

Palmore Mbu had 19 points; **Sophia Vital** added 14 points, seven rebounds and five steals; and the Rhode Island women's basketball team (11-2, 2-0 Atlantic 10) took down Richmond (11-4, 1-1), 73-61, at home in Kingston.

Maggie Doogan had 26 points and seven rebounds for the Spiders, whose four-game winning streak ended.

HOCKEY

Marchand is honored, but Panthers fall in OT

Nick Suzuki scored a power-play goal 3:24 into overtime as the Montreal Canadiens rallied from a two-goal deficit in the final five minutes of regulation to stun the host Florida Panthers, 3-2, in Sunrise.

Suzuki also scored late in regulation to tie it for Montreal, which improved to 6-1-3 in its past 10 games. **Cole Caufield** had the other goal for the Canadiens.

Brad Marchand and Sam Reinhart scored for Florida, but Marchand was called for roughing 1:27 into overtime, giving Montreal a four-on-three advantage.

In a pregame ceremony, the Panthers paid tribute to Marchand for notching his 1,000th point. He hit the milestone in mid-November but chose this game — against the Canadiens, one of his longtime rivals when he was with the Boston Bruins and a team coached by one of his idols, **Martin St. Louis** — for the formal celebration. ...

Largo boys, Irion girls make fresh starts after stars depart

BY EMMETT SIEGEL

SALISBURY, MD. — Largo guard Jalen Johnson stood in a hallway just off the court at the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center, having just finished the fifth game of his senior season. This is the program's first campaign since reigning All-Met Player of the Year Cam Ward graduated, and Johnson has seen plenty of posts on social media saying Largo won't be the same. They emerged during the offseason and haven't stopped.

"They keep saying Cam Ward this, Cam Ward that," Johnson said.

A few hours later, just down the road at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne — another site for the Governors Challenge, a high school invitational — Bishop Irion girls' coach



PETER CZIBORRA/ACTION IMAGES/REUTERS

William Saliba's Arsenal ended an 11-game winning streak by Aston Villa, which now finds itself six points out of first place.

Gunners will end year atop Premier League

BY JEROME PUGMIRE

Arsenal ensured it will end the calendar year in first place in the English Premier League after it beat visiting Aston Villa, 4-1, during a statement win Tuesday in London.

The Gunners' fourth goal, scored by substitute Gabriel Jesus one minute after he came on, highlighted the depth of Arsenal's bench. Manager Mikel Arteta jubilantly high-fived his assistants at the final whistle.

The victory put Arsenal five points ahead of Manchester City, which plays at Sunderland on New Year's Day, and six points clear of third-place Villa.

"It is a beautiful evening. That was a very tough match, as we knew it would be,

ARSENAL 4, ASTON VILLA 1

Arteta's team expands lead over Manchester City

because they are a top opponent to play against," Arteta told Sky Sports. "The way we started the second half was amazing — we really turned things up and were efficient in everything that we did."

Arsenal has not won the Premier League since 2004, and the pressure is on Arteta to deliver. "In 2026, we know what we want," he said.

No Arsenal player is near the top of the

goals chart, yet sharing the offense might be the team's strength.

Defender Gabriel Magalhães headed home early in the second half following a corner, and midfielder Martín Zubimendi netted in the 52nd minute.

Winger Leandro Trossard curled in a fine third goal from the edge of the penalty area in the 69th and was involved in the fourth goal, curled into the same corner from almost the same spot in the 78th by Jesus after Arsenal launched a superb counterattack.

The win was even more impressive considering Arsenal was missing key midfielder Declan Rice with a knee injury and Villa was on an 11-match winning streak in all competitions.

—Associated Press

TELEVISION AND RADIO

NHL

12:30 p.m. **New York Rangers at Washington** » Monumental Sports Network, WJFK (106.7 FM)

NBA

1 p.m. **Golden State at Charlotte** » NBA TV

3:30 p.m. **Phoenix at Cleveland** » NBA TV

7 p.m. **New York at San Antonio** » NBA TV

8 p.m. **Washington at Milwaukee** » Monumental Sports Network, WJFK (106.7 FM)

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Noon **ReliaQuest Bowl: Iowa vs. Vanderbilt** » ESPN

2 p.m. **Sun Bowl: Arizona State vs. Duke** » WUSA (Ch. 9), WJZ (Ch. 13)

3 p.m. **Citrus Bowl: Michigan vs. Texas** » WJLA (Ch. 7), WMAR (Ch. 2)

3:30 p.m. **Las Vegas Bowl: Nebraska vs. Utah** » ESPN

7:30 p.m. **College Football Playoff quarterfinal, Cotton Bowl: Miami vs. Ohio State** » ESPN

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Noon **Tulane at East Carolina** » ESPNU

Noon **Wake Forest at North Carolina State** » ESPN2

2 p.m. **Virginia at Virginia Tech** » ACC Network, WTEM (980 AM), WSBN (630 AM)

2 p.m. **Rice at Tulsa** » ESPNU

2 p.m. **Clemson at Syracuse** » ESPN2

2 p.m. **St. Bonaventure at VCU** » MASN

2 p.m. **Stony Brook at William & Mary** » CBS Sports Network

4 p.m. **George Washington at Richmond** » Monumental Sports Network

4 p.m. **Georgia Tech at Duke** » ACC Network

4 p.m. **Wichita State at UAB** » ESPNU

4 p.m. **North Texas at Memphis** » ESPN2

6 p.m. **DePaul at Villanova** » Fox Sports 1

8 p.m. **St. John's at Georgetown** » Fox Sports 1, WTEM (980 AM)

WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

12:30 p.m. **Ohio State at Purdue** » Big Ten Network

SOCCER

11 a.m. **Africa Cup of Nations, group stage: Algeria vs. Equatorial Guinea** » BeIN Sports

2 p.m. **Africa Cup of Nations, group stage: Ivory Coast vs. Gabon** » BeIN Sports

HOCKEY — IIHF WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

1 p.m. **Preliminary round: Switzerland vs. Slovakia** » NHL Network

3:30 p.m. **Preliminary round: Czech Republic vs. Latvia** » NHL Network

6 p.m. **Preliminary round: Sweden at United States** » NHL Network

8:30 p.m. **Preliminary round: Finland vs. Canada** » NHL Network



Coach Rodney Ward is leading a new era of Largo boys' basketball after the graduation of his son Cam, who is now at Michigan State.

Kesha Walton echoed something similar. Her Cardinals keep hearing they will take a step back now that the 2025 class has graduated, especially because All-Met Player of the Year Nyla Brooks is gone.

Brooks is now at North Carolina, where she is averaging 10.9 points for the No. 16 Tar Heels. Ward is at Michigan State and has carved out a role for Tom Izzo's ninth-ranked Spartans, averaging 6.2 points.

Back home, their high school programs have turned the page. Their new eras are easily defined: post-Nyla and post-Cam.

"They really want to continue what we've built and not make it a one-hit wonder," Walton said of this year's Cardinals. "Our standard is still the standard, and that's what they hold themselves to."

Ward was the most decorated player in Largo history, setting the Maryland public school scoring record with 2,716 career points. His last game in a Lions uniform brought their second straight Class 2A championship. At Irion, Brooks headlined the Alexandria program's most ac-

complished senior class ever, leading the Cardinals to back-to-back Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association championships and their first appearance in the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference title game. She was the first McDonald's all-American.

After Monday's win over McDonogh, the Cardinals watched Brooks and North Carolina face off against Boston College, where former classmate Amira Anderson plays. Brooks had 15 points in the Tar Heels' win, and Anderson scored five. That same night, Rodney Ward — Largo's coach and Cam's father — followed as his son had five points and four rebounds in a win over Cornell.

Reminders of their success are everywhere. Rodney Ward coaches with last season's championship ring on his right hand. Brooks's jersey hangs in Irion's gym to commemorate her all-American selection and Gatorade state player of the year award.

With overhauled rosters, the programs have worked through growing pains. Ward and Brooks starred, but they were far from one-person teams — both graduated seven seniors after last season. Irion doesn't have a senior on this season's roster after it lost five of its top seven rotation players, including Brooks, Anderson and

Anthony Mantha scored in his third straight game — this time notching two goals — to help the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the visiting Carolina Hurricanes, 5-1.

Justin Brazeau set a career high with his 12th goal and added an assist, and Tommy Novak and Sidney Crosby also scored for Pittsburgh, which has won three of four following an eight-game skid. Erik Karlsson had two assists and passed Brad Park for the 14th-most points by a defenseman in NHL history.

Mark Jankowski scored for Carolina, which has lost four of six ...

Kimi Körbler scored two goals as Switzerland beat Germany, 4-0, at the world junior hockey championship in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Switzerland (1-0-0-2) clinched a spot in the quarterfinals by eliminating Germany, which was outscored 22-5 as it lost all four of its games in Group A.

In Group B in Minneapolis, Krisjanis Sarts scored late in the first period and Alberts Smits scored twice on the power play in the second to help Latvia beat Denmark, 6-3, and clinch a spot in the quarterfinals. ...

The Professional Hockey Players' Association said its membership ratified a five-year collective bargaining agreement with the ECHL following a strike that forced the postponement of 41 games since last week.

SOCER

Senegal, Congo make Africa Cup statements

Senegal and Congo posted convincing victories at the Africa Cup of Nations, while Tanzania and Tunisia grabbed the last places in the knockout stage in Morocco.

Senegal, the 2021 champion, survived Kalidou Koulibaly's red card during his 100th appearance for the team as it routed Benin, 3-0, in Group D in Tangier. Congo finished second in the group on goal difference with a 3-0 win over already-eliminated Botswana in Rabat.

Senegal, Congo and Benin had secured places in the round of 16. But Tanzania and Tunisia had not. They progressed from Group C by playing out a 1-1 draw in Rabat that eliminated Angola. ...

Defending English Premier League champion Liverpool parted ways with set-piece coach Aaron Briggs.

During Saturday's nervy 2-1 home win against rock-bottom Wolverhampton, the visitors scored off a corner, and afterward Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk highlighted the team's problems on set pieces.

MISC.

NBA fines Suns' Green for cursing in interview

The NBA fined Phoenix Suns guard **Jalen Green** \$25,000 for using profanity during a teammate's postgame interview Monday.

Green, who did not play against the Washington Wizards, was celebrating with guard **Collin Gillespie** — who scored 25 points on 10-for-14 shooting in the 115-101 victory — when he interrupted Gillespie's on-court interview. ...

LIV Golf will end the year with no decision on whether the Official World Golf Ranking will approve the 54-man league to receive points like golf's tours.

The OWGR also said tournaments that are played over 54 holes or even 36 holes will have a reduction in points compared with standard 72-hole events.

—From news services and staff reports

guard Theresa Hagans Jr., now at Pittsburgh. Largo had three senior starters leave and is breaking in a handful of underclassmen.

Both teams are undeterred. Irion (8-2) bounced back from two losses to nationally ranked opponents in mid-December to rattle off five straight double-digit wins. It will soon jump into WCAC play, where there are few days off.

"Nyla and the rest of the seniors last year showed us how to play as a team, and even though everybody's getting their own, it's still helping the team that's the end goal," junior Geornae Davis said.

Largo has made a habit of finishing strong, posting zero losses in February or March since 2023. The Lions' defeat against Moon Area (Pennsylvania) on Monday dropped them to 3-2 but didn't shake their belief.

"There's a daily reminder from everybody else, like, 'Man, you guys can't do it



JONATHAN NEWTON/THE WASHINGTON POST

Anthony Rendon, left, starred as the Nationals' third baseman from 2013 to 2019, helping the team win the World Series in his last season.

ON BASEBALL

Rendon's time with the Angels ends with a whimper

ON BASEBALL FROM B7

injury, though it would be hard to find a member of the Mike Rizzo-led regime that would tell you he was the wrong choice. People around the Nationals knew firsthand what Rendon had said publicly for years: Baseball was never central to his identity, and he resented the attention it brought him.

"[Baseball] has never been a top priority for me," Rendon told the Athletic and others in February 2024, after he had played no more than 58 games in any of his first four seasons with the Angels. "This is a job. I do this to make a living. My faith, my family come first before this job. So if those things come before it, I'm leaving."

Given the money the Angels paid him and how much injuries limited him in the first four years of his deal, those comments landed poorly with players and fans who rightfully point out that generations of people would do anything to have Rendon's job. Rendon is just not one of those people.

He never has been.

The Houston native had been injury-prone since college — he fell to the Nationals at No. 6 in the 2011 draft because of concerns over ankle and shoulder injuries. In a clubhouse of training obsessives such as



JOHN E. SOKOLOWSKI/USA TODAY SPORTS

After he signed a \$245 million contract with the Angels, Rendon battled injuries that limited him to 257 games over six seasons.

Jayson Werth, Bryce Harper and Max Scherzer, Rendon always seemed less concerned about aging by comparison. He was a big leaguer by fate, not by choice — a hitting savant with hands so quick that they simply had to hit, even if their owner often seemed a little less invested.

"My enthusiasm has been the same since I got drafted, to be honest with you," Rendon said in that 2024 outpouring. "I was actually deleting old emails because my storage is getting to my maximum. ... I emailed myself a pros and cons of why I wanted to stay in the game. This

was in 2014."

In 2014, Rendon was in the second season of his seven with the Nationals, finishing fifth in National League MVP voting and winning a Silver Slugger award. In his healthy years, he was a sure thing: From 2013 to 2019, he averaged 142 hits, 35 doubles, 19 homers and 31 missed games per season. At those rates, he looked like an all-star worth signing long term. His home-state Texas Rangers were interested. The New York Yankees and Los Angeles Dodgers reportedly were, too, and maybe things would have gone differently with

those teams.

But the Angels' offer was too much to refuse: \$245 million over seven years, bigger than any contract they had ever given. Rendon took it. He looked like he might be worth it in the pandemic-shortened 2020 season. Then injuries to his groin, left knee, left hamstring, right hip, right wrist, groin (again), left wrist, left shin, left hip, left hamstring (again), lower back and left oblique came to define his next four seasons in Anaheim. At the start of spring training in February, the Angels said Rendon would undergo hip surgery that ended up sidelining him for the entire 2025 season. That meant he would enter this offseason with one year and \$38.6 million remaining on his contract — so little, relatively speaking, that both sides might consider absorbing the cost of divorce.

The exact terms of that divorce — first reported by the Athletic — remained unclear as of Tuesday. Rendon could remain on the Angels' roster, though that does not matter much: He can move to the 60-day injured list so the team can replace him on the 40-man roster. He can, effectively, disappear. To some with his skills, disappearing would constitute a nightmare. For Rendon, it always seemed like the dream.

ON THE NBA

Jokic's first serious injury should reveal real Nuggets

ON THE NBA FROM B7

Even though Denver dodged the worst-case scenario, the road ahead until Jokic's return will be unfamiliar and challenging with the potential to seriously complicate the Nuggets' playoff outlook. For years, Jokic has taken on added responsibilities while teammates such as Jamal Murray and Aaron Gordon recovered from injuries. Now, the rest of the Nuggets, who already were banged up, will be asked to return the favor. That's an enormous ask given that Jokic has delivered another MVP-caliber season by averaging 29.6 points, a league-best 12.2 rebounds and a league-best 11.0 assists, a stat line that hasn't been seen since Oscar Robertson in 1961-62.

"It's gut-wrenching, especially somebody as special as [Jokic] is," Nuggets Coach David Adelman said Monday after the Miami Heat pulled away from the Nuggets for a 147-123 victory following Jokic's injury. "You have to stay with it as a team and a group. That's how you best support your teammates who are out: by honoring them when you play."

Durability has long been one of Jokic's many superpowers: The Serbian center has played in 93 percent of Denver's games since his 2015 arrival, and his 777 games played during that time span rank third among all players. Since the beginning of his first MVP campaign in 2020-21, Denver has performed at a 55-win pace with Jokic on the court and a 30-win pace during his relatively rare absences. This season, that's the difference between the Western Conference's No. 4 seed and No. 12 seed.

As soon as Jokic ascended to stardom, Nuggets observers started splitting the team's body of work into "Jokic minutes" and "non-Jokic minutes" to recognize his immense impact and ability to make his teammates better. So far this season, Jokic ranks third leaguewide in plus-minus: Denver has outscored its opponents by 304 points with him on the court, and it has been outscored by 72 points when he's off the court. With Jokic, Denver has been the NBA's most dominant team outside the defending champion Oklahoma City Thunder.

Without Jokic, the Nuggets have performed somewhere between the Atlanta Hawks and Milwaukee Bucks, teams with losing records that are battling for the final spot in the Eastern Conference's play-in tournament.

Needless to say, the impressive numbers that have driven Jokic's MVP campaigns will now keep the Nuggets' coaching staff up at night for the foreseeable future. Denver was

already down three starters because of injury — Gordon, Christian Braun and Cam Johnson — and its only traditional backup center, Jonas Valanciunas, is 33 and nearly left the NBA to play in Europe over the summer.

There's some good news for the Nuggets: The next month of their schedule isn't loaded with top-tier Western Conference opponents. But there's bad news, too: Denver will play 16 games over the next four weeks, a grueling stretch that includes 10 games on the road and four sets of back-to-backs. If Jokic remains out until after the all-star break in mid-February, he would miss at least another eight games.

Under any timeline, the Nuggets appear headed for some major backsliding. Denver entered Tuesday as the West's No. 3 seed with a 22-10 record, but they were only three games up on the No. 7 Phoenix Suns. Instead of battling the San Antonio Spurs for the West's No. 2 seed and the right to be on the opposite side of the playoff bracket from the Thunder, the Nuggets could easily find themselves in the West's play-in tournament field by the time Jokic returns. Denver should have a chance to reverse any negative momentum in the final months of the season, but drawing Oklahoma City in the first round of the playoffs — rather than in the Western Conference finals — is suddenly an eventuality it must consider.

Until Gordon (hamstring) and Braun (ankle) return, the Nuggets' fate will reside almost exclusively in Murray's hands. The Canadian guard has averaged a career-high 25.2 points and shot a career-best 45.4 percent on three-pointers this season, and he will be asked to push his scoring and distributing to even greater heights as he shifts from riding shotgun to the driver's seat. While Jokic's injury could prevent him from winning a fourth MVP award because candidates must play at least 65 games, it could also help the 28-year-old Murray earn his first all-star selection.

That potential silver lining helps crystallize Denver's state of play without Jokic. Either his teammates will rise to the occasion and make the case they were better all along than they have gotten credit for in Jokic's shadow, or the Nuggets will tumble down the standings and thereby reinforce their franchise player's singular value.

"You have to keep it moving, and we will," Adelman said. "For [our team], in the moment, it's a little bit of a shock. ... These things happen. It's part of life. We'll move forward with the guys we have that are healthy. This group has enough to win some games — bottom line. We just have to keep our heads up."

CANDACE BUCKNER

College basketball has gone off the rails

BUCKNER FROM B7

because, as we continue to see, there's nothing in place that will keep the stewards of the game, the coaches, from bending moral codes.

Wanting a college basketball commissioner isn't a radical, new request. For decades — throughout his time at Duke — legendary coach Mike Krzyzewski called for the position to be created. In 2013, Krzyzewski said he thought a basketball commissioner, not the NCAA president, was needed to run the sport on a day-to-day basis. Seven years later, amid the coronavirus pandemic, Krzyzewski argued a commissioner would help craft a unifying message for coaches to echo on issues involving health and safety, society and culture.

Now, the necessity of a commissioner is clearer than ever. The unregulated transfer portal has shown so. As has the confusion over what is permissible NIL money and what is not, although an enforcement committee is supposed to be handling this. Specifically in the Nnaji case, college basketball needs to know who should be allowed to play versus who has given up eligibility. Krzyzewski is retired, so the current kings of the court are taking on this cause.

"My biggest thing is: Who's looking out for the shield, the college basketball [shield]?"

two-time champion coach Dan Hurley of Connecticut told CBS Sports. "Who's protecting college basketball, one of the most special things we have in sports? ... We need a commissioner. We need rules, we need guidelines."

Apparently no one. Well, not as much as they should be at NCAA headquarters after they cracked the doors to this strange, new world. By loosening eligibility rules, the NCAA has allowed, on a case-by-case basis, former professionals to play in college. In September, the NCAA granted Thierry Darlan, who played two seasons in the G League, two years of eligibility based on his age and years removed from the NBA Academy in Africa, according to ESPN. Entering Tuesday, Darlan had appeared in 14 games for Santa Clara.

The coaches are obviously always going to do what's in their best interest if they can grab a player from somewhere. It's gone on forever," Hurley said. "Coaches have cheated in recruiting for years. They've paid players. I mean, the coaches are going to find ways to make their team the best they can be."

Coaches, naturally, won't point fingers at one another. Instead of straight up calling out Baylor's Scott Drew for drafting second-round washouts into his program or mocking Santa Clara's Herb Sendek for raiding the G League to win a few games in the West Coast Conference,

their coaching peers all but shrug. Those in this fraternity see Drew and Sendek as just doing their jobs within the loose structure the NCAA has provided. What? You expect a basketball coach not to find every ambitious way around the rules, not to take a mile when given an inch? To not abandon integrity, that limp shell of a concept, on the side of the road while riding toward March?

"We really don't have any organization or any real rules right now, and so guys are just trying to do whatever they can do," Gonzaga Coach Mark Few told reporters Sunday. "Until there's a rule that says you can't do it, it's hard to blame anybody for doing what they're doing."

True statement, but it's still weak.

Blame the system, sure. That's the easiest route, because right now the system is a basically a building in downtown Indianapolis. The NCAA is a faceless bogeyman that lets anyone appear big and tough while taking shots at it. However, coaches can't simply turn a blind eye to the greatest rule-benders among them. If any coach could throw money at former salaried players who list their previous college as "Delaware Blue Coats/NBA G League Ignite," then why aren't more Division I programs looking like pro-am rosters?

Believe it or not, there actually are coaches out there who still recruit kids out of high school in



LUCAS PELTIER/USA TODAY SPORTS

an attempt to field a college basketball team. Yet those programs, such as Purdue under Matt Painter and Duke under Jon Scheyer, still play the modern version of college hoops, with the presence of international players and reportedly high NIL salaries. So, yes, Painter might recruit and

coach for today's game, but even he's as perplexed by college basketball as anyone else.

"You're just kind of at a loss for words," he said in October following the news of Darlan's arrival at Santa Clara. "You don't know what is next, right? Nothing surprises me anymore, I

know that."

Some coaches can't be trusted amid all this crazy in college basketball. Some of them need to be taught how to uphold the values of the sport. And since too many of them keep playing fast and loose with the loopholes, this game could use a commissioner.



After Phillies pitcher Orion Kerkering threw away a ball hit back to the mound, the Dodgers got to celebrate winning their National League Division Series. They went on to a second straight World Series title.

DECISIONS FROM B7

The Mavericks trade Luka Doncic for ... not much: Never mind that, in the wake of the Doncic trade, the Dallas Mavericks wound up with Cooper Flagg. They don't get credit for seeing a piece of outrageous good fortune fall into their collective lap.

On the other hand, the Mavericks deserved all the criticism they received — a Texas-size mass that didn't subside for months — and not just because they dealt a massively popular, 25-year-old superstar who already had led them to the NBA Finals. The return for Doncic and couple of ancillary pieces to make the trade work included an aging and injury-prone Anthony Davis, Max Christie, a first-round draft pick and ... actually, that was it.

The worst part? Well, that's a tough question, given that the trade came as an out-of-nowhere jolt of shocking news, left the franchise bereft of a long-term centerpiece (again, the subsequent, utterly fluky landing of Flagg doesn't count) and allowed the Los Angeles Lakers to retain some assets that the Mavericks should have demanded as part of the package. Maybe the most galling aspect was that Nico Harrison, the Mavericks' general manager, didn't shop Doncic around the league, a process that almost certainly would have yielded more substantial offers. Instead, Lakers GM Rob Pelinka appeared to use his long-standing friendship with Harrison to pull off a clandestine swindle. Plus, did it have to be the Lakers? You know, the franchise that has lorded over the Western Conference for huge chunks of the past 45 years and whose fans have come to expect the regular arrival of elite players as their birthright?

None of that sat at all well with Mavericks fans, and ultimately their fury and the team's lack of success after the trade cost Harrison his job. He's no longer around, but the frustration of the Doncic trade figures to linger in Dallas for years to come.

Orion Kerkering throws home: It might be unfair to say he panicked, but Kerkering was hardly the picture of composure when the ball was hit back to the 24-year-old Philadelphia Phillies pitcher in the bottom of the 11th inning of Game 4 of the National League Division Series.

Kerkering had trouble fielding the ball, but after he did eventually pick it up, he appeared to have time to turn and throw to first base. Given that there were two outs, a successful throw to the first baseman would have ended the inning, kept the score tied and kept the Phillies alive in their series against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Certainly, that was what catcher J.T. Realmuto wanted. As Kerkering picked up the ball, Realmuto was pointing toward first base. Alas, the pitcher opted to throw home — the bases were loaded, so an inning-ending out also could have been made at the plate — but he had only a split second to beat the runner, and Kerkering's rushed effort sailed wide of Realmuto. The runner was safe at home, the Dodgers spilled out of their dugout with joy, and the

In 2025, bad calls kept coming

Phillies were forced to contemplate a brutal end to their season. Kerkering defended his decision, saying he thought he could get the ball to home plate faster than if he turned and threw to first, but he acknowledged, "It was just a horses--- throw."

The Clippers bring back Chris Paul: When the Los Angeles Clippers signed Paul in July to a one-year contract, it seemed like a solid move, potentially even a heartwarming one — after all, Paul is a franchise icon, and he was poised to help his team return to the playoffs in what could be his final NBA season. Instead, the relationship between Paul — never one to refrain from offering strong opinions on team-related matters — and the Clippers' coaching staff reportedly curdled almost immediately. Then, barely a quarter of the way through this season, the 40-year-old point guard was banished altogether.

Paul remains under contract, though, meaning that after getting the heave-ho, he is still essentially getting paid handsomely by the Clippers not to work. Wait, why does that sound familiar? Oh, right — their season began under a cloud of suspicion that they may have circumvented NBA salary cap rules by arranging for Kawhi Leonard to receive a lucrative, no-show job from a team sponsor. At least Leonard is doing his job for the Clippers by putting up good numbers, but he already has missed a chunk of the season with his latest injury and, more ominously, has proved unable to help the Clippers avoid an early fall that has them near the bottom of the Western Conference.

A guy gets caught stealing a hat from a kid: Here's the thing — If you're going to swipe a cap clearly meant for a kid, don't do it where loads of cameras are present. Wait, sorry, here's the thing — Don't do it at all. Alas, Polish businessman Piotr Szczerek found it as easy in the moment as stealing candy from a baby, only to discover his misdeed went viral.

Caught red-handed at the U.S. Open (tennis version), Szczerek subsequently issued an apology, but not before online sleuths found his business and subjected it to damagingly poor reviews. Even in his apology, Szczerek claimed it was "never my intent to steal away a prized memento from the young fan," leading to another round of criticism.

Picking upsets in your bracket: Everyone knows that if you actually want to win your NCAA tournament pool, you can't go chalk. While you may not be able to predict which upsets will occur, you know they're coming, so your best bet is to pick a few and hope you get some hits.

A marathoner tries to help her maid: After Ruth Chepngetich eventually provided an explanation for how she came to have a banned substance in her system, the Athletics Integrity Unit described her tale as "hardly credible." Even if you take her explanation at face value, though, it doesn't exactly do her any favors.

John Calipari-coached SEC squad (No. 10 Arkansas, which promptly lost), and the Final Four was composed solely of No. 1 seeds. At least, at that point, Duke haters got to see the Blue Devils get upset by Houston, but even that unexpected result deprived hoops fans of seeing Flagg in the national title game.

Tom Brady clones his dog: In thanking a biosciences company for giving him and his family "a second chance with a clone of our beloved dog," Brady raised a question of what kind of "second chance" he thought he was getting. Obviously, the first go-round went so well that he decided to have the dog duplicated, so it wasn't a question of making amends. At the same time, the personality that so endeared the original pooch to the Bradys wouldn't necessarily be replicated in the clone.

What Brady could count on, if he cared to get some feedback, was disapproval from animal rights activists and others who happen to be well aware that tons of terrific pups are just waiting at shelters for a loving human to come along. That act of compassion could be accomplished for a fraction of the price of cloning — and without the possibility that several attempts might be discarded before an acceptable look-alike was produced.

Chauncey Billups plays in shady poker games: Billups, the Portland Trail Blazers coach who was placed on unpaid leave one game into the season after being arrested on money laundering conspiracy and wire fraud charges, pleaded not guilty. Perhaps he did nothing wrong and is guilty only of poor judgment — but, hoo boy, did he display some poor judgment in getting involved in an allegedly Mafia-backed scheme to use his celebrity to attract other poker players to illegal games so they could be defrauded with techniques such as rigged card-shuffling machines. In addition,

Billups was accused by federal authorities of passing along information about the Trail Blazers' plans to tank a March game by benching players, which allegedly resulted in big-money bets being placed on the contest.

If Billups plays his cards right (ahem) with the not-guilty plea and avoids what could be decades in prison, he still might be banned for life by the NBA, particularly if there is compelling evidence that he did indeed share Portland's tanking plans. At a minimum, he probably can kiss his coaching career goodbye, and his recent Hall of Fame induction could be in jeopardy.

A marathoner tries to help her maid: After Ruth Chepngetich eventually provided an explanation for how she came to have a banned substance in her system, the Athletics Integrity Unit described her tale as "hardly credible." Even if you take her explanation at face value, though, it doesn't exactly do her any favors.

Chepngetich, who smashed the women's marathon world record in October 2024 only to test positive for hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) several months later, was said to have told investigators that she fell ill with similar symptoms to those experienced shortly before by her housemaid. According to the AIU, an agency established by track and field's international governing body to ensure athletes adhere to anti-doping protocols, the 31-year-old Kenyan asked what medication her maid had taken and then promptly ingested it herself. Chepngetich even provided a photo of the medication, which clearly stated "Hydrochlorothiazide" on its packaging, and she was said to have claimed she didn't know it was on the prohibited list.

The AIU noted Chepngetich had multiple opportunities to give her account of events before she provided the explanation and that it still didn't account for the trace amounts of HCTZ found in a test she took before the episode in question. She accepted a three-year suspension, although her record has been allowed to stand, at least for the time being.

Bill Belichick agrees to go on camera: Infamously taciturn during his two-decade run as the New England Patriots' coach, Belichick invariably gave the impression that he would much rather be left alone to work on game plans in a darkened film room. After taking the North Carolina job, though, he was much more willing to go on camera. By doing so, the 73-year-old also happened to shine more of a spotlight on his girlfriend, 24-year-old Jordan Hudson. That may have been the plan all along (for at least one of them), but it didn't always go the way they would have liked.

Most notably, Hudson's commanding of a "CBS Sunday Morning" interview of Belichick in April raised widespread questions about how much of a managerial role she seemed to have taken. When the season started, she became a very visible presence on the Tar Heels' sideline, and cameras also caught Belichick conferring with her there shortly before games kicked off. In October, video emerged from an aborted docuseries on Belichick by NFL Films that showed Hudson displaying a high degree of involvement and, at times, casting aspersions on the work of production team members.

As for the on-field product Belichick produced, he probably wishes that wasn't filmed, either. In his first season at UNC, he oversaw a 4-8 season that began with an embarrassing blowout loss and included four other defeats by at least 16 points.

Mississippi fans hope for Lane Kiffin to stay: Sure, Kiffin bolting for LSU just after guiding the Rebels to their best regular season since 1962 made for a messy ending in Oxford, but what did Mississippi fans expect? Kiffin has departed almost all of his coaching gigs with a trail of ill will

in his wake, and the LSU job has been a generally more coveted position for decades.

Nonetheless, a lot of Mississippi fans apparently expected Kiffin to stay, and many of them didn't appreciate getting jilted. Maybe now that he's with the Tigers, some of those fans will learn that a leopard can't change its spots.

FIFA creates a peace prize for the president: Maybe, just maybe, if Donald Trump hadn't been openly piping for a Nobel Peace Prize, and if FIFA head Gianni Infantino hadn't been acting so openly obsequious toward Trump, the fact that FIFA's newly created peace prize just happened to go to Trump wouldn't seem like such a blatant case of currying favor. Of course, soccer's international governing body could reasonably have some major concerns about the smooth staging of its 2026 World Cup — much of which will be in the United States, which hasn't exactly rolled out the welcome mat for foreign visitors this year — that FIFA wants very much to allay.

We'll see how it goes next year with the world's most-watched tournament, just as we'll see who gets picked by FIFA as the next recipient of what it promises will be an annual honor. Presumably, the pool of candidates will be composed solely of world figures Infantino reckons will actually want to accept an award of such dubious origin.

FIFA asks Wayne Gretzky to pronounce names of countries: At the same World Cup draw this month where Infantino handed Trump his hardware, Gretzky was asked to help read names of countries as they were slotted into pods for group play. While it wasn't ideal that he pronounced Curacao as "Cuh-rocco" and North Macedonia as "Mack-a-donia," in fairness, those probably aren't places he heard dropped into conversation very often.

But Jordan? Or as Gretzky put it, "Jor-DAN"? Again, that's a country not likely to be bandied about frequently in Gretzky's presence, but you would think he has heard more than enough comparisons to Michael Jordan to just go with that as the default pronunciation.

NASCAR thinking it could win a court battle against Michael Jordan: Speaking of Jordan, his latest showdown was in a federal courtroom, not on an NBA court, but the outcome would have been familiar to any number of Jordan's opponents in hoops: NASCAR was put on the proverbial poster. Jordan and his 23XI racing team, along with co-plaintiff Front Row Motorsports, came away with a settlement of their antitrust lawsuit that pretty much gave them what they wanted. In turn, that amounted to a huge win for all the other Cup Series teams, who also will benefit from the reported settlement terms of permanent charters, greater revenue sharing and more say in how the overall business operates.

The Charlotte-based judge who presided over the nine-day trial, which began approximately 14 months after Jordan and his partners filed suit, said he wished the settlement could have been reached "a few months ago." Some NASCAR officials probably felt the same way, given some of the damaging details that emerged during discovery. They reportedly included text messages from NASCAR Commissioner Steve Phelps to a colleague that called team owner Richard Childress a "stupid redneck" who should be "taken out back and flogged."

It remains to be seen whether Phelps is able to keep his job, but there is little doubt that the organization he works for got dunked on by His Airness.

The choice of Keegan Bradley for Ryder Cup captain: Normally, active PGA Tour players are not chosen for the Ryder Cup captaincy. Bradley was not only very much still on the tour but, in fact, played so well this year that he might have been a captain's pick — had he not been the captain himself. Technically, Bradley could have selected himself, but he chose to focus solely on his duties as captain.

The result of the Ryder Cup — a 15-13 win for Europe on American soil — made it fair to wonder whether it would have been better to pick a captain who could have used the whole PGA Tour season to focus on the event instead of finding time between tournaments to give it thought. Bradley was criticized for his pairings — particularly the duo of Harris English and Collin Morikawa, whose possible partnership ranked dead last out of 132 optimal pairings in a widely cited statistical model — as well as his course setup and other tactics.

It seems safe to assume that, come 2027, the Ryder Cup captaincy will revert to an accomplished player who has aged out of the PGA Tour. Hmm ... Tiger Woods, anyone?

Mark Sanchez picks a fight over parking: At Sanchez's trial, which was moved to March, he might be able to present a convincing case that he was the victim in an October incident that left him in a hospital with stab wounds. The bizarre episode resulted in a felony charge being brought against the former quarterback, who can now also be called a former Fox Sports analyst after the network parted ways with him.

In Indianapolis for a Colts game, Sanchez was said by prosecutors to have been in a state of public intoxication when he approached a 69-year-old man and allegedly took issue with where the latter had parked his truck. The man was described as an employee of a cooking oil recycling company who had brought his truck to a hotel loading dock to perform his job duties before ending up in a physical confrontation, during which the man allegedly produced a knife to defend himself from further attack.

Authorities cited surveillance video from a hotel in bringing charges, which indicates Sanchez's legal team will have some work to do. If he can't adequately explain his side of things, Sanchez could get prison time.

The governor tackled LSU football's coach search

LSU FROM B7

Kelly's contract had offset language.

Landry, though, was oddly quiet after LSU hired Kiffin. Publicly, he had gone from railing against giant contracts to tacitly endorsing this one, congratulating Kiffin and the school on social media. But privately, he had struck a secret, previously unreported deal with LSU power brokers, John H. Carmouche, chair of the board's athletics committee, told The Washington Post. According to Carmouche, the board agreed to explore a provision that would formalize — in writing — that donors, not the state, would pay all of the buyout money if Kiffin is fired before his contract runs out.

The goal, Carmouche said, is for any potential buyout money to be underwritten by the Tiger Athletic Foundation, the athletic department's fundraising arm. LSU had *not* included this kind of provision in previous contracts for marquee coaches such as Kelly, Ed Orgeron, Les Miles, Kim Mulkey and Jay Johnson. School officials are still ironing out the details of Kiffin's contract, which includes figuring out how to legally make this buyout provision work, but they have some time. The board isn't scheduled to officially approve the contract until its next meeting in late February.

"We can't just assume people are going to step up and pay for it," Carmouche said of a potential buyout for Kiffin, describing what triggered these discussions in the first place. Schools typically don't use taxpayer dollars for buyouts. But Landry insisted on putting in writing that donors would foot the bill, no questions asked, because the governor believed the state could have wound up on the hook for some money owed to Kelly if the coach had won a since-resolved lawsuit against LSU, according to Carmouche.

As of mid-December, Carmouche said that, having talked with the lawyer working on the contract, he was optimistic the buyout provision could be included.

It was the year of the massive coaching buyout as public schools such as Penn State, Florida, Michigan State, Oklahoma State, Kentucky, UCLA and Auburn also fired football coaches still owed millions. But only in Louisiana did the governor make himself the main character, affecting the school's coaching search and possibly risking political capital in the process.

The episode was a rare window into what happens when two of a state's most powerful institutions collide, when a loud-barking governor uses sports as a prop and when hanging over everything is a most American question: Who will pay?

This story is based on interviews with more than a dozen people involved in LSU athletics, plus a dozen more who work in or around Louisiana politics. Several spoke on the condition of anonymity, saying they would rather avoid Landry's wrath, describing him as a vindictive politician with a good memory.

"Governor Landry has consistently put Louisiana's taxpayers and LSU fans first by ensuring the state is not responsible for buyout obligations and by preventing ticket price increases," Kate Kelly, the governor's spokeswoman, wrote in response to a list of detailed questions. "That is transparent and responsible leadership. LSU Athletics is the crown jewel of Louisiana — an institution this administration is actively working to protect and strengthen."

Woodward and two LSU athletics representatives declined to comment or did not respond to requests for comment.

Before LSU landed Kiffin, people across Louisiana were irate with Landry, particularly with how he chased Woodward out of town, and worried the governor may chase away top coaches, too. But after LSU landed Kiffin, the top coach on the market, those feelings — and any potential political consequences — are more complicated.

"He better hope that time will heal," said Richard Lipsey, a major LSU donor, a former board chair and a prominent Baton Rouge businessman. "Because right now, his popularity diminished a great deal because of what he did."

A real Tiger

Mark Emmert hadn't been LSU's chancellor for a year. But in November 1999, toward the end of a second straight losing season, Emmert knew he had to fire football coach Gerry DiNardo.

The school would have to pay DiNardo \$600,000 to not coach. Of course, not everyone would agree with the move. So after he let DiNardo go, Emmert met with groups around town, including



LSU fired football coach Brian Kelly in October, then hired Lane Kiffin away from rival Mississippi.

the Bengal Belles, an LSU fan club for women.

There wasn't an empty seat in the room. And when Emmert said he was surprised to see so many of them at games still, given the Tigers' losing record, a woman in the back stood up.

You don't get it, Emmert remembered her saying. *WE will always be here. It's YOU who won't be if this doesn't turn around.*

"The football team really belongs to the people there, which will make fans — and, yes, sometimes politicians — act in certain ways," said Emmert, who would later become president of the NCAA. "And it's the only city I've lived in where, if you ask a little boy what he wants to be when he grows up, he might just say governor of Louisiana."

But there is a key difference between Emmert's tenure and this moment: Republican Mike Foster, Louisiana's governor from 1996 to 2004, had very little interest in football. In fact, Emmert doesn't remember Foster attending games.

Landry, however, has often used LSU sports as a prop for attention. The 55-year-old rode the state's rising red tide to the governor's mansion in 2024, talking big, fighting hard and, as one former LSU athletics official put it, "obsessed with getting Trump's attention." He cut deals to advance his agenda — the local newspaper called him "MAGA but pragmatic" — but usually not before rushing headlong into situations in which he could exercise or consolidate power.

"The media says we're moving too fast," Landry told one crowd early in his tenure. "I think we're not moving fast enough."

"His composition as a person demands that he take charge, even though sometimes he may not even know where he's going," said political operative Roy Fletcher, who chuckled at the thought of people who don't follow politics meeting Landry through the LSU football drama. "Right out of the gate, he took a meat ax to the whole thing."

The first time Landry leveraged LSU sports was in April 2024, less than three months after he took office. His target was the LSU women's basketball team. Having noticed the Tigers were not on the court during the national anthem before a high-profile NCAA tournament game, Landry took to social media. In his post, which has been viewed more than 2.5 million times, he wrote: "It is time that all college boards, including Regent, put a policy in place that student ath-

letes be present for the national anthem or risk their athletic scholarship! This is a matter of respect that all collegiate coaches should instill."

But the team, as part of its pregame routine, was never on the court during the national anthem. It had nothing to do with the anthem or patriotism, only the timing of its warmups.

Once he realized his mistake, Landry asked Woodward to scramble together a statement from LSU athletics, according to two people with knowledge of the back-and-forth. Landry and his team then asked to edit the statement before LSU put it out, those people said.

"It would have taken one call to get the story straight," a former LSU athletics official said. "But, no, he just started tweeting whatever would get him the most likes."

Landry has helped funnel state money to other sports. That includes \$1.5 million for a UFC event, \$5 million for a U.S. Bowling Congress tournament and \$7 million for a LIV Golf event, \$5 million of which will go to LIV as a hosting fee. But nothing has seemed to catch his attention as LSU football has.

In the fall of 2024, LSU officials refused Landry's request to bring the school's live tiger mascot to the football field, so he arranged for a different tiger to be brought in from Florida for a short trip around the field. After LSU got crushed by Alabama, 42-13, he bashed his critics as "woke" and said: "Our live tiger, unfortunately, disappointingly, was the only tiger who showed up Saturday. I'm sorry."

This past fall, after LSU lost big to Texas A&M at home, Landry took another shot at the floundering Tigers on X, posting, "I think @LSUsports and the LSU Board of Supervisors needs to rethink their actions to raise ticket prices for next year after tonight's showing!"

The next morning, a group of LSU leaders decided on a conference call to negotiate Kelly's buyout down before officially terminating him, according to Carmouche. But a few hours later, Woodward jumped the gun, Carmouche said, and fired Kelly "without cause," meaning the school would have to pay his full buyout.

The governor was "blown away," according to Carmouche, and summoned allies to his mansion to strategize about how to handle the \$54 million buyout. The next day, Landry began ragging in public, blaming Woodward for putting the school in this

position by giving Kelly such a one-sided deal. Then, during a news conference at the state capitol, Landry blasted Woodward and said he would not be allowed to hire the next football coach.

In a screed about not letting powerful agents control the coaching market — and not standing for the massive buyouts that keep showing up in contracts — he mixed up some of those agents. But the facts weren't the point. The point was showing how dang mad he was.

Landry kept bashing Woodward on local sports shows until he eventually resigned. Lipsey, the prominent donor, received texts from friends around the country asking him what in the world was happening in Louisiana.

"It was just a clown show," another former board member said. "We were only missing the floppy shoes and red lipstick."

But while it felt, in the moment, as though that week could be a permanent stain on Landry's résumé, there was one clear way to avoid a complete disaster. LSU would just need some private planes.

Getting their man

Minutes after Landry vowed that LSU wouldn't sign another big-buyout deal at the state capitol, the phones of LSU officials started blowing up. By that point, LSU had zeroed in on Kiffin, the consensus top choice because of his ability to design an offense and build a program, several people with knowledge of the search said.

But it would be difficult to get him away from Mississippi, where he had resurrected his career and led one of the greatest six-year runs in school history, including an 11-1 record this season. LSU wasn't only asking Kiffin, 50, to leave the place where he says he got sober and found contentment. LSU was asking him to become the first coach to walk away from coaching a team to the College Football Playoff.

Naturally, Kiffin and Jimmy Sexton, the superagent who represents him, wanted an eye-popping payday. But to get Landry on board with that, the board knew from the beginning that it needed to address how a potential buyout would be paid.

It took a week of meetings among Carmouche, Verge Aubrey (who replaced Woodward as AD) and other key stakeholders to formalize the plan for the buyout provision, Carmouche recalled. Including the Tiger Athletic Foundation in Kiffin's contract — or at least exploring whether that was possible — became the surest path to satisfy Landry. And as for the TAF's ability to pay a buyout if necessary, it has a war chest of \$127 million in unrestricted assets, according to its 2024 audited financial statement.

Landry is more influential with LSU's board than a typical first-term governor, and not just because of how comfortable he is waging battles in public. After he took office, his allies passed a bill that enabled him to select the chairs of 150 state boards and commissions, including the state's four higher-education boards. So even though Landry has only appointed about half of LSU's board members at this point, the bill makes the entire board less likely to cross him, according to people familiar with the power dynamics.

From the outside, as LSU chased Kiffin, several people speculated that the volatile governor was being kept in check by Carmouche, a laid-back trial law-

yer. But Carmouche insisted working with Landry was easy.

"After [Woodward] left, everything kind of calmed down," he said. "[Landry] then trusted that we would proceed in a way to protect the state."

Still, LSU had to move fast. Florida and Florida State were wooing Kiffin behind the scenes, according to ESPN, while Mississippi promised to match any offer in terms of salary and roster funding.

LSU interviewed two other candidates — Missouri's Elijah Drinkwitz and Frank Wilson, LSU's interim coach after Kelly was fired — but remained focused on Kiffin, Carmouche said. Those involved were set on making a splash. And the key person, according to Fletcher, the longtime political operative, was James B. "Pepper" Rutland, a big-time booster and a former LSU linebacker. Fletcher said Rutland bankrolled multiple aspects of the pursuit of Kiffin, including the private jet that ferried Kiffin from Oxford to Baton Rouge.

"Pepper Rutland was absolutely essential to this thing because he wrote the checks," Fletcher said. "... I think that Pepper just said: 'To hell with it. I got the money. Let's roll, boys. Let's go get him!'"

In text messages to The Post, Rutland downplayed his role in the pursuit of Kiffin, saying it is "completely incorrect" that he was the "key booster" who helped land Kiffin. Rutland said LSU made two trips to Oxford during Kiffin's courtship. The Post then provided Rutland flight records showing that three private jets owned by MMR Group, the engineering juggernaut Rutland founded, made a total of six trips from Baton Rouge to Oxford and back between Nov. 17 and Dec. 2.

"Nothing really to tell here," Rutland responded. "I've met Lane Kiffin once, at our Hangar in BR. That's it."

He did not respond to further requests for clarification.

The Sunday after Thanksgiving, after weeks of drama, Kiffin announced he had accepted the job at LSU. Once the terms of his deal became public, Robert Mann, a retired LSU journalism professor, saw history repeating itself. In his book about Gov. Huey Long — who, in the 1930s, transformed LSU with an iron fist — Mann noted Long hurt LSU football with his frequent meddling, including hiring and firing coaches himself. Mann suggested that LSU had paid Kiffin more than it needed to because of a "Landry tax." Almost all conversations about Landry's involvement with LSU football will lead to comparisons with Long.

But Carmouche emphatically rejected the idea that LSU paid more than it needed to because of Landry. He felt Kiffin actually liked Landry's "spunk," and during Kiffin's introductory news conference, the coach said he had a "unique, great call" with the governor. Kiffin complimented Landry's "passion and energy for the state of Louisiana and for LSU football."

Lipsey, the major donor and former board chair, described Landry in a similar way, saying, "As a first-term governor, he got just a little excited and overstepped." And whether that will trail Landry like some sort of scarlet letter is the subject of statewide debate. Lipsey estimated that 90 percent of Louisianans were unhappy with how Landry acted after LSU fired Kelly, whether they voted for him or not. On the other hand, John Couvillon, a nonpartisan pollster based in Baton Rouge, said Landry's involvement was a "nothingburger" that won't affect him if he runs for reelection in 2027.

For a while, Landry moved on to other issues, staying uncharacteristically quiet on LSU sports. He had started the whole saga with a battle cry against a broken system, wagging his finger as he talked, and ended it with some standard-issue governor-speak, congratulating the school in a staid post on X: "I would like to congratulate the great team we have assembled to lead LSU into the future. They have done an outstanding job at recruiting a new head coach!"

But that didn't last long. In late December, Trump named Landry the special envoy to Greenland, putting the governor back in national headlines. A few days later, on Christmas Eve, Landry published an op-ed on college sports for conservative outlet RealClearPolitics. And this week, Yahoo Sports reported that Landry and Kiffin may attend the Sugar Bowl together Thursday in New Orleans to watch Georgia face Kiffin's old team.

"To those critical of LSU's coaching search and my role in it, I say: don't hate the player, hate the game!" Landry wrote in the op-ed. "We did what we had to do."

NFL NOTES

Diggs faces charges in spat with his ex-chef

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New England Patriots star wide receiver Stefon Diggs is facing strangulation and other criminal charges in connection with a dispute with his former private chef, police said.

News of the charges emerged after a court hearing Tuesday in Dedham, Massachusetts. Diggs is charged with felony strangulation or suffocation and misdemeanor assault and battery.

Diggs's lawyer, David Meier, said in a statement that Diggs "categorically denies these allegations."

Meier said the allegations never occurred, describing them as unsubstantiated and uncorroborated. A court arraignment is scheduled for Jan. 23.

In a statement, the Patriots said they are standing by Diggs.

"We support Stefon," the team said.

A police narrative in a court filing about the case said a woman came to the Dedham Police Department on Dec. 16 to say that two weeks earlier, while working as a private chef for Diggs, she came into her bedroom and became angry during a discussion about money. The woman told police that Diggs "smacked her across the face," she tried to push him away, and then he "tried to choke her using the crook of his elbow around her neck."

"She said that he was behind her with his arm wrapped around her," Officer Kenneth J. Ellis wrote. "She said that she did feel like she had trouble breathing and that she felt like she could have blacked out." Diggs threw her on a bed and said "f---" when she told him she had not been paid, Ellis wrote.

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Eli Manning, Reggie Wayne, Jahri Evans, Marshal Yanda, Terrell Suggs and Darren Woodson are returning finalists, while Kevin Williams made it to this stage for the first time in his sixth year of eligibility.



Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry (R) boosted his national profile by speaking out on LSU football as the school sought its next coach.

SCOREBOARD

PRO FOOTBALL		PRO BASKETBALL		HOCKEY		COLLEGE BASKETBALL		COLLEGE FOOTBALL									
NFL																	
NFC																	
EAST																	
Z-Philadelphia	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
z-Philadelphia	11	5	0	.667	362	201											
z-Dallas	7	9	1	.459	454	477											
e-Washington	4	12	0	.250	332	434											
e-N.Y. Giants	3	13	0	.188	347	422											
SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
Carolina	8	8	0	.500	297	364											
Tampa Bay	7	9	0	.438	364	374											
e-Atlanta	7	9	0	.438	334	384											
e-New Orleans	6	10	0	.375	287	330											
NORTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
z-Chicago	11	5	0	.688	425	396											
y-Green Bay	9	6	1	.594	388	344											
e-Minnesota	8	8	0	.500	328	326											
e-Detroit	8	8	0	.500	462	397											
WEST	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
y-Seattle	13	3	0	.813	273	289											
y-San Francisco	12	4	0	.750	434	358											
y-L.A. Rams	11	5	0	.688	481	326											
e-Arizona	3	13	0	.188	335	451											
AF																	
EAST	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
z-New England	13	3	0	.813	312	345											
y-Buffalo	11	5	0	.688	446	357											
e-Miami	7	9	0	.438	337	386											
e-N.Y. Jets	3	13	0	.188	292	468											
SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
y-Jacksonville	12	4	0	.750	433	352											
y-Houston	11	5	0	.688	366	265											
e-Indianapolis	8	8	0	.500	436	372											
e-Tennessee	3	13	0	.188	277	437											
NORTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
Pittsburgh	9	7	0	.563	371	363											
Baltimore	8	8	0	.500	400	372											
e-Cincinnati	6	10	0	.375	396	472											
e-Cleveland	4	12	0	.250	259	361											
WEST	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA											
z-Denver	13	3	0	.813	382	308											
y-L.A. Chargers	11	5	0	.688	365	321											
e-Kansas City	6	10	0	.375	350	314											
e-Las Vegas	2	14	0	.125	227	420											
y-Clinched playoff spot; z-clinched division; e-eliminated from playoff contention																	
WEEK 17																	
THURSDAY'S RESULTS																	
Dallas 30, at Washington 23																	
at Minnesota 23, Detroit 10																	
Denver 20, at Kansas City 13																	
SATURDAY'S RESULTS																	
Baltimore 41, at Green Bay 24																	
Houston 20, at L.A. Chargers 16																	
SUNDAY'S RESULTS																	
at Cincinnati 37, Arizona 14																	
at Cleveland 13, Pittsburgh 6																	
Jacksonville 23, at Indianapolis 17																	
at Miami 20, Tampa Bay 17																	
New England 42, at N.Y. Jets 10																	
New Orleans 34, at Tennessee 26																	
N.Y. Giants 34, at Las Vegas 10																	
Philadelphia 13, at Buffalo 12																	
at San Francisco 42, Chicago 38																	
MONDAY'S RESULTS																	
at Atlanta 27, L.A. Rams 24																	
WEEK 18																	
SATURDAY'S GAMES																	
Carolina at Tampa Bay (2-1); 4:30																	
Seattle (1-1) at San Francisco, 8																	
SUNDAY'S GAMES																	
Washington at Philadelphia (-7), 4:25																	
Baltimore (-3) at Pittsburgh, 8:20																	
Cleveland at Cincinnati (-7), 1																	
Dallas (-3) at N.Y. Giants, 1																	
Green Bay at Minnesota (-6), 1																	
Indianapolis at Houston (10-1), 1																	
New Orleans at Atlanta (3-1), 1																	
Tennessee at Jacksonville (12-1), 1																	
Arizona at L.A. Rams (-7), 4:25																	
Detroit at Chicago (-3), 4:25																	
Kansas City (-5) at Las Vegas, 4:25																	
L.A. Chargers at Denver (-12-1), 4:25																	
Miami at New England (-10%), 4:25																	
N.Y. Jets at Buffalo (-7), 4:25																	
MONDAY'S GAMES																	
Washington at Milwaukee, 8																	
Golden State at Charlotte, 1																	
Orlando at Indiana, 3																	
Phoenix at Cleveland, 3:30																	
New Orleans at Chicago, 7																	
Philadelphia at Vancouver, 9:30																	
TUESDAY'S GAMES																	
Philadelphia 13, at Memphis 16 (OT)																	
Boston at Utah, late																	
Detroit at L.A. Lakers, late																	
Sacramento at L.A. Clippers, late																	
WEDNESDAY'S GAMES																	
Washington at Milwaukee, 8																	
Golden State at Charlotte, 1																	
Orlando at Indiana, 3																	
Phoenix at Cleveland, 3:30																	
New Orleans at Chicago, 7																	
Philadelphia at Vancouver, 9:30																	
THURSDAY'S GAMES																	
Baltimore 41, at Memphis 16 (OT)																	
Houston 20, at L.A. Chargers 16																	
Seattle 27, at San Francisco 16																	
FRIDAY'S GAMES																	
Brooklyn at Washington, 7																	
San Antonio at New York, 7:30				</td													



WASHINGTON POST ILLUSTRATION; FAMILY PHOTOS; THE OBERPORTS

Regular people, extraordinary lives

They never got an obituary in The Post, and they rarely made the news. But across the region, these area residents who died in 2025 shaped and enhanced their communities.

BY WASHINGTON POST STAFF

Beyond the artists and athletes who died this year, the departed lawmakers and officials who made the news each day, the world lost beloved parents, children, friends and mentors — people who were mainstays of their communities, even if their names were not well known.

In the Washington area, families are mourning the bar owner who turned his dive into a D.C. institution; the surgeon who patched up newborns' hearts; and

the plumber who moonlighted as a youth football coach, teaching his players to be the best version of themselves.

Like dozens of others in the region, they were ordinary people who had extraordinary impacts on those around them. Today and Thursday, we're spotlighting 10 people who never received a Washington Post obituary, but who are far from forgotten.

READ MORE, B15-16

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: L. Thomas Mangrum Jr., 61, was a disability advocate; Penny Gentilly, 78, helped make air bags mandatory; Tony Tucker, 59, turned the football field into a classroom; Frank Midgley, 86, ran the cardiovascular department at Children's National Hospital; and Kasey Zachmann, a 10-year-old from Maryland, loved Christmas.

Justice sues Va. over tuition

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN FOCUS

Government says state in violation of federal policy

BY DAN ROSENZWEIG-ZIFF AND JEREMY ROEBUCK

The Justice Department sued Virginia for granting in-state tuition to undocumented students, saying the policy violated federal law by favoring those students over citizens who live outside Virginia and don't qualify for in-state benefits.

The lawsuit, filed Monday in the Eastern District of Virginia, asks a federal judge to bar the state from enforcing the policy, saying it "is not only wrong, but illegal."

"In Virginia and nationwide, schools cannot provide benefits to illegal aliens that they do not provide to U.S. citizens," said Attorney General Pam Bondi in a news release. "This Department of Justice will not tolerate American students being treated like second-class citizens in their own country."

Virginia is the seventh state to be sued by the Justice Department over similar policies across the country. Currently, 22 states and the District of Columbia have laws or policies that grant in-state tuition to undocumented students.

In Virginia, any student, re-

SEE VIRGINIA ON B14

Region rings in '26 with weak economy

Trump policies, other factors may permanently alter financial landscape

BY DANA HEDGPETH, FEDERICA COCCO AND OLIVIA GEORGE

Heading into the new year, the nation's capital is gripped by economic gloom that may permanently alter the shape of the city as the forces that long underpinned its growth weaken all at once.

Unemployment rose steadily through the summer, climbing above levels last seen in 2021 to reach nearly 7 percent by early fall, a reflection of the private sector struggling to absorb thousands of laid-off federal workers who fell victim to the Trump administration's slashing of the bureaucracy. Consumer spending fell sharply in late summer after holding up earlier in the year. The longest government shutdown in history closed top sightseeing attractions, further fueling the woes of declining tourism.

Those pressures are already reshaping daily economic life in Washington and the city's surrounding suburbs, showing up most visibly in empty offices, struggling restaurants and softer demand across retail and hospital

SEE OUTLOOK ON B14

TODAY'S WEATHER

8 a.m.	Noon	4 p.m.	8 p.m.
30°	36°	39°	36°

High today at approx. 3 p.m.: 40°

Precip: 40% Wind: SW 7-14 mph

For weather news, go to B18

Virginia is the 7th state sued by the Trump administration

VIRGINIA FROM B13

gardless of legal status, who attends two years of high school in Virginia and who paid, or whose parents paid, state income taxes, among other requirements, can receive in-state tuition and other aid. The law was passed in 2020, when Ralph Northam (D) was Virginia's governor.

In Republican-led states such as Texas and Oklahoma, state attorneys general made settlement agreements with the Trump administration this summer that struck down policies providing in-state tuition to undocumented students. The resolutions were approved by local federal judges.

In Texas, that deal was cemented and approved by the court within six hours of the Justice Department's suit, drawing complaints from students and activists that they were denied a meaningful opportunity to oppose the effort.

Both of those settlement agreements remain under review by appellate courts. The department's efforts to obtain similar judgments eliminating in-state tuition policies in Kentucky, Illinois, Minnesota and California remain pending in district courts.

An estimated 510,000 undocumented students attend institutions of higher education across the country, including roughly 12,000 in Virginia, according to the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, an advocacy group made up of U.S. college and university leaders.

Costs at top Virginia universities can vary by tens of thousands of dollars for in-state and out-of-state tuition. At the University of Virginia, for example, the cost of in-state undergraduate tuition for a first-year student ranges from roughly \$16,500 to \$27,000



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

"In Virginia and nationwide, schools cannot provide benefits to illegal aliens that they do not provide to U.S. citizens," U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said. "This Department of Justice will not tolerate American students being treated like second-class citizens."

for the 2025-2026 academic year. The cost to out-of-state students can exceed \$66,000.

It was not immediately clear how the state of Virginia will respond. Virginia Secretary of

Education Aimee Guidera and the offices of outgoing Gov. Glenn Youngkin and Attorney General Jason Miyares, both Republicans, did not immediately respond to a request for com-

ment Tuesday. A spokesperson for Gov.-elect Abigail Spanberger (D) also did not respond to a request for comment.

State Sen. Jennifer B. Boysko (D), who was one of the co-spon-

sors of the legislation to allow students access to in-state tuition, said it aimed to stabilize Virginia's economic future by educating kids who could work in high-demand jobs in health

care, education and technology.

"That is a good thing for our economy and society — to have educated people who are in Virginia," she said. "These are some of the hardest working kids, and I believe they deserve access to a degree."

She said she hopes Spanberger will stand up to the Trump administration and defend the policy once she takes office Jan. 17.

Sookyoung Oh, the executive director of the Asian American advocacy group Hamkae Center, said her organization worked alongside coalition partners to help draft portions of the original bill to ensure it complied with a federal code. That code requires that if a noncitizen is granted a postsecondary educational benefit on the basis of residency, then a U.S. citizen must also be granted that same benefit.

Oh argued that policies like Virginia's — which grants in-state tuition not based on residency but based on high school attendance, among other requirements — do not prevent a U.S. citizen in another state from qualifying for in-state tuition.

"This is a policy that benefits all students," she said.

Other states have raised similar arguments in court, though no federal judges have ruled on this question yet.

The Justice Department argued in its complaint that, following President Donald Trump's executive orders to limit benefits for undocumented immigrants, any aid given to those immigrants must also be available to citizens, regardless of where they live. Department lawyers argued the policy does not do that, and is therefore discriminatory.

Department lawyers asked the court to issue a permanent injunction that would bar the state, including future leaders, from granting the benefits.

Indicators show declines in retail sales, hotel stays – rise in empty office space

OUTLOOK FROM B13

tality.

The D.C. region saw the largest increase in home sale listings of any major metro area, according to the Brookings Institution, raising concerns about people being pushed from their homes due to increased economic instability or lured to other parts of the country for stronger job prospects — or both.

By the second quarter of 2025, the District had come within a whisker of a recession, with three months of declining GDP followed by another three months of flat growth.

"Death by a thousand cuts," said Yesim Sayin, executive director of the D.C. Policy Center, a local think tank. The significance of 2025, she said, lies less in any single data point and more in the earthquake it has delivered to the very bedrock of the city's long-term outlook.

"This isn't just a blip," Sayin said. "What this year has done is change the trajectory of the District's economy."

D.C.'s government has begun to register the shift. Its most recent financial plan, submitted to Congress in October, struck a notably cautious tone, framing priorities around affordability and maintaining services rather than expansion. On Monday, city officials released a revenue report showing weakening tax collections: November receipts, reflecting October activity, showed hotel tax revenue down 16 percent, restaurant tax revenue down 3.4 percent, retail sales taxes down 0.9 percent and income tax withholding down 1.5 percent.

Analysis by Brookings found that consumer spending in the

District held up through the first half of the year before dropping sharply in August and September, a decline far steeper than in the surrounding region. "The last two months have been the worst," said Tracy Hadden Loh, a fellow at Brookings.

Federal jobs are down 5.6 percent year over year, compared to a 3.1 percent decline nationwide, according to a joint analysis published in early December by Brookings and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, a nonprofit association of jurisdictions in the region.

Meanwhile, private-sector job growth has slumped. While the country as a whole experiences a decrease in unemployment rate, it is up by 0.65 percent in the D.C. region, with rates of unemployed workers growing the most in Virginia counties.

Commercial real estate experts said many companies are continuing to shed office space locally, extending a shift that began during the pandemic and driving up the vacancy rate.

Another change this year has been the pace at which office buildings are disappearing altogether. In 2025, 3.7 million square feet of office space was torn down in the D.C. region, up from 2.8 million the year before, said Melina Dugal, senior director of market analytics for the D.C. and Baltimore regions for CoStar Group which tracks commercial real estate trends.

Those trends long predate 2025, but federal job cuts have added new pressure to an already fragile market, said Phil Mobley, CoStar's national director of office analytics. "The federal government's personnel reductions are certainly a drag," Mobley said.



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Unemployment rose steadily, climbing above levels last seen in 2021 to reach nearly 7 percent by early fall, a reflection of the private sector struggling to absorb thousands of laid-off federal workers.

"Death by a thousand cuts. This isn't just a blip. What this year has done is change the trajectory of the District's economy."

Yesim Sayin, executive director of the D.C. Policy Center, a local think tank

"So far, it has probably outweighed the renewed focus on in-office work."

The effects are spilling beyond office towers and into the city's consumer economy, where the slowdown has been sharper and more sudden.

For many restaurateurs, this year has been especially tough, marked by what they describe as multiple punches: inflation, changes to D.C.'s wage policy, job cuts that have led to consumers spending less, Trump's temporary police takeover and fears of ICE raids.

As a result, Shawn Townsend — president and chief executive of the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington — said he's heard from many of his 1,500 members in the region as they navigate higher costs while demand softens. Some are closing, others are cutting down on staff and adjusting their menus to keep them simple.

"The margins continue to be razor thin," he said.

Eric Heidenberger, partner at DC Restaurant Group, said the economic changes have hit his business. His company owns sev-

eral restaurants in D.C., including Prost, Madhatter and Shaw's Tavern and employs 250 people.

"We're in a heavy-duty fight," Heidenberger said.

Some of his D.C. locations have seen sales drop 20 to 30 percent over the last four years compared with pre-pandemic levels. "We're trying to be resourceful and make ends meet so we wouldn't have to cut labor," he said.

Diane Gross, co-owner of Cork Wine Bar in Logan Circle, said the dampened demand coupled with increased prices for wine and food due to inflation and tariffs has made business tough. Sales have been down between 10 and 30 percent over the course of this year, she said. She used to be able to absorb some of the cost increases, Gross said, but lately some prices have jumped so much that she can't afford to.

Due to job losses in the region, she and other restaurateurs said they're noticing that when people do go out to eat or drink they're spending less.

"They're cutting out appetizers," she said. "You notice less steaks being ordered and more flatbreads. Less duck confit and more orders of fried calamari."

Now, she has servers take on more tables and has cut back employees' hours. She let three people go and has a manager — instead of a host — seat people on nights business is slow. For the holiday season, she's noticed consumers held smaller parties and she received fewer orders for gift baskets.

"We keep plugging along," she said, "because even though it's difficult we always think what else would we do? We're a neighborhood spot and it brings us so much joy."



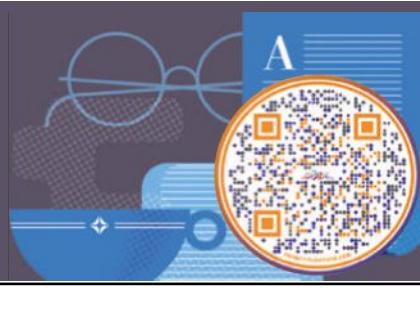
The Guide to Offers
The Washington Post

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The Washington Post

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OBITUARIES

L. Thomas Mangrum Jr. was a respected leader who advocated for those with disabilities

BY MICHELLE BOORSTEIN

On that late summer night when he was at the center of the dance floor, spinning in his wheelchair to pop music while decked out in a pink plaid suit, cobalt smoking slippers, red nail polish and a white fedora, it seemed impossible to picture where L. Thomas Mangrum Jr. had started out.

Because decades ago, Mangrum was very shy. And very wounded. And unsure about how to find his voice as a Black, gay, developmentally and physically disabled person growing up in Washington, at a time when people like him were often institutionalized.

But by the time he was dancing under the lights at a friend's wedding in August 2024, Mangrum had blossomed. Slowly at first — then rapidly — he became a familiar and respected leader in the city's disability rights community.

A little over a year later, Mangrum was gone at 61.

He had seemed to be everywhere. He testified before the D.C. Council, advocating for funding to support educational programs for people with disabilities. He trained law students at American University and medical students at Georgetown, discussing the needs of the disabled. He advised the Capital Pride parade organizers, helping ensure the route was wheelchair-accessible. And as a leader of Project ACTION!, a self-advocacy coalition, he led letter-writing campaigns in the 2010s that got the "R-word" eliminated from D.C. government rules, policies and documents.

In his advocacy, he spoke in a way that was both "kind and demanding," said Phyllis Holton, a longtime advocate for people with developmental disabilities. She befriended



L. Thomas Mangrum Jr. was front and center on the dance floor, celebrating at a friend's 2024 wedding.

Mangrum when he was in his 20s, taking continuing-education classes and learning to live independently.

"He will hold your feet to the fire. He will tell you point blank: 'You could be doing things better,'" said Susan Brooks, whose firm RCM provides services for people with disabilities. Brooks, who became his support person during covid, said Mangrum's focus was always on making sure people were happy and getting the same opportunities, disabled or not. "Be more person-centered," he would say. "More creative, more forceful."

At 6-foot-4, 250 pounds, Mangrum didn't roll into room unnoticed. He had a broad, ever-present smile and dressed with splashes of color, like a chunky aqua necklace, or a string of burgundy and pink beads. His shirts went *pow*; his fedoras were festooned with birds. Feather boas wrapped around his chair. When he sang, as he did through Players Unlimited — a theater group featuring performers with disabilities — his voice boomed, especially on the Broadway show tune "The Impossible Dream (The Quest.)"

Mangrum was still looking for a rambler, a one-story house good for accessibility, when he was diagnosed with Stage 4 stomach cancer earlier this year. A supreme planner, he had laid out his desires for his funeral long before. He got just what he wanted: "His hair dyed burgundy, his fingernails red and a baby blue hearse," Holton said. "Nothing black. And music with an LGBTQ theme."

"You have to learn to love yourself," Mangrum had said earlier in the year, addressing others with disabilities. "And accept everything about you."

Lucius Thomas Mangrum Jr. was born March 9, 1964. He lived in Washington and died Sept. 17.

Coach Tony Tucker turned the football field into a classroom for his players

BY EMMANUEL FELTON

Blake Pierce still remembers how brisk the air was as he ran onto the football field on a chilly fall day in 2004. As the quarterback for the Bowie Bulldogs, he had reached the local youth league championship, where he was facing off against a Chantilly team known for its stellar defense. He was nervous, but he knew he could count on his coach, Tony Tucker, who kept the team cool and composed even as they trailed by six points in the fourth quarter.

Pierce threw the game-winning touchdown pass.

He would go on to play football and basketball in high school and in college. And like so many of his teammates, he remained close with Tucker, whose generosity, work ethic and commitment to his community inspired a whole generation of boys in Bowie.

"He was a big person for a lot of people my age," Pierce said. "Coming up on 25 years later, people still talk about Coach Tony."

Tucker, who died at 59 after a six-year battle with cancer, built a life defined by reliability, magnanimity and an unshakable, quietly radiant strength.

He grew up in the District, where his commitment to hard work started early. Long before most teenage boys were awake, Tony was already dressed and working, joining his father on the back of the garbage truck his dad owned. Those early mornings taught him discipline and responsibility — traits that never left him.

At Eastern High School, he was the kind of football player coaches remember, the kind

who seems destined for college athletics. But after dropping out of high school, he found a new passion. Job Corps training led him into plumbing, a profession he saw as practical, steady and deeply necessary. Eventually he started his own business, Tony's Drain Services. Always looking to serve others, after Hurricane Katrina, he traveled to New Orleans to help families rebuild.

Outside work, Tucker loved spades, pool, dominoes, cookouts and the noisy, joyful gatherings that he hosted for his family and friends. He had a gift for forming bonds that lasted. "Even when he was in the hospital sick, he was cracking jokes with the nurse," said his son, Tony Tucker Jr., a heavily recruited defensive end who played for the University of Pittsburgh. "Even in all that pain, you could just really see his spirit."

The Bowie community knew him not just as a businessman and father, with five children in his blended family, but as Coach Tony — the man who transformed football fields into classrooms of character. Championships came, and players like Jelani Jenkins and A.J. Hendy went pro, but Tucker cared more about who they became than what they achieved.

Long after Pierce played in the youth league championship, when he launched a career flipping houses, he knew exactly the plumber he wanted to work with. "I didn't understand it back then," Pierce said, "but for him to be as successful as he was in his career, and then be at practice every night from six to eight, five days a week, really showed how much he cared about us."

Tony Tucker was born June 22, 1965. He lived in Glenn Dale and died Feb. 9.



Tony Tucker grew up in the District, where his commitment to hard work started early.

TONY TUCKER JR.

Frank Midgley once ran a marathon in the morning and performed a heart transplant that night

BY REIS THEBAULT

Frank Midgley, there were thousands of Melissa Greene Smiths. But to Smith, there was only one Dr. Midgley, the man who sewed a tiny piece of fabric over a hole in her heart when she was just 4 years old, the man who saved her life.

She barely remembers the day of the operation. But Midgley's name became a fixture in her household, and the scar he left on her chest a symbol of survival. Smith is one of many who would have perished without Midgley's intervention, and when the pediatric surgeon died in September at 86, she could feel his legacy in her heartbeat.

When Midgley first picked up his scalpel in the 1960s, performing open-heart surgery on children was a rare and risky undertaking. But by the time he placed his last suture, more than 40 years later, the survival rate had skyrocketed, and the operation had become commonplace. Midgley spent his career pioneering techniques to make such surgeries safer and more successful.

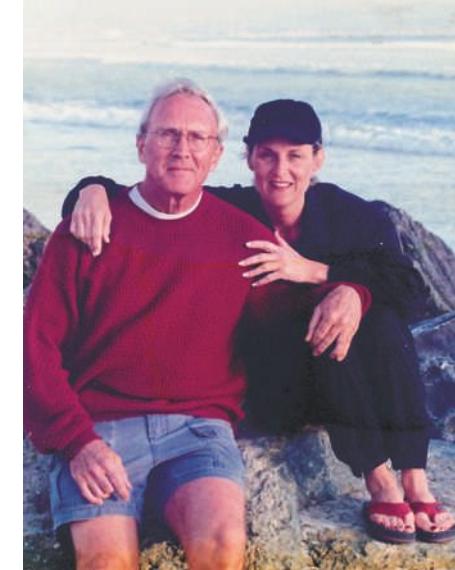
"He is forever a main character in my life, and he always will be," said Smith, now 37 and married with a young son. "I feel honored to have a scar on my body that was cut and sewn by such an extraordinary man."

Born and raised in Yonkers, New York, Midgley trained with surgeons in Michigan and London before coming to Washington in 1974, joining what is now Children's National



SALLY BROWN

Frank Midgley was the chief of cardiovascular surgery at Children's National Hospital in Washington for nearly three decades. He was a pioneer in the field of pediatric heart surgery, helping procedures become commonplace medicine.



SALLY BROWN

Hospital. Two years later, he was named chief of cardiovascular surgery, a title he would hold for nearly three decades.

Midgley had a cool head and an engineer's brain — a knack for taking things apart and putting them back together. Colleagues remember him as one of the finest surgeons of his generation.

Yet when he heard such superlatives, he

demurred.

"He said, 'I'm just the plumber,'" his wife, Sally Brown, recalled.

He was always fixing things.

Brown met him when she was 43, a single mother of four coming off a difficult divorce. Midgley, who had two grown children from a previous marriage, helped raise Brown's kids, teaching them how to drive and how to stitch up wounds, setting them up to practice on raw chicken breasts. Despite his occupation, he had a prodigious sweet tooth: doughnuts, ice cream, orange soda.

His work was intense, and sometimes tragic. Yet he rarely seemed stressed.

"His attitude was, 'How can I not do this?'" Brown said. "I know how to fix this baby, so how could I not?"

Some of his feats became hospital legend. Like the time he ran a marathon early one morning and then performed a complicated heart transplant late that night. He helped separate conjoined twins and operated on Quinn Bradlee, the son of Washington Post journalists Sally Quinn and Ben Bradlee, the paper's longtime executive editor.

Some 25 years after Midgley patched the hole in Smith's heart, she had a chance to meet him, thank him, hug him. "I was wide-eyed and starstruck," she said.

What he told her still echoes: "Take good care of yourself."

Frank Murray Midgley was born July 6, 1939. He lived in Potomac and died Sept. 6.

OBITUARIES

Penny Gentilly, who was severely injured in a car crash, helped make air bags mandatory

BY KYLE SWENSON

Driving down a rain-slicked road in Bethesda in June 1991, Penny Gentilly, a longtime Capitol Hill staffer on her way home to Potomac from an aerobics class, collided head-on with a van. The crash, in a vehicle without air bags, put her into a coma, derailing the life of the 45-year-old mother and D.C. political operator.

It also helped transform the future of automobile safety in America.

With encouragement from the consumer advocacy group Public Citizen, her husband Peter Peyer, a lobbyist, was soon walking the halls of Congress, pitching lawmakers on new safety standards proposed as part of a massive transportation bill.

"If there had been air bags in Penny's car," he would say, "she could be here talking about this."

The blunt force of Gentilly's story — delivered by a grieving partner whose wife was in the hospital with a traumatic brain injury, and whose 7-year-old daughter was devastated back at home — nudged reluctant lawmakers to include a measure requiring air bags for the driver and front-seat passenger in all new cars. The bill was signed into law that December, after previous air-bag proposals had been blocked in the House, rejected by lawmakers opposed to new federal regulations.

"She had such a good reputation on Capitol Hill," Peyer recalled, "and hearing her story made it personal for the representatives."

In the aftermath of the crash, Gentilly achieved what every idealistic young professional drawn to Washington politics hopes for — monumental change. But she never recovered enough to understand how her own injuries had impacted millions. For more than three decades, she lived in a nursing home in Rockville, where she died in February at 78.

Raised in Northern California, Gentilly became interested in politics while studying at the University of California at Berkeley. She went on to campaign for George Moscone, a San Francisco progressive who was elected mayor in 1975, and moved to Washington to work as a congressional staffer, first for Leon Panetta and then for Peter A. Peyer, an independent-minded Republican from New York.

When Peyer launched a longshot Senate campaign in 1976, Gentilly pitched in to help. She soon met her future husband, the candidate's son.

"She was very direct and didn't hide what



KIM AND PETER PEYER

Before the summer of 1991, Penny Gentilly was living a life similar to many ambitious young professionals who migrate to D.C.: She was a former Capitol Hill staffer married to a man who also worked in politics.



KIM AND PETER PEYER

she thought," the younger Peyer said, recalling that not long after they met, Gentilly told him, "You know your dad is going to lose, right?"

Peyer's father lost in a landslide. But the bond he and Gentilly forged on the campaign trail led to a committed romance, and a quintessential D.C. love story: two ambitious, politically engaged young people, crowding their days with endless work.

"We both had demanding jobs," Peyer said. "But we understood each other's commitments."

By the early 1990s, Gentilly was one of the highest-ranking female staffers on the Hill, serving as executive director of the House Democratic Caucus. The day before her car crash, she accepted a new job at the PR firm Hill & Knowlton.

Gentilly's accident meant that she was not on hand as her daughter, Kim Peyer, grew, married and had a child of her own. But her example inspired Kim to go into politics herself, with appointments in the Obama and Biden administrations.

"Part of what drew me to this kind of work is my mother's legacy," she said. "There is something that pulls me about the real world impact that policy decisions can have."

Penny Eileen Gentilly was born June 6, 1946. She lived in Rockville and died Feb. 9.

Kasey Zachmann, who loved Christmas, celebrated in June this year — 2 months before she died

BY MARISSA J. LANG

It's no secret that Kasey Zachmann loved Christmas. She loved the lights and the carols, the gift-giving and the trimming of the tree. She loved Santa Claus, "Home Alone" and baking with her family. She loved the way the holiday seemed to make things, and people, sparkle.

For a little girl who spent half her life in and out of hospitals and doctors' offices, undergoing treatment for brain cancer, Christmas was transportive.

Kasey's yuletide enthusiasm inspired hundreds of families near her Maryland home to organize an elaborate community Christmas this year, six months ahead of schedule, after doctors warned her cancer had spread and she was running out of time.

Kasey didn't make it to December. She died Aug. 16, two months after the June celebration and about two weeks after her 10th birthday. Her story inspired friends, neighbors and strangers to donate hundreds of thousands of dollars to medical research and clinical trials, to raise awareness about pediatric cancer, to hang up holiday lights in the sweltering summer heat.

But Kasey was more than her diagnosis. An artist, a big sister and a natural performer, she lit up onstage and often requested to perform at her dance recitals solo. She loved rainbows and music and having pork chops for dinner. She refused to eat red gummy bears and didn't like roller coasters. She never got used to being stuck by needles at the doctor's office, hating it every time.

Diagnosed with medulloblastoma when she was 5, Kasey endured chemotherapy, surgeries, dozens of rounds of radiation and a rigorous medication regimen, including two experimental drugs she tested in clinical trials. Through it all, her parents held out hope that they might find a cure, a way to save their eldest daughter.

But earlier this year, the Zachmanns learned that the cancer in Kasey's brain had made a rare and fatal progression. That's when Alyssa, her mother, emailed their neighbors, asking for help bringing a little Christmas cheer to what they believed could be Kasey's last few weeks.

Her parents said she packed as much joy into her final two months of life as any kid could — parties and presents and a vacation with her family.

"It was like she took whatever she had left, both energy wise and happiness wise, and spent it on that Christmas in June, the week at the beach, and her birthday," said her dad, Joe Zachmann.

Before Kasey died, her parents preserved their daughter's voice in a metallic green Christmas ornament bearing her photo. It's been hard to listen to this year, they said. But they're glad to have it — for Christmases to come, and for every holiday season they will mark without her. With the press of a button, her small voice rings out from the family's tree: "Merry Christmas."

Kasey Vivian Zachmann was born July 30, 2015. She lived in Chevy Chase and died Aug. 16.



ALLISON ROBERT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



ZACHMANN FAMILY



ALLISON ROBERT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

"It was like she took whatever she had left, both energy wise and happiness wise, and spent it on that Christmas in June, the week at the beach, and her birthday," said Kasey's dad, Joe Zachmann. Kasey, 10, was diagnosed with brain cancer when she was 5, but fought the disease for five years.

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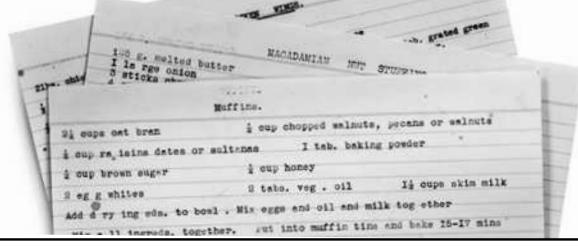
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IN MEMORIAM

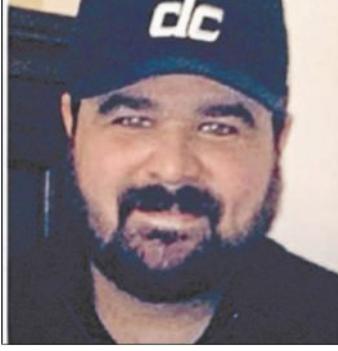
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DEATH NOTICE

HARRIS



MICHAEL BRADLEY HARRIS

Michael Bradley Harris unexpectedly passed away on December 23, 2025. He is survived by his loving parents Bill and Denise Harris, cherished siblings Greg Harris and Laura Harris, doting grandmother Dinni Harris, his many beloved aunts, uncles and cousins, as well as his treasured and devoted dog Gary.

His life was full of friends and family who loved him dearly and will cherish the memories they have with him.

Funeral services will be held privately in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to a charity of your choice. Services entrusted to Sage Bloomfield Danzansky Goldberg Funeral Care.

www.sagebloomfield.com

DEATH NOTICE

HOLLANDER

LOIS HOLLANDER

Lois Schuler Hollander of Rockville, MD passed away peacefully on Tuesday, December 30th, 2025. Beloved and devoted wife, mother, aunt, grandmother and great-grandmother. She joins her late husband Dr. Richard "Dick" Hollander, to whom she enjoyed 62 years of marriage. She is survived by her children, Marge Rosenberg (David), David Hollander (Jen), Lisa Adelstein (Mike), her nieces and nephews, Susan Ciefarдин (Tom), Stephen Capon (Amy), Jonathan Capon (Shawn) and Joshua Capon (Karen); 20 cherished grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren. She is predeceased by her parents Israel and Belle Schwartz, and her brother Harry Schwartz.

Lois was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. She attended the University of Wisconsin, where she met her classmate, Andrew Dick. They settled in the Washington, DC area in 1962, where they raised their family. Lois was the heart of a large extended family. Her calm presence, kindness, and generosity touched everyone who knew her. She gave

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HOLIDAY HOURS

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January 2, 2026
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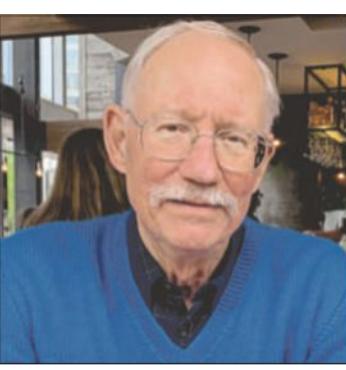
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DEATH NOTICE

CROWLEY



JOHN WILLIAM CROWLEY

John William Crowley, 78, of Chevy Chase, Maryland, passed away on December 4, 1947, in San Antonio, Texas to John M. and Bernadine (Bright) Crowley.

After graduating from the University of South Florida in 1968, John joined the Peace Corps, serving in a rural agricultural program in Northeastern Thailand, and subsequently worked on the editorial desk for the daily English language papers The Bangkok World and The Bangkok Post. From 1977 to 1990, he worked with the International Rescue Committee in Thailand as part of the Joint Voluntary Agency, where he screened In-

dochinese refugees for U.S. resettlement.

Among them was Dr. Haing S. Ngor, who honored John in his autobiography. John became a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State in 1990, serving with distinction in several offices in the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia, as well as deputy political advisor for the U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii. He retired in 2012, after serving as Senior Advisor with the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism in the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation.

He was humble, a superb listener, and quietly funny, exactly the right ingredients.

To his family, he was simply Dad, present, watchful, helpful, and endlessly loving. At home, he was happiest with a puzzle in progress, a backyard bird to identify, a long walk downtown on the Capital Crescent Trail, or mastering the daily Wordle or Spelling Bee challenge, always achieving "Genius" status.

He filled the bird feeder every morning, photographed passing wildlife and his favorite flowers, and enjoyed a walk for more walk outside with his beloved dogs, Sampson and Minnie. He is survived by his wife, Sivalee; daughters, Jamie and Allison; brothers, Tim and Patrick, and sister Anne; and dog, Minnie. Services are to be private.

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LYKES



Charles Huesmann Ducote, a United States Foreign Service Officer. Consuelo spent her early years in Buenos Aires, Havana, Cuba, Paris, and Boston. Graduating from the Boston Notre Dame Academy, she then received her undergraduate degree in Art History from the Sorbonne University in Paris and Mount St. Mary's College. She was born in French Spanish, and Portuguese. She married her beloved husband William FG Lykes (Bill), a Naval Academy Midshipman in Paris, going on to marry him on June 17, 1952. After several naval postings, Consuelo and Bill settled in Arlington and raised five children: Consuelo L. Bangs, Karen L. Crow, Leslie L. Dilley, Catherine L. Hogan and William C. Lykes. Consuelo worked as a Kindergarten Teacher's Aid in Arlington County Public Schools from 1969 until her retirement. She and her Bill enjoyed sailing throughout the Chesapeake Bay and the West Indies. Consuelo is survived by her 5 children, 13 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. She was a delight to all who crossed her path, had a way of brightening each room she entered and will be missed deeply. She will be laid to rest with her beloved husband at Arlington National Cemetery.

STERN



VIRGINIA W. STERN

engineer from MIT pursuing a career in science and technology policy. Married in 1956, the couple had four children, Adam, Amy, Mark, and Rachel, and ultimately settled in Washington, DC.

Jinny's work as an advocate for people with disabilities began when her son Mark became deaf at age one due to spinal meningitis. Jinny sought out experts to learn more about deafness and then earned a master's degree in deaf education at Gallaudet University in 1971. She connected with and helped many families with deaf children through her professional work at the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York, and her volunteer efforts for the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf in Washington. The Stern family home was a place of hospitality, friendship and connection, featuring frequent visits from family members, neighbors, friends, diplomats, students, and visitors from around the world. Over four decades, Jinny rented out a spare bedroom to interns and young professionals working in DC, offering them not just a place to live, but also support, guidance, and always engaging discussions.

Jinny traveled widely, starting with her colleague Bob year after year. From Italy to Chile, Costa Rica, and India, and hiking in New Zealand, Bhutan, and Nepal. They developed a special fondness for Kitty Hawk and the Outer Banks of North Carolina, which became the family's summer vacation destination for more than 50 years.

Jinny loved the city of Washington: the monuments and memorials, the values they represent. Rock Creek Park, bringing nature into daily life, the Metro for connecting cultures and communities, and the ringing bells of the National Cathedral, which she could hear from her kitchen table. She especially appreciated going to fine art galleries, and enjoyed a variety of performing arts throughout the Washington area, and supported their programs. Jinny and Bob were longtime members of Temple Sinai. They were also among the founders and dedicated members of the Cleveland & Woodley Park Village, a volunteer service organization that helps seniors age in their own homes.

Jinny is predeceased by her beloved husband, Robert L. Stern, of nearly 56 years. She survived by her four children, Adam (Tia Rich), Amy S. Gordon (Jonathan), Mark (Carly), and Rachel (David) (Derek); and seven grandchildren, Sasha (Mark (Diana), Zachary, Abby, Grace, Anna and Charlotte). Donations can be made in her memory to the Cleveland and Woodley Park Village, P.O. Box 11231, Washington, DC 20008 (www.cwpv.org), or to the Sibley Memorial Hospital Foundation, 5255 Loughboro Road NW, Washington, DC 20016 (www.hopkinsmedicine.org/support/sibley).

RYON



ANN SARKIS RYON (Age 73)

Ann Sarkis Ryon, 73, passed into eternal life peacefully in her sleep on Thursday, December 18, 2025. She was born on October 16, 1952, in Springfield, Massachusetts, and was raised by two loving parents, John and Marie Sarkis, whom she cherished so dearly. Ann is survived by her husband, Michael Ryon of Warrenton, VA; her beloved son, Connor Ryon, and daughter-in-law, Amy Ryon, of Warrenton, VA; her sister, Maryanne, and her husband Rod of Inverurie, Scotland; her brother, Joseph Sarkis, and his wife Ann-Marie of West Springfield, MA; and a long line of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Ann grew up in West Springfield, Massachusetts, where she attended St. Mary's High School (1970). She often spoke of her wonderful childhood, cherishing her dear parents and the best brother and sister she could have ever wished for. In 1993, she married Michael Ryon, and in 1996 they

welcomed their cherished son, Connery, into the world.

Ann was extremely proud of her career and wore many hats throughout her life. She served in the federal government for over 33 years, including at the State Department and, at the time of her passing, the Federal Aviation Administration. She also retired from Continental Airlines at Reagan National Airport after more than 20 years of service.

In addition to her federal career, Ann was an adjunct professor at La Sierra University and taught community college, where she taught ballroom dance with her husband and, most recently, film studies - two passions she enjoyed sharing with others.

A lifelong learner and lover of academia, Ann earned four master's degrees from Wesleyan University, Springfield College, American University, and Georgetown University. At the time of her passing, she was enrolled in a Doctoral Program at Georgetown University, fulfilling one of her lifelong dreams.

Her legacy lives on not only in her family, but in the many dear friends who found in Ann a confidante, a cheerleader, and a steady source of love and encouragement. She always wanted the best for everyone and some of her passions and favorite things were her dance, cards, cherry blossoms, art - anything all-encompassing with her son, family and friends.

Ann's family will receive family and friends on Friday, January 2, 2026 at Moser Funeral Home, 233 Broadview Ave, Warrenton, VA, from 5 to 8 p.m. A funeral service will be held Saturday, January 3, 2026 in the funeral home chapel starting at 2 p.m.

Online condolences may be expressed at www.moserfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Ann-Sarkis-Ryon?obitid=46758839#obituaryInfo

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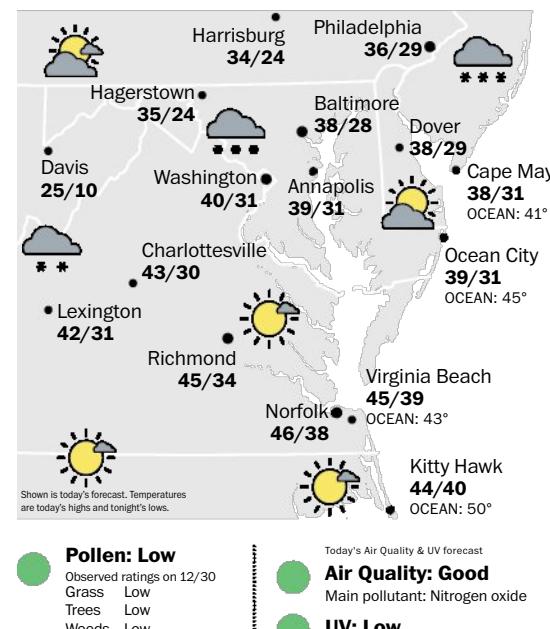
THE WEATHER

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A flurry of activity?

 An early-morning snow shower is possible. It will be partly to mostly cloudy with slightly milder conditions, as highs hit the upper 30s to low 40s. Winds will blow from the southwest at 10 to 15 mph, with gusts near 20 mph. Temperatures will fall through the 30s during the evening hours and get to near freezing when the clock strikes midnight to herald in the new year. Skies will be partly cloudy, and a flurry or snow shower is possible in the early hours of 2026 as lows settle in the 20s by dawn.

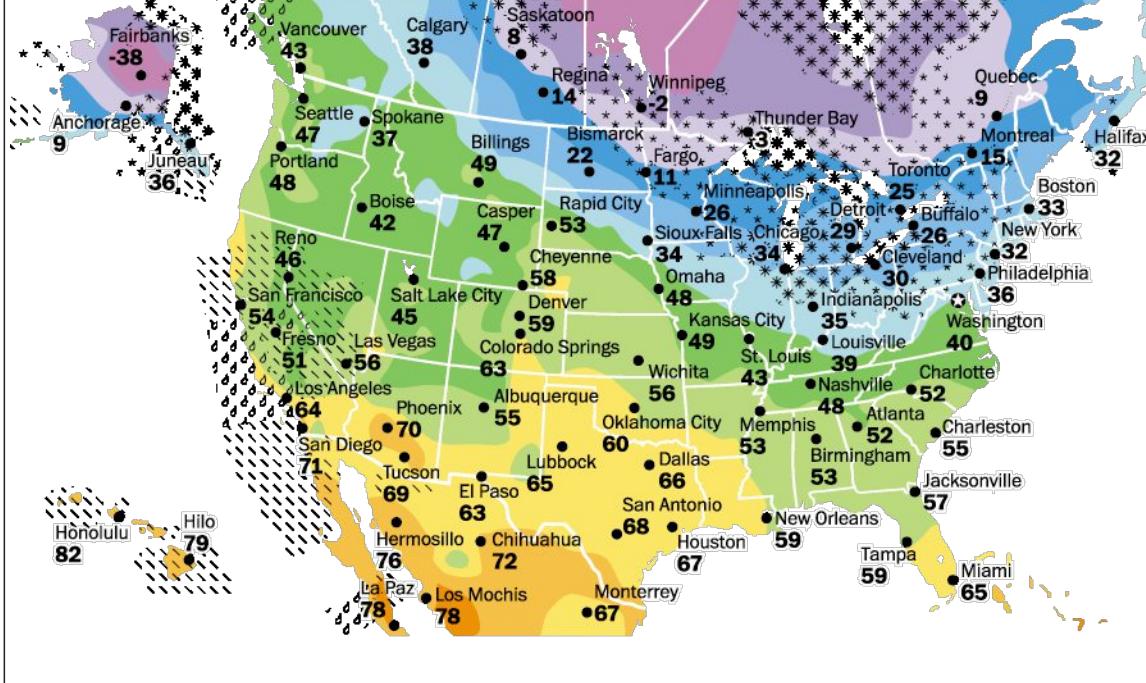
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 40° 31° REALFEEL® 34° CHANCE PRECIP: 40% WIND: SW 7-14 mph HUMIDITY: Low	 34° 23° REALFEEL® 23° CHANCE PRECIP: 40% WIND: NWN 10-20 mph HUMIDITY: Low	 39° 29° REALFEEL® 39° CHANCE PRECIP: 10% WIND: S 6-12 mph HUMIDITY: Low	 40° 26° REALFEEL® 36° CHANCE PRECIP: 5% WIND: NW 6-12 mph HUMIDITY: Low	 43° 28° REALFEEL® 49° CHANCE PRECIP: 15% WIND: VAR 2-4 mph HUMIDITY: Low	 43° 32° REALFEEL® 40° CHANCE PRECIP: 15% WIND: S 4-8 mph HUMIDITY: Low

NATION TODAY



Most food influencers aren't in hot water

Despite recent events, the restaurant-creator dynamic is doing fine

BY EMILY HEIL

Recently, your timeline might have been peppered with news stories about food influencers behaving badly. Most dramatically, a woman was arrested in Brooklyn for serial dining and dashing, after she refused to pay for luxurious meals around the Williamsburg neighborhood because she said she was reviewing them on Instagram. And a Phoenix-area bakery owner in October found herself in a public back-and-forth with a woman who had given her pastries a bad review after the bakery declined to comp her food.

These cases might have some restaurants feeling wary and normal diners who expect to pay their own way irritated, but many in the restaurant and influencer world say they're hardly the norm. Influencers have largely become just another part of the ecosystem, with diners relying on them for tips on where to get the best martini and fries in town and restaurants counting on them to reach younger customers.

SEE INFLUENCERS ON E4

HOW TO The best methods for cooking cabbage

BY AARON HUTCHERSON

There's a lot to love about cabbage. It's affordable, nutritious, long-lasting, versatile and delicious. It's always there for you, any time of the year, which is especially helpful in the colder months, when there are limited produce options.

Cabbage comes in a variety of shapes and shades, and its flavor can be bitter and/or sweet, depending on the type. Although the most common variety is the pale-green globe in produce aisles across the country, that's just one of many out in the world. There's red cabbage (really more of a deep magenta in color), which tends to be firmer than green and a tad more pungent, but the two are otherwise interchangeable. (When cooking with red cabbage, adding acid prevents it from turning an off-putting blue-gray color.)

Savoy cabbage leaves are thinner than the standard green and have a beautiful texture. Napa cabbage is oblong rather than

SEE CABBAGE ON E4



NOURISH

Lettuce cups with nuts, cheese and cranberries are simple yet inviting. E2

Q&A

We answered questions about butter, browning beef for stew and more. E5

MORE AT WASHINGTONPOST.COM
Gnocchi With Brown Butter and Sage E2

Baechu Doenjang Guk (Cabbage and Doenjang Soup) E3

Nordic candy shops are making sweet waves



LAUREN BULBIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Boutiques like these have been cropping up across the U.S.

BY ETHAN BECK

Nordic candy was almost inescapable for Maddie Langlois. Anytime she opened TikTok last year, she encountered sweets of all shapes and sizes from the New York shop BonBon. It had tiny strawberry squids, various types of sour fish, foam skulls and raspberry puckers. Soon enough, other confectionery companies — including Swedish brand Bubs and the Los Angeles-based Sockerbit — began swarming social media. Nearly all of these candy enterprises sourced their sweets from Europe.

This was good news for Langlois, 26, who had long been self-conscious about preferring gummies to chocolate. "In my mind, gummy candy is immature," said Langlois, who works as a publicist in Boston. "I felt like chocolate was more widely acceptable. So, when gummies were like popping off, I was like, 'Oh, sweet, I need one of these stores near us, so I can go in and get all this gummy candy that I want to try.'"

SEE CANDY ON E6

Candy from Lil Sweet Treat in D.C., which opened last month. The brand started out in New York's West Village in 2024 and has since added six more locations.

Party-worthy lettuce cups with nuts, fruit and cheese come together in a snap



I truly appreciate hosts who present elaborate, artfully prepared dishes and create stunning tablescapes for their guests. I'm keenly aware of how much time and effort it all

Lettuce Cups With Maple Walnuts, Gorgonzola and Cranberries

8 servings (makes 16 lettuce cups)

These crisp lettuce cups filled with maple walnuts, blue cheese and dried cranberries brim with bold, contrasting tastes and textures. They make for an elegant and healthful finger food that's ideal for easy entertaining.

Make ahead: The lettuce cups can be assembled and refrigerated for up to 1 hour before serving.

Storage: Refrigerate the nuts and the dressing separately for up to 1 week. Let the dressing come to room temperature before serving, and re-whisk the ingredients to recombine.

Total time: 20 mins

From cookbook author and registered dietitian nutritionist Ellie Krieger.

Ingredients

- ½ cup unsalted raw walnut pieces
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons maple syrup, divided
- ¼ teaspoon plus a pinch fine salt, divided
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- 2 tablespoon chopped fresh chives, divided
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 16 small-to-medium leaves Little Gem lettuce (from two 8-ounce heads)
- 2 ounces Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled (¼ cup)
- ¼ cup dried cranberries

Steps

- In a small (8-inch) skillet over medium heat, combine the walnuts, 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon of the maple syrup and a pinch of salt, and cook, stirring frequently, until the syrup thickens and caramelizes and adheres to the nuts, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate

takes — and I've absolutely no desire to do it myself.

But I cherish having company, especially during the holidays, when family and friends are visiting from out of town and we have the rare chance to catch up in person. I just don't want to work very hard to pull it together.

That doesn't mean I don't try

at all; I still want to treat them to something enticing that feels worthy of celebration. Luckily, there are plenty of fuss-free ways to make that happen, and this plate of loaded lettuce cups is high on my list.

To start with, it's absolutely gorgeous — like a flower in full bloom. It's also flavorful, with each lettuce cup boasting bites

of pungent blue cheese, chewy dried cranberries, crunchy maple-glazed nuts and a tangy Dijon mustard dressing. (I like to make a big batch of the maple-glazed nuts to keep in the refrigerator throughout the season. They bring texture and crunch to salads and yogurt bowls, and they make a lovely addition to cheese boards. In a

pinch, store-bought candied nuts work as well.)

This platter brings festive vibes in a fresh, healthy way, and it can be pulled together at a moment's notice with ingredients easily kept on hand. Simple yet impressive, it takes the pressure off of hosting, and it makes me more likely to say "Come on over!" on a whim.

That makes it a true gift, because gathering with loved ones is among the healthiest, most fortifying things you can do during the holiday season — and year-round.

Krieger is a registered dietitian nutritionist, cookbook author, and cooking show and podcast host. Learn more at elliekrieger.com.



LAUREN BULBIN/THE WASHINGTON POST; FOOD STYLING BY LISA CHERKASKY

and let cool.

- In a small bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar, 1 tablespoon of the chives, the mustard, the remaining 1 teaspoon of maple syrup, the remaining ¼ teaspoon of salt and the pepper until combined.
- To serve, arrange the lettuce

leaves on a serving plate. Drizzle about ½ teaspoon of the dressing into the center of each. Then fill each lettuce cup with a few of the maple-walnut pieces, a couple of pieces of crumbled cheese and a few dried cranberries. Scatter the remaining 1 tablespoon of

chives on top and around the plate, and serve right away or refrigerate until needed.

Substitutions

- Walnuts >> pecans or almonds.
- Sherry vinegar >> champagne vinegar, white wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar.
- Dijon mustard >> your favorite

mustard.

• Maple syrup >> honey or agave.

Nutrition | Per serving (2 lettuce cups): 144 calories, 8g carbohydrates, 5mg cholesterol, 12g fat, 1g fiber, 3g protein, 2g saturated fat, 164mg sodium, 5g sugar

Recipe tested by Olga Massov; email questions to food@washpost.com

Gnocchi with brown butter and fried sage is a 20-minute meal with flair



How was your 2025? For many, myself included, it was fairly tumultuous. There was work stress, anxiety about my family's health and sadness about world events. But there were bright

spots, too, including awe-inspiring concerts; trips to different cities and countries; and deepening friendships over card games, meals and dancing until the wee hours.

In any given year, there's always reason to celebrate, even if it's just the fact that you made it through. So to bid farewell to the old and ring in the new, we're making brown butter and fried sage leaves to pour over pan-seared gnocchi — a meal that feels festive and extravagant but takes only 20 minutes to prepare.

It starts with store-bought gnocchi that get cooked in a nonstick or cast-iron skillet until brown and crisp on the outside, though they retain a slight chew for a variety of textures. It's a technique I shared last summer (wapo.st/3YeeFk), and I am once again asking you to try it for yourself if you haven't already. (You are certainly welcome to make your own potato or ricotta gnocchi if you're in the mood for more of a project during the holiday week.)

Brown butter and fried sage are classic partners for gnocchi. (If you're not a fan of the potato dumplings for whatever reason, you could pour brown butter and sage on any type of pasta and it would be delicious.) The butter is nutty with notes of caramel, while the sage is earthy, savory

and woodsy, with a touch of freshness that some liken to citrus, eucalyptus or mint.

Browning butter is simple to do but requires a watchful eye and keen senses. "Butter is a matrix of fat, water, proteins and sugars," recipes editor Becky Krystal wrote on the subject. When it is exposed to heat, the water is driven off, and what remains starts to evolve, creating new aromas and flavor compounds. "Use your eyes, ears and nose. The bubbling and crackling ... followed by silence means the water has been cooked off and it's time to pay even closer attention to the solids brown."

As much as I dislike asking you to do this, you'll want a separate pan for this step — one with a light interior, such as stainless steel, so you can more readily see the color transform. Just seconds before the butter is ready, add the sage leaves to fry until they curl and crisp. Then you want to immediately take the skillet off the heat and pour the butter and sage over the seared gnocchi to keep the butter from burning. There's a very fine line between deliciousness and disaster.

To finish, top the dish with flaky sea salt, black pepper, parmesan cheese and lemon zest, and serve with lemon wedges on the side. These accoutrements really make the dish sing by adding flavor and balance to each bite, with the cheese enhancing the savory nuttiness of the brown butter and the lemon's brightness keeping it from feeling too heavy.

I found myself going back again and again until I ended up eating the whole platter. It's a meal worth celebrating on its own — and one that can help you commemorate life's best moments, too.

Gnocchi With Brown Butter and Sage

2 to 3 servings (makes 3 cups)

Hearty gnocchi, nutty brown butter and crisp sage leaves form a terrific trio in this recipe. Using store-bought potato gnocchi means this dish can come together in minutes. It's served with lemon wedges and parmesan cheese for balance and extra flavor.

Storage: Refrigerate for up to 4 days.

Total time: 20 mins
From staff writer Aaron Hutcherson.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- One (16-ounce) package shelf-stable potato gnocchi
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 20 fresh sage leaves
- 1 lemon, finely zested and cut into wedges
- Grated parmesan cheese, for serving
- Flaky sea salt, such as Maldon, for serving
- Freshly ground black pepper, for serving

Steps

- In a large (12-inch) nonstick or cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil until shimmering. Add the gnocchi, breaking apart any pieces that are stuck together, and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden and browned in spots, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a serving bowl or individual bowls.
- In a small to medium (8-to-10-inch) stainless-steel (or other light-colored material) skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. (You can also use a medium [3-to-4-quart] saucier.) Cook, stirring or swirling the pan frequently, until the milk solids turn a light golden brown and the butter smells nutty, about 3 minutes. Add the sage leaves, and fry until they start to curl and crisp, 20 to 30 seconds. Remove from the heat, and pour the mixture over the gnocchi. Sprinkle with the lemon zest, parmesan, flaky salt and pepper. Serve hot, with



LAUREN BULBIN/THE WASHINGTON POST; FOOD STYLING BY CAROLYN ROBB

lemon wedges for squeezing over.

Substitutions

- Shelf-stable potato gnocchi >> refrigerated or homemade gnocchi of any kind that has
- been boiled first.
- No sage? >> Omit it, or finish with chopped fresh basil or parsley.
- Parmesan >> pecorino Romano or grana Padano.
- Dairy-free? >> Use nondairy

butter and parmesan.

Nutrition | Per serving (1 cup), based on 3: 462 calories, 58g carbohydrates, 40mg cholesterol, 26g fat, 2g fiber, 5g protein, 2g saturated fat, 842mg sodium, 1g sugar

Recipe tested by Aaron Hutcherson; email questions to food@washpost.com

FOOD

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Soothe your mind and body with a comforting cabbage and doenjang soup



G. Daniela Galarza
EAT VORACIOUSLY
After weeks of buttery sweets, crisp latkes, rich stews and cheese-laden casseroles, I'm in the mood for meals that are lighter but still warming and cozy. Baechu Doenjang Guk, or Cabbage and

Doenjang Soup as it's called in English, is Joanne Lee Molinaro's way of soothing her mind and body.

Known to online audiences as the Korean Vegan, Molinaro has a new cookbook, "The Korean Vegan: Homemade," that is full of easy but gratifying recipes. A born storyteller, Molinaro invites readers into her inner world in her latest book, sharing deeply personal remembrances from her childhood and early adulthood. After reading it, like her other fans, I felt a connection.

That connection helped me make the leap from reading her book to cooking from it. As I flipped through the recipes, the one for this soup stood out. "Baechu Doenjang Guk is for when you're feeling a little blue or a little tired. It will lift your spirits with both its healing properties (the cabbage is so good for the tummy) and its mouthwatering flavor," she wrote.

I called her to chat about how she created the dish. "Personally, I was having stomach problems at the time, and I had read that something that could help with stomach issues was cabbage, so I started cooking with a lot of cabbage," she told me. "I remembered this Korean recipe with cabbage and doenjang. I had just been talking to a friend who's a total foodie about where you draw the line between guk and chigae, soup and stew. I knew I wanted this to be a soup. One distinction is that there's not too much protein ... so it's meant to be easy on the tummy and curative."

Molinaro originally used standard green cabbage here, and although that worked well, she decided to try it with the cabbage Koreans have been using for centuries. "I thought it was okay with regular cabbage, but when I used napa cabbage, it felt like it came to life for me," Molinaro said. "This soup is soothing both physically but also mentally for me. The flavor of doenjang is the most comforting flavor in my culinary vocabulary. It's the flavor I go back to when something is really tough."



PHOTOS BY LAUREN BULBIN/THE WASHINGTON POST; FOOD STYLING BY LISA CHERKASKY

Doenjang is a fermented soybean paste, similar to Japanese miso but more deeply savory and more pungent. Molinaro included a recipe for spicy doenjang chigae, a traditional Korean stew flavored with doenjang, in her first cookbook. It's a dish that she ate countless times growing up but that her mother avoided making if a non-Korean was coming to the house, because she worried they'd be put off by the smell. In a surprising twist, that recipe was a hit among Molinaro's readers. "I'd spent so much of my childhood being embarrassed at the smell and appearance of doenjang, and so the surprising popularity of this humble stew signaled to me what I'd always suspected deep down — despite all the boundaries we've erected to

divide us, we have far more in common than we realize," Molinaro wrote. "We all just love delicious food!"

Cooks know that most delicious food takes time. In Korean kitchens, one way to speed things up is to use a long-fermented paste, such as doenjang, to give depth and body to dishes that otherwise would need more ingredients or a longer cooking time. This Baechu Doenjang Guk is a case in point. It has just nine ingredients and takes only 35 minutes.

Sesame oil, shiitake mushrooms and yellow onion lend their flavors to the broth, but it's the doenjang that acts as a backbone, grounding everything else, including the chopped cabbage and chunks of silken tofu. "Soups are great

because they can be this easy," Molinaro told me. It's an instance of something simple being more than the sum of its parts. For Koreans like Molinaro, it might also be a taste of childhood: something comforting and gentle, soothing and warming — and just right for right now.

This is from our Eat Voraciously newsletter, which delivers a quick dinner recipe four days a week, Monday through Thursday. Sign up at wapo.st/evnewsletter.

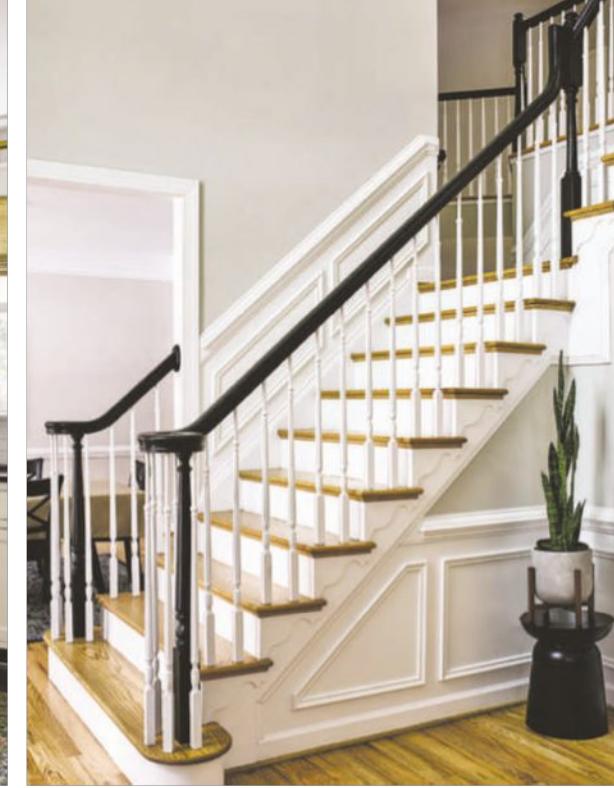
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Baechu Doenjang Guk (Cabbage and Doenjang Soup)

4 servings (makes 8 cups)

This vegan soup, known as baechu doenjang guk in Korean, is hearty with cabbage and tofu. Mushrooms, soy sauce and doenjang (a fermented soy paste) give the broth a deep, complex flavor. Adapted from "The Korean Vegan: Homemade" by Joanne Lee Molinaro, the dish is described as a mellow, soothing, stewlike soup, something to lean on when you're feeling "a little blue or a little tired." It's simple, fortifying and warming.

Storage: Refrigerate for up to 4 days.

Where to buy: Doenjang can be found at Asian markets and online.

Total time: 35 mins

Adapted from "The Korean Vegan: Homemade" by Joanne Lee Molinaro (Avery, 2025).

Ingredients

- 1½ teaspoons olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 8 fresh shiitake mushrooms (about 5 ounces), stems removed, sliced
- 1 small yellow onion (5 ounces), halved and thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons doenjang, plus more as needed (see Where to buy)
- 4 cups vegetable broth, preferably low-sodium, divided
- 1 teaspoon reduced-sodium soy sauce, plus more as needed
- 4 large napa cabbage leaves, cut into 1-inch chunks

Steps

- In a large Dutch oven, Korean clay pot or other heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, heat the olive and sesame oils until shimmering. Add the mushrooms and onion, and sauté until fragrant and softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in the doenjang until the vegetables are evenly coated.
- Add 1 cup of the broth and the soy sauce, and use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned

Recipe tested by G. Daniela Galarza; email questions to food@washpost.com



You'll stir the doenjang, a fermented soybean paste, into the onions and mushrooms.



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The best ways to cook cabbage, including braising, roasting and more

CABBAGE FROM E1

round, and you can also find pointed varieties shaped like cones at farmers markets. And bok choy, sometimes referred to as "Chinese cabbage," can be found big or small (baby), with loose, deep-green leaves.

Regardless of the variety you pick up, there's lots that cabbage can do. Here's how to make the most of the beloved vegetable. Recipes whose names are capitalized can be found at [wapo.st/recipes](#).

Raw

For starters, cabbages can be enjoyed without any heat applied. Although they can keep in the refrigerator for weeks, it's best to use them within a few days if you plan to eat them raw. Standard green and red cabbages tend to be tougher and boast a bigger crunch compared with napa and Savoy, which are more tender. No matter the variety, you want to thinly slice or finely chop cabbage when including it in raw applications to avoid having to chew forever.

Napa cabbage is included in the mix in Wolfgang Puck's Chinois Chicken Salad. Former Washington Post copy editor Jim Webster made a vegetarian version with even more cabbage in his Orange and Cashew Cabbage Salad With Sesame Dressing. For a salad with fewer ingredients that is still full of flavor, there's Cabbage Salad With Tahini and Miso.

Perhaps the most common use for raw cabbage is in slaws of various types, such as Tri-Cabbage Coleslaw or Red Cabbage and Fennel Slaw With Sunflower Seeds. If you're making it in advance, it's a good idea to salt the cabbage ahead of time so you can get rid of some of the moisture to prevent your slaw from becoming watery.

Fermented and pickled

Various preservation methods are used with cabbage in cuisines around the world. There's Classic Sauerkraut, the tangy, Central European staple. There's sunny and bright Cambodian-Style Cabbage Pickle, which includes chile, ginger, garlic and lemongrass. And one of my favorites: Napa Cabbage Kimchi from Korea, with its kick of spice from gochugaru (Korean chile flakes). All are excellent as condiments, ingredients in other recipes, or side dishes or snacks on their own.

Baked, braised, simmered and steamed

Gently cooking cabbage helps to coax out more of its sweetness,



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; FOOD STYLING BY LISA CHERKASKY

Cabbage comes in a variety of shapes and shades. For example, napa cabbage is oblong rather than round, and bok choy can be found big or small (baby bok choy).

especially for the standard green variety. When it comes to specific methods, there are a number of options. You can pan-steam it, as in Lemon-Ginger Baby Bok Choy, which is perhaps my go-to method for preparing cabbages for its speed. For a hands-off approach, turn on the oven, such as in Baked Tofu With Peanut Sauce and Bok Choy.

Cutting heads into wedges and braising them makes for a stunning presentation and tender leaves, as in Braised Red Cabbage Wedges and Caramelized Cabbage With Caraway, Dill and Yogurt. Last but not least, cut cabbages and bok choy into strips or pieces to include in soups, as in Cabbage, Fennel and White Bean Soup and Deconstructed Wonton Soup.

Stuffed

Whole cabbage leaves, typical-



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; FOOD STYLING BY DIANA JEFFRA

Roasted Cabbage Wedges With Tomatoes and Chickpeas (wapo.st/recipes) yields charred, crispy edges with sweet layers underneath.

ly Savoy, can be boiled until pliant before being stuffed and rolled into neat little packages. The fillings can be whatever you want, but they typically include rice with meat and/or vegetables. Sesame Chicken Cabbage Rolls are flavored with toasted sesame oil, lime juice, soy sauce, ginger, garlic and more. Stuffed Cabbage Rolls use ground turkey as the protein and are cooked in a tomato-based sauce that includes Thai red curry paste for extra body and a bit of zing. For a vegetarian option, Mushroom Stuffed Cabbage Rolls call for the fungi of your choosing along with walnuts for the filling.

Grilled, roasted and stir-fried

Browning vegetables via various high-heat cooking methods is an easy way to introduce additional flavors and textures. Roast-

ed Cabbage Wedges With Tomatoes and Chickpeas yields charred, crispy edges with tender, sweet layers underneath. You can achieve similar results by firing up the grill, as in Grilled Baby Bok Choy With Miso Butter. Another benefit of using high heat, even if you don't want to brown or char the vegetable, is that it's simply fast. A prime example is Stir-Fried Tofu With Mushrooms, Red Pepper and Bok Choy.

Aside from maybe dessert, there's virtually nothing that cabbage can't do. Add it to pasta or noodles, as in Cabbage and Noodles With Dill and Yogurt; mix it into the filling for a casserole, as in Cabbage, Sausage and White Bean Casserole; or stir it into a batter for pancakes or latkes, as in Cottage Cheese Pancakes With Cabbage and Dill and Cabbage Latkes. The possibilities with cabbage are endless.

Restaurants, creators say most interactions are business as usual

INFLUENCERS FROM E1

And mostly, the interactions — usually agreed to and scheduled well in advance of a visit — go according to plan.

John Winterman, the owner of the Michelin-starred Francie in Brooklyn, one of the restaurants hit up by the now-notorious dine-and-dasher Pei-Yun Chung, estimates that he gets three to five requests every week from influencers looking to visit Francie and post about it in exchange either for a comped meal or, sometimes, a fee. He turns almost all of them down, but when his restaurant does invite one in, they know what they are in for.

"You have to be very discerning about who you're going to let into your world," he said in an interview. "Lots of feeds out there, they have a few thousand followers, and they've got pictures of, like, rainbow-colored bagels, and, all due respect to that sort of thing, that's not really going to represent our product that well."

Unlike in earlier days of influencer culture, interactions between content creators and the businesses they promote are typically professionalized, sometimes involving detailed contracts. In most cases, the terms are at least spelled out in an email or a direct conversation. On one side, there's what a restaurant might offer: a comped meal, possibly from a limited selection of menu items; whether there's a limit on drinks or items ordered; and whether the influencer is expected to tip. On the other side, there's what the visiting social media figure will provide, possibly spelling out the number of posts or stories, and whether the restaurant can use the content on their own platforms.

Kate Finley, the founder of Belle Communication who consults with restaurants on their social media strategy, says she advises clients to be as explicit as possible. "Communication is key," she said. "You can't leave it open-ended."

For many restaurateurs, simply not doing business with influencers is no longer an option. "At this point, you can't have your head in the sand or dig your heels in on no influencers," Finley said. "It's like saying, 'I don't want the local news media to cover me.' It's just not smart business."

To younger consumers, a person they follow on social media and feel connected to might seem like a more reliable source of information than advertising, online sources such as Yelp reviews, or traditional media coverage. "Influencers make themselves really relatable, and the viewers are able to identify with them, which creates a really strong parasocial relationship," said Linda Dam, a professor at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas who studies food influencers. "Research has indicated that if you do have that strong relationship, you're more likely to have better brand attitudes and intentions to either purchase the food or consume the food that they do."

Which means that relatability — or the biggest buzzword in the social media realm, authenticity — is prized on both sides of the deal. That's what Rina Rapuano is looking for when vetting social media accounts for the D.C. restaurants she handles PR for, including Italian hot spot L'Aridente. She said she is more likely to seek out influencers who have already expressed an organic (a.k.a. uncompensated) interest in the restaurant.

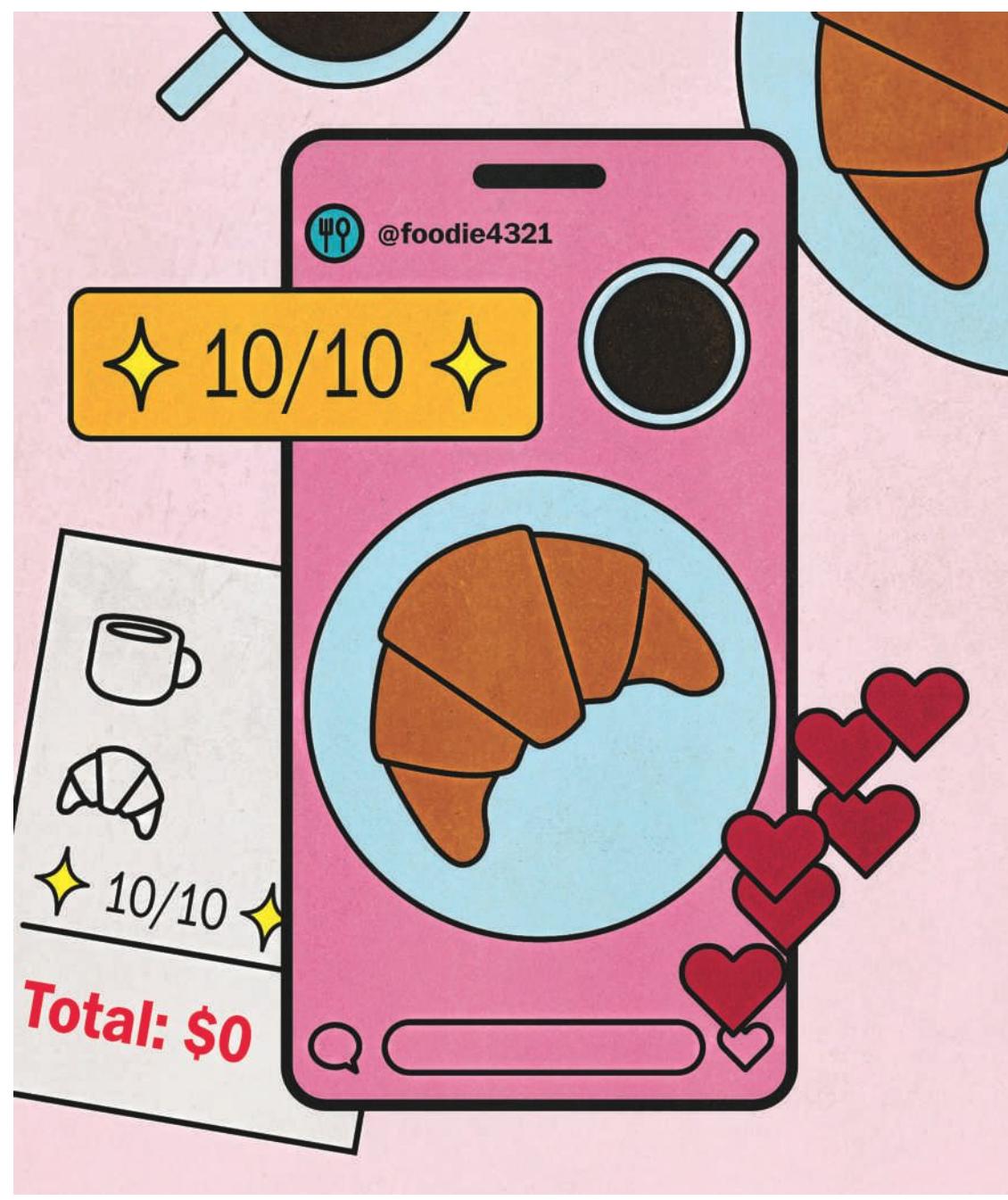


ILLUSTRATION BY CECE PASCUAL/THE WASHINGTON POST; ISTOCK

"The influencers that we like to work with are the ones who are highly engaged, the ones who interact with our content or we interact with their content throughout the year, even when they're not visiting," she said.

On a larger scale, national chains often take the same approach. Jake Rosen, an agent who represents influencers in deals with brands, says major

brands such as McDonald's will want to work with people who have already declared themselves to be fans.

"We've had so many sponsorships that have come from a brand seeing an organic post and either paying for a future post, or saying 'We love your review on this item, and would you be open to us buying the video rights and putting it in an ad?'" Rosen said.

"A lot of it comes from love for the brand that preexists before they post about it in a partnership."

Rapuano said her restaurants usually don't work with written contracts, but by the time an influencer gets an invite, she's familiar enough with the kind of posts and the influencer's personality and style to know what to expect.

The posts and videos that compensated influencers produce, unsurprisingly, are largely positive.

Unpaid reviews can sometimes skew more negative, such as the drags of Atlanta's dining scene dished out by uber-influencer Keith Lee, who takes pains to avoid being recognized and given special treatment.

Ricky Ly (@tastychomps), an Orlando-based influencer who highlights local restaurants and food businesses and often features Asian-owned establishments, says he's not interested in sharing negative reviews with his audience. "If it's not good, I try not to talk about them, 'cause I don't want to kick anyone while they're down," he said.

Ly, who started out as a food blogger in 2008 and has shifted his focus to videos and social media, has more than 72,000 followers on Instagram, which puts him in the category of small-to-midsized influencer. Some of his posts are paid, and others he does free, in the name of helping local businesses and keeping his page as a source for recommendations that his viewers can trust, he said. Recently, he got a call from a new Filipino bakery asking whether he'd like to come try its wares. "They just started out, so I'm not going to charge them," he said. And it ended up "working out well for everybody," he said. The post did well, clocking more than 400,000 views across platforms, and it drove business to the bakery, which sold out after being featured.

Growing up, his father owned an Asian market and a Japanese restaurant in South Florida. "I always wished more people knew about them," said Ly, who has kept his day job as an engineer and does not plan to make content creation his full-time profession. "And I don't know if [tastychomps] came from that, but maybe I've always been trying to spread the word and also connect community through food and through the media to help people find places that maybe they've never tried before."



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; FOOD STYLING BY LISA CHERKASKY

If you want to use boneless, skinless chicken breasts in a salad, try the method used in Wolfgang Puck's Chinois Chicken Salad, available at wapo.st/recipes.

Baking chicken, making spiced nuts and more

Q&A

Each Thursday at 11 a.m., Post food writer Aaron Hutcherson and recipes editor Becky Krystal answer questions

and provide practical cooking advice in a chat with readers at washingtonpost.com/community. Here are edited excerpts. Recipes whose names are capitalized can be found at our Recipes landing page at washingtonpost.com/recipes.

Q: How do I oven-bake simple chicken for salads? And how do I incorporate goat cheese as a potential co-star ingredient in my salads? It doesn't crumble, and if I throw it on a salad straight off the log, it just becomes a smear on a few leaves.

A: Assuming you're referring to boneless, skinless chicken breasts, my go-to method is listed in our recipe for Wolfgang Puck's Chinois Chicken Salad. Season the chicken with salt and pepper, brown it in a stainless-steel skillet, then finish it in a 350-degree oven.

Some grocery stores sell pre-crumbled goat cheese that you can just sprinkle on your salad. If using a log, use your fingers to tear it into pieces as best as you can to add to your salad.

— Aaron Hutcherson

Q: My friend bakes exclusively with Kerrgold butter. Although I've used European-style butter such as Pligrå for kouign-amann, for my cookie baking, I use store-brand unsalted butter. Would my cookies taste better with a higher-fat butter like Kerrgold?

A: Not necessarily. It may not even work with your particular recipes. High-fat butters can be great for laminated pastries, but because they are just that — higher in fat — they tend to have less water, which can cause problems, too. There might be some cases where the swap would work — perhaps a buttery shortbread — but I think that, overall, the safer (not to mention cheaper) option is to stick with regular supermarket butter.

— Becky Krystal



STACY ZARIN GOLDBERG/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; FOOD STYLING BY LISA CHERKASKY

The recipe for Maple-Bacon Spiced Nuts calls for such ingredients as dark brown sugar, sea salt, cumin, cinnamon and cayenne pepper.

Q: I have a caramel sauce recipe that calls for 1 tablespoon of corn syrup to stabilize the mixture as it cooks and to minimize the chance of graininess, I think. Could I use golden syrup instead? It's in my cabinet, and I'd hate to go buy a bottle of Karo for essentially a single use. Is it the syrup-ness or the ingredient of corn that matters?

A: I think the golden syrup should be fine there. It's not the corn that matters; it's the liquid sugar. These types of sugars — either invert sugar, partial invert sugars or ingredients similar to invert sugars — can help prevent crystallization.

— B.K.

Q: When I make any kind of beef stew, I have to brown it in batches so as not to overcrowd

my Le Creuset. The heat has to be high enough to brown, but because the process takes a while, at some point, the fond starts getting dark and maybe even smoking. Once I decided I had to clean the pot in between batches for fear of adding a burned flavor to the stew, which not only potentially removes flavor but also takes forever (Enamelled cast iron doesn't cool quickly.) Any suggestions?

A: What heat are you using? The Le Creusets do indeed get pretty hot, because cast iron is so efficient at retaining heat, so even if you're starting at medium-high, there's a good chance you either need to start lower or adjust down as time goes on. I usually have to on mine, anyway. A splash of water or whatever liquid is in the recipe can also help

cool things down and allow you to scrape up any browned bits.

— B.K.

Q: I line my baking sheets with parchment paper and faithfully watch the oven temperature/minutes the cookies are baking. Still, the bottom of my cookies burn more often than not. I suspect it has something to do with the baking sheet (or type of baking sheet) I am using. (I also allow the sheet to cool before I use it again to bake.) I once used a perforated pizza pan and had better luck. Will try it again, but any thoughts or recommendations?

A: I suspect the sheet pan is a good hunch, but you didn't tell me what yours are! Aluminum/steel, such as what is made by Nordic Ware, is my preferred

type. You could also try double-stacking pans to give a little more insulation on the bottom. And move the pans higher up in the oven if it seems as if your lower element runs hot.

— B.K.

Q: I'm thinking of giving jars of spiced nuts as gifts to my friends. Any tips or tried-and-true recipes?

A: I made a version of our Maple Spiced Glazed Nuts to use in my Farro and Pumpkin Soup With Spiced Maple Pecans. I'm also a fan of recipes that call for an egg white. We also have Maple-Bacon Spiced Nuts on our site, and I have one on my old blog (bit.ly/4pgq32D) for candied pistachios that I shared based on a Smitten Kitchen recipe.

— A.H.

CANDY FROM E1

She got her wish. This year, a handful of stores that stock Nordic candies opened in Boston, beginning in February with Madeleine's Candy Shop. They're part of a larger wave of boutique, social-media-friendly shops cropping up around the country off the back of the viral Swedish candy craze.

In 2024, Ely Ross opened a quaint West Village shop called Lil Sweet Treat, before rapidly adding six more locations in Manhattan, Boston, Philadelphia and (as of last month) D.C. Farther north, in Portland, Maine, Nikoline Ostergaard founded Sodt, alongside her mother and sister, after seeing that there was a market for treats from her native Denmark. In Utah, the two co-founders of a Swedish-inspired clothing brand brought some Nordic sweets to a pop-up event. Seeing the fervor that the candy caused, Malia Bradburn, Olive Redd and Greta Sundelage decided to open So Swede in an extra office space.

These shops bring Nordic sweets into the neighborhoods of online candy connoisseurs. But inside the shops, the line blurs between the digital sphere and reality: With bright wallpapers, cute bags and the pick-and-mix setups, these stores are playgrounds for those making TikTok videos and Instagram posts.

It's that sleek, fancy feel that defines many of these shops, including Madeleine's Candy Shop, which "feels like you're at like a boutique clothing store or a boutique grocery store," according to Marina Gearhart, 31, who first encountered Madeleine's while looking for a specific elderflower fish candy from BonBon. "The wallpaper in there feels like a hotel. They really know what they're doing."

That emphasis on elevating candy culture comes from Scandinavia, where a weekly dose of candy for kids is as standard as recess. Leo Schatzl, one of BonBon's co-founders, remembers biking to pick up sweets for lordagsgodis, a Swedish and Norwegian tradition where children eat candy only on Saturdays. "To a Swede, going to buy your candy on Saturday is the closest thing we have to a religious tradition," he said.

Sweets shops are, of course, not exclusive to Europe. Across America, penny candy shops used to be well-represented at general stores and apothecaries, on boardwalks and in vacation towns. Often featuring specific, locally made treats, many of them began to close because of corporate consolidation or because the candy manufacturers moved overseas be-

"Even though they may not know it, they're going back to the old model of candy being special."

Susan Benjamin,
a candy historian and the founder
of the True Treats store

tween the 1970s and '90s, according to Sasha Zabar, who owns Glace Candy in Manhattan and whose family runs Zabar's.

"A lot of the smaller-scale candy businesses became co-packers and manufacturers for nutraceuticals, like vitamin gummies and also THC-related stuff as well," Zabar said. "There's not a lot of companies that make candy anymore, especially in the U.S."

These new European-inspired shops are just the latest in a long history of upscale sweet spots, according to Susan Benjamin, a candy historian and the founder of the True Treats store. In contrast to inexpensive, corner-store-type shops, Benjamin notes a long history of posh places selling bonbons and truffles or advertising French-style chocolates. Madeleine's and Lil Sweet Treat are among the latest places to capitalize on Americans' curiosity about European snacks.

"Even though they may not know it, they're going back to the old model of candy being special, where you get a sample when you go in a candy store on a little silver plate and you try a little bit, or where it's got special lighting," Benjamin said. "It's almost like a jewelry store, the way they used to do it."

For the candy fans The Washington Post spoke to for this story, the polished look of these stores doesn't hurt, but the thrill is around the novelty: different flavors, chewy textures and a freedom to buy whatever amount they want through the mix-and-match system. Christine Oh, a 36-year-old intensive care unit nurse who lives near Sodt in Maine, said it's about trying something that she had previously seen only online.

"There's definitely plenty to choose from, but it wasn't too much," Oh said about Sodt's cozy space. "It was fun because every-



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

Many of the new candy stores use a pick-and-mix setup, including the Lil Sweet Treat location in D.C.'s Georgetown neighborhood.

For candy lovers in the U.S., Nordic sweet shops are a treat



A selection of candy from Lil Sweet Treat. In Scandinavia, a weekly dose of candy for children is standard.

thing was new. Of course, Bubs and Squashies I had seen from TikTok. But all the other options I really wasn't familiar with."

In these stores, sweets are presented as a conduit to the customer's inner child. Schatzl said that he has a touch of Peter Pan syndrome, which is how BonBon came up with its tagline: "Growing up is a trap." After all, it's hard for customers to be upset about work or politics or parenting when they're considering whether to purchase marshmallow squeezes or tart gummies.

Some of these shops don't exclusively carry European candy. But a broader selection of treats brought Gearhart right back to her childhood when she first went to Madeleine's. "Walking in there, seeing ones like sour Airhead belts — something that I remember having at summer camp when I was a kid — is really nostalgic," she said.

The demand for higher-quality candy also helps. Several treat slingers noted that customers are intrigued by European health regulations, where ingredients such as titanium dioxide and potassium bromate, which can be found in some fruity candies, are banned. These stricter rules appeal to the MAHA-curious who stop into the stores.

"There's something to be said about the health movement that's happening in America on TikTok and social media," said Bradburn, adding that the use of natural dyes and the lack of high-fructose corn syrup or red dye No. 40 in Nordic candies "has also played a part in people being intrigued by it."

Nearly all of the shop owners The Post spoke with mentioned that, just after opening, they had to quickly place additional orders or close because they sold out of European candies. A few spots — Lil Sweet Treat, So Swede and BonBon — have plans to expand, while others are just trying to keep up with the demand of a single location.

"I don't need to have 17 locations," said Madeleine Branson, the founder of Madeleine's Candy Shop. "I want to be that nostalgic neighborhood local store that hopefully has longevity."

Integrating Madeleine's into the surrounding community in Boston was always part of Branson's plan. Otherwise, she fears, these candy stores might go the way of the frozen yogurt boom. Even if retail is struggling, the brick-and-mortar shops help candy become a place for people to connect, according to shop owners.

"It's a lot harder to do that over e-commerce, because it's a little bit more transactional," said Ross, who worked in tech before founding Lil Sweet Treat. "There's no way for two old best friends to meet up and make an activity of creating a candy bag."

The remarkable staying power of those colorful Swedish candies was a shock to Madison Banks, 25, who thought "we would move on to maybe a different nationality or a different niche" by now. But hearing that So Swede was regularly selling out of sweets this summer, Banks decided to drop by the shop, where the continued success began to click.

"Everyone was in there, gathering around these jars of candy, talking about what they wanted."



The surge in popularity has prompted several boutique shops to quickly place additional orders or close because they sold out of candies.

MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

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5431 Oleander Drive
Wilmington NC, 28403

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY
KNOWN AS**
3465 Regency Pkwy
District Heights, MD 20747

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust to DAVID E. WATERS AND ANTHONY B. OLMIERT SR, Trustee(s), dated May 24, 2019, and recorded among the Land Records of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND in Liber 42180 , folio 457 , the holder of the indebtedness secured by this Deed of Trust having appointed the undersigned Substitute Trustees, by instrument duly recorded among the aforesaid Land Records, default having occurred under the terms thereof, and at the request of the party secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT FRONT OF THE DUVAL WING OF THE COURTHOUSE COMPLEX 14735 MAIN ST, UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 at 10:00 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND and improvements thereon situated in PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD and described as follows:

LOT NUMBERED TWENTY-ONE (21) IN BLOCK LETTERED "A", IN THE SUBDIVISION KNOWN AS "PLAT ONE, SECTION ONE, REGENCY TOWNS", AS PER PLAT THEREOF RECORDED AMONG THE LAND RECORDS OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND IN PLAT BOOK 125 AT PLAT 34. BEING IN THE 6TH ELECTION DISTRICT OF SAID COUNTY. THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON BEING KNOWN AS 3465 REGENCY PARKWAY, DISTRICT HEIGHTS, MD 20747.

Property is subject to a IRS Right of Redemption.

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning, subdivision, environmental condition, merchantability, compliance with building or housing codes or other laws, ordinances or regulations, or other similar matters, and subject to easements, agreements and restrictions of record which affect the same, if any. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, liens, restrictions and agreements of record affecting same including any condominium and/or HOA assessments pursuant to Md Real Property Article 11-10.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$11,000.00 payable in certified check or by a cashier's check will be required from purchaser at time of sale, balance in immediately available funds upon final ratification of sale by the Circuit Court of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND interest to be paid at the rate of 4.625 % on unpaid purchase money from date of sale to date of settlement. The secured party herein, if a bidder, shall not be required to post a deposit. Third party purchaser (excluding the secured party) will be required to complete full settlement of the purchase of the property within TEN (10) CALENDAR DAYS of the ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court otherwise the purchaser's deposit shall be forfeited and the property will be resold at the risk and expense of the defaulting purchaser. All other public charges and private charges or assessments, including water/sewer charges, ground rent, taxes if any, to be adjusted to date of sale. Cost of all documentary stamps and transfer taxes and all other costs incident to the settlement shall be borne by the purchaser. If applicable, condominium and/or homeowner association dues and assessments will be adjusted to date of sale. If the sale is rescinded or not ratified for any reason, including post sale lender audit, or the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable title or a resale is to take place for any reason, the purchaser(s) sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the aforementioned deposit. The purchaser waives all rights and claims against the Substitute Trustees whether known or unknown. These provisions shall survive settlement. Upon refund of the deposit, this sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. The sale is subject to post-sale review of the status of the loan and that if any agreement to cancel the sale was entered into by the lender and borrower prior to the sale then the sale is void and the purchaser's deposit shall be refunded without interest. Additional terms and conditions, if applicable, maybe announced at the time and date of sale. Sale is subject to the attestation by the Borrower in accordance with Section 5.A of the Governor's order of 10.16.2020. File No. (22-03548)

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**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY
KNOWN AS**
2108 Columbia Avenue
Hyattsville, MD 20785

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust to RICHARD T. CREGGER, Trustee(s), dated March 8, 2007, and recorded among the Land Records of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND in Liber 27473 , folio 353 , the holder of the indebtedness secured by this Deed of Trust having appointed the undersigned Substitute Trustees, by instrument duly recorded among the aforesaid Land Records, default having occurred under the terms thereof, and at the request of the party secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT FRONT OF THE DUVAL WING OF THE COURTHOUSE COMPLEX 14735 MAIN ST, UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 at 10:00 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND and improvements thereon situated in PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD and described as follows:

LOTS NUMBERED SEVEN (7) EIGHT (8), NINE (9), TEN (10) AND ELEVEN (11) IN BLOCK NUMBERED TWENTY-SIX (26) IN THE SUBDIVISION KNOWN AS "COLUMBIA PARK" AS PER PLAT THEREOF RECORDED AMONG THE LAND RECORDS OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND IN PLAT BOOK JWB 5 AT PLAT 627, RE-RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK A, AT PLAT NO. 56, ONE OF THE LAND RECORDS FOR SAID PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND.

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning, subdivision, environmental condition, merchantability, compliance with building or housing codes or other laws, ordinances or regulations, or other similar matters, and subject to easements, agreements and restrictions of record which affect the same, if any. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, liens, restrictions and agreements of record affecting same including any condominium and/or HOA assessments pursuant to Md Real Property Article 11-10.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$22,500.00 payable in certified check or by a cashier's check will be required from purchaser at time of sale, balance in immediately available funds upon final ratification of sale by the Circuit Court of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND interest to be paid at the rate of 2.0002 % on unpaid purchase money from date of sale to date of settlement. The secured party herein, if a bidder, shall not be required to post a deposit. Third party purchaser (excluding the secured party) will be required to complete full settlement of the purchase of the property within TEN (10) CALENDAR DAYS of the ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court otherwise the purchaser's deposit shall be forfeited and the property will be resold at the risk and expense of the defaulting purchaser. All other public charges and private charges or assessments, including water/sewer charges, ground rent, taxes if any, to be adjusted to date of sale. Cost of all documentary stamps and transfer taxes and all other costs incident to the settlement shall be borne by the purchaser. If applicable, condominium and/or homeowner association dues and assessments will be adjusted to date of sale. If the sale is rescinded or not ratified for any reason, including post sale lender audit, or the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable title or a resale is to take place for any reason, the purchaser(s) sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the aforementioned deposit. The purchaser waives all rights and claims against the Substitute Trustees whether known or unknown. These provisions shall survive settlement. Upon refund of the deposit, this sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. The sale is subject to post-sale review of the status of the loan and that if any agreement to cancel the sale was entered into by the lender and borrower prior to the sale then the sale is void and the purchaser's deposit shall be refunded without interest. Additional terms and conditions, if applicable, maybe announced at the time and date of sale. Sale is subject to the attestation by the Borrower in accordance with Section 5.A of the Governor's order of 10.16.2020. File No. (22-03548)

BRENNAN FERGUSON, JOHN C. HANRAHAN,
JEREMY B. WILKINS, AMANDA DRISCOLL,
ROBERT OLIVERI, PAUL HEINMULLER,
Substitute Trustees



Dec 24,31,Jan 7, 2026 0012507533

851 Prince Georges County | **851 Prince Georges County**
Brock and Scott, PLLC
5431 Oleander Drive
Wilmington NC, 28403

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY
KNOWN AS**
11801 CLEAVER DRIVE
Bowie, MD 20721

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust to FRIEDMAN & MAC FAYDEN PA, Trustee(s), dated May 8, 2007, and recorded among the Land Records of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND in Liber 25363 , folio 679 , MODIFIED FEBRUARY 3, 2010 IN 2000 IN BOOK 31517, PAGE 539, the holder of the indebtedness secured by this Deed of Trust having appointed the undersigned Substitute Trustees, by instrument duly recorded among the aforesaid Land Records, default having occurred under the terms thereof, and at the request of the party secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT FRONT OF THE DUVAL WING OF THE COURTHOUSE COMPLEX 14735 MAIN ST, UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 at 10:00 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND and improvements thereon situated in PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD and described as follows:

LOT NUMBERED ELEVEN (11) IN BLOCK LETTERED "C" IN THE SUBDIVISION KNOWN AS "PLAT OF CORRECTION, LOTS 11 AND 22, BLOCK "C", ENTERPRISE KNOTS CLUSTERS" AND DULY RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK NLP 723 AT PLAT 16, AMONG THE LAND RECORDS OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND, BEING IN THE 13TH ELECTION DISTRICT OF SAID COUNTY, TAX ID # 13-1476944

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning, subdivision, environmental condition, merchantability, compliance with building or housing codes or other laws, ordinances or regulations, or other similar matters, and subject to easements, agreements and restrictions of record which affect the same, if any. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, liens, restrictions and agreements of record affecting same including any condominium and/or HOA assessments pursuant to Md Real Property Article 11-10.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$21,500.00 payable in certified check or by a cashier's check will be required from purchaser at time of sale, balance in immediately available funds upon final ratification of sale by the Circuit Court of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND interest to be paid at the rate of 2% on unpaid purchase money from date of sale to date of settlement. The secured party herein, if a bidder, shall not be required to post a deposit. Third party purchaser (excluding the secured party) will be required to complete full settlement of the purchase of the property within TEN (10) CALENDAR DAYS of the ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court otherwise the purchaser's deposit shall be forfeited and the property will be resold at the risk and expense of the defaulting purchaser. All other public charges and private charges or assessments, including water/sewer charges, ground rent, taxes if any, to be adjusted to date of sale. Cost of all documentary stamps and transfer taxes and all other costs incident to the settlement shall be borne by the purchaser. If applicable, condominium and/or homeowner association dues and assessments will be adjusted to date of sale. If the sale is rescinded or not ratified for any reason, including post sale lender audit, or the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable title or a resale is to take place for any reason, the purchaser(s) sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the aforementioned deposit. The purchaser waives all rights and claims against the Substitute Trustees whether known or unknown. These provisions shall survive settlement. Upon refund of the deposit, this sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. The sale is subject to post-sale review of the status of the loan and that if any agreement to cancel the sale was entered into by the lender and borrower prior to the sale then the sale is void and the purchaser's deposit shall be refunded without interest. Additional terms and conditions, if applicable, maybe announced at the time and date of sale. Sale is subject to the attestation by the Borrower in accordance with Section 5.A of the Governor's order of 10.16.2020. File No. (22-03548)

TAX ID# 13-01596717

Said property is in fee simple and is improved by a dwelling and is sold in "as is condition" and subject to all superior covenants, conditions, liens, restrictions, easement, rights-of-way, as may affect same, if any.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$10,000 by certified funds shall be required at the time of sale except that Lienor or its assignee, or its designee may bid its debt and shall not be required to post a deposit. The balance of the purchase price with interest at 8.00% per annum from the date of sale to the date of payment will be paid within TEN (10) DAYS after the final ratification of the sale. If settlement is delayed for any reason, there shall be no abatement of interest or taxes. Adjustments on all taxes, public charges and special or regular assessments will be made as of the date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser.

If applicable, condominium assessments, private utilities, water and sewer that may become due after the time of sale will be the responsibility of the purchaser. Title examination, conveyancing, state revenue stamps, transfer taxes, title insurance, and all other costs incident to settlement are to be paid by the purchaser. Time is of the essence for the purchaser, otherwise the deposit will be forfeited and the property will be resold at the risk and costs of the defaulting purchaser, who agrees to pay reasonable attorneys' fees and costs if a motion to resell the property has been filed, purchaser waives personal service of any paper filed in connection with such motion, and agrees to accept service of any paper by regular mail to address provided within the Bill of Sale. If the sale is not ratified or the Trustee is unable to convey marketable title, the purchaser's sole remedy is the return of the deposit without interest. Upon refund of the deposit, the sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the trustee. Trustee's File No. 4169509.

Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. Purchaser assumes the risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale forward.

Mariana R. Teran, Trustee.
Rees Broome, PC,
1900 Gallows Road, Suite 700
Tysons Corner, VA 22182
703-790-1911

HARVEY AUCTIONEERS, LLC

300 E. Joppa Road
Hampton Plaza • Suite 1103
Hampton, MD 20636
410-769-9797

Dec 24,31,Jan 7, 2026 0012507296

850 Montgomery County | **850 Montgomery County**

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
REAL PROPERTY AND
ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**

3127 University Boulevard West Unit 3
Kensington, MD 20895

Trustee's Sale of valuable fee simple property improved by premises known as 3127 University Boulevard West Unit 3 Kensington, MD 20895. By virtue of the power and authority contained in a Statement of Lien, recorded in Liber 67478 at Page 261 and the Statement of Lien, recorded in Liber 69104 at Page 1 among the land records of Montgomery County, Maryland, in the original principal amount of \$22,028.16. Upon default and request for sale, the undersigned trustee will offer for sale at public auction at the Courthouse for the MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND, located at 50 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland, on January 20, 2026 at 12:15 PM, all that property described in said Statement of Lien including but not limited to:

TAX ID# 13-01596717

Said property is in fee simple and is improved by a dwelling and is sold in "as is condition" and subject to all superior covenants, conditions, liens, restrictions, easement, rights-of-way, as may affect same, if any.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$10,000 by certified funds shall be required at the time of sale except that Lienor or its assignee, or its designee may bid its debt and shall not be required to post a deposit. The balance of the purchase price with interest at 8.00% per annum from the date of sale to the date of payment will be paid within TEN (10) DAYS after the final ratification of the sale. If settlement is delayed for any reason, there shall be no abatement of interest or taxes. Adjustments on all taxes, public charges and special or regular assessments will be made as of the date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser.

If applicable, condominium assessments, private utilities, water and sewer that may become due after the time of sale will be the responsibility of the purchaser. Title examination, conveyancing, state revenue stamps, transfer taxes, title insurance, and all other costs incident to settlement are to be paid by the purchaser. Time is of the essence for the purchaser, otherwise the deposit will be forfeited and the property will be resold at the risk and costs of the defaulting purchaser, who agrees to pay reasonable attorneys' fees and costs if a motion to resell the property has been filed, purchaser waives personal service of any paper filed in connection with such motion, and agrees to accept service of any paper by regular mail to address provided within the Bill of Sale. If the sale is not ratified or the Trustee is unable to convey marketable title, the purchaser's sole remedy is the return of the deposit without interest. Upon refund of the deposit, the sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the trustee. Trustee's File No. 4169509.

Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. Purchaser assumes the risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale forward.

Mariana R. Teran, Trustee.
Rees Broome, PC,
1900 Gallows Road, Suite 700
Tysons Corner, VA 22182
703-790-1911

HARVEY AUCTIONEERS, LLC

300 E. Joppa Road
Hampton Plaza • Suite 1103
Hampton, MD 20636
410-769-9797

Dec 24,31,Jan 7, 2026 0012509207

851 Prince Georges County | **851 Prince Georges County**
Brock and Scott, PLLC
5431 Oleander Drive
Wilmington NC, 28403

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY
KNOWN AS**
3603 Applecross Place
Clinton, MD 20740

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust to DAVID N. PRENSKY, Trustee(s), dated July 8, 2007, and recorded among the Land Records of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND in Liber 28275 , folio 638 , the holder of the indebtedness secured by this Deed of Trust having appointed the undersigned Substitute Trustees, by instrument duly recorded among the aforesaid Land Records, default having occurred under the terms thereof, and at the request of the party secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT FRONT OF THE DUVAL WING OF THE COURTHOUSE COMPLEX 14735 MAIN ST, UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 at 10:00 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND and improvements thereon situated in PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD and described as follows:

LOT NUMBERED THIRTY-ONE (31) IN BLOCK LETTERED "E" IN THE SUBDIVISION KNOWN AS "WINDBROOK", AS PER PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK WWW 65, PLAT NO. 29 AMONG THE LAND RECORDS OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND, BEING IN THE 5TH ELECTION DISTRICT OF SAID COUNTY.

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning,

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025

EZ

851 Prince Georges County **851 Prince Georges County**
 Brock and Scott, PLLC
 5431 Oleander Drive
 Wilmington NC, 28403

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
 VALUABLE SIMPLE PROPERTY**
 KNOWN AS
 8513 Hillview Rd
 Landover, MD 20785

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust to MELINDA A. CLAYTON, Trustee(s), dated March 12, 2008, and recorded among the Land Records of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND in Liber 29496, folio 156, the holder of the indebtedness secured by this Deed of Trust, having appointed the undersigned Substitute Trustees, by instrument duly recorded among the aforesaid Land Records, default having occurred under the terms thereof, and at the request of the party secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT FRONT OF THE DUVAL WING OF THE COURTHOUSE COMPLEX 14735 MAIN ST, UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 at 10:00 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND and improvements thereon situated in PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD and described as follows:

LOT 8, AS SHOWN ON A PLAT ENTITLED, "PLAT 3, NORAIR" RECORDED AMONG THE LAND RECORDS OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 183, PLAT 79.

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning, subdivision environmental condition, merchantability, compliance with building or housing codes or other laws, ordinances or regulations, or other similar matters, and subject to easements, agreements and restrictions of record which affect the same, if any. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, liens, restrictions and agreements of record affecting same including any condominium and of HOA assessments pursuant to Md Real Property Article 11-110.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$36,000.00, payable in certified check or by a cashier's check will be required from purchaser at time of sale, balance in immediately available funds upon final ratification of sale by the Circuit Court of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND interest to be paid at the rate of 4.25% on unpaid purchase money from date of sale to date of settlement. The secured party herein, if a bidder, shall not be required to post a deposit. Third party purchaser (excluding the secured party) will be required to complete full settlement of the purchase of the property within TEN (10) CALENDAR DAYS of the ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court otherwise the purchaser's deposit shall be forfeited and the property will be resold at the risk and expense of the defaulting purchaser. All other public charges and private charges or assessments, including water/sewer charges, ground rent, taxes if any, to be adjusted to date of sale. Cost of all documentary stamps and transfer taxes and all other costs incident to the settlement shall be borne by the purchaser. If applicable, condominium and/or homeowner association dues and assessments will be adjusted to date of sale. If the sale is rescinded or not ratified for any reason, including post sale lender audit, or the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable title or a resale is to take place for any reason, the purchaser's sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the aforementioned deposit. The purchaser waives all rights and claims against the Substitute Trustees whether known or unknown. These provisions shall survive settlement. Upon refund of the deposit, this sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. The sale is subject to post-sale review of the status of the loan and that if any agreement to cancel the sale was entered into by the lender and borrower prior to the sale then the sale is void and the purchaser's deposit shall be refunded without interest. Additional terms and conditions, if applicable, maybe announced at the time and date of sale. Sale is subject to the attestation by the Borrower in accordance with Section 5.A of the Governor's order of 10.16.2020. File No. (19-13932)

THOMAS W. HODGE, BRENNAN FERGUSON,
 CHRISTINE N. JOHNSON, JEANNA McMURRAY,
 ROBERT A. OLIVERI, MELISSA ALCOCER,
 Substitute Trustees



Harvey Auctioneers, LLC
 300 E. Joppa Road
 Hampton Plaza • Suite 1103
 410-769-9797

Dec 24, 31, Jan 7, 2026 0012508303

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
 OF REAL PROPERTY AND
 ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**
 14247 HAMPSHIRE HALL COURT, UNIT #702
 UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust dated August 17, 2021, recorded in Liber 46323, Folio 38 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, with an original principal balance of \$275,000.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 at 11:23 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with any buildings or improvements thereon located in Prince George's County, MD and described as Unit 702, Building K, in "Phase 7, Hampshire Hall Condominium" and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust.

The property, and any improvements thereon, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$26,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price, together with interest on the unpaid purchase money at the current rate contained in the Deed of Trust Note, or any modifications thereto, from the date of sale to the date funds are received by the Sub. Trustees, payable in cash within ten days of final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court. There will be no abatement of interest due to the purchaser in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. Adjustment of all real property taxes, including agricultural taxes, if applicable, and any and all public and/or private charges or assessments, to the extent such amounts survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer, ground rent and front foot benefit charges, to be adjusted to date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. Purchaser is responsible for any recapture of homestead tax credit. All transfer taxes and recordation taxes shall be paid by Purchaser. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property, and assumes risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale. The sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, this sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of the deposit without interest. If purchaser fails to settle within ten days of ratification, subject to order of court, purchaser agrees that property will be resold and entire deposit retained by Sub. Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability. The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within ten days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the Purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale. The defaulted purchaser shall not be entitled to any surplus proceeds resulting from said resale even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by said defaulted purchaser. Sub. Trustees will convey either marketable or insurable title. If they cannot deliver one or the other, or if ratification of the sale is denied by the Circuit Court for any reason, the Purchaser's sole remedy, at law or equity, is return of the deposit without interest. (Matter No. 377453-1)

Howard N. Bierman, Carrie M. Ward, et al.,
 Substitute Trustees



Alex Cooper Auctioneers
 908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17, 24, 31, 2025 0012508356

EZ

851 Prince Georges County **851 Prince Georges County**
 Brock and Scott, PLLC
 5431 Oleander Drive
 Wilmington NC, 28403

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
 VALUABLE SIMPLE PROPERTY**
 KNOWN AS
 9105 BANLEIGH LN
 Clinton, MD 20735

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust to PATRICK J. FLANAGAN, Trustee(s), dated August 11, 2006, and recorded among the Land Records of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND in Liber 26266, folio 566, the holder of the indebtedness secured by this Deed of Trust having appointed the undersigned Substitute Trustees, by instrument duly recorded among the aforesaid Land Records, default having occurred under the terms thereof, and at the request of the party secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT FRONT OF THE DUVAL WING OF THE COURTHOUSE COMPLEX 14735 MAIN ST, UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 at 10:00 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND and improvements thereon situated in PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD and described as follows:

ALL THAT CERTAIN PROPERTY SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF PRINCE GEORGE'S AND STATE OF MARYLAND, BEING DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: LOCATED ON LOT 20, BLOCK T, SECTION 7, PLAT ONE, FOX RUN ESTATES NLP 149-87.

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning, subdivision environmental condition, merchantability, compliance with building or housing codes or other laws, ordinances or regulations, or other similar matters, and subject to easements, agreements and restrictions of record which affect the same, if any. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, liens, restrictions and agreements of record affecting same including any condominium and of HOA assessments pursuant to Md Real Property Article 11-110.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$36,000.00, payable in certified check or by a cashier's check will be required from purchaser at time of sale, balance in immediately available funds upon final ratification of sale by the Circuit Court of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND interest to be paid at the rate of 4.25% on unpaid purchase money from date of sale to date of settlement. The secured party herein, if a bidder, shall not be required to post a deposit. Third party purchaser (excluding the secured party) will be required to complete full settlement of the purchase of the property within TEN (10) CALENDAR DAYS of the ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court otherwise the purchaser's deposit shall be forfeited and the property will be resold at the risk and expense of the defaulting purchaser. All other public charges and private charges or assessments, including water/sewer charges, ground rent, taxes if any, to be adjusted to date of sale. Cost of all documentary stamps and transfer taxes and all other costs incident to the settlement shall be borne by the purchaser. If applicable, condominium and/or homeowner association dues and assessments will be adjusted to date of sale. If the sale is rescinded or not ratified for any reason, including post sale lender audit, or the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable title or a resale is to take place for any reason, the purchaser's sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the aforementioned deposit. The purchaser waives all rights and claims against the Substitute Trustees whether known or unknown. These provisions shall survive settlement. Upon refund of the deposit, this sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. The sale is subject to post-sale review of the status of the loan and that if any agreement to cancel the sale was entered into by the lender and borrower prior to the sale then the sale is void and the purchaser's deposit shall be refunded without interest. Additional terms and conditions, if applicable, maybe announced at the time and date of sale. Sale is subject to the attestation by the Borrower in accordance with Section 5.A of the Governor's order of 10.16.2020. File No. (19-13932)

BRENNAN FERGUSON, JOHN C. HANRAHAN,
 JEREMY B. WILKINS, AMANDA DRISCOLL,
 ROBERT OLIVERI, PAUL HEINMULLER,
 Substitute Trustees



Harvey Auctioneers, LLC
 300 E. Joppa Road
 Hampton Plaza • Suite 1103
 410-769-9797

Dec 24, 31, Jan 7, 2026 0012507295

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
 REAL PROPERTY AND
 ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**
 2832 CRESTWICK PLACE
 DISTRICT HEIGHTS, MD 20747

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust dated August 8, 2006, recorded in Liber 34858, Folio 179 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, with an original principal balance of \$240,000.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 at 11:19 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with any buildings or improvements thereon located in Prince George's County, MD and described as follows:

2832 CRESTWICK PLACE
 DISTRICT HEIGHTS, MD 20747

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning, subdivision environmental condition, merchantability, compliance with building or housing codes or other laws, ordinances or regulations, or other similar matters, and subject to easements, agreements and restrictions of record which affect the same, if any. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, liens, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$20,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price, together with interest on the unpaid purchase money at the current rate contained in the Deed of Trust Note, or any modifications thereto, from the date of sale to the date funds are received by the Sub. Trustees, payable in cash within ten days of final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court. There will be no abatement of interest due to the purchaser in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. Adjustment of all real property taxes, including agricultural taxes, if applicable, and any and all public and/or private charges or assessments, to the extent such amounts survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer, ground rent and front foot benefit charges, to be adjusted to date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. Purchaser is responsible for any recapture of homestead tax credit. All transfer taxes and recordation taxes shall be paid by Purchaser. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property, and assumes risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale. The sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, this sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of the deposit without interest. If purchaser fails to settle within ten days of ratification, subject to order of court, purchaser agrees that property will be resold and entire deposit retained by Sub. Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability. The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within ten days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the Purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale. The defaulted purchaser shall not be entitled to any surplus proceeds resulting from said resale even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by said defaulted purchaser. Sub. Trustees will convey either marketable or insurable title. If they cannot deliver one or the other, or if ratification of the sale is denied by the Circuit Court for any reason, the Purchaser's sole remedy, at law or equity, is return of the deposit without interest. (Matter No. 327635-1)

Howard N. Bierman, Carrie M. Ward, et al.,
 Substitute Trustees



Alex Cooper Auctioneers
 908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17, 24, 31, 2025 0012508354

The Washington Post

851 Prince Georges County **851 Prince Georges County**
 BWB Law Group, LLC
 6003 Executive Blvd., Suite 101
 Rockville, MD 20852
 (301) 961-6555

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE OF
 REAL PROPERTY AND
 ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**
 705 KAPLAN COURT
 LANDOVER A/R/A/T HYATTSVILLE, MD 20785

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust dated November 17, 2006, recorded in Liber 26817, Folio 625 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, with an original principal balance of \$196,000.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 at 11:17 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with any buildings or improvements thereon located in Prince George's County, MD and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust.

The property, and any improvements thereon, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$8,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price, together with interest on the unpaid purchase money at the current rate contained in the Deed of Trust Note, or any modifications thereto, from the date of sale to the date funds are received by the Sub. Trustees, payable in cash within ten days of final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court. There will be no abatement of interest due to the purchaser in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. Adjustment of all real property taxes, including agricultural taxes, if applicable, and any and all public and/or private charges or assessments, to the extent such amounts survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer, ground rent and front foot benefit charges, to be adjusted to date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. Purchaser is responsible for any recapture of homestead tax credit. All transfer taxes and recordation taxes shall be paid by Purchaser. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property, and assumes risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale. The sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, this sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of the deposit without interest. If purchaser fails to settle within ten days of ratification, subject to order of court, purchaser agrees that property will be resold and entire deposit retained by Sub. Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability. The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within ten days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the Purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale. The defaulted purchaser shall not be entitled to any surplus proceeds resulting from said resale even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by said defaulted purchaser. Sub. Trustees will convey either marketable or insurable title. If they cannot deliver one or the other, or if ratification of the sale is denied by the Circuit Court for any reason, the Purchaser's sole remedy, at law or equity, is return of the deposit without interest. (Matter No. 369091-2)

Howard N. Bierman, Carrie M. Ward, et al.,
 Substitute Trustees

**ALEX COOPER
 auctioneers**

908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
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Dec 17, 24, 31, 2025 0012508353

851 Prince Georges

C4 CLASSIFIED • NOTICES • Trustee Sales—MD

851 Prince Georges County | 851 Prince Georges County

BW Law Group, LLC
6003 Executive Blvd., Suite 101
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 961-6555**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF REAL PROPERTY AND
ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**
**9213 MIDLAND TURN
UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772**

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust dated May 16, 2005, recorded in Liber 22445, Folio 463 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, with an original principal balance of \$241,600.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 11:33 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with any buildings or improvements thereon located in Prince George's County, MD and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust.

The property, and any improvements thereon, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$34,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price, together with interest on the unpaid purchase money at the current rate contained in the Deed of Trust Note, or any modifications thereto, from the date of sale to the date funds are received by the Sub. Trustees, payable in cash within ten days of final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court. There will be no abatement of interest due to the purchaser in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. Adjustment of all real property taxes, including agricultural taxes, if applicable, and any and all public and/or private charges or assessments, to the extent such amounts survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer, ground rent and front foot benefit charges, to be adjusted to date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. Purchaser is responsible for any recapture of homestead tax credit. All transfer taxes and recordation taxes shall be paid by Purchaser. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property, and assumes risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale. The sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, this sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of the deposit without interest. If purchaser fails to settle within ten days of ratification, subject to order of court, purchaser agrees that property will be resold and entire deposit retained by Sub. Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability. The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within ten days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the Purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale. The defaulted purchaser shall not be entitled to any surplus proceeds resulting from said resale even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by said defaulting purchaser. Sub. Trustees will convey either marketable or insurable title. If they cannot deliver one or the other, or if ratification of the sale is denied by the Circuit Court for any reason, the Purchaser's sole remedy, at law or equity, is return of the deposit without interest. (Matte No. 355774-3)

Howard N. Bierman, Carrie M. Ward, et al.,
Substitute Trustees**ALEX COOPER
auctioneers**
908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17,24,31, 2025 0012508361

BW Law Group, LLC
6003 Executive Blvd., Suite 101
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 961-6555**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF REAL PROPERTY AND
ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**
**6500 GREEN HOLLY WAY
UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20772**

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust dated January 7, 2022, recorded in Liber 47110, Folio 117 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, with an original principal balance of \$300,000.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 11:41 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with any buildings or improvements thereon located in Prince George's County, MD and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust.

The property, and any improvements thereon, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$29,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price, together with interest on the unpaid purchase money at the current rate contained in the Deed of Trust Note, or any modifications thereto, from the date of sale to the date funds are received by the Sub. Trustees, payable in cash within ten days of final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court. There will be no abatement of interest due to the purchaser in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. Adjustment of all real property taxes, including agricultural taxes, if applicable, and any and all public and/or private charges or assessments, to the extent such amounts survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer, ground rent and front foot benefit charges, to be adjusted to date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. Purchaser is responsible for any recapture of homestead tax credit. All transfer taxes and recordation taxes shall be paid by Purchaser. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property, and assumes risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale. The sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, this sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of the deposit without interest. If purchaser fails to settle within ten days of ratification, subject to order of court, purchaser agrees that property will be resold and entire deposit retained by Sub. Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability. The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within ten days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the Purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale. The defaulted purchaser shall not be entitled to any surplus proceeds resulting from said resale even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by said defaulting purchaser. Sub. Trustees will convey either marketable or insurable title. If they cannot deliver one or the other, or if ratification of the sale is denied by the Circuit Court for any reason, the Purchaser's sole remedy, at law or equity, is return of the deposit without interest. (Matte No. 371400-1)

Howard N. Bierman, Carrie M. Ward, et al.,
Substitute Trustees**ALEX COOPER
auctioneers**
908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
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Dec 17,24,31, 2025 0012508370

851 Prince Georges County | 851 Prince Georges County

BW Law Group, LLC
6003 Executive Blvd., Suite 101
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 961-6555**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF REAL PROPERTY AND
ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**
**2608 LANHAM HILL CIRCLE
UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20774**

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust dated September 26, 2022, recorded in Liber 48220, Folio 100 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, with an original principal balance of \$575,263.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 11:37 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with any buildings or improvements thereon located in Prince George's County, MD and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust.

The property, and any improvements thereon, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$56,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price, together with interest on the unpaid purchase money at the current rate contained in the Deed of Trust Note, or any modifications thereto, from the date of sale to the date funds are received by the Sub. Trustees, payable in cash within ten days of final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court. There will be no abatement of interest due to the purchaser in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. Adjustment of all real property taxes, including agricultural taxes, if applicable, and any and all public and/or private charges or assessments, to the extent such amounts survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer, ground rent and front foot benefit charges, to be adjusted to date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. Purchaser is responsible for any recapture of homestead tax credit. All transfer taxes and recordation taxes shall be paid by Purchaser. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property, and assumes risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale. The sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, this sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of the deposit without interest. If purchaser fails to settle within ten days of ratification, subject to order of court, purchaser agrees that property will be resold and entire deposit retained by Sub. Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability. The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within ten days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the Purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale. The defaulted purchaser shall not be entitled to any surplus proceeds resulting from said resale even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by said defaulting purchaser. Sub. Trustees will convey either marketable or insurable title. If they cannot deliver one or the other, or if ratification of the sale is denied by the Circuit Court for any reason, the Purchaser's sole remedy, at law or equity, is return of the deposit without interest. (Matte No. 375919-1)

Howard N. Bierman, Carrie M. Ward, et al.,
Substitute Trustees**ALEX COOPER
auctioneers**
908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
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Dec 17,24,31, 2025 0012508367

851 Prince Georges County | 851 Prince Georges County

BW Law Group, LLC
6003 Executive Blvd., Suite 101
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 961-6555**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF REAL PROPERTY AND
ANY IMPROVEMENTS THEREON**
**12616 DARLENN STREET
UPPER MARLBORO, MD 20774**

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust dated July 26, 2005, recorded in Liber 23039, Folio 494 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, with an original principal balance of \$264,800.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 11:45 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with any buildings or improvements thereon located in Prince George's County, MD and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust.

The property, and any improvements thereon, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$24,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price, together with interest on the unpaid purchase money at the current rate contained in the Deed of Trust Note, or any modifications thereto, from the date of sale to the date funds are received by the Sub. Trustees, payable in cash within ten days of final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court. There will be no abatement of interest due to the purchaser in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. Adjustment of all real property taxes, including agricultural taxes, if applicable, and any and all public and/or private charges or assessments, to the extent such amounts survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer, ground rent and front foot benefit charges, to be adjusted to date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. Purchaser is responsible for any recapture of homestead tax credit. All transfer taxes and recordation taxes shall be paid by Purchaser. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property, and assumes risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale. The sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, this sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of the deposit without interest. If purchaser fails to settle within ten days of ratification, subject to order of court, purchaser agrees that property will be resold and entire deposit retained by Sub. Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability. The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within ten days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the Purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale. The defaulted purchaser shall not be entitled to any surplus proceeds resulting from said resale even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by said defaulting purchaser. Sub. Trustees will convey either marketable or insurable title. If they cannot deliver one or the other, or if ratification of the sale is denied by the Circuit Court for any reason, the Purchaser's sole remedy, at law or equity, is return of the deposit without interest. (Matte No. 175310-13)

Howard N. Bierman, Carrie M. Ward, et al.,
Substitute Trustees**ALEX COOPER
auctioneers**
908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17,24,31, 2025 0012508372

851 Prince Georges County | 851 Prince Georges County

McCabe, Weisberg & Conway, LLC
312 Marshall Avenue, Suite 800
Laurel, MD 20707
www.mwc-law.com**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF IMPROVED REAL PROPERTY**
**1649 TULIP AVENUE
FORESTVILLE, MD 20747**

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust from Gary A. Seegers a/k/a Gary A. Seegars, dated September 28, 1998 and recorded in Liber 12528, folio 186 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, default having occurred under the terms thereof and at the request of the parties secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustees will offer for sale at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 10:55 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND AND THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON situated in Prince George's County, Maryland and more fully described in the condominium know as "The Fairmont 1005 Condominium" and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust.

The property is improved by a dwelling. The property will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions, easements, encumbrances and agreements of record affecting the subject property, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit in the form of cashier's or certified check, or in such other form as the Substitute Trustees may determine, at their sole discretion, for \$9,000 at the time of sale. If the noteholder and/or servicer is the successful bidder, the deposit requirement is waived. Balance of the purchase price is to be paid within ten (10) days of the final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland. Interest is to be paid on the unpaid purchase price at the rate of 10.0500% per annum from date of sale to the date the funds are received in the office of the Substitute Trustees, if the property is purchased by an entity other than the noteholder and/or servicer. If payment of the balance does not occur within ten (10) days of ratification, the deposit will be forfeited as liquidated damages. The purchaser agrees that the property may be resold pursuant to an order of court, waives personal service upon themselves and/or any principal or corporate designee of any documents filed regarding the failure to pay the purchase price within ten (10) days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail of said documents at the address provided by the purchaser in the Memorandum of Sale. The purchaser will not be entitled to any surplus or profits arising from the resale even if they are the result of improvements made by the purchaser. There will be no abatement of interest due from the purchaser in the event settlement is delayed for any reason. Taxes, ground rent, water rent, and all other public charges and assessments payable on an annual basis, including sanitary and/or metropolitan district charges, and front foot benefit charges, if applicable, to be adjusted for the current year to the date of sale, and assumed thereafter by the purchaser. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Cost of all documentary stamps, transfer taxes (including agricultural transfer taxes, if applicable), and all settlement charges shall be borne by the purchaser. The sale is subject to a post sale audit of the loan, including but not limited to an analysis of whether the borrower entered into a loan modification agreement, filed bankruptcy, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. The Substitute Trustees will convey either insurable or marketable title. If the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable or marketable title or, the post sale audit concludes that the sale should not have occurred, or the sale is not ratified by the court for any reason, the purchaser's sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the deposit without interest even if the purchaser has made improvements to the property. Upon refund of the deposit, the sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. The purchaser at the foreclosure sale shall assume the risk of loss for the property immediately after the sale. (Matte #14-608061).

The property will be sold subject to a 120 day right of redemption by the Internal Revenue Service.

Laura H. G. O'Sullivan, et al., Substitute Trustees

**ALEX COOPER
auctioneers**
908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17,24,31, 2025 0012508371

EZ

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025

851 Prince Georges County | 851 Prince Georges County

McCabe, Weisberg & Conway, LLC
312 Marshall Avenue, Suite 800
Laurel, MD 20707
www.mwc-law.com**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF IMPROVED REAL PROPERTY**
**1005 CHILLUM ROAD, UNIT #207
HYATTSVILLE, MD 20782**

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust from Pauline Letts, dated May 26, 2006 and recorded in Liber 25487, folio 442 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, default having occurred under the terms thereof and at the request of the parties secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustees will offer for sale at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 11:03 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND AND THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON situated in Prince George's County, Maryland and described as Unit number 207, in the condominium know as "The Fairmont 1005 Condominium" and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust. The

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025

EZ

851 Prince Georges County | **851 Prince Georges County**
 McCabe, Weisberg & Conway, LLC
 312 Marshall Avenue, Suite 800
 Laurel, MD 20707
 www.mwc-law.com

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF IMPROVED REAL PROPERTY**

5734 MIDDLETON LANE
TEMPLE HILLS, MD 20748

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust from Lawrence Z. Garrison, dated June 21, 2006 and recorded in Liber 28928, folio 475 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, default having occurred under the terms thereof and at the request of the parties secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustees will offer for sale at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 10:57 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND AND THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON situated in Prince George's County, Maryland and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust. The property is improved by a dwelling. The property, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions, easements, encumbrances and agreements of record affecting the subject property, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit in the form of cashier's or certified check, or in such other form as the Substitute Trustees may determine, at their sole discretion, for \$34,000 at the time of sale. If the noteholder and/or servicer is the successful bidder, the deposit requirement is waived. Balance of the purchase price is to be paid within ten (10) days of the final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland. Interest is to be paid on the unpaid purchase price at the rate of 5% per annum from date of sale to the date the funds are received in the office of the Substitute Trustees, if the property is purchased by an entity other than the noteholder and/or servicer. If payment of the balance does not occur within ten (10) days of ratification, the deposit will be forfeited as liquidated damages. The purchaser agrees that the property may be resold pursuant to an order of court, waives personal service upon themselves and/or any principal or corporate designee of any documents filed regarding the failure to pay the purchase price within ten (10) days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail of said documents at the address provided by the purchaser in the Memorandum of Sale. The purchaser will not be entitled to any surplus or profits arising from the resale even if they are the result of improvements made by the purchaser. There will be no abatement of interest due from the purchaser in the event settlement is delayed for any reason. Taxes, ground rent, water rent, and all other public charges and assessments payable on an annual basis, including sanitary and/or metropolitan district charges, and front foot benefit charges, if applicable, to be adjusted for the current year to the date of sale, and assumed thereafter by the purchaser. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Cost of all documentary stamps, transfer taxes (including agricultural transfer taxes, if applicable), and all settlement charges shall be borne by the purchaser. The sale is subject to a post sale audit of the loan, including but not limited to an analysis of whether the borrower entered into a loan modification agreement, filed bankruptcy, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. The Substitute Trustees will convey either insurable or marketable title. If the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable or marketable title or, the post sale audit concludes that the sale should not have occurred, or the sale is not ratified by the court for any reason, the purchaser's sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the deposit without interest even if the purchaser has made improvements to the property. Upon refund of the deposit, the sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. The purchaser at the foreclosure sale shall assume the risk of loss for the property immediately after the sale. (Matter #22-601431). The property will be sold subject to a 120 day right of redemption by the Internal Revenue Service.

Laura H. G. O'Sullivan, et al., Substitute Trustees

908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17,24,31, 2025 0012508332

Robertson, Anschutz, Schneid & Crane, LLC
 11350 McCormick Road, EP 1, Suite 302
 Hunt Valley, MD 21031
 470-321-7112

**TRUSTEES' SALE
OF VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY
KNOWN AS
942 CLOVIS AVE.
CAPITAL HEIGHTS, MD 20743-3943**

Under a power of sale contained in that Deed of Trust dated June 23, 2015, and recorded in Liber 37336, folio 295, of the land records of PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, with an original principal amount of \$212,880.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the appointed Substitute Trustees will offer for sale at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 12, 2026 at 2:00 PM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND together with any buildings or improvements thereon situated in PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD, located at the above address and more fully described in the aforementioned Deed of Trust.

TAX ID# - 18-1998301

The property and improvements will be sold in an "AS IS" physical condition without warranty of any kind and subject to all conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, including any condominium or homeowners association assessments pursuant to MD Real Property Article A§ 11-110 and A§ 11B-117.

TERMS OF SALE: A non-refundable bidder's deposit of \$17,800.00 by cashier/certified check or such other form as the Substitute Trustee may determine, in their sole discretion, required at time of sale except for the party secured by the Deed of Trust. Risk of loss on purchaser from date and time of auction. The balance of the purchase price together with interest thereon at 3.625% per annum from date of sale to receipt of purchase price by Substitute Trustees must be paid by cashier's check within 10 days after final ratification of sale. The noteholder shall not be obligated to pay interest if it is the purchaser. There will be no abatement of interest due from the purchaser in the event that additional funds are tendered before settlement or if settlement is delayed for any reason. All real estate taxes and other public charges and/or assessments to be adjusted as of the date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. If applicable, any condominium and/or homeowners association dues and assessments that may become due after the date of sale shall be purchaser's responsibility. Purchaser shall pay all transfer, documentary and recording taxes/fees and all other settlement costs. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining possession of the property. Time is of the essence for the purchaser. If purchaser defaults, deposit will be forfeited and property resold at the risk and cost of the defaulting purchaser who shall be liable for any deficiency in the purchase price and all costs, expenses and attorney's fees of both sales. If Substitute Trustees do not convey title for any reason, purchaser's sole remedy is return of deposit without interest. This sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan secured by the Deed of Trust including but not limited to determining whether prior to sale a bankruptcy was filed, forbearance, repayment or other agreement was entered into; or loan was reinstated or paid off. In any such event this sale shall be null and void and purchaser's sole remedy shall be return of deposit without interest. File No. (23-114310)

KEITH YACKO, DAVID WILLIAMSON,
Substitute Trustees

Dec 24,31,Jan 7, 2026 0012507083

EZ

851 Prince Georges County | **851 Prince Georges County**

McCabe, Weisberg & Conway, LLC
 312 Marshall Avenue, Suite 800
 Laurel, MD 20707
 www.mwc-law.com

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF IMPROVED REAL PROPERTY**

8603 MAGNOLIA STREET
LAUREL, MD 20707

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust from Edna N. Christopher a/k/a Edna Ngozi Christopher, dated March 2, 2007 and recorded in Liber 27533, folio 210 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, default having occurred under the terms thereof and at the request of the parties secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustees will offer for sale at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 10:59 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND AND THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON situated in Prince George's County, Maryland and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust. The property is improved by a dwelling.

The property, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions, easements, encumbrances and agreements of record affecting the subject property, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit in the form of cashier's or certified check, or in such other form as the Substitute Trustees may determine, at their sole discretion, for \$44,000 at the time of sale. If the noteholder and/or servicer is the successful bidder, the deposit requirement is waived. Balance of the purchase price is to be paid within ten (10) days of the final ratification of the sale by the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland. Interest is to be paid on the unpaid purchase price at the rate of 5% per annum from date of sale to the date the funds are received in the office of the Substitute Trustees, if the property is purchased by an entity other than the noteholder and/or servicer. If payment of the balance does not occur within ten (10) days of ratification, the deposit will be forfeited as liquidated damages. The purchaser agrees that the property may be resold pursuant to an order of court, waives personal service upon themselves and/or any principal or corporate designee of any documents filed regarding the failure to pay the purchase price within ten (10) days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail of said documents at the address provided by the purchaser in the Memorandum of Sale. The purchaser will not be entitled to any surplus or profits arising from the resale even if they are the result of improvements made by the purchaser. There will be no abatement of interest due from the purchaser in the event settlement is delayed for any reason. Taxes, ground rent, water rent, and all other public charges and assessments payable on an annual basis, including sanitary and/or metropolitan district charges, and front foot benefit charges, if applicable, to be adjusted for the current year to the date of sale, and assumed thereafter by the purchaser. Condominium fees and/or homeowners association dues, if any, shall be assumed by the purchaser from the date of sale. The purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the ground rent escrow, if required. Cost of all documentary stamps, transfer taxes (including agricultural transfer taxes, if applicable), and all settlement charges shall be borne by the purchaser. The sale is subject to a post sale audit of the loan, including but not limited to an analysis of whether the borrower entered into a loan modification agreement, filed bankruptcy, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. The Substitute Trustees will convey either insurable or marketable title. If the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey insurable or marketable title or, the post sale audit concludes that the sale should not have occurred, or the sale is not ratified by the court for any reason, the purchaser's sole remedy in law or equity shall be limited to the refund of the deposit without interest even if the purchaser has made improvements to the property. Upon refund of the deposit, the sale shall be void and of no effect, and the purchaser shall have no further claim against the Substitute Trustees. Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. The purchaser at the foreclosure sale shall assume the risk of loss for the property immediately after the sale. (Matter #22-601431).

The property will be sold subject to a 120 day right of redemption by the Internal Revenue Service.

Laura H. G. O'Sullivan, et al., Substitute Trustees

908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17,24,31, 2025 0012508337

Rosenberg & Associates, LLC
 4340 East West Highway, Suite 600
 Bethesda, MD 20814
 (301) 907-8000
 www.rosenberg-assoc.com

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF IMPROVED REAL PROPERTY**

9004 BYARD COURT
SPRINGFIELD, MD 20774

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust from Robert A. Bobonick, dated May 22, 2017 and recorded in Liber 39723, folio 434 among the Land Records of Prince George's County, MD, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Sub. Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, 14735 Main St., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772 (Duval Wing entrance, located on Main St.), on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 10:50 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND AND THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON situated in Prince George's County, MD and described as Unit Number 5976 301 in Westchester Park Section One Condominium and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust. The property is improved by a dwelling.

The property, which is improved by a dwelling, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

Terms of Sale: A deposit of \$30,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price to be paid in cash within ten days of final ratification of sale by the Circuit Court for Prince George's County. Interest to be paid on the unpaid purchase money at the rate pursuant to the Deed of Trust Note from the date of sale to the date funds are received in the office of the Trustees. There will be no abatement of interest in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement or if settlement is delayed for any reason. The noteholder shall not be obligated to pay interest if it is the purchaser. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. There will be no reduction of interest due to overpayment of deposit. Adjustment of all real property taxes (excluding recapture of previously reduced or exempt taxes) and any other public charges or assessments, to the extent such amount survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer charges, and ground rent to be adjusted to date of sale and paid at execution of the deed, except where the secured party is the purchaser, and thereafter assumed by the purchaser. All due and/or unpaid private utility, water and sewer facilities charges, condo/HOA assessments and Columbia Assoc. assessments, to the extent such amount survive foreclosure sale, are payable by the purchaser without adjustment. Cost of all documentary stamps, transfer taxes, recaptured taxes (including but not limited to agricultural taxes), and settlement expenses shall be borne by the purchaser. Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. Purchaser assumes the risk of loss from the date of sale to the date the funds are received in the office of the Sub. Trustees. Taxes, ground rent, water rent, condominium fees and/or homeowner association dues, all public charges/assessments payable on an annual basis, including sanitary and/or metropolitan district charges, if applicable, to be adjusted for the current year to date of sale and assumed thereafter by the purchaser. All due and/or unpaid private utility, water and sewer facilities charges, condo/HOA assessments and Columbia Assoc. assessments, to the extent such amount survive foreclosure sale, are payable by the purchaser without adjustment. Cost of all documentary stamps, transfer taxes, recaptured taxes (including but not limited to agricultural taxes), and settlement expenses shall be borne by the purchaser. Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. 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C6 CLASSIFIED • NOTICES • Trustee Sales—MD

851 Prince Georges County | **851 Prince Georges County**
TRUSTEE'S SALE
6813 Ashleys Crossing Court, Temple Hills, MD 20748

Trustee's Sale of valuable fee simple property improved by premises known as 6813 Ashleys Crossing Court, Temple Hills, MD 20748. By virtue of the power and authority contained in a Deed of Trust, dated May 25, 2006, and recorded in Liber 28804 at Page 370 among the land records of the County of Prince George's, in the original principal amount of \$495,000.00. Upon default and request for sale, the undersigned trustees will offer for sale at public auction at the Courthouse for the COUNTY OF PRINCE GEORGE'S, at the front of the Duval Wing of the Courthouse Complex located at 14735 Main Street, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772, on January 6, 2026 at 2:00 P.M., all that property described in said Deed of Trust including but not limited to:

Tax ID# 06-3527587

Said property is in fee simple and is improved by a dwelling and is sold in "as is" condition and subject to all superior covenants, conditions, liens, restrictions, easement, rights-of-way, as may affect same, if any.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of 10% of the sale price, cash or certified funds shall be required at the time of sale. The balance of the purchase price with interest at 6.00% per annum from the date of sale to the date of payment will be paid within TEN DAYS after the final ratification of the sale.

Adjustments on all taxes, public charges and special or regular assessments will be made as of the date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser.

If applicable, condominium and/or homeowners association dues and assessments that may become due after the time of sale will be the responsibility of the purchaser. Title examination, conveyancing, state revenue stamps, transfer taxes, title insurance, and all other costs incident to settlement are to be paid by the purchaser. Time is of the essence for the purchaser; otherwise the deposit will be forfeited and the property may be resold at risk and costs of the defaulting purchaser. If the sale is not ratified or if the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey marketable title in accord with these terms of sale, the purchaser's only remedy is the return of the deposit. Trustee's File No. 25-298182.

The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within fifteen days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale.

William M. Savage, et al., Substitute Trustees.

LOGS LEGAL GROUP LLP
Mailing Address: 8520 Cliff Cameron Dr., Suite 330,
Charlotte, North Carolina 28269
(410) 769-9797



Dec 17,24,31,2025 0012507098

852 Anne Arundel County | **852 Anne Arundel County**

852 Anne Arundel County | **852 Anne Arundel County**

Rosenberg & Associates, LLC
4340 East West Highway, Suite 600
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 907-8000
www.rosenberg-assoc.com

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF IMPROVED REAL PROPERTY**

7415 BALTIMORE ANNAPOLIS BOULEVARD
GLEN MILLS, MD 21016

Under a power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust from Sherry Abusakran and Joyce Klaes dated November 25, 2015 and recorded in Liber 29063, folio 140 among the Land Records of Anne Arundel County, MD, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the Trustees will sell at public auction at the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, at the Court House Door, 8 Church Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401, on

JANUARY 6, 2026 AT 9:15 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, together with the buildings and improvements thereon situated in Anne Arundel County, MD and more fully described in the aforesaid Deed of Trust. Tax ID #05-326-1593600.

The property, which is improved by a dwelling, will be sold in an "as is" condition and subject to conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, if any, and with no warranty of any kind.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of 10% of the sale price, cash or certified funds shall be required at the time of sale. Balance of the purchase price with interest at 6.00% per annum from the date of sale to the date of payment will be paid within TEN DAYS after the final ratification of the sale.

Adjustments on all taxes, public charges and special or regular assessments will be made as of the date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser.

If applicable, condominium and/or homeowners association dues and assessments that may become due after the time of sale will be the responsibility of the purchaser. Time is of the essence for the purchaser; otherwise the deposit will be forfeited and the property may be resold at risk and costs of the defaulting purchaser. If the sale is not ratified or if the Substitute Trustees are unable to convey marketable title in accord with these terms of sale, the purchaser's only remedy is the return of the deposit. Trustee's File No. 25-298182.

The purchaser waives personal service of any papers filed in connection with its failure to settle within fifteen days of ratification and expressly agrees to accept service by first class mail at the address provided by the purchaser as identified on the Memorandum of Sale.

William M. Savage, et al., Substitute Trustees.

LOGS LEGAL GROUP LLP
Mailing Address: 8520 Cliff Cameron Dr., Suite 330,
Charlotte, North Carolina 28269
(410) 769-9797



Dec 17,24,31,2025 0012507098

852 Anne Arundel County | **852 Anne Arundel County**

853 Calvert County | **853 Calvert County**

Brock and Scott, PLLC
5431 Cleander Drive
Wilmington NC, 28403

**SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEES' SALE
OF VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY
KNOWN AS**

105 CHESLEY COURT

Saint Leonard, MD 20685

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust to JOHN B. THIRD, Trustee(s), dated November 9, 2016, and recorded among the Land Records of CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND in Liber 4888, folio 147, MODIFIED MARCH 9, 2023 IN BOOK 6419, PAGE 454, the holder of the indebtedness secured by this Deed of Trust having appointed the undersigned Substitute Trustees, by instrument duly recorded among the aforesaid Land Records, default having occurred under the terms thereof, and at the request of the party secured thereby, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at THE CALVERT COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT 175 MAIN ST, PRINCE FREDERICK, MD 20678 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 AT 2:15 PM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND, and improvements thereon situated in CALVERT COUNTY, MD and described as follows:

BEING KNOWN AND DESIGNATED AS LOT NUMBERED TWO (2), IN THE SUBDIVISION KNOWN AS "REVISED PLAT ONE (1), LANCASTER HILL", AS PLAT RECORDED AMONG THE LAND RECORDS OF CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND, IN LIBER A.B.E. NO. 2, FOLIO 53. TAX ACCOUNT # 01-198793 PROPERTY ADDRESS KNOWN AS: 105 CHESLEY COURT, ST. LEONARD, MARYLAND 20685

The property will be sold in an "AS IS WHERE IS" condition, without either express or implied warranty or representation, including but not limited to the description, fitness for a particular purpose or use, structural integrity, physical condition, construction, extent of construction, workmanship, materials, liability, zoning, subdivision, environmental condition, merchantability, compliance with building or housing codes or other laws, warranties or regulations, or other similar matters, and subject to easements, agreements and restrictions of record which affect the same, if any. The property will be sold subject to all conditions, liens, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same including any condominium and of HOA assessments pursuant to Md Real Property Article 11-10.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of \$13,000 in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order will be required of the purchaser at time and place of sale. Balance of the purchase price to be paid in cash within ten days of final ratification of sale by the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County. Interest to be paid on the unpaid purchase money at the rate pursuant to the Deed of Trust Note from the date of sale to the date funds are received in the office of the Trustees. There will be no abatement of interest in the event additional funds are tendered before settlement or if settlement is delayed for any reason. The noteholder shall not be obligated to pay interest if it is the purchaser. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE FOR THE PURCHASER. There will be no reduction of interest due to overpayment of deposit. Adjustment of all real property taxes (excluding recapture of previously reduced or exempt taxes) and any other public charges or assessments, to the extent such amount survive foreclosure sale, including water/sewer charges, and ground rent to be adjusted to date of sale and paid at execution of the deed, except where the secured party is the purchaser, and thereafter assumed by the purchaser. All due and/or unpaid private utility, water and sewer facilities charges, condo/HOA assessments and Columbia Assoc. assessments, to the extent such amount survive foreclosure sale, are payable by the purchaser without adjustment. Cost of all documentary stamps, transfer taxes, recaptured taxes (including but not limited to agricultural taxes), and settlement expenses shall be borne by the purchaser. Purchaser shall be responsible for obtaining physical possession of the property. Purchaser assumes the risk of loss or damage to the property from the date of sale forward. Additional terms to be announced at the time of sale.

If the Trustees are unable to convey good and marketable title, the purchaser's sole remedy in law and equity shall be limited to a refund of the deposit without interest. If the purchaser fails to go to settlement, subject to order of the court, the entire deposit (including any amount received over the advertised deposit amount) shall be forfeited to the Trustees as liquidated damages for all losses occasioned by the purchaser's default and purchaser shall have no further liability.

In the event of a resale, the defaulting purchaser shall not be entitled to receive the surplus, if any, even if such surplus results from improvements to the property by the defaulting purchaser and the defaulting purchaser shall be liable to the Trustees and secured party for reasonable attorney's fees and expenses incurred in connection with all litigation involving the property or the proceeds of any resale. Defaulting purchaser waives personal service of any document filed in connection with such a motion on him/herself and/or any principal or corporate designee, and expressly agrees to accept service of any such document by regular mail directed to the address provided by said purchaser at the time of the foreclosure auction. Trustees' file number 22-000590-MD-F-4.

Diane S. Rosenberg, Mark D. Meyer, et al., Trustees

LICENSE NOS. A000113, A000176, A000177, A000193,

A000424, A000479, A000507, A000508

ALEX COOPER
auctioneers

908 York Road • Towson, MD 21204 • 410.828.4838
www.alexcooper.com

Dec 17,24,31,2025 0012508341

853 Calvert County | **853 Calvert County**

853 Calvert County | **853 Calvert County**

Robertson, Anschutz, Schneid & Crane, LLC
11350 McCormick Road, EP 1, Suite 302
Hunt Valley, MD 21031
470-321-7112

**TRUSTEES' SALE
OF
VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY**

KNOWN AS

7851 CITADEL DRIVE
SEVERN, MD 21144

Under a power of sale contained in that Deed of Trust dated July 3, 2007, and recorded in Liber 19611, folio 0380, of the land records of ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, with an original principal balance of \$333,900.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the appointed Substitute Trustees will offer for sale at public auction at THE ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT 8 CHURCH CIR, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401, ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 AT 4:00 PM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND together with any buildings or improvements thereon situated in ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MD, located at the above address and more fully described in the aforementioned Deed of Trust.

TAX ID# - 04-605-06093808

The property and improvements will be sold in an "AS IS" physical condition without warranty of any kind and subject to all conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, including any condominium or homeowners association assessments pursuant to MD Real Property Article A§ 11-110 and A§ 11B-117.

TERMS OF SALE: A non-refundable bidder's deposit of \$29,500.00 by cashier's/certified check or such other form as the Substitute Trustee may determine, in their sole discretion, required at time of sale except for the party secured by the Deed of Trust. Risk of loss on purchaser from date and time of auction. The balance of the purchase price together with interest thereon at 7.25% per annum from date of sale to receipt of purchase price by Substitute Trustees must be paid by cashier's check within 10 days after final ratification of sale. The noteholder shall not be obligated to pay interest if it is the purchaser. There will be no abatement of interest due from the purchaser in the event that additional funds are tendered before settlement or if settlement is delayed for any reason. All real estate taxes and other public charges and/or assessments to be adjusted as of the date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. If applicable, any condominium and/or homeowners association dues and assessments that may become due after the date of sale shall be purchaser's responsibility. Purchaser shall pay all transfer, documentary and recording taxes/fees and all other settlement costs. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining possession of the property. Time is of the essence for the purchaser. If purchaser defaults, deposit will be forfeited and property resold at the risk and cost of the defaulting purchaser who shall be liable for any deficiency in the purchase price and all costs, expenses and attorney's fees of both sales. If Substitute Trustees do not convey title for any reason, purchaser's sole remedy is return of deposit without interest. This sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan secured by the Deed of Trust including but not limited to determining whether prior to sale a bankruptcy was filed; forbearance, repayment or other agreement was entered into; or loan was reinstated or paid off. In any such event this sale shall be null and void and purchaser's sole remedy shall be return of deposit without interest. File No. (25-306575)

KEITH YACKO, DAVID WILLIAMSON,
Substitute Trustees

A181, A136, A311, A183, A425, A426, A461, A463, A508



Dec 24,31,Jan 7, 2026 0012507193

Robertson, Anschutz, Schneid & Crane, LLC
11350 McCormick Road, EP 1, Suite 302
Hunt Valley, MD 21031
470-321-7112

**TRUSTEES' SALE
OF
VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY**

KNOWN AS

12595 SOUTHERN MARYLAND BLVD

DUNKIRK, MD 20754

Under a power of sale contained in that Deed of Trust dated July 31, 2018, and recorded in Liber 5242, folio 391, of the land records of CALVERT COUNTY, with an original principal balance of \$186,868.00, default having occurred under the terms thereof, the appointed Substitute Trustees will offer for sale at public auction at THE CALVERT COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT 175 MAIN ST, PRINCE FREDERICK, MD 20678 ON,

JANUARY 12, 2026 AT 9:00 AM

ALL THAT FEE SIMPLE LOT OF GROUND together with any buildings or improvements thereon situated in CALVERT COUNTY, MD, located at the above address and more fully described in the aforementioned Deed of Trust.

TAX ID# - 03-012417

The property and improvements will be sold in an "AS IS" physical condition without warranty of any kind and subject to all conditions, restrictions and agreements of record affecting the same, including any condominium or homeowners association assessments pursuant to MD Real Property Article A§ 11-110 and A§ 11B-117.

TERMS OF SALE: A non-refundable bidder's deposit of \$17,700.00 by cashier's/certified check or such other form as the Substitute Trustee may determine, in their sole discretion, required at time of sale except for the party secured by the Deed of Trust. Risk of loss on purchaser from date and time of auction. The balance of the purchase price together with interest thereon at 7.5% per annum from date of sale to receipt of purchase price by Substitute Trustees must be paid by cashier's check within 10 days after final ratification of sale. The noteholder shall not be obligated to pay interest if it is the purchaser. There will be no abatement of interest due from the purchaser in the event that additional funds are tendered before settlement or if settlement is delayed for any reason. All real estate taxes and other public charges and/or assessments to be adjusted as of the date of sale and thereafter assumed by purchaser. If applicable, any condominium and/or homeowners association dues and assessments that may become due after the date of sale shall be purchaser's responsibility. Purchaser shall pay all transfer, documentary and recording taxes/fees and all other settlement costs. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining possession of the property. Time is of the essence for the purchaser. If purchaser defaults, deposit will be forfeited and property resold at the risk and cost of the defaulting purchaser who shall be liable for any deficiency in the purchase price and all costs, expenses and attorney's fees of both sales. If Substitute Trustees do not convey title for any reason, purchaser's sole remedy is return of deposit without interest. This sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan secured by the Deed of Trust including but not limited to determining whether prior to sale a bankruptcy was filed; forbearance, repayment or other agreement was entered into; or loan was reinstated or paid off. In any such event this sale shall be null and void and purchaser's sole remedy shall be return of deposit without interest. File No. (23-156548)

KEITH YACKO, DAVID WILLIAMSON,
Substitute Trustees

HARVEY E T S AUCTIONEERS, LLC

300 E Joppa Road
Hampshire Plaza • Suite 1103
Baltimore, MD 21298
410-769-9797

Dec 24,31,Jan 7, 2026 0012507396

Robertson, Anschutz, Schneid & Crane, LLC
11350 McCormick Road, EP 1, Suite 302
Hunt Valley, MD 21031
470-321-7112

**TRUSTEES' SALE
OF
VALUABLE FEE SIMPLE PROPERTY**

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