



DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Biden welcomed President-elect Donald J. Trump to the White House on Wednesday. They later had a closed-door meeting.

New York Puts  
Congestion Toll  
Back on Track

This article is by Emma G. Fitzsimmons, Grace Ashford and Winnie Hu.

New York will revive its once-abandoned plan for the nation's first congestion-pricing program, but at the reduced rate of a \$9 toll for most vehicles to enter Midtown and Lower Manhattan, according to five people familiar with the matter.

Gov. Kathy Hochul was expected to announce the state's revised proposal on Thursday, lowering the previously set \$15 charge for cars to enter Manhattan's core at peak hours.

The new plan would be fast-tracked for implementation. It would go before the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board for approval next week, and would most likely take effect before



CINDY SCHULTZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Gov. Kathy Hochul set a \$9 fee for cars entering Manhattan.

President-elect Donald J. Trump takes office in January — a time frame that aims to pre-empt Mr. Trump's vows to kill the program.

State officials believe that they will not need to repeat the lengthy environmental review process because the previous review accounted for a range of tolls from \$9 to \$23. The state and city must sign an agreement with transportation officials in the Biden administration, who have been supportive of the plan.

The last-minute effort to save the tolling plan comes as Ms. Hochul faces growing pressure from transit advocates and state lawmakers to secure funding for the transit system. She also faces legal challenges from supporters

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Kennedy's Wish List for F.D.A. Raises Red Flags

By CHRISTINA JEWETT

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been unflinching in his attacks on the Food and Drug Administration in recent weeks, saying he wants to fire agency experts who have taken action against treatments that have sometimes harmed people or that teeter on the fringe of accepted health care practice.

How much influence Mr. Kennedy will have in President-elect Donald J. Trump's next administration remains unclear, with some suggesting that he could act as a White House czar for policy over several federal health agencies. Mr. Trump has voiced support for Mr. Kennedy in recent weeks, saying he will let him “go wild on health.” In his acceptance speech, Mr. Trump reiterated his

Raw Milk, Stem Cells  
and an Unapproved  
Autism Therapy

support for Mr. Kennedy's involvement on health matters.

Some of Mr. Kennedy's priorities are relatively standard, such as focusing on the health effects associated with ultraprocessed foods. Yet others threaten to undermine F.D.A. authority to rein in inappropriate medical treatments or to warn about products that can damage the public's health.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Kennedy did not respond to interview requests.

Days before the election, in a post on X that has received 6.5

million views, Mr. Kennedy threatened to fire F.D.A. employees who have waged a “war on public health.” He listed some of the products that he claimed the F.D.A. had subjected to “aggressive suppression,” including ivermectin, raw milk and vitamins as well as therapies involving stem cells, and hyperbaric oxygen.

Some items that he singled out had become flash points for conservative voters during the coronavirus pandemic, including ivermectin, which was found to be an ineffective treatment against Covid.

Dr. Robert Califf, the current F.D.A. commissioner who spoke frequently about the dangers of misinformation in the Covid pandemic, said at an event Tuesday

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In Crypto Era, a Contest Goes From Aww to Ugh

By VICTOR MATHER

It sounds like a fun, friendly online competition. Some cute dogs are chosen, and the public votes for its favorites. At the end, one dog claims the top prize.

So how did the Honorary NYC Dog Mayor Election of 2024 turn into a morass of ballot stuffing, vituperation and — ugh — cryptocurrency-influenced chicanery?

The early rounds of the 16-dog bracket seemed normal: Mello the Samoyed beat Puccini the Yorkiepoop. Mr. Tobie the silky terrier beat Louie the French bulldog.

But something was up with Bertram the Pomeranian. He was a likely favorite on his own, given his nearly 400,000 Instagram followers, and his social media moment posing as an uncanny Paddington Bear look-alike.

As the competition progressed, however, it seemed that somebody had created a cryptocurrency named after Bertram and begun pushing his candidacy. And some of the coin's enthusiasts were sure that the better Bertram did in the contest, the more the price of his namesake currency would rise.

Another strong contender was Enzo the Shih Tzu, owned by Olivia Caputo, a full-time influencer. (Enzo has almost 100,000 Instagram followers and, like the other



KATHY GRAYSON

The Honorary NYC Dog Mayor Election of 2024 was disrupted by traders of a cryptocurrency named for Bertram, a Pomeranian.

entrants, was recruited for the competition.)

“I thought it would be fun and a good way to engage our audience,” Ms. Caputo said in an interview. “It would be so silly for Enzo to have a title. I did it for the fun of it all. It turned out not to be very fun.”

Stephen Calabria, who runs

podcasts for the Mount Sinai Health System, started the contest in 2022. “Frankly, I had always envisioned this as a good-faith and good-humored way to get shelter dogs adopted and to use this as a platform for good,” he said. “If I never hear the word crypto again, it will be a blessing.”

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Enemies Meet  
And Play Nice,  
For a Moment

Biden and Trump Talk  
Transfer of Power

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON — Politics always involves a measure of performance. And on that score, few moments rival the one on Wednesday morning at the White House, when President Biden and President-elect Donald J. Trump pretended in public to like and respect each other — for a total of 29 seconds.

They shook hands despite years of animus and recriminations. Mr. Trump has called Mr. Biden “crooked” and a “communist,” and has vowed to investigate his actions in office. Mr. Biden has said Mr. Trump is a “dictator” who tried to steal an election and would “sacrifice our democracy” in his pursuit of power.

On Wednesday, at least, the nation's 46th president was determined to uphold the traditions that have long surrounded a peaceful transfer of power — offering to do “everything we can to make sure you're accommodated, have what you need” — even if they were traditions that Mr. Trump refused to extend to him four years earlier.

Mr. Trump responded as they posed in front of a roaring fireplace in the Oval Office: “I appreciate very much a transition that's so smooth, it'll be as smooth as you can get.”

Up until less than two weeks ago, the president-elect regularly derided Mr. Biden as weak, infirm and demented. On Wednesday, he referred to the president merely as “Joe,” offering his appreciation for the gracious hospitality.

It was a remarkable half-minute, followed by a closed-door meeting of the two men, along with their chiefs of staff, that lasted almost two hours. But beneath the public disguise, both men were dealing with starkly different realities.

For Mr. Trump, it was a heady, I-told-you-so moment of political resurrection after a defeat he had never really accepted. And for Mr. Biden and his staff, it was a grim, how-is-this-happening day that left them feeling defeated and in despair.

“Rough day,” one senior aide texted during the meeting, summing up the mood in the West Wing, where Mr. Trump's new team will soon take over.

Encounters like these are always fraught with tension, plac-

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Thune to Lead Senate

A traditionalist choice emerged victorious over a right-wing, MAGA-backed challenge from Rick Scott of Florida. Page A14.

GAETZ NOMINATED  
BY TRUMP TO LEAD  
THE JUSTICE DEPT.

RIGHT-WING FIREBRAND

A President-Elect Vowing  
Retribution Chooses  
a Compliant Ally

By GLENN THRUSH  
and DEVLIN BARRETT

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald J. Trump on Wednesday named Representative Matt Gaetz, the firebrand Republican from Florida, as his nominee for attorney general, a provocative move to install a compliant ally at the helm of the Justice Department as he seeks retribution against those who prosecuted him.

The pick reflected Mr. Trump's determination to choose as the nation's top law enforcement official a fierce defender who would not resist his directives or question his claims, as William P. Barr, his last confirmed attorney general, did in the aftermath of the 2020 election.

If Mr. Gaetz is confirmed by the Senate — no sure thing given the widespread bipartisan animosity toward him — his ascension to a powerful cabinet post would represent a remarkable turnaround that mirrors Mr. Trump's own whipsaw political comeback.

Mr. Gaetz, 42, was the focus of a three-year federal sex-trafficking investigation that ended in 2023 when the Justice Department under President Biden declined to bring charges. He was the subject of a House Ethics Committee inquiry into his conduct until he resigned from his seat late Wednesday, effectively ending the investigation.

Mr. Trump passed over several more conventional candidates who had emerged in recent days, including Senator Mike Lee of Utah, a conservative whose nomination would have been far better received in the chamber.

The selection of Mr. Gaetz blindsided many of Mr. Trump's allies on Capitol Hill. The announce-

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HAIYUN JIANG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Representative Matt Gaetz has been a fierce critic of the F.B.I.

Ukraine Is Focusing on Security  
As Trump Presses for Cease-Fire

By ANDREW E. KRAMER

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian officials have said for months that they would not cede territory occupied by Russia in any peace settlement. Now, as Ukraine contemplates an accelerated timetable for negotiations pushed by President-elect Donald J. Trump, it is putting at least as much importance on obtaining security guarantees as on where an eventual cease-fire line might fall.

With Ukrainian forces steadily losing ground in the east, two senior officials said that defending Ukraine's interests in potential talks would hinge not on territorial boundaries, which are likely to be determined by the fighting, but on what assurances are in place to make a cease-fire hold.

“Talks should be based on guarantees,” said Roman Kostenko, the chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament's Defense and Intelligence Committee. “For Ukraine, nothing is more important.”

A senior Ukrainian official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive negotiations, was more direct. “The territorial question is extremely important, but it's still the second question,” the official said, “The first question is security guarantees.”

Ukraine sets its borders based on its 1991 declaration of independence. Russia has since gained control of about 20 percent

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**2,100 Artworks, All Fake**  
Italy said it dismantled a network of forgers and dealers selling works purported to be by A-list artists. PAGE A4

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The U.S. had given Israel 30 days to increase the flow of aid, lest it risk losing military help. PAGE A6

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The New York City Council approved a bill that would shift the responsibility for paying real estate broker fees from renters to landlords. PAGE A21

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Inflation has cooled notably, but a pickup in annual price increases shows that it is not back to normal. PAGE B1

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When the government shut down its Shop feature, the platform struck a deal with a local company. PAGE B1



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A new exhibition of the often-domestic work of Vanessa Bell makes a case for her as a groundbreaking artist. PAGE C6

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Remastered recordings hint at what might have been for Mia Zapata, the murdered Gits frontwoman. PAGE C1

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The Vogue editor handed over the reins, for one issue, to the designer Marc Jacobs. Here's how it came to pass, and what ended up in the magazine. PAGE D1

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Frank Auerbach, who for more than 60 years painted a small circle of intimates and the streets and parks near his London studio, was 93. PAGE B12

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**Andy Beshear** PAGE A23



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**Football's Coolest Headgear**  
A former municipal worker in Nebraska is using his airbrush to turn helmets for college football teams into eye-popping works of art. PAGE B7



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