



SEAN RAYFORD/GETTY IMAGES

A Big Storm’s Heavy Toll

Hurricane Helene wreaked havoc in Asheville, above, and elsewhere in North Carolina, where hundreds were rescued. Page A15.

G.O.P. Is Filing
Deluge of Suits
Over Elections

This article is by **Danny Hakim, Alexandra Berzon and Nick Corasanti**.

Republicans have unleashed a flurry of lawsuits challenging voting rules and practices ahead of the November elections, setting the stage for what could be a far larger and more contentious legal battle over the White House after Election Day.

The onslaught of litigation, much of it landing in recent weeks, includes nearly 90 lawsuits filed across the country by Republican groups this year. The legal push is already more than three times the number of lawsuits filed before Election Day in 2020, according to Democracy Docket, a Democratically aligned group that tracks election cases.

Voting rights experts say the legal campaign appears to be an effort to prepare to contest the results of the presidential election after Election Day should former President Donald J. Trump, the Republican nominee, lose and refuse to accept his defeat as he did four years ago. The lawsuits are concentrated in swing states — and key counties — likely to determine the race. Several embrace debunked theories about voter fraud and so-called stolen elections that Mr. Trump has promoted since 2020.

In Montgomery County, Pa., the state’s third-largest county, the party is seeking to force local officials to count ballots by hand, evoking debunked conspiracy theories about corrupted voting machines. A case filed by the Republican National Committee in Nevada this month falsely asserts that nearly 4,000 noncitizens voted in the state in 2020, a claim that was rejected at the time by the state’s top election official, a Republican.

If successful, the Republicans’ lawsuits would shrink the electorate, largely by disqualifying voters more likely to be Democrats. They seek purges of voter rolls, challenge executive orders from President Biden aimed at expanding ballot access and create stricter requirements to voting by mail.

Continued on Page A13

Outcry Over a City’s Welcome Mat to Refugees

By **KURT STREETER**

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. — The billboards featured a foreboding message. Taxpayer money, it said, was footing the bill for a nonprofit to traffic Somali refugees — and officials in Eau Claire, Wis., had been hiding the facts for months.

When the City Council president, Emily Berge, saw the false accusations plastered last October above a thoroughfare in this river-crossed Midwestern city, her heart sank.

“I was shocked such claims would be made,” Ms. Berge said. “It was so xenophobic, and not at all what we stand for as a com-

In Wisconsin, Fears of
Change to Midwest
Way of Life

munity,” Ms. Berge added.

Xenophobic? “Hardly,” said Matthew Bocklund, an avid supporter of former President Donald J. Trump and an activist who helped raise funds for the billboards.

The message, he said, “got people to wake up and realize what was really going on.”

The billboards marked the be-

ginning of a searing monthslong battle in central and western Wisconsin over 75 refugees, mostly from countries in central Africa. Each one had been vetted, often for years, and then invited by the federal government to come to the United States. An evangelical nonprofit would help them settle, at least initially, in Eau Claire, a predominantly white, liberal-leaning city of 70,000, surrounded by a conservative swath of rural Wisconsin.

Standing against the resettlement: a loud protest group, dozens strong, made up in part of evangelical Christians, who said

Continued on Page A16



ERIC LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

At churches like Bethel A.M.E. Church in Ardmore, Pa., membership of young people is declining.

Black Churches and Gen Z Are Not Connecting

By **CLYDE McGRADY**

PHILADELPHIA — On a Sunday morning, about 100 worshippers gathered for services at Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. The choir filled the room with verses from “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior.” The kick drum thumped. The high hat ticked. And the audience punctuated the hymn with the syncopated double

Risking a Key Element
of Political Power

clapping often heard in Black churches. Some of the congregants sang with masks over their faces. But as the crowd nodded along to the testimony and sermon that day, the church is facing a challenge: The congregation is

getting older, with few young people in the pews.

Mother Bethel is the birthplace of the A.M.E. church, a major denomination of the Black Protestant tradition.

Its pews were once packed. During the Great Migration in the 1920s, Mother Bethel’s membership peaked at about 4,000, according to the Rev. Dr. Mark Tyler, 58, who has led the church for the

Continued on Page A14

Israeli Strike on Nasrallah
Was Years in the Making

Spy Agencies Expanded Resources to Track
Hezbollah’s Plans and Leaders

This article is by **Adam Goldman, Ronen Bergman, Julian E. Barnes and Aaron Boxerman**.

WASHINGTON — In the immediate days after the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel, Israeli intelligence officials feared a preemptive strike was imminent from another longtime enemy, Hezbollah. They frantically prepared to stop it with plans to strike and kill Hassan Nasrallah, the powerful Hezbollah leader who the Israelis knew would be in a bunker in Beirut.

But when Israel informed the White House of its plans, alarmed administration officials discounted the imminent Hezbollah strike. President Biden called Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, told him that killing Mr. Nasrallah would set off a regional war and asked him to hold his fire, current and former senior American and Israeli officials said.

On Saturday, Israel announced that it had killed Mr. Nasrallah after warplanes dropped more than 80 bombs on four apartment buildings in Lebanon, where the Hezbollah leader of more than three decades had gone to meet his top lieutenants. Mr. Biden was not informed ahead of time, irri-

tating the White House.

But the more salient outcome for both Israel and the United States was how successfully Israeli intelligence had pinpointed Mr. Nasrallah’s location and penetrated Hezbollah’s inner circle. In a matter of weeks, Israel has decimated the senior and midlevel ranks of Hezbollah and left the group reeling.

That success is a direct result of the country’s decision to devote far more intelligence resources in targeting Hezbollah after its 2006 war with the Iran-backed terrorist group. It was a defining moment for Israeli intelligence. The Israeli army and the intelligence agencies failed to score a decisive victory in that 34-day conflict, which ended with a U.N.-brokered ceasefire and allowed Hezbollah, despite heavy losses, to regroup and prepare for the next war with Israel.

Israel has spent the years since bolstering what was already considered one of the world’s best in-

Continued on Page A10

ESCALATION Israel fired on Yemen, Lebanon and Gaza, inching closer to a regional war. PAGE A8

A Fierce Debate in Iran on How,
And If, to Answer Israel’s Attacks

By **FARNAZ FASSIHI**

In the turbulent landscape of the Middle East, Iran’s aging supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, could always rely on the close alliance, unwavering loyalty and deep friendship of Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the Lebanese militia Hezbollah.

When Israel killed Mr. Nasrallah in a massive airstrike on Friday, it abruptly wiped out a singular force in Ayatollah Khamenei’s hierarchy of close associates.

Iran had for 40 years nurtured Hezbollah as the main arm of its proxy network of militias, as a forward defense against Israel. But in the past two weeks, Hezbollah’s capacity began to crumble under wave after wave of Israeli attacks on its leadership, arsenal and communications.

Now, fissures have opened

within the Iranian government over how to respond to Mr. Nasrallah’s killing, with conservatives arguing for a forceful response and the moderates, led by Iran’s new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, calling for restraint.

All of this has left Iran, and its supreme leader, in a vulnerable position.

Four Iranian officials who knew Mr. Nasrallah personally said that Ayatollah Khamenei had been deeply shaken by his friend’s death and was in mourning but had assumed a calm and pragmatic posture. The officials, including two members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, requested anonymity, as they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Continued on Page A9

After 85 Years, Fixing a Typo
The Brontës Would’ve Hated

By **LYNSEY CHUTEL**

LONDON — For 85 years, the names of three of English literature’s best-known writers, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, were featured in Poets’ Corner, the Westminster Abbey nook dedicated to great poets, authors and playwrights, but something wasn’t quite right: They were missing the accent mark.

Last week, the error was fixed when the diereses — umlaut-like punctuation dots, each just about a third of an inch in diameter — were added above each E of the famous last name.

It’s a small but sizable victory for three sisters who could not publish under their own names nearly 200 years ago, even as their novels “Jane Eyre” and “Wuthering Heights” helped change the portrayal of women’s



AARON CHOWN/PRESS ASSOCIATION, VIA A.P.

Westminster Abbey punctuated their plaque last week.

lives in fiction.

“Those three women fought harder than most to have their voices heard, to have their work understood on its own merits, and it endures,” said Sharon Wright, who discovered the mistake while visiting Westminster Abbey in London in January. “We can at

Continued on Page A11

INTERNATIONAL A4-11

Russian Troops Intensify Fight
With fall approaching, Ukraine says its forces in the eastern Donetsk region are facing battle more frequently than they have in months. PAGE A6

NATIONAL A12-17

Mayor’s Fate Worries Business
New York’s corporate sector is concerned that the possible removal of Eric Adams from office would leave it without one of its biggest backers. PAGE A17

BUSINESS B1-6

Polluting Sky to Save the Earth
Entrepreneurs, inspired by a science fiction novel, are engaging in stratospheric solar geoengineering, to the dismay of some scientists. PAGE B1

ARTS C1-6

Queen of the Beads
The artist Liza Lou’s medium is the tiny seed bead. And her many creations include a 35-foot-long mobile home that is now on display in Brooklyn. PAGE C1

OPINION A18-19

David French PAGE A19

