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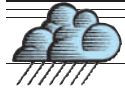
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The Washington Post

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Economic picks hew closer to convention

Range of experts see duo as potential moderating influence on Trump

BY **JEFF STEIN**

President-elect Donald Trump has chosen relatively conventional experts to lead his second administration's economic policy, even as he pursues tariffs that could upend the international trade order and fills much of his Cabinet with ideologues and loyalists.

Trump tapped a former Fox News host to lead the Defense Department and a vaccine skeptic to run the Department of Health and Human Services; his choice for attorney general, former congressman Matt Gaetz (R-Florida), withdrew from consideration after even GOP senators said they doubted he could be confirmed.

In contrast to those picks, Trump has received bipartisan praise for his selections to arguably the two most important economic positions in his administration — the financier Scott Besent, chosen to be treasury secretary, and conservative economist Kevin Hassett, chosen to lead the White House National Economic Council. Democrats have policy disagreements with both men, but economists from both parties broadly see them as likely to exert a moderating influence on Trump's most extreme impulses to upend the global trade order.

Still, many Trump allies caution that their selection isn't necessarily evidence that the incoming administration will be any

SEE **TRUMP** ON **A18**

Threats: Homes of picks for top roles were targeted, FBI says. **A4**

Transition deal: Agreement signed by Trump lacks key guardrails. **A4**

Bitcoin: Investors press Trump to create a federal reserve. **A17**

Vaccine rates stall ahead of likely peak for covid, flu, RSV

BY **SABRINA MALHI**

As the holiday season approaches, public health experts are sounding the alarm about low vaccination rates against the coronavirus, flu and RSV. With gatherings and travel on the rise, many people are heading into the next few months unprotected against these respiratory illnesses, which typically peak from December to February.

Experts worry that the unenthusiastic embrace of vaccines could spark outbreaks and increased hospitalizations.

As of this month, about 37 percent of adults 18 and older had received a seasonal flu shot, while 19 percent had received updated coronavirus vaccines and 40 percent of adults 75 and older — the group at greatest risk — got an RSV vaccine.

The vaccination rates are similar to last year's figures, and the numbers reflect a persistent public health challenge achieving broader vaccine uptake for these illnesses.

In December 2023, the percentage of adults 18 and older who had received the flu vaccine was 42 percent. The vaccination rate for

SEE **VACCINES** ON **A4**

Conservation efforts serve as an exit plan for Massachusetts growers amid farming challenges and climate change



CASSANDRA KLOS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

As cranberry era ends, a new future for wetlands

BY **ANNA PHILLIPS**
IN MATTAPOISETT, MASS.

Gary Swift harvests the last cranberries of the season at A.D. Makepeace, which has put 3,400 acres under conservation protections in the past 15 years.

As the sun set on a November afternoon, Brendan Annett walked through a wetland preserve, greeting everyone who passed him by with the enthusiasm of a mayor at a ribbon cutting.

Which he kind of was. Annett, who oversees conservation projects for the nonprofit Buzzards Bay Coalition, had recently finished work on the site known as Mattapoisett Bogs that, for more than a century, had been a working cranberry farm. As the industry waned here, the family who owned the land had sold it to the conservation group, which had set about transforming it back to the wetland it once was. Walking trails had just reopened to the public. But as ducks paddled in placid water and late-afternoon light turned the reeds and rushes to gold, it was easy to imagine it had been this way forever.

Southeastern Massachusetts has been cranberry country for

more than 200 years, ever since a Revolutionary War veteran discovered he could transplant wild vines to a swamp near his home on Cape Cod. But falling prices, competition from cranberry growers in Wisconsin, Quebec and Chile, and climate change have made it increasingly difficult for the state's farmers to continue on — and has led to a boom in conservation projects as some look for an exit strategy.

Scientists and state officials are seeking to enlist retired cranberry bogs to filter out pollutants and defend the state's coastline from sea level rise, strategically deploying wetlands and swamps against future threats.

Those involved share a sense of urgency, fueled by the knowledge that they are in a race against a tangle of competing interests. Housing developers, solar companies, sand and gravel mining outfits all want the same valuable

SEE **CRANBERRIES** ON **A22**

You're growing older, but not all at once

Scientists are looking into why some of our organs seem to start aging earlier than others

BY **GRETCHEN REYNOLDS**

Recently, scientists at Stanford University began to wonder why identical lab mice, bred with the same DNA and brought up in identical conditions, wound up so different in their old age.

Some mice could ace cognitive tests and race around on their running wheels. Others would forget simple tasks and hobble from place to place. Genetically, they remained indistinguishable, but their twilight years could hardly have been more distinct.

The scientists' attempts to untangle what was going on inside these mice is redefining how we think about aging. It has opened up a new area of research into what scientists are calling "organ aging," which looks at how different parts of our bodies seem to start aging earlier than others, affecting what diseases we develop and how long we live.

The research suggests aging isn't strictly temporal, not solely

SEE **AGING** ON **A6**



ILLUSTRATION BY BEN GILES FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Lebanon now faces a power vacuum

WAR'S EBB BRINGS UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Weakened Hezbollah still likely to seek authority

BY **KAREEM FAHIM**

As quickly as they had fled, people across Lebanon on Wednesday strapped belongings atop cars and headed home, uncertain what awaited them in their cities, towns or villages — or, for their ravaged country, what came next.

A furious Israeli military offensive against the militant group Hezbollah over the last year dealt Lebanon death and destruction and, after a cease-fire early Wednesday, left something else: a vacuum of authority, with the country's future hanging on how it would be filled, officials and analysts said.

Stepping into the void could be Hezbollah, bloodied but — according to some experts — unbowed; the Lebanese military, a weak force betting on a surge of international support; or some configuration of regional and Western states, including the United States and Saudi Arabia, eager to project their interests on Lebanon in its hour of need.

A competition for influence could involve the process of rebuilding the country, the election of a president and the provision of security in Lebanon, especially in the south, at a time when many in the country are preoccupied with recovering from the war.

"You know we were so busy, all of us, with the cease-fire," Lebanon's foreign minister, Abdallah Bou Habib, said at a conference in Rome on Tuesday, hours before the truce between Israel and

SEE **LEBANON** ON **A10**

Cease-fire: Triumph and doubt in Beirut's southern suburbs. **A9**

After Israel's Hezbollah deal, Gaza cease-fire appears far off

BY **REBECCA TAN, SHIRA RUBIN AND HAJAR HARB**

JERUSALEM — The cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah reached this week has revived hopes that a peace deal to end the longer, even more destructive war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip could soon be within grasp.

But analysts said Wednesday that despite signs of momentum, significant gaps remain between Israel and Hamas over key issues, including the shape of any withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the long-term role, if any, that Hamas will play in the enclave, which it had governed for more than 15 years.

A top Israeli demand is for Hamas to release dozens of hostages who were captured during its assault on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Hamas, however, has little incentive to relinquish this trump card unless its demands are met, said Mkhaimar Abusada, a Palestinian political analyst. "The gaps have not narrowed," he said. "It's very much the same as before."

In the coming days, U.S. officials will "make another push with

SEE **GAZA** ON **A11**