

Musk Muscles His Rivals Out In Space Race

Concerns Rise as U.S. Relies on SpaceX

By ERIC LIPTON

WASHINGTON — Elon Musk aggressively elbowed his way into the space launch business over the past two decades, combining engineering genius and an entrepreneurial drive with a demand that the U.S. government stop favoring the big, slow-moving contractors that had long dominated the industry.

Today, it is Mr. Musk who is dominant. His company, SpaceX, is the primary provider of launch services to NASA and to the Pentagon. His rockets carry far more commercial satellites into orbit than anyone else's, including those for his own Starlink communications network. He has set new standards for reaching space cheaply and reliably.

But in one striking way, the former outsider has come to resemble the entrenched contractors he once fought to topple: He is increasingly using his vast power and influence to try to keep emerging rivals at bay, his competitors say, even as his success is prompting qualms within the government about such heavy reliance on a mercurial billionaire.

The new generation of space entrepreneurs trying to emulate Mr. Musk is sufficiently concerned about what they see as his anticompetitive tactics that some of them are now willing to take him on publicly.

Tim Ellis started Relativity Space after being inspired by Mr. Musk's pursuit of a rocket that could carry humans to Mars. Then he heard from other industry executives that individuals with ties to SpaceX were trying to block his efforts to raise money for his own Mars project.

Jim Cantrell worked with Mr. Musk at the founding of SpaceX in 2002. When he started to build his own launch company, Phantom Space, two potential customers told his sales team they could not sign deals because SpaceX inserts provisions in its contracts to discourage customers from using rivals.

Peter Beck, an aerospace engineer from New Zealand, met in 2019 with Mr. Musk to talk about Mr. Beck's own launch company, called Rocket Lab. Several months later, SpaceX moved to start carrying small payloads at a discounted price that Mr. Beck and other industry executives said was intended to undercut their chances of success.

"I don't think this is an accidental monopoly," Mr. Beck said in an interview about SpaceX and Mr. Musk. "These are business decisions that are being made."

None of these executives said they had taken legal action against SpaceX. And no one in the industry disputes that Mr. Musk and SpaceX deserve enormous credit for making spaceflight more affordable and almost routine.

But his tactics are generating a backlash within the industry. And they are adding to concerns in the government about relying so heavily for a critical technology on someone known as much for his divisive public statements, his in-

Continued on Page A18



Sam and Megan Kling with their children in Taylor, Wis. Ms. Kling never thought of herself as someone who would choose abortion.

Unlikely Voices in the Fight for Abortion Rights

By KATE ZERNIKE

For a long time, many women who had abortions because of catastrophic fetal diagnoses told their stories only privately. Grieving pregnancies they dearly wanted and fearing the stigma of abortion, they sought the closely guarded comfort of online communities identified by the way many doctors had described the procedure — TFMR, or "termination for medical reasons."

In the two years since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, their pain has been compounded into anger by new abortion bans across the country. While these women account for a fraction of abortions in the United States, they have emerged as the most powerful voices in the nation's post-Roe debate, speaking out against bans with their stories of being forced across state lines and left to feel like criminals in seeking care.

Many of these women started out opposing abortion, but as they have changed their minds, they have changed the way Americans speak about it. Shifting from private anguish to public outrage, they have also helped shift public opinion toward more support for abortion.

"After going through all this, I

Medical Complications Galvanized Some to Change Minds

wondered, why are we not the poster child for abortion rights?" said Riata Little Walker, who traveled from her home in Casper, Wyo., for an abortion in Colorado at 22 weeks, after doctors diagnosed Down syndrome and a heart defect in her fetus, which they said would require surgery and later a transplant if it survived until delivery.

"Yes, your body, your choice, but that's not the story that pulls people in," she said. "We have to bring our stories to the front because otherwise it's so easy for those over here to do, 'But they're killing babies.'"

Ms. Walker is Catholic and had worked for Wyoming Republicans, including Senator John Barasso. She opposed abortion, and

Continued on Page A14

How to Cajole A Blasé Voter Off the Fence

By KATIE GLUECK
and NICK CORASANTI

Joe Perez is exactly the type of voter President Biden and former President Donald J. Trump are fighting over: A 22-year-old Hispanic man in Las Vegas who grew up leaning Republican, he also supports abortion rights and was turned off by the Capitol rioters on Jan. 6, 2021.

But Mr. Perez — unenthusiastic about a Biden-Trump rematch, overwhelmed by the news and disillusioned by politics — is tuning out.

"If you ask me right now what's going on with, like, the presidential race, or the situation in Gaza or Ukraine or whatever, I don't think I can answer," said Mr. Perez, who supported Mr. Trump in 2020 and is intrigued by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. now. "I'm not trying to follow that anymore."

Instead, said Mr. Perez, a valet who hopes to become a firefighter, "I'm just going to have to roll with the punches, because I don't think I'm going to make a difference."

In fact, people like him could be quite important.

Politically disengaged Americans are emerging as one of the most unpredictable, complex and potentially influential groups of voters in the 2024 race. They are fueling Mr. Trump's current polling leads but in many cases hail from traditionally Democratic backgrounds, giving Mr. Biden a chance to win some of them back — if he can get their attention.

No shortage of events could jolt alienated voters over the next five months, starting with a verdict in the first criminal trial of a former president in American history, which could arrive this week. Even though many of these people are historically infrequent voters, those who do cast ballots could

Continued on Page A15



Israel Advances in Rafah
The assault in the southern Gaza Strip presses on despite mounting calls for a cease-fire. Page A9.

LAWYERS DELIVER CLOSING APPEALS TO TRUMP JURORS

FINAL CHANCE TO SWAY

Where the Defense Sees
a Victim, Prosecutors
See a Schemer

This article is by Ben Protess, Jonathan E. Bromwich and Maggie Haberman.

For nearly three hours on Tuesday, Donald J. Trump's lawyer did his level best to persuade the jury to acquit his client, wielding a scalpel to attack nearly every strand of the criminal case against the former president.

Then it was a prosecutor's turn. Rather than using a fine blade, he swung a sledgehammer.

Throughout a marathon closing argument that nearly outlasted daylight, the prosecutor delivered a sweeping rebuke of the former president, seeking to persuade the jury of 12 New Yorkers that Mr. Trump had falsified records to cover up a sex scandal involving a porn star. The prosecutor, Joshua Steinglass, wove together witness testimony and documents to drive home the key points of the weeks-long case, the first criminal trial of an American president.

Facing the judge's 8 p.m. deadline, Mr. Steinglass raced to the wire, stopping only to take a gulp of water as the sky darkened outside the towering courtroom windows.

"Everything Mr. Trump and his cohorts did in this case was cloaked in lies," Mr. Steinglass said as the jurors, who had been glued to most of his presentation, began to fidget in their seats.

By the time the prosecutor finished, the courthouse had closed



Former President Donald J. Trump arriving at court for closing arguments on Tuesday.

to other business and the traffic on Lower Manhattan streets had slowed. More than 10 hours after Mr. Trump's lawyer began the day by calling the case "absurd" and "preposterous," Mr. Steinglass finally had the final word.

The disparate strategies — Mr. Steinglass's closing was more than twice as long as the defense's — reflected their separate tasks. The defense needed only to establish reasonable doubt, while the prosecution needed to persuade the jury to accept a narrative that, Mr. Steinglass argued, could lead to only one ending: guilty on all counts.

The closing arguments were each side's last chance to pitch their case to the jury — and frame

Continued on Page A16

Flood of 'Forever Chemicals' Lawsuits Expected

By HIROKO TABUCHI

The defense lawyer minced no words as he addressed a room full of plastic-industry executives. Prepare for a wave of lawsuits with potentially "astronomical" costs. Speaking at a conference earlier this year, the lawyer, Brian Gross, said the coming litigation could "dwarf anything related to asbestos," one of the most sprawling corporate-liability battles in United States history.

Mr. Gross was referring to PFAS, the "forever chemicals" that have emerged as one of the major pollution issues of our time.

Used for decades in countless everyday objects — cosmetics, take-out containers, frying pans — PFAS have been linked to serious health risks, including cancer. Last month, the federal government said several types of PFAS must be removed from the drinking water of hundreds of millions of Americans.

"Do what you can, while you can," he said.

Continued on Page A20

Industry Is Warned of 'Astronomical' Costs

ing corporate-liability battles in United States history.

His Aim: Overhaul Schools. He Has Trump's Ear.

By ALEXANDRA BERZON
and MICHAEL C. BENDER

In early 2021, Representative Byron Donalds, Republican of Florida, and his wife, Erika, took the stage at an event hosted by the Truth & Liberty Coalition, a group that pushes to inject Christianity into public schools and other institutions and whose leader has described homosexuality as Satan's work.

The couple were warmly welcomed as allies in the cause. Mrs. Donalds was singled out for opening a charter school in Florida. As a state legislator, Mr. Donalds had

Congressman Pushes a Biblical Worldview

ity as Satan's work.

created a school voucher program that, in the words of one speaker, let children "get a biblical worldview education."

Mr. Donalds addressed the group with characteristic humility. He is just a "poor kid from Brooklyn," he said, who made good by doggedly pursuing his interests.

He urged the group to do the

Continued on Page A15



INTERNATIONAL A4-12

A Lonely Fight Against Bigotry
As politicians in India stoke religious hatred online, a few activists deliver their messages in person. PAGE A4

Ukraine's Air Defenses Failing
In recent months, more Russian missile strikes have disrupted critical supplies and damaged infrastructure. PAGE A6

NATIONAL A13-21
Making Sense of the Protests
As Columbia students received their diplomas, many of them were grappling with what campus activism would mean to their futures. PAGE A13

Trump Takes Up Outlaw Image
Preparing for a verdict in Manhattan, the former president has aligned himself with fellow defendants and people convicted of crimes. PAGE A17

A Plot to Sell Graceland
A person using an email for the company seeking to foreclose on the former home of Elvis Presley says his ring was behind the threat. PAGE A20

BUSINESS B1-5
A.I. Can Replace the C.E.O.
Chief executives are vulnerable to the same forces buffeting their employees. Leadership is important, but so is efficiency — and cost-cutting. PAGE B1

An Unpoliced Tax Break?
An insider accused the I.R.S. of failing to scrutinize a benefit in Puerto Rico designed to lure the wealthy. PAGE B1

SPORTS B6-10
Offbeat Pitches Paying Off
The story behind the Trash Pandas and other zany names taking over minor league baseball. PAGE B6



FOOD D1-8

The First Dinner Bell
Restaurants like Restaurant Yuu in Brooklyn serve meals to their workers before their customers. PAGE D1

Summer Fare Made Easy
We've rounded up some of our most delightful salads, desserts, easy dinners, grilling and no-cook recipes. PAGE D4

ARTS C1-6
Grabbing the Spotlight
The comedian Michelle Buteau is moving to a bigger stage, Radio City Music Hall, for her new special. PAGE C1

The Choreographer's Groove
The dances of Shay Latukolan, who has worked with Jungle and Childish Gambino, are deceptively simple. PAGE C1

OPINION A22-23
Bret Stephens
PAGE A22

