

## Next on the docket: A lot more Trump

Former president adds to backlog of blockbuster cases for Supreme Court

BY ANN E. MARIMOW

In the next four months, the Supreme Court will resolve a huge number of highly consequential cases — as many as the justices might typically confront across several years. Their decisions will address some of the nation's most pressing issues and influence the course of this fall's presidential election.

The most closely watched question: whether Donald Trump is immune from criminal prosecution on charges of trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election. The court's announcement Wednesday that it will hear the case in late April drew enormous criticism for boosting Trump's efforts to delay his D.C. election obstruction trial until after the 2024 election, in which he is the leading Republican candidate.

The justices are already grappling with other blockbuster cases that will shape the future of free speech online, the power of federal government agencies and access to the most widely used abortion medication. In addition, they have two other cases with significant legal and political impacts for Trump.

And the high court appears crunched for time, far behind in issuing rulings for cases heard since the start of the term in October. The court has announced just five decisions, leaving 92 percent of argued cases to be formally resolved before the term ends in late June or early July.

Steve Vladeck, a University of Texas law professor who closely tracks the work of the justices in a weekly newsletter, said the nation's highest court has reached a tipping point, brought on by the fallout from recent landmark decisions, the unprecedented situation of a major

SEE SUPREME COURT ON A5

**Caucus wins:** Trump triumphs in GOP contests in three states. **A4**



PLAYTIME PROJECT; NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

**At top, Relisha Rudd at age 8. Age progression photos show what she might look like at 12, 14 and 16. She has never been found.**

**Petula Dvorak:** After 10 years, we're still failing homeless children. **C1**



At age 8, Relisha Rudd vanished, taken by a janitor at a D.C. homeless shelter.

## A decade later, she haunts a changed city.

BY ELLIE SILVERMAN

The homeless shelter in Southeast Washington where 8-year-old Relisha Rudd lived was no place for a child. It had bedbugs, dirty showers and no playground.

It also had a janitor who in that crowded space filled with about 600 children befriended Relisha, then took her.

Nearly three weeks passed before authorities realized she was missing. But people were soon searching and learning how Relisha, a girl with soulful eyes, had slipped through a system that was supposed to keep her safe.

Ten years later, Relisha still has not been found. In that time, much has changed: The second-grader's disappearance forced a reckoning in how the city treats its poorest and most vulnerable residents. The megashelter, at the site of the former D.C. General Hospital, has been razed. The city now places unhoused families in much smaller shelters across several neighborhoods and aims to get them more quickly into homes.

Those who knew Relisha, or came to feel as if they did, are also not the same: Mourners are now advocates. A homeless child who lived alongside her became an educator. And school employees who looked out for her are more diligent.

SEE RELISHA ON A10

## Native Americans lack access to liver transplant system

BY ANNIE GILBERTSON AND BEN TANEN

Native Americans are far less likely than other racial groups to gain a spot on the national liver transplant list, despite having the highest rate of death from liver disease, according to an analysis of four years of transplant data by the Markup and The Washington Post.

Compared with their total

Despite high death rate, they are less likely to gain a spot on the list

number of deaths from liver disease, White people gain a spot on the transplant list almost three times more often than Native Americans, the data shows. Had transplant rates been equal, nearly 1,000 additional Native people

would have received liver transplants between 2018 and 2021.

Native Americans who do win a spot on the list advance to surgery at about the same rate as White people, showing that front-end access is a primary driver of disparity. Among other racial groups, the liver transplant acceptance rate for Black people is slightly lower than for White patients nationally, while Asian Americans have the highest rate of acceptance to

the transplant wait list by far.

These findings come as mortality from liver disease is climbing across the nation, hitting nearly 57,000 deaths in 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Liver disease is commonly caused by obesity, hepatitis C and alcoholism. Researchers have attributed the rise in mortality to increased heavy drinking during the coronavirus pandemic,

SEE LIVERS ON A13

## Federal rules hinder studies of marijuana's health effects

DEA to decide soon on reclassification as drug gains wide acceptance

BY DAVID OVALLE AND FENIT NIRAPPII

When Michigan voters approved recreational marijuana six years ago, the measure included an innovative mandate: using cannabis tax revenue to pay for research into the health benefits of the drug for military veterans. State officials later committed \$40 million.

Not a single veteran has received marijuana in a trial. Critics blame federal restrictions on marijuana research.

The Food and Drug Administration blocked one Michigan study into post-traumatic stress disorder, contending it's too dangerous to have participants inhale marijuana, even though that's how most veterans use the drug. In another series of proposed studies, it took researchers

nearly two years to secure a federally approved marijuana supply for study — by law, they can't use pot widely available at dispensaries. Those studies are still months from beginning.

The delays in Michigan underscore the challenges of studying potential health benefits and consequences of marijuana in the United States, where it remains federally illegal even as it is lawful in most states. Scientists hope that research will accelerate if the federal government soon loosens restrictions on the drug. But they fear that federal regulators' deep-rooted skepticism of marijuana and legal barriers will continue to hamper studies that must balance safety and scientific rigor with the immutable reality that millions already smoke joints, inhale vapes and eat edibles to medicate themselves.

"It's very important to have empirically sound data and real-world investigations of the products that patients are actually using and the ways they are using them," said Staci Gruber, director of the Marijuana Investigations

SEE RESEARCH ON A6



ILLUSTRATION BY CHLOE CUSHMAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

 **ELECTION 2024**

## Out of the bubble

How private chats and chance encounters with grandchildren, neighbors and fellow churchgoers influence Biden's thinking

BY TYLER PAGER

In the early months of his presidency, as the pandemic dragged on with its stifling restrictions, President Biden often delivered a favorite monologue to aides: He was worried about young people's mental health, he said. High school seniors were missing prom and graduation. He wanted to know how college students went on dates.

Specifically, Biden wondered how young people could "make love" under the circumstances, according to two aides who heard the president use that phrase multiple times during his first year in office. Biden's fixation on

loneliness among young people, the aides said, grew out of his near-daily conversations with his grandchildren.

Biden brought those concerns to Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy, who had written a book on loneliness, and encouraged him to prioritize the issue. Last May, Murthy released a National Strategy to Advance Social Connection, accompanied by guidance "calling attention to the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country."

As president of the United States, Biden has access to practically unlimited information. He

SEE BIDEN ON A12

**How Biden Leads:** This story is part of a three-part series scrutinizing Biden's leadership style, and how he has run the most complex government in the world, as he asks voters to return him to the White House for a second term.

### METRO


D.C. police arrested a 15-year-old in the Capitol Hill killing of a Lyft driver.

### SPORTS

In Caitlin Clark, Pete Maravich has a studious and worthy hoops heir.



### ARTS & STYLE


 Jeffrey Wright is finally in the Oscar hunt for "American Fiction."

### BUSINESS

What does it mean to be middle class? Poll finds wide disagreement.



### TRAVEL

 Pit-stop meals along America's highways have gotten posh.

### BOOK WORLD

Journalist Steve Coll's latest shows Saddam Hussein's practical side.

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