



A t-storm around 87/69 • Tomorrow: T-storms 81/67 C10

Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## A flood of crypto cash threatens oversight

Major firms' expensive lobbying campaign seeks to reshape federal law

BY TONY ROMM

Cryptocurrency companies and investors have spent at least \$149 million over the past four years to thwart tough regulation, elect new allies to Congress and defeat lawmakers seen as potential threats, a campaign that culminated last week with a House vote to soften federal oversight of the embattled industry.

The wide array of financial backers include Coinbase and Ripple, which the U.S. government recently sued for allegedly violating federal rules meant to protect investors from harm. Even as they have come under withering scrutiny, these and other major crypto firms have fought not only to rebuff the charges but to remake the laws entirely, mounting an expensive lobbying effort that has left no part of Washington untouched.

On Capitol Hill, the industry has shelled out more than \$60 million to shape federal policy since the start of 2021, according to filings analyzed by The Washington Post and data from OpenSecrets and Public Citizen, two money-in-politics watchdogs. The lobbying campaign helped spur the House on Wednesday to advance the Financial Innovation and Technology for the 21st Century Act, the first major piece of legislation on cryptocurrency to clear either chamber of Congress.

The bill would shift some federal oversight of crypto from the Securities and Exchange Commission, an aggressive regulator, to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), which some critics see as weaker, friendlier to industry and underfunded. Coinbase, Ripple and lobbying groups like the Blockchain Association and the Crypto Center for Innovation helped House Republicans devise the legislative approach, SEE CRYPTOCURRENCY ON A21



FRED RAMOS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A woman buys tortillas in Mexico City. Small shops stamping out warm tortillas have long been a fixture of Mexican neighborhoods.

## As Mexico's cartels expand, even the tortilla is a target

The shots rang out just before 10 a.m. A motorcyclist roared past a modest building behind the old railway station here, firing three times. Minutes later, the gunman unloaded on a storefront a half-mile away, wounding a teenager.

The assailant was from the feared Acapulcos gang, the authorities later concluded — an offshoot of a heroin-trafficking cartel. But the targets that November morning weren't rival drug dealers or police informants.

They were tortilla shops.

Small businesses stamping out warm tortillas have long been a fixture of Mexican neighborhoods. Now, thousands are being threatened by armed groups, part of a transformation in organized crime that's rippling through Latin America. Cartels are playing a growing role in the region's economies, from infiltrating seaports to extorting small businesses — and gaining increasing political power.

As criminal groups branch out beyond drugs, they're increasingly extorting a host of businesses, including producers of the country's staple food

BY MARY BETH SHERIDAN,  
LORENA RÍOS AND FRED RAMOS  
IN CUAUTLA, MEXICO

Drug-trafficking rings have expanded so rapidly that nearly every Latin American mainland nation has become a major producer or transit corridor for cocaine, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime. But criminal groups are also branching out into other illegal enterprises. In Mexico, they're shaking down fishermen, chicken vendors, builders, trucking companies, gas stations and a host of other businesses, including producers of the country's staple food — the corn tortilla.

At least 15 percent of tortillerías — about 20,000 storefront businesses — are regularly extorted, according to the National Tortilla Council, a trade group. A decade ago, the council said, only a tiny percentage were threatened. Around the country, from rural villages to beach resort towns such as Zihuatanejo, tortilla shops that refuse to pay are set on fire or riddled with gunfire.

"We're practically at the point where SEE CARTELS ON A18

## U.S. is an outlier on ICJ ruling on Israel

RAFAH ORDER IS MET WITH LOUD SILENCE

Support for war leads to increasing isolation

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

The United States, which prides itself as a global leader on human rights and international law, was conspicuously silent Friday after the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to comply with its "obligations" under the Genocide Convention and "immediately halt its offensive" in Rafah.

The absence of any public statement from the Biden administration was a stark contrast to an almost identical ruling by the ICJ in March 2022, ordering Russia to "immediately suspend the military operations" it had just begun in Ukraine. Noting that the court "plays a vital role in the peaceful settlement of disputes under the U.N. Charter," the State Department effusively welcomed the order and called on Moscow to comply.

The administration has sharply rejected any comparison between the two situations, noting that one began with an attack on Israel by a terrorist group and the other with an unprovoked invasion by one U.N. member state into another.

Instead of issuing a statement on the Israel ruling, the National Security Council authorized spokespeople to respond to any questions with a single sentence: "We've been clear and consistent on our position on Rafah."

That position — that Israel's invasion of Rafah has been a "limited" incursion to root out remaining Hamas fighters while avoiding undue civilian harm, and to free around 100 living and dead Israeli hostages that remain captives — conflicts with the ICJ conclusion that Rafah is a "change in the situation" since its last warning earlier this year that SEE ISRAEL ON A4

## In Milwaukee, a padlocked patio becomes a battleground

Black public housing tenants wrestle with a raft of frustrations — and having any of them heard

BY JOSE A. DEL REAL  
IN MILWAUKEE

Their emails to government officials had gone unanswered, their requests to testify at City Hall had been ignored, and now 14 residents of Milwaukee public housing were gathered in a pink linoleum common room to brainstorm how to get attention from the people with power.

"A woman got robbed in the hallway," one woman said. "I don't feel safe here."

"I need to get the mold out of my apartment. I can't breathe," said another.

"There are mice everywhere," said a man.

Kevin Solomon, a 25-year-old community organizer, listened quietly as the tenants began yelling over one another, grasping for the opportunity to tell *someone* what daily life had turned into inside the 251-unit College Court Apartments. Its two Brutalist towers were managed by the city's public housing authority.

"Y'all got to calm down. We SEE MILWAUKEE ON A8



SARAH L. VOISIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Kevin Solomon, left, a community organizer, and Charlene "Peaches" Bell, a tenant at College Court Apartments in Milwaukee. Kevin had seen the makings of a great organizing partner in Peaches.

PERSPECTIVE

## Four years later, has the movement for racial justice lost the fight?

BY ROBERT SAMUELS  
AND TOLUSE OLORUNNIPA

In their book, "His Name Is George Floyd," Robert Samuels and Toluse Olorunnipa examined how institutional racism shaped the life and legacy of the Black man murdered on Memorial Day in 2020. Four years after Floyd's killing, the Washington Post national reporters reflect on the retrenchment of the racial-justice movement sparked by his death.

**ROBERT:** One day, this March, I woke up in a hotel room in Memphis and wondered if we got it all wrong.

So many times in the two years since publishing our book, "His Name Is George Floyd," people have asked whether there is any hope for the country.

But four years after Floyd's murder and the so-called great racial reckoning, we were set to speak in a city whose school system had decided our book

was too controversial to be taught. Other school systems had stymied discussion about systemic racism, businesses were questioning their diversity programs, and affirmative action had been deemed illegal in college admissions. Some police reforms had been undone.

The backlash feels more enduring than the reckoning itself. And on that morning, I stared at the ceiling, asking myself: What if all that protesting that consumed the George Floyd summer — not all of the racial tension that had come before — was the desperate last gasp of a movement that would inevitably fail?

**TOLUSE:** When I first heard you raise that question, I initially viewed it as an intriguing and provocative mental exercise — the kind of idea two journalists could politely debate, before moving on with their lives. But it didn't

SEE GEORGE FLOYD ON A6

ARTS & STYLE.....E1  
BOOK WORLD.....B1  
BUSINESS NEWS.....G1

COMICS.....INSERT  
METRO.....C1  
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OPINION PAGES.....A22  
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