

Brackets out: The fields are set. Play-in games start Tuesday, and Virginia men will play Colorado St.



Top seeds: U-Conn., Houston, UNC and Purdue (men); S. Carolina, Iowa, USC and Texas (women). **D1**

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

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Breezy 52/36 • Tomorrow: Breezy 52/40 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024 • \$3

Asylum restrictions won't stem border flow

Policy changes have little effect without greater funding, DHS data shows

BY NICK MIROFF

The U.S. officers who screen migrants at the border to determine eligibility for asylum have been plowing through cases at a record clip since May, when the Biden administration placed tougher restrictions on people who cross illegally.

The officers are completing twice as many interviews per month as they did a year ago, and under the tighter rules, the percentage of migrants who are rejected and referred for deportation has more than doubled, according to the latest Department of Homeland Security data.

But the number of people screened remains a small fraction of the number who cross the border illegally. And the government does not have the detention capacity to hold others long enough to interview them.

As a result, the government has limited ability to reduce border crossings by adjusting the U.S. asylum system, whose delays and dysfunction are widely recognized as a driver of illegal immigration.

The bipartisan Senate border bill that failed last month would have greatly increased deportation capacity, providing \$6 billion

SEE BORDER ON A2

Budget showdown: Border-related dispute raises risk of shutdown. **A3**

Anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes in schools rise sharply

In states with restrictive laws, reports on K-12 campuses quadrupled

BY LAURA MECKLER, HANNAH NATANSON AND JOHN D. HARDEN

School hate crimes targeting LGBTQ+ people have sharply risen in recent years, climbing fastest in states that have passed laws restricting LGBTQ+ student rights and education, a Washington Post analysis of FBI data finds.

In states with restrictive laws, the number of hate crimes on K-12 campuses has more than quadrupled since the onset of a divisive culture war that has often centered on the rights of LGBTQ+ youth.

At the same time, calls to LGBTQ+ youth crisis hotlines have exploded, with some advocates drawing a connection between the political climate and the spike in bullying and hate crimes.

LGBTQ+ students have long dealt with bullying and harassment at school, but some students are feeling particularly vulnerable due to the wave of legislation. They are also on edge

SEE BULLYING ON A6



BILL O'LEARY/THE WASHINGTON POST

Margie Eyman Perez hugs Debbie Darling Norris as she takes a photo of a memorial flag at the Bethesda studio of artist Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg, who is archiving 20,000 of the white flags placed on the National Mall during the pandemic.

As memorial is archived, grief remains

Four years after the onset of the pandemic, families are 'never going back to normal'

BY JENNA PORTNOY

The monument to grief on the National Mall was never built to last.

The sea of white flags, one for each covid victim, rustled in the wind and shimmered in the sunlight for a time, simply asking passersby to consider those who died too soon:

"Dante Montreal. He liked turtles."

"Will I ever stop thinking, 'I want my mommy?'"

"Warner Lee Timmons. Beloved husband, father and grandfather who served his country but died unnecessarily when

his country let him down."

The ink on some tributes has faded, but the messages endure.

The urgency of remembering has only deepened for survivors as America moves further from the World Health Organization's declaration of a coronavirus pandemic, four years ago this month.

To artist and former hospice volunteer Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg, who is archiving 20,000 flags from the memorial with anthropology professor Sarah E. Wagner, the nation's reckoning with loss is just beginning. Nearly 1.2 million people in America have perished, federal data

shows.

"We're running from a burning building. We're not ready to stop and look back at the largest slow-motion casualty event in U.S. history," Firstenberg said.

The flags were installed outside RFK Stadium in Washington from late October through November 2020 and on the Mall from Sept. 17 to Oct. 3 in 2021.

The Washington Post talked to some of the people who dedicated flags about what the memorial, "In America: Remember," meant to them.

SEE COVID ON A16



JAHl CHIKWENDU/THE WASHINGTON POST

Supreme Court Justices Sonia Sotomayor, left, and Amy Coney Barrett at a panel discussion Tuesday.

Justices seek to dispel divided image

BY ANN E. MARIMOW

The bitter confirmation battle was behind her, and Amy Coney Barrett was the nation's newest Supreme Court justice — a conservative protégé of the late Antonin Scalia whose antiabortion bona fides helped make her President Donald Trump's pick to cement a 6-3 supermajority.

She was still celebrating at the White House when she received her first congratulatory phone call from the high court. On the line: Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the court's leading liberal, an Obama nominee and the first Latina on the bench.

The unlikely pair are now headlining joint public appearances to make the case for dis-

agreeing more agreeably at a time when the country is more polarized than ever and public opinion of the Supreme Court is at historic lows, with approval divided sharply along partisan lines.

The justices are at the center of a huge number of politically consequential disputes, all fall-

SEE SCOTUS ON A4

An unlikely time frame for forced TikTok sale

Any deal probably is too complicated to be done in 6 months, experts say

BY DREW HARWELL AND EVA DOU

A forced sale of TikTok within 180 days, as House-passed legislation requires, would be one of the thorniest and most complicated transactions in corporate history, posing financial, technical and geopolitical challenges that experts said could render a sale impractical and increase the likelihood the app will be banned nationwide.

The bill, which President Biden has said he would sign, raced through the House but faces a slow-walk in the Senate and constitutional challenges in the courts. Yet financial experts say the complex legislative process targeting the video app, which is owned by the China-based internet giant ByteDance, may end up being easier than any subsequent transaction.

A sale would require severing a company potentially worth \$150 billion from its technical backbone while being the subject of legal challenges and resistance

from China, which has pledged to block any deal.

While the bill's supporters have argued that it's not a ban, the practical difficulties would raise the chance TikTok would fail to meet the six-month divestiture deadline — after which, it could be blocked for its 170 million users nationwide.

"As we would say in the business, the amount of hair on the transaction is so extreme," said Lee Edwards, a former mergers and acquisitions partner at the law firm Shearman & Sterling, using a term of art for a complicated deal with uncertain prospects.

To complete a deal of this size and complexity in half a year, including passing any regulatory review that might be required in countries around the world, would be "extraordinarily fast and aggressive," he added. Any buyer would need to devote "huge amounts of management and strategic planning resources ... with a high risk of failure."

TikTok, one of the world's most popular apps, would probably sell for more than \$100 billion, according to one financial analyst's estimate. And that may be low: TikTok made \$16 billion in sales in the United States last year, the Financial Times reported — a revenue figure that could value the

SEE TIKTOK ON A12

IN THE NEWS

Cherry blossoms The District's famed trees reached their second-earliest peak bloom in more than a century of records, reflecting the growing influence of climate change. **B1**

Relations with Niger The junta ruling the West African nation announced that it was ending military ties with the United States. **A9**

THE NATION President Biden took in \$53 million in donations last month. **A3** Donald Trump said at a rally that some undocumented immigrants who are accused of crimes are "not people." **A6**

THE WORLD Photos depict the descent into chaos in Haiti, where gangs have filled a power vacuum. **A8** Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel "will not succumb" to pressure to stop its war in Gaza. **A9**

THE ECONOMY For years, politicians such as Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) have tapped private contacts at social media firms to influence a range of decisions. The Supreme Court is set to decide whether their attempts to influence the tech giants violate the First Amendment. **A13**

THE REGION The U.S. attorney's office in D.C. is on track to prosecute more than half of those arrested by police in the city in 2024, a turnaround from recent years, officials said. **B1** Metro fare evaders in the District will now face the possibility of fines and arrest. **B1**

STYLE What's old to some is new to the young, whose latest discovery-slash-resurrection is the humble disposable camera. **C1** Biden made an appearance at the annual Grid-iron dinner for the first time as president, using the occasion to lay into Trump. **C1**

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The Washington Post
Year 147, No. 53794

