

Rain 51/48 • Tomorrow: Mostly cloudy 65/52 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2023 • \$3

Pope gave Israel blunt warning on war in Gaza

Francis cautioned against committing ‘terror’ in call that nation did not reveal

BY ANTHONY FAIOLA,
STEFANO PITRELLI
AND LOUISA LOVELUCK

As bombs fell and tanks penetrated deep into Gaza in late October, Israeli President Isaac Herzog held a fraught phone call with Pope Francis. The Israeli head of state was describing his nation’s horror over the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 when the pope issued a blunt rejoinder.

It is “forbidden to respond to terror with terror,” Francis said, according to a senior Israeli official familiar with the call, which has not been previously reported.

Herzog protested, repeating the position that the Israeli government was doing what was needed in Gaza to defend its own people. The pope continued, saying those responsible should indeed be held accountable, but not civilians.

That private call would inform Israeli interpretations of Francis’s polemic statement, at his Nov. 22 general audience in St. Peter’s Square, that the conflict had “gone beyond war. This is terrorism.” Taken with the diplomatic exchange — deemed so “bad” by the Israelis that they did not make it public — the implication seemed clear: The pope was calling their campaign in Gaza an act of terrorism.

“How else could it be interpreted?” said the senior official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter.

The Vatican declined to clarify whether the pope was publicly or
SEE POPE ON A14

U.S. efforts: Blinken says Israel has agreed to protect civilians. **A12**

Scarce food: Not enough aid makes it to Gaza amid pause. **A12**

EPA seeks eradication of nation’s lead water lines

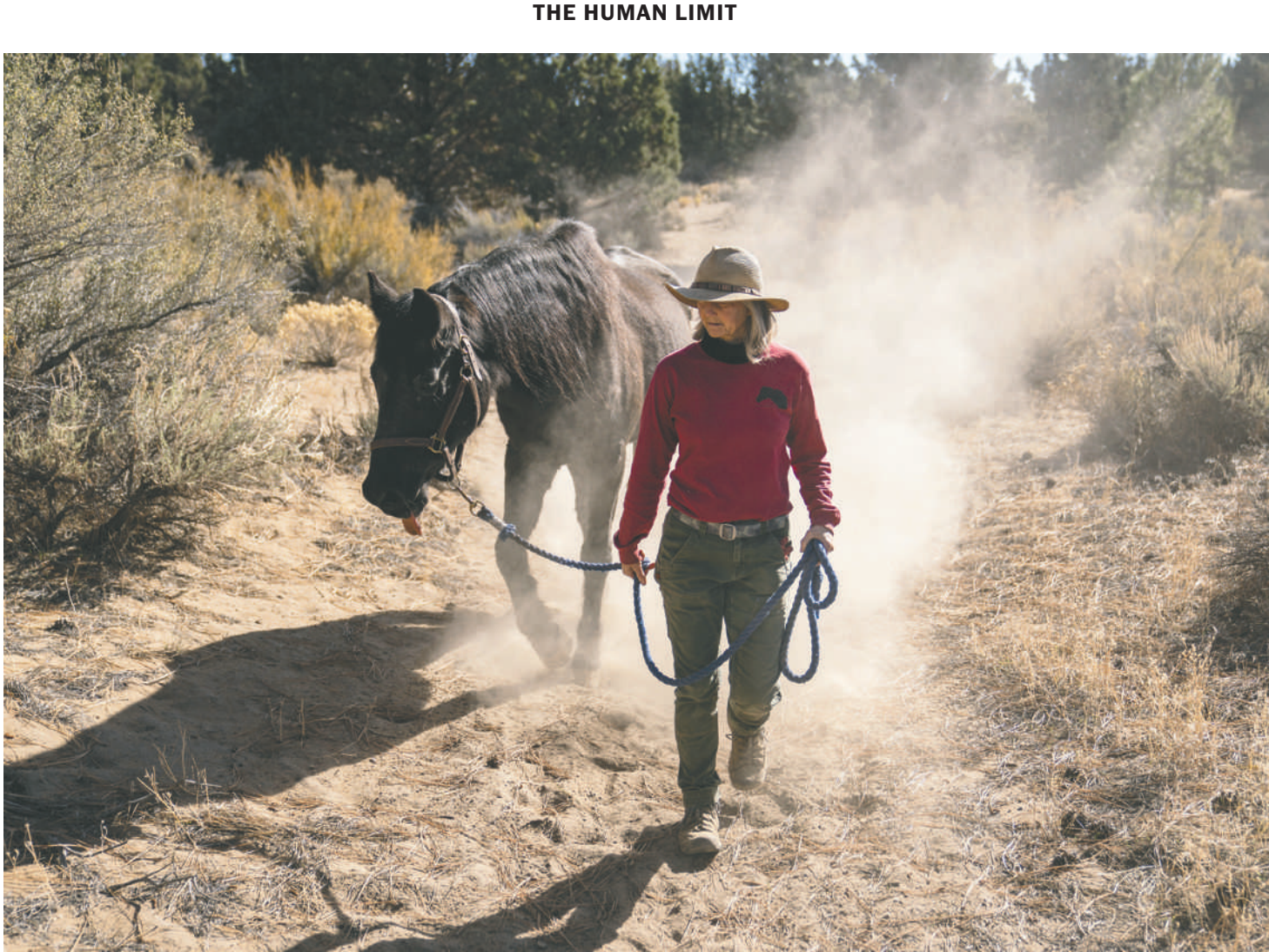
Rule would force most utilities to replace toxic pipes within 10 years

BY ANNA PHILLIPS

In a sweeping decision that could be expensive but beneficial to public health, the Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed for the first time requiring water utilities nationwide to replace all of their lead pipes.

If finalized, the rule would compel local utilities to dig up and replace lead piping in an ambitious effort to protect children and the public from the potent neurotoxin. It would be a massive undertaking, and the EPA has said it could cost \$45 billion.

But the costs of lead exposure are also high. Lead can cause irreversible cognitive damage and other health problems, even at low levels, and particularly in small children. Despite the significant health threat, cities have struggled to get rid of the estimated 9 million lead pipes that
SEE LEAD ON A18



PHOTOS BY CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN/THE WASHINGTON POST

THE HUMAN LIMIT

A hidden killer’s range is expanding

Valley fever cases are rising in the American West, and scientists suspect climate change is the reason

BY JOSHUA PARTLOW, VERONICA PENNEY
AND CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN
IN BAKERSFIELD, CALIF.

At some point, Erik McIntyre inhaled the fungal spores. He couldn’t see them or feel them, and it was weeks before he began to lose energy, to drop weight, to cough up blood at a karaoke bar in Arizona.

Now that he’s paralyzed from Valley fever, in a nursing home at age 53, the former U.S. Navy electrician’s day begins at 5 a.m. with a rectal tube procedure to release gas trapped in his stomach. The antifungal injections that left him retching and shaking are less frequent now, and the lesions where the fungus grew on his face and arms have faded to scars. But he knows he will never be cured, and that he will probably never walk again.

“I try not to dwell on what could have been,” he said.

McIntyre can imagine the moment he encountered those microscopic spores. He remembers driving across dusty Phoenix suburbs with his windows down. But he can’t be sure.

These days, the fungus could be anywhere.

Valley fever has long haunted the American Southwest: Soldiers on dusty military bases, prisoners in wind-swept



TOP: Leslie Ades walks a horse through dust near Bend, Ore. Valley fever is a fungus that develops below the undisturbed surface of soils in hot, dry areas in the Western United States, and scientists fear that climate change will expand its range. **ABOVE:** Erik McIntyre, 53, became paralyzed after contracting Valley fever.

jails, construction workers pushing new suburbs farther into deserts have all encountered coccidioides, the flesh-eating fungus that causes Valley fever. But the threat is growing. Cases have roughly quadrupled over the past two decades, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A key reason for Valley fever’s spread, researchers say, may be human-driven climate change — and they warn that a much larger area of the United States will become vulnerable to the disease in the decades to come. The fungus thrives in dry soils, rides on plumes of dust and booms after periods of extreme drought — the exact cycles that scientists say have grown more intense and widespread across the American West due to the warming climate.

While science is not yet able to show a definitive link between the rising case counts and higher temperatures, the connection seems clear to many of the front-line health workers grappling with the disease.

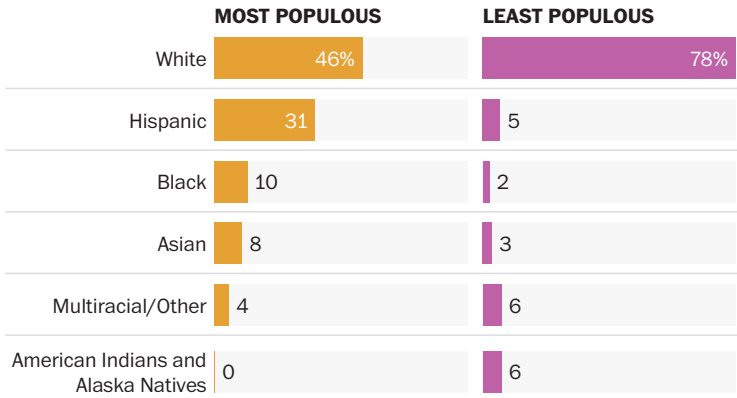
“I cannot think of any other infection that is so closely entwined with climate change,” said Rasha Kuran, an infectious-disease specialist at the University
SEE VALLEY FEVER ON A10

IMPERFECT UNION

The hidden biases at play in the U.S. Senate

People of color get notably less representation. And that’s not the only way things are skewed.

The five most populous states (Calif., Fla., N.Y., Pa. and Tex.) and the five least populous states (Alaska, N.D., S.D., Vt. and Wyo.) have the same representation in the Senate, but the most populous states are much more racially diverse.



with the most population.

The new nation in 1790 consisted of 13 states arrayed along the Eastern Seaboard, with political parties still in their infancy. At that time, only White male landowners could vote. Today the United States is a transcontinental behemoth. It’s increasingly diverse, with the franchise open to adult citizens, regardless of race or landowning status. And it’s increasingly sorting itself along rigid partisan lines.

The result of the country’s evolution has been a Senate that suffers from three fundamental imbalances, according to a Washington Post data analysis of population growth, demographic changes and shifts in voting patterns.

First, the disparities in power among voters in different states have widened as states have
SEE SENATE ON A6

IN THE NEWS

FBI site selection The GSA inspector general’s office will review the decision to place the agency headquarters in Greenbelt, Md., after an outcry from Virginia officials. **B1**

Big name, big bets LeBron James’s longtime manager, Maverick Carter, admitted to betting on NBA games through an illegal bookie. **D1**

THE NATION A federal contractor provided poor migrant care, a whistleblower complaint alleges. **A3**
Senate Democrats voted to subpoena two allies of conservative Supreme Court justices. **A4**

THE WORLD At **COP28**, nations struck a deal on a “loss and damage” fund for climate emergencies. **A8**
Russia’s Supreme Court banned the global LGBTQ+ movement as an extremist group. **A9**

THE ECONOMY LinkedIn has AI to help improve your profile, but early users say that the tool feels robotic and that it can introduce inaccuracies. **A17**
Tesla launched its long-anticipated Cybertruck after years of false starts and a sharp price increase. **A18**

THE REGION Police have arrested an 18-year-old in connection with robberies along the Metropolitan Branch Trail. **B1**
D.C. home buyers have been left with significantly less aid after changes to the Home Purchase Assistance Program. **B1**

STYLE Journalists in small towns find themselves on the front lines in First Amendment battles. **C1**

WEEKEND Food critic Tom Sietsema talks about some great restaurants in the D.C. area ahead of the holiday season.

BUSINESS NEWS.....A17
COMICS.....C5
OPINION PAGES.....A19
OBITUARIES.....B4
TELEVISION.....C4
WORLD NEWS.....A8

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