

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

THE WEATHER
Today, partly sunny, humid, afternoon thunderstorm, high 87. **Tonight**, thunderstorm, humid, low 74. **Tomorrow**, humid, a spotty storm, high 89. Weather map, Page B10.

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MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Sixth Street Bridge in Los Angeles, known as the “Ribbon of Light,” has been cast into darkness after its wiring was stolen.

Copper Thieves Darken Streets Across the U.S.

By MICHAEL CORKERY
The Sixth Street Bridge in Los Angeles is wired to glow with colorful lights celebrating the city's spirit. But the bridge, known as the “Ribbon of Light,” goes dark at night now. So do stretches of the busy 405 freeway and dozens of street blocks across the city.
In St. Paul, Minn., a man was recently hit by a car and killed while crossing a street near his home where streetlights had gone out.
And in Las Vegas and surrounding communities, more than 970,000 feet of electrical wiring, the equivalent of 184 miles, have gone missing from streetlights over the past two years.

The lights are going out across American cities, as a result of a brazen and opportunistic type of crime. Thieves have been stripping copper wire out of thousands of streetlights and selling it to scrap metal recyclers for cash. The wiring typically fetches only a few hundred dollars, but blacked-out lights pose safety hazards to drivers and pedestrians, and are costing cities millions to repair.
Metal theft has been an urban plague for decades, often rising alongside commodity prices. But the combination of the economic ills and social malaise lingering since the pandemic and soaring demand for metals, especially for copper, has brought this street crime to new levels.

Some theft involves elements of essential city infrastructure and even public artwork that once seemed immovable. Across Los Angeles County, more than 290 fire hydrants have gone missing since January.
And in Denver, two men were arrested this winter for removing bronze artwork from a Martin Luther King Jr. monument, causing roughly \$85,000 in damage. The police said the two men were paid \$394 for the metal, which was recovered from a local scrap company.

Other theft hits personally. At the Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery in Carson, Calif., next to Compton, someone stole nameplates off the mausoleum and a commemorative plaque dedicated by the boxer Joe Louis, according to Aisha Woods, who volunteers to maintain the cemetery. Thieves even stole the metal pipe that is

Continued on Page A14

Barrett Stands Apart With Independent Streak

By ADAM LIPTAK
WASHINGTON — Justice Amy Coney Barrett, 52, is the youngest member of the Supreme Court and the junior member of its conservative supermajority. Last week, she completed what was only her third full term.
Yet she has already emerged as a distinctive force on the court, issuing opinions that her admirers say are characterized by intellectual seriousness, independence, caution and a welcome measure of common sense.
In the term that ended last week, she delivered a series of concurring opinions questioning and honing the majority's meth-

Justice in Conservative Bloc Wrote Dissents Joined by Liberals

ods and conclusions.
She wrote notable dissents, joined by liberal justices, from decisions limiting the tools prosecutors can use in cases against members of the Jan. 6 mob and blocking a Biden administration plan to combat air pollution. She voted with the court's three-member liberal wing in March, saying the majority had ruled too broadly in restoring former President Donald J. Trump to the Colorado ballot.

The bottom line: Justice Barrett was the Republican appointee most likely to vote for a liberal result in the last term.
That does not make her a liberal, said Irv Gornstein, the executive director of Georgetown University's Supreme Court Institute. “Don't forget,” he said, “she voted to overrule Roe v. Wade. She voted to outlaw affirmative action. She almost always votes against the administrative state. And she voted to reject every voting rights challenge.”
“Yes,” Professor Gornstein added, “she is more principled and open-minded and thoughtful than some of the others. She cares more about precedent than some

Continued on Page A18

Yes, You Can Hug This Sloth ... but Should You?

By MELENA RYZIK
Cats may be the reigning queens of the internet, but sloths are not far behind.
With a visage that appears to be smiling and a physiological need to cling, the slow-moving mammal, native to Central and South America, has been frequently memed and made into beloved animated characters. But lately sloths have been proliferating IRL, far outside their arboreal habitats. They can be fed, cuddled and photographed at animal parks and pet shops, often despite unclear provenance and lax adherence to safety and health rules.
Sloths join big-eared fennec foxes and baby-faced kinkajous as star attractions in the growing range of venues where interactions with animals — the more exotic and up-close the better — underpin the business model. The number of those U.S.D.A.-licensed exhibitors almost doubled from 2019 to 2021, with over 1,000 sloths inspected annually in the last two years. According to federal data, the risk of animal deaths and disease outbreaks has increased. So have human injuries — and the concerns of experts and state agencies.

“The desire for proximity — to touch, to feel the immediate presence of animals — is very old,” said Nigel Rothfels, a historian who studies zoos. “Perhaps we are hard-wired for it. But the access and demand have increased.”
Whether it's at an iffy roadside stand (think “Tiger King”) or a well-established institution's “backstage tour,” the encounters



KIRSTEN LUCE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A worker woke up a sloth with food at a SeaQuest in Trumbull, Conn. It has since closed after several U.S.D.A. violations.

often wind up, by design, on social media. That visibility normalizes hugging critters — but many animal experts say it shouldn't.
Research shows that depicting interactions can mislead the public into thinking the animals could be pets, or question whether they're really endangered. “Put simply, viewing animals in contact with people has the potential to in-

fluence negative beliefs about wildlife and conservation,” said Sally Sherwen, the director of wildlife conservation and science at Zoos Victoria, a conservation-oriented network in Australia.
One company that has attracted outside attention from regulators and animal advocates is SeaQuest, a national chain of in-

Continued on Page A13

As Rich Demur, Biden Plays Up Smaller Donors

But He Still Courts, and Needs, Big Backers

By KENNETH P. VOGEL
WASHINGTON — In a nationally broadcast interview on Monday, President Biden pushed back on rich Democrats who want him to end his re-election campaign, saying, “I don't care what the millionaires think.”
Small donors, he made clear, were coming through for him.
But hours later, Mr. Biden joined a private call with his top donors and fund-raisers to reassure them. “It matters,” he told them of their support.
The seemingly contradictory messages show the conundrum facing the president as he grapples with the fallout from his disastrous debate performance against former President Donald J. Trump last month. In order to continue to fund his presidential campaign, Mr. Biden will most likely need the support of wealthy Democratic Party backers, but they have been among the loudest voices calling for him to end his bid for re-election.
In trying to defuse their opposition, Mr. Biden — a politician who has long relied on the party's establishment to fund his campaign — has adopted a surprisingly populist anti-elite message that, in some ways, echoes Mr. Trump's.
Major donors are warning that the party will lose the White House and down-ballot races with Mr. Biden atop the ticket. A growing chorus of donors has been pushing — first quietly, then publicly — for him to step aside to allow a replacement nominee and threatening to withhold their cash unless that happens.
While Mr. Biden's campaign has continued to court wealthy Democrats, including working to schedule fund-raising receptions despite uncertain interest, the president has also publicly cast the backlash from major donors as a sign that he is sticking up for regular people against moneyed interests. But polls show that many rank-and-file Democratic voters also have deep concerns about his age.

“The voters — and the voters alone — decide the nominee of the Democratic Party,” Mr. Biden wrote in a letter to congressional Democrats on Monday morning. “Not the press, not the pundits, not the big donors, not any selected groups of individuals, no matter how well intentioned.”
In an interview on MSNBC's “Morning Joe” on Monday, Mr. Biden said, “I'm getting so frustrated by the elites,” and he sin-

Continued on Page A16

STAUNCH SUPPORT Black women are dismissing calls for President Biden to step aside. PAGE A17

TOP DEMOCRATS SWALLOW FEARS AND BACK BIDEN

DAY OF ANXIOUS TALKS

Leaders Emerge Divided but Eager to Move Beyond Turmoil

This article is by **Catie Edmondson, Maya C. Miller, Robert Jimison and Annie Karni.**

WASHINGTON — Top Democrats in Congress indicated on Tuesday that they were unwilling — at least for now — to mount an effort to push aside President Biden even after a day of meetings in which their members expressed grave concerns about his age, mental acuity and ability to win re-election.

Both in public and behind closed doors, House and Senate Democrats from across the political spectrum, including ultra-liberals in safe seats and centrists in politically vulnerable districts, have raised profound fears about Mr. Biden's viability as a candidate. But no Democratic leader on Capitol Hill was willing to ask the president to withdraw.
Instead, they emerged on Tuesday swearing allegiance to Mr. Biden, if not exactly in enthusiastic or expansive terms.

“I'm with Joe,” Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the majority leader, repeatedly replied, as he sidestepped multiple questions about Mr. Biden's fitness for office.
“We are ridin' with Biden,” Representative James E. Clyburn of South Carolina proclaimed nine times as he sought to shut down reporters' queries.

Still, House and Senate Democrats left their respective private meetings on Tuesday deeply fractured. Asked whether Democrats were on the same page after the discussion, Representative Steve Cohen of Tennessee replied, “We're not even in the same book.”
And on Tuesday afternoon, a seventh House Democrat, Representative Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, publicly called on Mr. Biden to withdraw from the race, saying she feared he would be unable to defeat former President

Continued on Page A17



HAIYUN JIANG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
“I'm with Joe,” Senator Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday.

Cigarettes Smuggled in Gaza Aid Attract Mobs and Stall Convoys

By AARON BOXERMAN and NATAN ODENHEIMER
JERUSALEM — A new problem is bedeviling humanitarian aid convoys attempting to deliver relief to hungry Gazans: attacks by organized crowds seeking not the flour and medicine that trucks are carrying, but cigarettes smuggled inside the shipments.
In tightly blockaded Gaza, cigarettes have become increasingly scarce, now generally selling for \$25 to \$30 apiece. U.N. and Israeli officials say the coordinated attacks by groups seeking to sell smuggled cigarettes for profit pose a formidable obstacle to bringing desperately needed aid to southern Gaza.
The Israeli authorities closely scan everything that goes in and out of Gaza through Israeli-administered checkpoints. But the cigarettes have managed to slip through for weeks inside aid trucks, mostly through Kerem Shalom crossing into southern Gaza.
To evade Israeli inspections, smugglers — mostly in Egypt — have been hiding them in sacks of United Nations-donated flour, diapers and even a watermelon, according to aid agencies and an Israeli military official who shared photos with The New York Times.
Aid trucks that set off from the crossing into Gaza were then at-

Continued on Page A5



INTERNATIONAL A4-11
Preserving Holocaust Artifacts
With the survivor generation shrinking, Israel's memorial is stepping up efforts to safeguard its vast collection. PAGE A4

The Man in Charge of Haiti
Analysts say Garry Conille, the new prime minister, is more policy expert than seasoned politician. PAGE A11

NATIONAL A12-19
A Block That Defies Fixing
In New York's East Village, amid buzzy restaurants and high-end real estate, a section of 14th Street remains rife with violence and drugs. PAGE A12

Tough Call on Trump Immunity
The judge in the election interference case will soon have to decide how to proceed with her indictment. PAGE A18

OBITUARIES A22
Top Denier of Climate Change
James Inhofe, 89, a five-term senator from Oklahoma, took hard-right stands on the environment and other issues.



FOOD D1-8
When the Goal Is Gooeyness
No campfire? No problem. You can make s'mores in the oven, or rethink them as a refined tart. PAGE D2

Pondering a Nonfictional 'Bear'
If the restaurant on the hit show were a real-life operation, how would it truly run? We asked some experts. PAGE D6

BUSINESS B1-5
When Your Bank Isn't a Bank
For unsuspecting depositors of online financial start-ups, the unraveling of an intermediary has separated them from their life savings. PAGE B1

ARTS C1-6
An Impressionist's Perspective
A writer used Camille Pissarro's paintings of suburban London and a 'lost' railway as a lens into the city's history and a way to resolve a mystery. PAGE C1

OPINION A20-21
The Editorial Board PAGE A20



SPORTS B6-9
A Fun Ride for the Dutch
Thousands of Netherlands soccer fans, with a big orange bus in the lead, are turning the European Championship in Germany into a party. PAGE B6

