

# The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

RE V1 V2 V3 V4



Partly sunny 44/32 • Tomorrow: Rain, snow 39/35 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 2024 • \$3

## U.S. hit by covid wave with new JN.1 variant

But hospitalizations and deaths remain lower than in previous winters

BY FENIT NIRAPPIL AND LENA H. SUN

The United States is in the throes of another covid-19 uptick, cementing a pattern of the virus surging around the holidays as doctors and public health officials brace for greater transmission after Americans returned to school and work this week.

Coronavirus samples detected in wastewater, the best metric for estimating community viral activity, suggest infections could be as rampant as they were last winter. A smattering of health facilities around the country, including every one in Los Angeles County, are requiring masks again. JN.1, the new dominant variant, appears to be especially adept at infecting those who have been vaccinated or previously infected.

While photos of positive coronavirus tests are once again proliferating across social media, fewer people are going to the hospital than a year ago. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 29,000 covid hospitalizations in the week before Christmas, the most recent data, compared with 39,000 the previous year. The agency has reported an average of 1,400 weekly deaths since Thanksgiving, less than half of the fatalities at the same point last year.

Even so, covid remains one of the leading causes of death as well as the top driver of respiratory

SEE VIRUS ON A14

## U.S. strike in Baghdad kills militia commander

Iraq says attack that took the life of leader linked to Iran broke agreements

BY MUSTAFA SALIM, LOUISA LOVELUCK, DAN LAMOTHE AND ALEX HORTON

BAGHDAD — A U.S. airstrike here on Thursday killed an Iran-linked militia commander and risked accelerating the regional fallout from Washington's support for Israel's military operation in Gaza, even as the Biden administration scrambles to contain the bloodshed.

Explosions occurred in the central part of the city, rattling windows and prompting Iraqi authorities to close off nearby streets. Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, a militia that has claimed several attacks on U.S. forces, said its deputy commander of operations in the Baghdad region, Mushtaq Talib al-Saidi, also known as Abu Taqwa, was killed at a logistical support headquarters on Palestine Street.

SEE IRAQ ON A9

**Mideast tensions:** Rising attacks threaten a spiraling conflict. **A12**

An audacious plan for the Paris Olympics: Ceremonies and competition on the famed river



BERTRAND GUAY/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

## Making the Seine the star

BY LES CARPENTER IN PARIS

By day, the Seine River winds gracefully through the city's center, but as darkness falls, the Seine turns from turquoise to indigo to inky black until it glows with reflections of the city lights. Many call the Seine the world's most romantic river, and beneath the Pont d'Iena, a man waits beside a red carpet lined with burning candles and a row of letters that spell "Marry me." Two violinists play nearby. Behind them, the Eiffel Tower shimmers bright white.

More than 400 years ago, the Seine's first bridge, the Pont Neuf, just downstream, opened up the river's splendor. Before then, the Seine had been Paris's lifeblood — its birthplace on the Ile de la Cite, its workhorse, its gateway to the world. But with the Pont Neuf, "the romance of the river began," says Joan DeJean, the author of "How Paris Became Paris: The Invention of the Modern City." At last, Parisians could "gaze for a long distance down



CYRIL ZANNETTACCI/AGENCE VU FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**TOP:** Triathletes dive into the Seine River during a training event. Olympic competition is to be held on the river. **ABOVE:** An interceptor tunnel will carry water to a huge storage basin so sewage will not flow into the Seine.

the river [and] admire the panorama and the beauty of the great architecture that lines both banks."

Ever since, the Seine has dazzled in a way no river can, becoming what DeJean calls a "marketing tool."

"For many people, Paris wouldn't be Paris without the Seine," she says.

Now the organizers of this summer's Paris Olympics want to make the Seine the star of their Games with an audacious plan to host the Opening Ceremonies not inside a stadium as other Olympics have done but on the river itself.

They imagine a sunset parade of athletes riding dozens of river cruise boats three miles up the Seine to a makeshift amphitheater at the Trocadero across the water from the Eiffel Tower for an extravaganza on the river with acrobats, light shows, drone displays and dancers on nearby rooftops.

They also plan to stage some

SEE SEINE ON A10

**He's Him:** Sprinter Noah Lyles has big Paris plans. "I'm the guy," he says. **D1**

## Half of Black D.C. residents lack easy medical care

Analysis highlights continuing pattern of health inequities, especially east of the Anacostia

BY MICHAEL BRICE-SADDLER, JENNA PORTNOY, JOHN D. HARDEN AND JANICE KAI CHEN

Nearly half of Black D.C. residents live in medically underserved areas — neighborhoods with a shortage of primary care services where the rates of heart disease, hypertension and other serious chronic conditions are more prevalent than in the rest of the city, a Washington Post analysis of federal data shows.

The numbers underscore the troubled state of health outcomes for Black residents in the nation's capital, who for decades have been disproportionately affected by ailments like heart disease, diabetes, asthma and HIV, despite a flurry of initiatives to stem the tide. That concern is especially acute in the low-income communities concentrated east of the Anacostia River, where outcomes are notably worse than for White, Asian and Latino residents city-wide.

SEE HEALTH CARE ON A6



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

**Christy Webster, 63, wipes away tears while discussing her health concerns. Plagued by colon pain, Webster had to travel to a more affluent sector to see a doctor after multiple attempts to treat it herself.**

## False beliefs on Jan. 6 take root

25% OF ADULTS SAY FBI INSTIGATED RIOT

Post-UMD poll finds 34% of Republicans hold view

BY TOM JACKMAN, SCOTT CLEMENT, EMILY GUSKIN AND SPENCER S. HSU

Twenty-five percent of Americans say it is "probably" or "definitely" true that the FBI instigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, a false concept promoted by right-wing media and repeatedly denied by federal law enforcement, according to a new Washington Post-University of Maryland poll.

The Post-UMD poll finds a smaller 11 percent of the public overall thinks there is "solid evidence" that FBI operatives organized and encouraged the attack, while 13 percent say this is their "suspicion only."

Among Republicans, 34 percent say the FBI organized and encouraged the insurrection, compared with 30 percent of independents and 13 percent of Democrats.

The results confirm that misinformation about Jan. 6 is widespread as the United States begins a presidential election year, during a campaign in which the former

SEE JAN. 6 ON A18

**Speaking out:** Lawyer alleges retaliation after Army dispute. **A18**

**Jan. 6 sentencing:** Proud Boy given 10 years in Capitol riot. **B1**

## Authorities pressure parents of truant kids

Some states escalate punishment to combat school absenteeism

BY DONNA ST. GEORGE

The 5-year-old missed school for a doctor's appointment. The next day he had a fever. Once, his mother had car trouble, and the boy missed a day. Another time, his family fell sick with covid-19. And then there was the day he missed school when his mother brought him to his brother's medical appointment, knowing she would not make it to school pickup on time.

The kindergartner racked up 14 absences in five or so months — half of them without explanation — according to his Missouri school district, which steered the case to prosecutors. His mother, Tamarae LaRue, was convicted of violating the state's compulsory attendance law, a verdict the state Supreme Court upheld several months ago.

The episode ultimately sent LaRue to jail for 15 days — her case showing some of the more punitive stakes as chronic student absenteeism remains at near-record highs and many ar-

SEE SCHOOL ON A2

## IN THE NEWS

**School shooting in Iowa** Students and families recounted the terror after a teen gunman killed a sixth-grader and wounded five others at their small-town high school. **A4**

**Tensions over restaurant** The gay couple who owned the Front Porch in rural Virginia sold it, citing conflicts with their neighbors. **C1**

**THE NATION** **A historic site** in North Carolina is taking a new approach to fighting climate change. **A3** **U.S. officials** say Russia has fired missiles supplied by North Korea into Ukraine. **A4**

**THE WORLD** **Tuvalu** has struck a deal with Australia to fight climate change, but it has strings attached. **A8** **Japan** sits on four major tectonic plates, making it particularly prone to earthquakes. **A12**

**THE ECONOMY** **Twenty-two states** and dozens of cities and counties are increasing their minimum wage this month. **A13** **Donald Trump's** businesses received foreign payments of at least \$7.8 million during his time as president, according to a report. **A14**

**THE REGION** **Metro** missed chances to address a wheel issue that caused a 2021 derailment, a National Transportation Safety Board report found. **B1** **An initiative** from the Washington Capitals teaches hockey basics to Prince George's County students. **B1**

**STYLE** **Harvard President** Claudine Gay's resignation followed dogged reporting by the Washington Free Beacon. **C1**

**WEEKEND** **Forget the best.** See which films our critics rated as the worst of last year, and how to watch them if you must.

BUSINESS NEWS.....A13  
COMICS.....C5  
OPINION PAGES.....A15  
OBITUARIES.....B4  
TELEVISION.....C4  
WORLD NEWS.....A8

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