

Man guilty in murder that became a GOP focus

Killing of Laken Riley in Georgia helped fuel debate on immigration

BY KIM BELLWARE

A Georgia judge sentenced Jose Antonio Ibarra to life in prison without the possibility of parole just hours after finding the Venezuelan national guilty on all counts in the murder of Laken Riley, a 22-year-old Augusta University nursing student whose February killing inflamed the immigration debate that became a central theme of this year's presidential election.

Athens-Clarke County Superior Court Judge H. Patrick Haggard announced the verdict and sentence Wednesday after a four-day bench trial of Ibarra, who entered the country illegally in 2022. Ibarra previously waived his right to a jury trial.

Gasping and crying could be heard off-camera on the courtroom live stream once Haggard read the first guilty verdict for the malice murder charge. The cries continued as the judge went down the list of charges that, in addition to murder, included kidnapping, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, hindering an emergency call, tampering with evidence and being a peeping Tom.

Ibarra did not visibly react as the verdict was read.

The body of Riley, a college junior who was an avid runner, was found brutally beaten near a wooded area on the University of Georgia campus in February after her roommates and her mother grew worried when she didn't come home from her run or answer phone calls.

Riley's killing was a focus of campaigning Republicans over the summer, with Donald Trump using the case to call for greater border security. Trump has frequently highlighted crimes committed by immigrants in his political messaging.

SEE VERDICT ON A2

U.S. egg supply in pre-holiday slump as avian flu cases surge

BY HANNAH ZIEGLER AND SHANNON NAJMABADI

While most grocery prices have stabilized this year, one supermarket staple keeps getting pricier and tougher to track down: eggs.

It was frustrating to shoppers at a Trader Joe's in the Union Market neighborhood of Northeast Washington on Wednesday as they walked past an empty refrigerator case with a sign that read: "Temporarily out of eggs." One customer, Donella Brockington, worried she wouldn't have eggs to bake for Thanksgiving. "I hate going to grocery stores, so when I go and I can't get what I want, it's unpleasant," she said.

Not too far away, at a Whole Foods Market in Logan Circle, only duck eggs, quail eggs and organic pasture-raised eggs were available. A sign informed shoppers that the store was limiting egg purchases to three cartons per customer. "We are currently experiencing difficulty sourcing eggs that meet our strict animal welfare standards," it said.

SEE EGGS ON A18



Israel's war with Hezbollah has shattered lives and families.



Hundreds of Lebanon's children have been suffering most of all.



BY ABBIE CHEESEMAN AND SUZAN HAIDAMOUS IN ARAMOUN, LEBANON

Scattered throughout the wrecked apartment was evidence of how particularly vulnerable children are to the effects of explosive weapons. A day and a half after Israel fired the missile through the building, the bodies of the adults had long since been retrieved and identified. Pieces of the children, though, were still being found everywhere.

The main recovery effort in this village south of Beirut was over, but this stage was infinitely more delicate: A civil defense worker, using just a small trowel and his hands, picked carefully through the concrete

that had collapsed into the second-floor apartment, searching for what remained of Mohamad, 11, and Elia, 7. An ambulance worker followed with a plastic bag to collect bits of their charred flesh for DNA identification. Each chunk was so small it could fit in the palm of his hand.

The missile struck without warning at 4:30 a.m. last Wednesday. It killed Dana Makki's grandparents, aunt and her three young cousins. By Sunday afternoon, Dana still had no idea when or how the family would be able to bury Mohamad. The rescue-

SEE LEBANON ON A10

FROM TOP: Ivana Skakye, 2, sustained burns on 40 percent of her body. Nour al-Musawi, 6, no longer eats, walks or speaks. Ali Khalifeh, 2, had his hand amputated after he was trapped under rubble for 14 hours.

PHOTOS BY LORENZO TUGNOLI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

House panel told Gaetz paid for sex

COMMITTEE DECLINES TO RELEASE REPORT

Pressure mounts on former lawmaker tapped for AG

This article is by Jacqueline Alemany, Liz Goodwin, Leigh Ann Caldwell, Meryl Kornfield and Marianna Sotomayor

House Ethics Committee investigators probing sexual misconduct allegations against former congressman Matt Gaetz obtained records showing that he paid more than \$10,000 to two women who testified before the committee, according to a person familiar with the investigation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive material.

The records that were exhibited during closed-door testimony displayed 27 PayPal and Venmo payments disbursed between July 2017 and January 2019 totaling over \$10,000 paid to the two witnesses, that person said. Some payments were for sex, the witnesses testified to the committee. ABC News first reported on the exhibits.

The news came as the House Ethics Committee declined to release its report on sexual misconduct allegations against Gaetz (R-Florida) after a closed-door meeting Wednesday, and as President-elect Donald Trump's embattled attorney general pick attempted to sell himself on Capitol Hill to skeptical GOP senators.

"There was not an agreement by the committee to release the report," said Rep. Michael Guest (R-Mississippi), the committee's chair.

SEE GAETZ ON A4

Trump's picks draw from Project 2025

BY PATRICK SVITEK

In one of his earliest interviews as a leader of Donald Trump's transition team, Howard Lutnick was emphatic.

"Absolutely zero. No connection. Zero," Lutnick said on CNBC, referring to ties between the transition team and Project 2025, the conservative blueprint for a second Trump term that had become a political liability for the Republican nominee.

"I won't take a list from them," Lutnick added in the Sept. 16 interview. "I won't take a topic from them. I won't touch them. They made themselves nuclear."

But just over two months later, Trump has won the presidency and is assembling an administration that includes some picks for key positions that stand in stark contrast to his repeated efforts to distance himself from Project 2025.

The most striking example would be Russ Vought, whom Trump is leaning toward appointing to lead the White House budget office. Vought, who held the same role during Trump's first term, was an architect of Project 2025, writing a chapter on the executive office — and advocating

SEE TRUMP ON A6

Linda McMahon: In '09, she falsely claimed a bachelor's in education. A4
Kennedy: Some GOP senators say the HHS pick must explain his views. A6
'Massive' cuts vowed: Musk and Ramaswamy expound on their role. A18

RFK Jr.'s skepticism, Oregon vote further turn tide against fluoride

BY FENIT NIRAPPIL

LEBANON, ORE. — Longtime denizens of this town of 20,000 recalled widespread tooth decay among children before the city council voted to add fluoride to the drinking water two decades ago. But a group of residents remained unconvinced.

They urged neighbors to do their own research, insisting it would reveal that the mineral embraced for generations to improve oral health was actually a dangerous substance that could harm their organs. They shared photos of corroded pipes and scarred arms they claimed were damaged by the acidic, concentrated form of fluoride. Was it worth \$25,000 a year in tax dollars for the city to put fluoride in drinking water?

The skepticism prevailed on Election Day as Lebanon voters

narrowly voted to remove fluoride from the water supply, mirroring how more Americans are starting to question a practice experts have lauded as one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a longtime vaccine skeptic whom President-elect Donald Trump has chosen to be his Health and Human Services secretary, wants communities across the nation to follow Lebanon's lead. Days before the election, Kennedy said the Trump administration on Inauguration Day would advise water districts to remove fluoride, which he referred to on X as "an industrial waste associated with arthritis, bone fractures, bone cancer, IQ loss, neurodevelopmental disorders, and thyroid disease." Despite medical organizations character-

SEE FLUORIDE ON A8



WILL MATSUDA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Inside the water treatment plant in Lebanon, Oregon, which voted recently to no longer supplement its drinking water with fluoride.

IN THE NEWS

Billionaire indicted The Justice Department charged Indian businessman Gautam Adani in connection with an alleged bribery scheme and other crimes. A18

U-Va. slayings A former student pleaded guilty to murder in the shooting deaths of three university football players in 2022. B1

THE NATION Analyzing Kamala Harris's election loss, senior campaign officials pointed to broad discontent with the economy and credited Donald Trump's use of new media sources. A3

THE WORLD The publisher of a newspaper forced to close in Hong Kong was defiant at his trial. A9
Venezuela poses an early test of Trump's dealmaking approach to foreign policy. A11

THE CLIMATE Plankton may be unable to thrive in rapidly warming oceans, two studies have found. A14

THE ECONOMY Trump's return to the White House might add momentum to a conservative activist's anti-DEI efforts involving big companies. A17

THE REGION A Trump-appointed federal judge criticized the notion of "blanket pardons" for Jan. 6 rioters while postponing the trial for a defendant. B1
Gov. Glenn Youngkin overstepped his authority in withdrawing Virginia from a carbon initiative, a judge ruled. B1

STYLE Five more plaintiffs have filed lawsuits against Sean "Diddy" Combs alleging that they were drugged and sexually assaulted. C1

LOCAL LIVING Decking out your dinner table for the holidays can start with things you already own.

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