

# The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## Backlash unravels police reforms

Legislators, voters roll back measures added after George Floyd killing

BY ROBERT KLEMKO, EMILY DAVIES AND TOM JACKMAN

RowVaughn Wells traveled to the Tennessee Capitol last week hoping to preserve the small silver lining that emerged from the death of her son, who was fatally beaten last year after being pulled over by Memphis Police. In his memory, the city passed the Tyre Nichols Driving Equality Act, barring officers from conducting certain traffic stops for low-level violations, among other measures.

But now state lawmakers are advancing legislation that would nullify the Memphis law. On Monday, state Rep. John Gillespie (R), the bill's sponsor, ran into Wells and her husband in the Capitol, where they had come to bear witness to debate on the legislation.

Gillespie appeared taken aback at seeing them, Wells recalled in an interview, then collected himself.

"I hope you understand," he said.

"I don't," she shot back.

Gillespie's measure is part of a groundswell of legislative and voter pushback against reforms initiated over the past four years after the police killings of Black Americans including Nichols, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Each killing stunned Americans and inspired activism, rioting and a racial reckoning that translated into hundreds of bills aimed at curtailing law enforcement powers and reshaping how police do their jobs.

In some cases, lawmakers and voters now say those changes needed to be fine-tuned to work well. In others, they are trying to address community backlash at measures that have been labeled anti-police, as well as a perception that crime has worsened

SEE POLICING ON A5



PHOTOS BY CAITLIN O'HARA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## Tribes fight clean-energy projects

Native American leaders push back on Biden-backed plans that encroach on their lands

BY MAXINE JOSELOW IN TUCSON, ARIZ.

Verlon Jose recalls climbing a hill here to see the majestic peaks of the Santa Rita Mountains in one direction and the cactus-studded San Pedro Valley, where his ancestors lived hundreds of years ago, in the other.

But looking out from that same vista in February, Jose saw only unwelcome development. To the south, bulldozers were carving roads and clearing land for a massive copper mine on the western slope of the Santa Ritas. To the east, construction was underway on a 550-mile power line that would cut through a 50-mile portion of the valley.

While the power line would not technically cross the tribal land of the Tohono O'odham Nation, whose government Jose leads, it would intersect areas that his people consider part of their ancestral heritage.

"This is our land," said Jose, whose tribe includes roughly 38,000 members across southern Arizona and northern Mexico. "It should all be protected."



TOP: The SunZia transmission line project. ABOVE: Tohono O'odham Chairman Verlon Jose says the line would intersect with areas his people consider part of their ancestral heritage.

Jose is one of several tribal leaders nationwide who are growing frustrated with the Biden administration and its ambitious plans for clean-energy projects that could affect their ancestral lands. While the White House has worked to repair the federal government's relationships with Indigenous peoples, that effort is conflicting with another Biden priority: expediting projects essential for the energy transition.

The SunZia transmission line is one of those projects. Once complete, the power line would carry clean electricity from massive wind farms in New Mexico to more-populated areas as far away as California. The Biden administration has championed SunZia as a key pillar of its plans for fighting climate change and boosting green energy, and has defended its engagement with area tribes.

The administration "took very seriously" tribal concerns about SunZia, said John D. Podesta, a senior adviser to Biden on climate policy.

"We feel very solid that the analysis was done properly and that ... the

SEE TRIBES ON A10

## City's apology for lynchings rings hollow for some

Executions of 3 Black men cast a shadow over Salisbury

BY JOE HEIM

SALISBURY, MD. — This city of 33,000 on Maryland's Eastern Shore moved one step closer to reckoning with its past as its elected officials last week approved an apology for the long-ago lynchings of three Black men.

In the lynchings by local White mobs in 1898 and 1931, there was no trial, no evidence presented, no judge, no jury. Instead, the public executions were meted out with unchecked viciousness as the men were beaten, hanged, shot, paraded through town and, in one instance, set on fire.

For some Salisbury residents, the lynchings are not worth revisiting. The city has moved on, they say. They point to two Black members on the five-member city council, including its president, D'Shawn Doughty, 29, as a sign of

SEE SALISBURY ON A4



Some Salisbury residents say the lynchings aren't worth revisiting and point to the council's two Black members, D'Shawn Doughty, center left, and April Jackson, center right, as a sign of progress.

## FBI source Smirnov had past credibility issues

Accused of smearing Bidens, he revealed his role while chasing deals

BY ISAAC STANLEY-BECKER

When a Los Angeles internet entrepreneur decided that his company should lend money to Alexander Smirnov, an Israeli American businessman fluent in four languages, he did so in part because Smirnov boasted of a highly respectable background.

"He was representing himself as working for the FBI," Dmitry Fomichev recalled in an interview about the 2012 loan, which Fomichev would later say in a lawsuit Smirnov never repaid. "He said, 'I'm a very powerful guy.'"

Several years later, Smirnov again disclosed his work with law

enforcement to investors who put up \$100,000 in cash for a company he was touting called Grand Pacaraima Gold Corp., the investors later alleged in a suit of their own against Smirnov.

It was true: Smirnov was a source for the FBI. But as a confidential informant, he wasn't supposed to be broadcasting his government work, and experts and former agents said his apparent decision to do so raises significant questions about his credibility.

Smirnov's work with the FBI burst into public view last month when federal prosecutors accused him of lying to authorities about a multimillion-dollar bribery scheme involving President Biden and his family.

The 37-page indictment blew a hole in the Republican-led effort to impeach Biden, which drew on the bribery allegation. At the same time, the indictment raised

SEE INFORMANT ON A7

### IN THE NEWS

**Israel-Gaza war** A U.S. Army vessel loaded with equipment to build a floating pier to facilitate aid has departed for the region. A13

**Legacy admissions** Virginia's governor signed into law bills that prohibit the state's public universities from giving applications from children of alumni preferential treatment. B1

**THE NATION**  
**A trans activist** in Iowa faces trial in a protest-related case that they claim was motivated by their gender identity. A3  
**A Trump campaign** insider recounts a failed hunt for voter fraud. A9

**THE WORLD**  
**Seeking to counter** China, the Philippines has been rapidly striking new defense deals. A12  
**Brazil is facing** a staggering health crisis as dengue fever rips through the region. A18

**THE ECONOMY**  
**Fed up** with trying to find love via apps, singles are reviving the analog practice of speed dating. A15

**THE REGION**  
**Forensic genealogy** led Virginia police to a suspect in two 1980s homicide cases that had gone cold. B1

**A teen boy** accused of trying to shoot a 14-year-old on a Prince George's County school bus will be prosecuted as an adult, a judge ruled. B1  
**For a chess champion** trying to recover after three strokes, the game is part of his rehabilitation strategy. B1

**STYLE**  
**"Dragon Ball" creator** Akira Toriyama, who died this month at 68, laid the bedrock of modern action storytelling, Gene Park writes. C1  
**On Ariana Grande's** new album, she uses the plushness of her voice to obscure the details of a bruised-up heart. C3

BUSINESS NEWS.....A15  
COMICS.....C6  
OPINION PAGES.....A16  
OBITUARIES.....B4  
TELEVISION.....C4  
WORLD NEWS.....A12

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