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Shortage of judges keeps civil cases on hold

Mandatory retirement at 70 thinning the ranks

By Sean Cotter
GLOBE STAFF

Five years after attorney Lisa Arrowood filed a medical malpractice lawsuit, the case still hasn't gone to trial. She came close in August, but the case hit a sudden snag.

"A month before the trial, we found out there is no judge," Arrowood said. She's now scheduled to have the trial begin in July, before a new judge, according to court filings.

Arrowood's experience is far from abnormal: As she put it, "There are a lot of empty courtrooms."

While the flow of cases returns to normal levels after being disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, a shortage of judges is now causing holdups in the busy superior courts in Greater Boston, leading lawyers to urge the state to focus on putting new judges in place.

"There just aren't enough judges to go around. It's frustrating for anybody trying to get a resolution," said lawyer Justin O'Brien, who said he too had a civil trial postponed by a judicial vacancy in Suffolk Superior Court.

One of Suffolk Superior's eight standard civil sessions has been down a judge in recent months, according to the state's roster of judicial assignments. Two of the four sessions in Norfolk Superior Court did not have a judge as

JUDGES, Page A10



SHARON CHEN/ADOBE STOCK

Retailers fear a TikTok ban could shut off link to Gen Z

By Thomas Lee
GLOBE STAFF

The clock may be ticking on TikTok in the United States but retailers — who have a lot to lose — have been mum on the popular social media app's fate.

The House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a bill, supported by President Biden, that could effectively ban TikTok in the country unless ByteDance, its Chinese owner, sells the busi-

► **Fight over a ban is just getting started, writes Hiawatha Bray. B5.**

ness. A ban could be disastrous for retailers, since TikTok has become a key way of reaching elusive Gen Z consumers, especially in trend-driven categories like fashion and beauty.

"TikTok drives a lot of eyeballs," said Gene Han, a former top innovation executive at Target who now advises startups.

And yet in the lead-up to the vote, retailers said little to nothing publicly about TikTok's predicament in Congress. One possible reason is that retailers want to stay clear of the complicated rivalry between the United States and China that permeates such debates.

The National Retail Federation, the industry's leading trade association, is "currently reviewing the proposed legislation and has not issued a formal position at this time," spokesperson Danielle

TIKTOK, Page A7

SEASON'S GREENINGS

With temperatures reaching the 60s in places, spring has sprung, at least away from the relentless sea breeze (sorry, Boston). In Pembroke, snowdrops were in full bloom this week, a pair of Eastern bluebirds did their thing, and moss from a stump reflected in the water of a vernal pool as a peeper swam by. The weather will turn cooler and a bit wetter over the weekend, but winter is officially over on Tuesday, so how bad can it be?



PHOTOS BY JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Schumer urges new leader for Israel

Says Netanyahu 'has lost his way,' is obstacle to peace

By Annie Karni
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York and the majority leader, delivered a pointed speech Thursday on the Senate floor excoriating Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel as a major obstacle to peace in the Middle East and calling for new leadership in Israel, five months into the war.

► **Israel's military says it supports initiatives to get aid into the Gaza Strip. A4.**

Many Democratic lawmakers have condemned Netanyahu's leadership and his right-wing governing coalition, and President Biden has even criticized the Israeli military's offensive in the Gaza Strip as "over the top." But Schumer's speech amounted to the sharpest critique yet from a senior US elected official — effectively urging Israelis to replace Netanyahu.

"I believe in his heart, his highest priority is the security of Israel," said Schumer, the high-

SCHUMER, Page A6

Local officials think twice about taking stand on Gaza

By Spencer Buell
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — The issue dominated city councilors' inboxes for weeks, and brought protesters again and again to City Hall to confront councilors directly.

When it was time for a final vote, an hourslong affair with hundreds of people signed up for public comment, the mayor opted to do it on Zoom to avoid chaos in person.

The prolonged debate wasn't over development or parking rules, nor school funding or bike lanes. The issue was whether — and how — to formalize residents' growing and passionate opposition to the conflict in Gaza.

Across Massachusetts, resolutions calling for a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war have passed in recent weeks with overwhelming support after at times heated debate. But now,

BOARDS, Page A7

Neighbors fighting for a cure to pickleball headache

By Shannon Larson
GLOBE STAFF

'It's incredibly annoying. It makes me want to ask for an abatement of my real estate taxes.'

MAGGIE TRUDEL,
on the noise of the seemingly endless games of pickleball

Driving home from Cape Cod in July, Mike Megley was at peace after a restful vacation. It didn't last long.

As he turned into his Braintree neighborhood, he heard the familiar staccato sound that had put him on edge for months: *pop-pop-pop*.

The pickleball players, or "pickleheads" as he calls them, were out in force on the outdoor courts at Hollis Field, a mere 60 feet from his property on Wynot Road.

"I instantly became unhappy," recalled Megley, a retired 60-year-old who likened the sound to the backup beeper of a truck. "I heard the noise and it was like, back to reality."

As the pickleball phenomenon has swept the nation, particularly during the pandemic, a volley of noise complaints has followed.

PICKLEBALL, Page A10



JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Mike Megley's home is uncomfortably close to Braintree's pickleball courts.

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Suggested retail price
\$3.50



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Dismal point

Friday: A few showers.
High 46-51. Low 37-42.

Saturday: Sun returns.
High 49-54. Low 39-44.

**Weather and Comics, G8-9.
Obituaries, C10.**



In a surprise less than two weeks before Donald Trump is set to go on trial in New York City, the prosecutors proposed a delay of up to 30 days to give his lawyers time to review records. **A2.**

Physicians at Salem Hospital voted overwhelmingly to unionize, part of a growing number of doctors organizing amid concerns the health care industry is increasingly corporate. **B5.**

Six eighth-graders at Southwick Regional School are facing criminal charges for participating in a Snapchat conversation that included racist language and a mock slave auction. **B1.**

Salisbury residents are appealing to the state for help after flooding washed away half of a \$600,000 dune restoration project paid for by property owners. **B1.**