

State-level diversity initiatives under siege

Programs aiding a raft of groups are ripe targets for anti-DEI activists

BY JULIAN MARK

Tyler Lynn, a Spanish instructor in Eagle Point, Ore., says he's out \$192 because a state rebate to renew teaching licenses is not available to him, a White man whose native tongue is English. So he's suing to open the program to all.

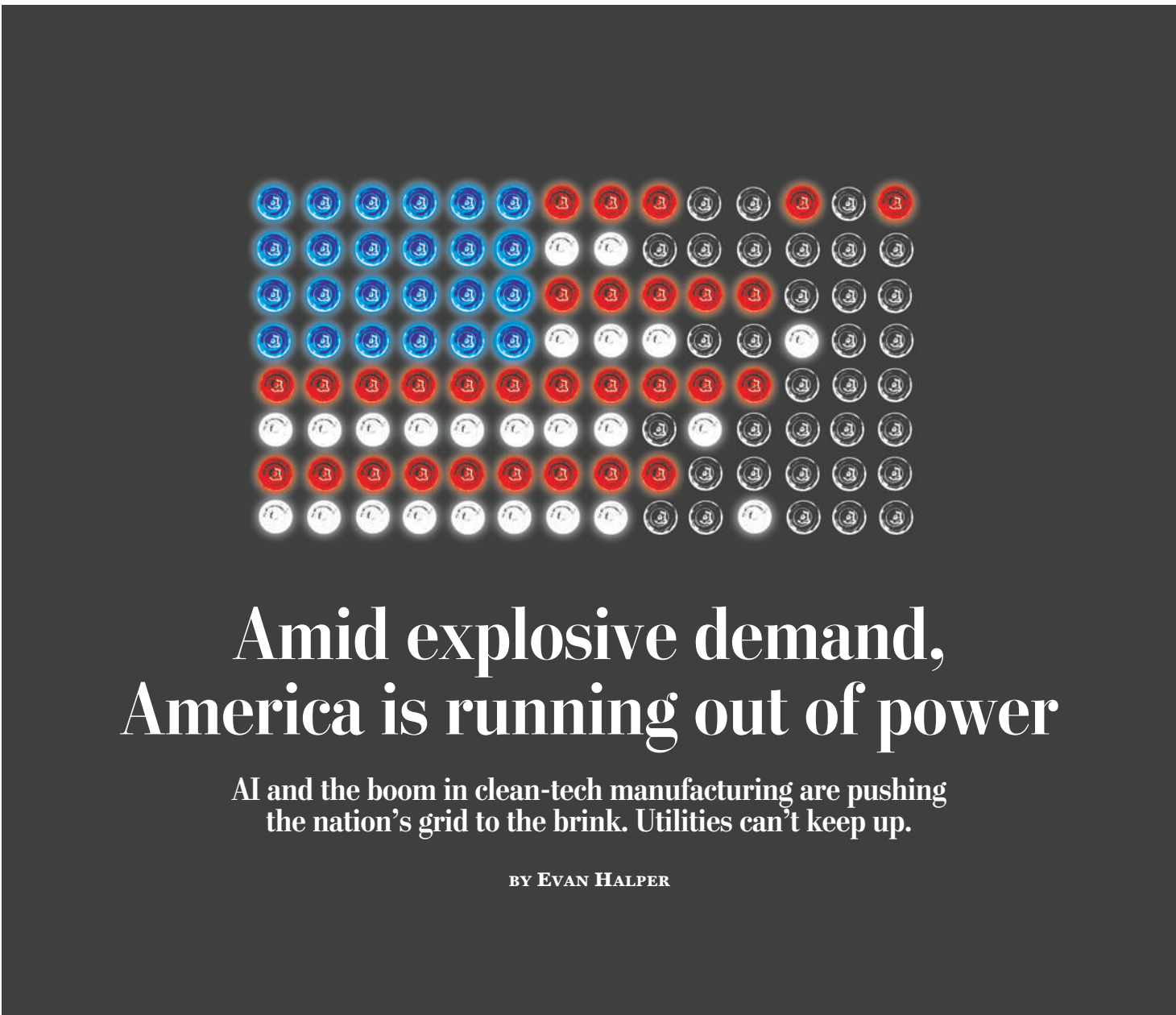
While some teachers get the rebate "by just being of the correct race," Lynn said in an interview, "I don't get a dime from the state for my skills or my qualifications."

Lynn is one of a half-dozen plaintiffs who have launched challenges in recent months against state programs meant to increase racial and ethnic diversity across a range of professions, from teaching to farming to podiatry. Their lawsuits represent the latest front in a conservative campaign to roll back affirmative action programs in government and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the corporate world since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned race-conscious college admissions last year.

Such programs are ripe targets, legal experts say, in part because nearly every state and locality has one or more that benefit women, minorities and other underrepresented groups. They typically offer financial benefits like Oregon's teachers rebate, or greater opportunity to pull the levers of power on government boards and commissions. But now their legal justification — that government has a "compelling interest" to remedy past or ongoing discrimination — is undergoing a radical reexamination in American society.

On Tuesday, a federal judge in Texas ordered a federal agency created to help minority-owned businesses access capital and government contracts to open its doors to everyone, including White business owners. U.S. District Judge Mark T. Pittman, a

SEE DIVERSITY ON A9



Amid explosive demand, America is running out of power

AI and the boom in clean-tech manufacturing are pushing the nation's grid to the brink. Utilities can't keep up.

BY EVAN HALPER

ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA PADILLA CASTELLANOS/THE WASHINGTON POST; ISTOCK

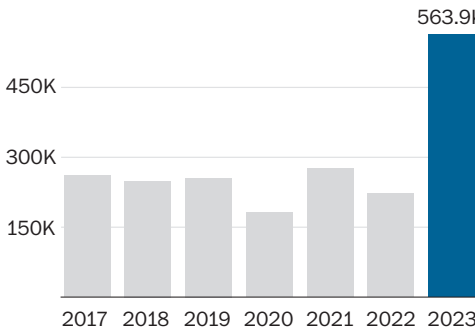
Fast swaths of the United States are at risk of running short of power as electricity-hungry data centers and clean-technology factories proliferate around the country, leaving utilities and regulators grasping for credible plans to expand the nation's creaking power grid.

In Georgia, demand for industrial power is surging to record highs, with the projection of new electricity use for the next decade now 17 times what it was only recently. Arizona Public Service, the largest utility in that state, is also struggling to keep up, projecting it will be out of transmission capacity before the end of the decade absent major upgrades.

Northern Virginia needs the equivalent of several large nuclear power plants to serve all the new

Projected new energy demand in North America doubles

Each year's nine-year growth forecast for new electricity demand, in gigawatt hours



Data covers U.S., Canada and part of Baja California, Mexico.

Source: North American Electric Reliability Corp. Long Term Reliability Assessment

data centers planned and under construction. Texas, where electricity shortages are already routine on hot summer days, faces the same quandary.

The soaring demand is touching off a scramble to try to squeeze more juice out of an aging power grid while pushing commercial customers to go to extraordinary lengths to lock down energy sources, such as building their own power plants.

"When you look at the numbers, it is staggering," said Jason Shaw, chairman of the Georgia Public Service Commission, which regulates electricity. "It makes you scratch your head and wonder how we ended up in this situation. How were the projections that far off? This has created a challenge like we have never seen before."

SEE POWER ON A10

Corpses pile up in Haiti's streets

Stench of death in capital as armed gangs rampage amid spiraling violence

BY WIDLORE MÉRANCOURT AND SAMANTHA SCHMIDT

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI — On a ride through the gang-controlled streets of Haiti's capital on Friday, past an improvised barricade, the motorcycle taxi reached a crossroad. First came the smell — of something burning. Then, the sight: a corpse, charred black, lying in the middle of street, its bones and feet sticking out of the pile of ash.

The night before, Jimmy Bour-siquot, a carpenter who lives nearby, heard two gunshots. Peering carefully out his window, checking his watch — it was 8:24 p.m. — he saw two men drive away, leaving the body behind, not far from a university administration office and one of Haiti's largest telecommunications companies. A few hours later, he said, the men returned and burned the remains.

The streets of Port-au-Prince reek with the stench of the dead.

It's a grisly new marker of the violence and dysfunction in this beleaguered Caribbean nation of 11 million people. In the absence of a functioning state, violent armed gangs have taken control of more than 80 percent of the capital, the United Nations estimates. Gunfire crackles at all hours. Residents who dare leave their homes stumble across bodies that have been left where they fell.

Port-au-Prince reached a high of 92 degrees on Friday. The smell of decaying corpses, human rights activists say, has driven some people from their homes. Others have taken it upon themselves to move or burn the bodies. Because who else will?

Even before the past week, public services in the city were sharply limited. Trash piled up in its slums; cholera had resurfaced. The gangs terrorized the

SEE HAITI ON A11

ELECTION 2024

The one last call Biden always needs to make

Amid high-stakes decisions, the president hears out top aides — then reaches out to a politician

BY TYLER PAGER

Two of President Biden's top advisers this past December were seeking his sign-off on a potentially explosive deal with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro: Biden would grant clemency to a Maduro ally in exchange for Venezuela's release of 30 prisoners, including 10 Americans.

In the Oval Office, Biden intently grilled Jeff Zients, his chief of staff, and Jon Finer, his deputy national security adviser. Were they sure Maduro would honor the deal? Were Venezuelan opposition leaders on board? Did Secretary of State Antony Blinken back the plan? Zients and Finer repeatedly sought to reassure Biden, but the president wanted more.

"Before I make a final decision here, I want to get a read from the

SEE BIDEN ON A12

Dueling rallies in Ga: Biden and Trump stump 70 miles apart. **A13**

Trump's base: It's older and more conservative than in 2016. **A14**



DEMETRIUS FREEMAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

One way President Biden's trust in other politicians manifests: He hires them. Such was the case with former New Orleans mayor Mitch Landrieu, left, whom Biden brought aboard as an adviser.

Leonsis met arena opponent, but fate was already sealed

Influential Va. senator's resistance leaves project hanging by a thread

BY GREGORY S. SCHNEIDER AND LAURA VOZZELLA

RICHMOND — Nearly eight months after Ted Leonsis first met with Gov. Glenn Youngkin to conjure big visions for a Wizards and Capitals arena in Virginia, he finally sat down with the woman with the power to make or break that dream.

They hit it off — the billionaire team owner and state Sen. L. Louise Lucas, the Democrat from Portsmouth who rose from shipyard worker to become, at 80, a force in Richmond. He sized her up: "You're a badass," he said, which she loved. But after 40 minutes chatting at her Richmond hotel last week, Lucas remained firm. The \$1.5 billion in public debt the governor had pledged for the arena was too much.

Her opposition leaves the project hanging by a thread, and left Youngkin (R) fuming. "It befuddles me," he said at a news conference Thursday below the steps of the State Capitol, Lucas smiling down on his dismay from the portico above. Youngkin, a multi-millionaire former private equity chief, had marshaled his Harvard MBA and all of his business experience, plus that of his team of high-finance advisers, only to run up against a humbling Richmond truth: A governor is not a CEO.

The General Assembly's leaders have to be on board for the arena plan to work. Lucas, who this year became chairwoman of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, has enormous power as one of the gatekeepers of the state budget. And after three decades as a Black woman climbing the ladder in the former capital of the Confederacy, Lucas felt she had been shut out of the dealmaking process.

In interviews last week, Lucas

SEE ARENA ON A8

Youngkin: Governor vetoes eight bills as Assembly wraps up. **C1**

METRO

Dogs whose owner shot at police trying to save them are now adopted.

BUSINESS

TurboTax and H&R Block use AI for tax advice. It's awful, our critic writes.

ARTS & STYLE

➡ Nominee Da'Vine Joy Randolph isn't so sure about this Oscars thing.

BOOK WORLD

Percival Everett's sly take on "Huck Finn" upends Mark Twain's world.

SPORTS

➡ As the Iditarod faces a hazy future, these teens strive to keep it alive.

TRAVEL

At this sauna marathon, groups compete in a day-long endurance test.



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