



Partly sunny, breezy 89/70 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 85/66 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2024 • \$3

## Near a cliff, Metro must find cash or cut deep

Billions in deficits, drastic service reductions loom for transit agency

BY MICHAEL LARIS

The Washington area's Metro transit system is inching toward financial catastrophe, threatening the region's quality of life and its efforts to lift up the poor, address climate change and spur a post-covid economic revival.

Billions of federal pandemic-relief dollars are now nearly gone, and the "nation's subway," as some boosters call it, is facing massive deficits far into the future.

Local jurisdictions agreed this year to cover much of a vast budget shortfall for the fiscal year that started July 1, staving off drastic cuts that would have shut down 10 rail stations and half of Metrobus lines to close a \$750 million gap in Metro's \$2.4 billion operating budget. The infusion prevented a "death spiral," Metro said.

But that was all just a warm-up. Annual operating deficits of up to a billion dollars are looming in the coming years, Metro officials said, which will require dire cuts or new funds.

Metro will also hit a critical debt ceiling in 2028, exhausting a dedicated funding stream it has used to borrow billions for infrastructure repairs and posing safety risks in the long run, they said.

Transit agencies around the country are in trouble. New York's subway is in a multibillion-dollar hole after Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) halted a congestion pricing plan that would have charged drivers headed into part of Manhattan.

SEE METRO ON A12

## Suits allege workplace DEI classes cross line

Plaintiffs say assertions of inherent racism put stigma on White workers

BY TAYLOR TELFORD AND JULIAN MARK

Joshua Young, a corrections officer in the Colorado prison system, was shocked by the lessons of the anti-bias training session he was required to attend in March 2021. With its references to "white supremacy," "white exceptionalism" and "white fragility," the training sent a clear and disturbing message to his mind: All White people are racist.

"I thought the training was potentially harmful to our staff relationships, relationships between staff and offenders, and undermined us in so many ways," Young, 47, said in an interview. "It told us basically that ... we were unable to treat people fairly just because of the way they look."

So Young sued, becoming one of more than a half dozen White plaintiffs alleging that workplace bias trainings tread on their civil rights. The cases are part of a broader legal and political back-

SEE DEI ON A11



MICHAEL S. WILLIAMSON/THE WASHINGTON POST

## A \$4.25M drug's big dose of questions

The rising number of costly gene therapies can save lives — if patients are able to gain access

BY RACHEL ROUBEIN

It's the world's most expensive drug: \$4.25 million for a one-time infusion to stave off a rare neurodegenerative disease that can claim the lives of children by the time they turn 5.

But as the London-based pharmaceutical company Orchard Therapeutics prepares to offer the lifesaving treatment at a handful of U.S. hospitals this year, the eye-popping price tag is raising critical questions about patient access to a growing number of costly gene therapies in the fragmented U.S. health-care

system.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the drug, Lenmeldy, in March, giving families of the roughly 40 to 100 U.S. babies born each year with metachromatic leukodystrophy (MLD), a genetic disease causing progressive decline in brain and motor functions, hope that their children would live into adulthood — if they can get the treatment.

In less than seven years, the number of single-dose gene therapies approved by the FDA grew from zero to 18, a number that analysts estimate will nearly quintuple by 2032. Such therapies

modify a person's genes to treat or cure disease. The list price for these treatments is projected to reach a total of \$35 billion to \$40 billion over the next decade, raising the stakes for drug manufacturers and policymakers to find a model for making these new medications accessible and affordable.

"The equity issues are huge with any individual gene therapy," said Meghan Halley, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Stanford Center for Biomedical Ethics.

In the rapidly expanding market of  
SEE DRUG ON A6

Celia Grace Hamlett brushes a doll's hair at home in Winfield, Ala., as Kassie Hamlett gets her daughter ready for church. The 7-year-old was the first person in the country to receive a new gene therapy to treat a rare neurodegenerative disease.

PARIS OLYMPICS

## Wilson's summer is one of Olympic proportions

High school star, 16, runs in 4x400 to become youngest U.S. track and field athlete ever at the Games



PATRICK SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

Bullis School's Quincy Wilson said he wasn't at his best during the first leg of the relay semifinals. But his teammates rallied to qualify for Saturday's final, and he called the experience "amazing."

D.C. marathon runner: After covid crushed his Tokyo plans, Olympian was reinvigorated by running group. B1

Relay ups and downs: Sha'Carri Richardson and the U.S. women win 4x100 gold; the U.S. men are DQ'd. D1



Barry Svrluga

COLUMN

SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE — Whatever his path forward, Quincy Wilson will never again bask in the moment that washed over him Friday morning. He climbed into the starting blocks at Stade de France, a wall of sound growing around him. He may well race in other Olympics. He will never again do so for the first time.

"It was," he said, "amazing." What other reaction is there? He is 16. On the Tuesday after Labor Day, he will begin his junior year at Bullis School in Potomac. Marry that with the fact that — as the French fans sang and swayed to Joe Dassin's "Les Champs-Élysées" — he held the baton in the semifinals of the men's 4x400-meter relay at the Paris Summer Games.

When the starter's gun rang through the arena, Wilson burst from the blocks. With that step, he became the youngest track and field Olympian in American history.

"Honestly, I was kind of like, in the moment," said Vernon Norwood, the second leg for the

SEE SVRLUGA ON A7

## Russia races to repel assault

A SCRAMBLE TO SEND REINFORCEMENTS

Intelligence and strategy failures under scrutiny

BY CATHERINE BELTON AND FRANCESCA EBEL

Russian President Vladimir Putin convened a meeting of his Security Council on Friday and his military commanders rushed to send reinforcements as a stunning Ukrainian incursion into Russia's western Kursk region presented the biggest challenge to the Russian leader since an uprising by Wagner mercenaries in June 2023.

With Russia's military eager to quash the surprise attack that began Tuesday, questions mounted over failures in intelligence and strategy that allowed Ukrainian troops to cross the border and seize what some Russian analysts estimated to be about 100 square miles of territory in Kursk — the biggest counterattack on Russian soil since Putin invaded Ukraine.

The attack on Kursk, which is adjacent to Ukraine's Sumy region, caught Russian defenses thinly staffed and seemingly unaware.

"This is a very big blow to the reputation of the Russian authorities, of the military and Putin," one Russian business executive said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to avoid retribution or prosecution. "Because for 2½ years, there has been minimal

SEE UKRAINE ON A9

ELECTION 2024

## Walz was an LGBTQ ally in a difficult era

Students from late 1990s say they took heart as he modeled acceptance

BY JOANNA SLATER AND KARIN BRULLIARD

Long before he entered politics, Tim Walz spent years teaching at a high school in southern Minnesota. He was a memorable figure inside and outside the classroom, a beloved educator who helped coach the football team to a state title. But for a small group of students, he was something even rarer.

Those students knew Walz as a person who would stand up for others no matter their sexual orientation, even when they faced hostility elsewhere. A quarter-century ago, such acceptance and understanding were far from common. Walz and his wife, Gwen, offered that unequivocally.

SEE WALZ ON A4

Walz's service: Democrats move to avoid "Swift boat" redux. A3

TikTok: Trump tries to court users of an app he sought to ban. A4

## IN THE NEWS

**Inquiry wraps up** An Israeli security unit found by the U.S. to have violated human rights will continue to receive funding. A9

**Debby doesn't quite deliver** The remnants of the hurricane brought downpours to the region, but not a severe blow. B1

**THE NATION**  
**A Denver** police recruit who lost his legs after training has sued the department. A2  
**The FDA** rejected a nonprofit's application to allow MDMA as a treatment for PTSD. A7

**THE WORLD**  
**In South Korea**, food scraps rarely go to waste, but the country struggles with excess food. A8  
**61 people** died when a domestic flight crashed near São Paulo. A11

**THE ECONOMY**  
**Renters** can breathe a sigh of relief: Price increases are cooling off in parts of the country. A10  
**Senate** Democrats launched an inquiry into student loan balances appearing twice on credit reports, which can make it tough to secure a mortgage. A11

**THE REGION**  
**A man who** violently fought police on Jan. 6 got 20 years in prison, a long sentence for one of the insurrectionists. B1  
**An electrical** engineer for the Defense Department was charged with mishandling more than 150 pages of highly classified documents. B1

**STYLE**  
**White Dudes** for Harris assembled and raised millions of dollars, but some are worried about how the demographic mobilization could be perceived. C1  
**Singer-songwriter** Jessica Pratt's distinctive music is a mystery she'll keep exploring. C1

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