

ELECTION 2024

Some see divine hand in Trump's close call

Survival fuels talk that he was 'chosen' by God for White House

BY DREW HARWELL, MICHELLE BOORSTEIN AND JOSH DAWSEY

Former president Donald Trump's narrow escape from an assassin's bullet has reinvigorated talk among some of his supporters that the thrice-married billionaire is a messiah figure, anointed by God to save a troubled nation.

Since the attack on Trump's life during a campaign rally Saturday in Butler, Pa., left him bloodied but otherwise unharmed, some supporters in Congress and on social media have shared Bible scriptures and illustrations showing the Holy Ghost deflecting the bullet. Internet celebrities such as boxer Jake Paul have called the moment proof of "who God wants to win," and posters on TheDonald, a far-right message board unaffiliated with Trump, have mentioned God seven times as often as they did in the week before the shooting, a Washington Post analysis found.

The idea of divine influence has surfaced at the Republican National Convention, where a bandaged and somber Trump was hailed before a raucous Milwaukee crowd Monday night. Some delegates and Trump aides already convinced that the former president would put the country on a righteous course said they saw that belief confirmed from on high on Saturday night.

SEE TRUMP ON A15

Vance pick unnerves GOP's business elite, thrills populists

BY JEFF STEIN

Former president Donald Trump's choice of Sen. J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) as the GOP's vice-presidential nominee reflects the ascendancy of the party's populist economic wing — and the choice is alarming traditional conservative policymakers and elite donors who opposed the pick.

Vance has suggested a break with the Republican Party's economic orthodoxy of the last several decades on a range of policy issues, including unions, anti-trust, trade and taxes, even making comments that appear at odds with Trump, who already scrambled the party's ideology.

The first-term senator has embraced a more active role for government intervention in the economy than most Republicans, emerging as a leader of a minority faction among GOP senators that also includes Sens. Josh Hawley (Mo.) and Marco Rubio (Fla.). Vance has praised President Biden's antitrust crusader at the Federal Trade Commission, called for a higher minimum wage and even once called for raising taxes on corporations — all positions anathema to conservatives. The

SEE VANCE ON A18

More than MAGA: Haley, DeSantis go on stage to broaden appeal. A8

Eyes on 2028: Youngkin seems to be laying the groundwork. B1

Ripon, Wis.: Birthplace of the GOP shows how party has changed. C1



ADAM GRAY/GETTY IMAGES

Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) leaves federal court in Manhattan on Tuesday, after a jury found him guilty of 16 felonies. Co-defendants Fred Daibes, a real estate developer, and businessman Wael "Will" Hana were also convicted. Menendez has vowed to appeal.

Menendez convicted in bribery trial

BY SALVADOR RIZZO AND SHAYNA JACOBS

NEW YORK — Sen. Bob Menendez was convicted Tuesday of taking bribes from three businessmen who showered him and his wife with cash, gold bars and a Mercedes-Benz, an extravagant bounty for his help securing deals with foreign officials and trying to derail several criminal investigations in New Jersey.

The jury in Manhattan federal court found the once powerful

Senator sold power and influence for gold bars, cash, prosecutors said

New Jersey lawmaker guilty on all 16 felony counts. They include bribery, extortion, wire fraud, conspiracy, obstruction of justice and acting as a foreign agent for Egypt from 2018 to 2022, when Menendez was at the height of his influence in

Washington, serving as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or as the panel's top Democrat while his party was in the minority.

The two co-defendants in the trial, real estate developer Fred Daibes and businessman Wael "Will" Hana, were also convicted.

Menendez showed no emotion as the guilty verdicts were read about 1 p.m., after three days of jury deliberations. U.S. District Judge Sidney H. Stein scheduled sentencing for Oct. 29; the punishment could be

decades in prison and a ban from holding public office.

As lawyers discussed bail and sentencing logistics, Menendez sat with his hands clasped together, covering his mouth.

Menendez did not testify in his own defense. He vowed to appeal, and legal experts say he could be helped by the Supreme Court's rulings in recent years narrowing the scope of federal bribery laws.

Outside the courthouse, Menendez told reporters he had

SEE MENENDEZ ON A26



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

An electronic billboard on Tuesday shows former president Donald Trump in Butler, Pa., where he was the target of an attack during his campaign rally over the weekend.

Much love for Trump, little blame for Biden

Residents of Butler, Pa., hesitate to link their political foe to the attack, as some in GOP have

BY DANIELLE PAQUETTE

BUTLER, PA. — The gun seller usually agrees with Republicans trashing President Biden. Look at the banners hanging in his family's showroom: "MAGA COUNTRY." "MEAN TWEETS 2024."

But across his hometown, not far from where the shooter opened fire on a Trump rally, an electronic billboard flashed a new slogan that gave him pause: "DEMOCRATS ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION."

On the internet, meanwhile, some of his favorite GOP stars claimed that Biden's words had motivated the would-be assassin.

Donald Trump's newly minted pick for vice president, Sen. J.D. Vance (R-Ohio), said the rival campaign's rhetoric "directly led" to eight bullets flying toward the former president.

Directly led? "As much as I don't like the Democrats, I don't know if I can blame them," said Curt Hunka, 29.

How could anyone know, he wondered aloud, what inspired the 20-year-old gunman from a nearby Pittsburgh suburb? The FBI hasn't established a motive. Hunka understood the pressure that public figures face to speak "now, now, now," he said, but he

SEE SHOOTING ON A5

In big shift, Biden floats term limits, ethics code for high court

BY TYLER PAGER AND MICHAEL SCHERER

President Biden is finalizing plans to endorse major changes to the Supreme Court in the coming weeks, including proposals for legislation to establish term limits for the justices and an enforceable ethics code, according to two people briefed on the plans.

He is also weighing whether to

call for a constitutional amendment to eliminate broad immunity for presidents and other constitutional officeholders, the people said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations.

The announcement would mark a major shift for Biden, a former chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who has long resisted calls to make substantive

changes to the high court. The potential changes come in response to growing outrage among his supporters about recent ethics scandals surrounding Justice Clarence Thomas and decisions by the new court majority that have changed legal precedent on issues including abortion and federal regulatory powers.

Biden previewed the shift in a Zoom call Saturday with the Con-

gressional Progressive Caucus.

"I'm going to need your help on the Supreme Court, because I'm about to come out — I don't want to prematurely announce it — but I'm about to come out with a major initiative on limiting the court. ... I've been working with constitutional scholars for the last three months, and I need some help," Biden said, according to a transcript of the call obtained by The

Washington Post.

Term limits and an ethics code would be subject to congressional approval, which would face long odds in the Republican-controlled House and a slim Democratic majority in the Senate. Under current rules, passage in the Senate would require 60 votes. A constitutional amendment requires even more hurdles, including two-thirds

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IN THE NEWS

Hungry on the battlefield Ukrainian attacks on Russian supply lines have blunted a renewed invasion into the Kharkiv region, according to communication intercepts. A19

Sweltering heat D.C. suffered through 104-degree weather Tuesday, hitting triple-digit temperatures for the third straight day. B1

THE NATION **Six workers** in Colorado contracted bird flu, the most human cases in any state. A3
Scientists may have found a spade-toothed whale. It would be only the 7th ever studied. A26

THE WORLD **Real estate** was once the way for families in China to build wealth amid explosive growth in the 1990s and 2000s. Today, during a downturn, it's more likely to drain fortunes. A20

THE ECONOMY **A year-long** Senate probe found that Amazon's Prime Day sales event has been a "major cause" of worker injuries. A21
PC makers are rolling out laptops with AI processors, but the best features have nothing to do with the tech. A21

THE REGION **Prosecutors** have begun dropping obstruction charges against Jan. 6 defendants after a Supreme Court ruling limiting its use. B1
Larry Hogan pulled ahead of Angela Alsobrooks in fundraising for Maryland's U.S. Senate campaign. B1

STYLE **Meagan Good** discusses her new movie, spirituality and, yes, her relationship with Jonathan Majors. C1

FOOD **Community Matters**, a cafe in Charlotte, provides work training and life skills to those recovering from addiction.

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