# The Washington Post

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**Sunshine 71/46** • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 72/49 **B6**

*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024 · **$3**


## Tensions high as Hur prepares to testify

### Report aftermath reveals White House schism with Justice Department

BY PERRY STEIN AND TYLER PAGER

When Robert K. Hur testifies to Congress on Tuesday about his investigation of President Biden's handling of classified documents, he is expected to defend a special counsel process created to shield fraught cases from political interference.

But Hur's testimony will also highlight how Attorney General Merrick Garland's use of special counsels to handle the most politically sensitive cases has calcified tensions between the White House and the Justice Department.

It will be the first time Hur has addressed the public since his special counsel report last month on why he would not seek to charge Biden for his alleged mishandling of classified documents after his vice presidency. He said in the report that a jury might see Biden as "a sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory," not a criminal trying to break the law.

Biden and his top aides exploded at that portrait of the 81-year-old president, whose age and cognitive abilities have become a crucial issue in the 2024 presidential race. The report fueled White House anger at Garland, who Biden aides say has over-relied on special counsels — including to investigate the president's son, Hunter — in a way they believe has insulated the attorney general from some of the Justice Department's toughest decisions.

To many, Garland has been dealt an improbable hand: Unprecedented Justice Department investigations into Biden and former president Donald Trump as they prepare to face off in the 2024 election. The separate probe of Hunter Biden, whose legal troubles stem from years of drug addiction. A mandate to insulate the Justice Department from politics at a time when Trump and his allies repeatedly, and without evi-

SEE **BIDEN** ON **A8**

### Scientists and engineers work with residents of one of the coldest towns on Earth to develop equipment for the harsh conditions

BONNIE JO MOUNT/THE WASHINGTON POST

## Embracing renewable energy to save tradition

BY SARAH KAPLAN AND BONNIE JO MOUNT
IN QAANAAQ, GREENLAND

**In Qaanaaq, Greenland, residents live between the gargantuan Greenland Ice Sheet and the frigid waters of Baffin Bay.**

Out on the ice, Toku Oshima often says, "there is no time." No calendar but the migrations of sea creatures. No clock but the cadence of the tides. She can hunt and fish the same way her parents did, and their parents before them: traveling by dog sled, sleeping in a wooden hut she built with her own hands. In the rugged mountains and frozen fjords that surround Greenland's northernmost town, the old ways are still alive.

But those ways are under threat. Human-caused climate change has scrambled weather patterns and pushed the rhythms of animals out of sync with the ice and sun. Residents struggle to earn a living through hunting and fishing, which leaves them unable to afford the imported oil that keeps their homes warm and lit during the long Arctic night. The high cost of electricity and heat has forced some people to abandon their traditional livelihoods — or to leave the town altogether.

Qaanaaq residents should be able to heat their homes without sacrificing their culture, Oshima said. But that will require them to cast off the culprit behind their dual challenges of climate change and energy security: fossil fuels.

Together with scientists and engineers from Dartmouth College, Oshima is working to bring renewable energy to one of the most remote places on Earth. Drawing power from local wind and sunshine can reduce the cost of living in Qaanaaq, easing financial pressures on residents who already live at the edge of survival. And it can help the town do its part to rein in the planet-warming pollution that threatens its very existence.

The effort is in its infancy, with Oshima's Dartmouth partners still developing the equipment they hope to install. To succeed in such an isolated and harsh environment, they are leaning on the expertise of those who thrived in this landscape for generations. Each prototype is designed specifically for conditions in Qaanaaq and tested by the residents themselves.

Dartmouth College engineer Mary Albert, the U.S. co-leader for the project, sees it as a potential model for sustainability efforts the world over. "It's cogeneration of knowledge," she said, "so they can continue to live where they want to live and how they want to live."

SEE **GREENLAND** ON **A20**

## Pharma aims to hold line on prices

### BIDEN SEEKS TO CUT COSTS FOR SENIORS

### Legal challenge to future of Medicare negotiations

BY TONY ROMM

TRENTON, N.J. — Pharmaceutical giants are mounting a vigorous legal battle against President Biden's plan to lower seniors' prescription drug costs, urging federal judges here and around the country to invalidate a new program that aims to reduce the price of medications for high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

In a flurry of lawsuits, these drugmakers have blasted the government initiative as unconstitutional, defended their pricing practices and warned that regulation could undermine future cures — even as millions of older Americans say they are struggling to afford essential treatments.

The legal wrangling appears primed to reach the Supreme Court, which could carry lasting implications for the government's ability to regulate healthcare prices broadly. The stakes are also enormous for Biden, who ran in 2020 on a pledge to fulfill a longtime promise — made by both parties — to ease a key financial strain on older Americans.

The pharmaceutical industry specifically seeks to block a new law that enables Medicare to negotiate the price of select drugs under its prescription benefit, known as Part D. The idea is modeled after similar systems internationally, which have helped lower costs in other countries even as Americans face sky-high prices for some of the same treatments.

Enacted in 2022 as part of Biden's signature economic package, the Inflation Reduction Act, the law requires the administration to identify an initial set of 10 drugs to negotiate. The list was unveiled in August and includes

SEE **DRUGS** ON **A5**

## Doctored photo of princess triggers media crisis

### Celebrities' aspiration for perfection and journalism's truth-telling mission clash with its release

BY MAURA JUDKIS, JANAY KINGSBERRY, HERB SCRIBNER AND KARLA ADAM

Paul Clarke, a veteran photographer, was out rowing on the River Thames in the rain Sunday when his phone started lighting up.

The royal family had just released a photo of Catherine, Princess of Wales, and her three children — officially, a greeting in honor of Mother's Day in Britain, yet one that also arrived amid frenzied speculation about the future queen's striking absence from the public eye since abdominal surgery in January.

Clarke is an expert in the art of editing and retouching photos, and friends wanted his opinion of the image. He quickly noticed some, uh — *inconsistencies*.

What was up with Princess Charlotte's hand, which seemed distorted by the cuff of her sleeve? Why were her mother's fingers so

SEE **PHOTO** ON **A12**

PRINCE OF WALES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**Inconsistencies that prompted wire agencies to pull this photo released by Kensington Palace on Sunday include, clockwise from top right, Princess Charlotte's hair being cut off at her shoulder; distortions in her hand, sleeve and skirt; and the zipper on Princess Catherine's jacket.**

**Royal remorse:** Princess of Wales apologizes for photo edits. **A13**

## In test tubes, mimicking evolution's first steps

### A 'monumental' experiment may suggest how life on Earth started

BY MARK JOHNSON

A much-debated theory holds that 4 billion years ago, give or take, long before the appearance of dinosaurs or even bacteria, the primordial soup contained only the possibility of life. Then a molecule called RNA took a dramatic step into the future: It made a copy of itself.

Then the copy made a copy, and over the course of many millions of years, RNA begot DNA and proteins, all of which came together to form a cell, the smallest unit of life able to survive on its own.

Now, in an important advance supporting this RNA World theory, scientists at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, Calif., have carried out a small but essential part of the story. In test tubes, they developed an RNA molecule that was able to make accurate copies of a different type of RNA.

The work, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, gets them closer to the grand goal of growing an RNA molecule that makes accurate copies of itself.

"Then it would be alive," said Gerald Joyce, president of Salk and one of the authors of the new paper. "So, this is the road to how life can arise in a laboratory or, in principle, anywhere in the universe."

The team remains a ways off from showing that this is how life on Earth truly began, but the scenario they tested probably mimics one of the earliest stirrings of evolution, a concept described by the English naturalist Charles Darwin more than 150 years ago.

"This is a steppingstone toward understanding how life evolved," said Nikolaos Papastavrou, first author of the paper and a Salk postdoctoral fellow.

SEE **RNA** ON **A7**

## IN THE NEWS

**Biden's budget** The president's proposal for fiscal 2025 year calls for broad new social programs and higher taxes on major corporations and the wealthy. **A6**

**Gambling in D.C.** FanDuel will replace the troubled GambetDC platform this spring as the lone citywide sports-betting provider. **B1**

**THE NATION**

**A GOP report** detailed testimony contradicting that of a key witness for the Jan. 6 committee. A2

**The Trump campaign** is hoping to make gains among Black men in swing states. A4

**THE WORLD**

**Russia has boosted** its air power against Ukraine by deploying "glide bombs." A9

**Israeli pressure** on the Palestinian economy is pushing the West Bank to the brink. A11

**THE ECONOMY**

**As social media** ubiquity becomes harder to attain, the term "viral" is losing its meaning. A15

**The revamp** of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, once a potentially big win, has become a headache for the Biden administration. A16

**THE REGION**

**A daydream in 2021** led a 26-year-old to spend the past year walking to D.C. from Washington state. B1

**Three women** injured during the clearing of a 2020 racial justice protest in D.C. settled with the U.S. Park Police for a total of $750,000. B1

**STYLE**

**At Vanity Fair's** annual Oscars after-party, stars indulged in dancing, drinking and very quotable conversations. C1

**HEALTH & SCIENCE**

**Researchers** are working to determine whether "forever chemicals" in artificial turf fields could endanger kids' health. E1




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