

Rain 51/48 • Tomorrow: Mostly cloudy 65/52 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2023 · \$3

## Pope gave Israel blunt warning on war in Ğaza

Francis cautioned against committing 'terror' in call that nation did not reveal

> BY ANTHONY FAIOLA, STEFANO PITRELLI AND LOUISA LOVELUCK

As bombs fell and tanks penetrated deep into Gaza in late October, Israeli President Isaac Herzog held a fraught phone call with Pope Francis. The Israeli head of state was describing his nation's horror over the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 when the pope issued a blunt rejoinder.

It is "forbidden to respond to terror with terror," Francis said, according to a senior Israeli official familiar with the call, which has not been previously reported.

Herzog protested, repeating the position that the Israeli government was doing what was needed in Gaza to defend its own people. The pope continued, saying those responsible should indeed be held accountable, but not civilians.

That private call would inform Israeli interpretations of Francis's polemic statement, at his Nov. 22 general audience in St. Peter's Square, that the conflict had "gone beyond war. This is terrorism." Taken with the diplomatic exchange — deemed so "bad" by the Israelis that they did not make it public — the implication seemed clear: The pope was calling their campaign in Gaza an act of terror-

"How else could it be interpreted?" said the senior official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter.

The Vatican declined to clarify whether the pope was publicly or SEE POPE ON A14

U.S. efforts: Blinken says Israel has agreed to protect civilians. A12

Scarce food: Not enough aid makes it to Gaza amid pause. A12

## **EPA seeks** eradication of nation's lead water lines

Rule would force most utilities to replace toxic pipes within 10 years

### BY ANNA PHILLIPS

In a sweeping decision that could be expensive but beneficial to public health, the Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed for the first time requiring water utilities nationwide to replace all of their lead

If finalized, the rule would compel local utilities to dig up and replace lead piping in an ambitious effort to protect children and the public from the potent neurotoxin. It would be a massive undertaking, and the EPA has said it could cost \$45 billion.

But the costs of lead exposure are also high. Lead can cause irreversible cognitive damage and other health problems, even at low levels, and particularly in small children. Despite the significant health threat, cities have struggled to get rid of the estimated 9 million lead pipes that SEE LEAD ON A18

#### THE HUMAN LIMIT



# A hidden killer's range is expanding

Valley fever cases are rising in the American West, and scientists suspect climate change is the reason

t some point, Erik McIntyre inhaled the fungal spores. He couldn't see them or feel them, Land it was weeks before he began to lose energy, to drop weight, to cough up blood at a karaoke bar in

Now that he's paralyzed from Valley fever, in a nursing home at age 53, the former U.S. Navy electrician's day begins at 5 a.m. with a rectal tube procedure to release gas trapped in his stomach. The antifungal injections that left him retching and shaking are less frequent now, and the lesions where the fungus grew on his face and arms have faded to scars. But he knows he will never be cured, and that he will probable never walk again.

"I try not to dwell on what could have been," he said.

McIntyre can imagine the moment he encountered those microscopic spores. He remembers driving across dusty Phoenix suburbs with his windows down. But he can't be sure.

These days, the fungus could be any-

Valley fever has long haunted the American Southwest: Soldiers on dusty military bases, prisoners in wind-swept BY JOSHUA PARTLOW, VERONICA PENNEY AND CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN IN BAKERSFIELD, CALIF.



TOP: Leslie Ades walks a horse through dust near Bend, Ore. Valley fever is a fungus that develops below the undisturbed surface of soils in hot, dry areas in the Western United States, and scientists fear that climate change will expand its range. ABOVE: Erik McIntyre, 53, became paralyzed

after contracting Valley fever.

jails, construction workers pushing new suburbs farther into deserts have all encountered coccidioides, the flesheating fungus that causes Valley fever. But the threat is growing. Cases have roughly quadrupled over the past two decades, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A key reason for Valley fever's spread, researchers say, may be human-driven climate change - and they warn that a much larger area of the United States will become vulnerable to the disease in the decades to come. The fungus thrives in dry soils, rides on plumes of dust and booms after periods of extreme drought — the exact cycles that scientists say have grown more intense and widespread across the American West due to the warming climate.

While science is not yet able to show a definitive link between the rising case counts and higher temperatures, the connection seems clear to many of the front-line health workers grappling with the disease.

"I cannot think of any other infection that is so closely entwined with climate change," said Rasha Kuran, an infectious-disease specialist at the University SEE VALLEY FEVER ON A10

## U.S. axes alerts to Meta on intrusion

#### FOREIGN INFLUENCE WARNINGS WITHER

Partnership eroded by conservative legal effort

#### BY NAOMI NIX AND CAT ZAKRZEWSKI

The U.S. government has stopped warning some social networks about foreign disinformation campaigns on their platforms, reversing a years-long approach to preventing Russia and other actors from interfering in American politics less than a year before the U.S. presidential elections, according to company offi-

Meta no longer receives notifications of global influence campaigns from the Biden administration, halting a longtime practice involving the federal government and the world's largest social media company, senior security officials said Wednesday. Federal agencies have also stopped communicating about political disinformation with Pinterest, according to the company.

The developments underscore the far-reaching impact of a conservative legal campaign against initiatives established to avoid a repeat of the 2016 election, when Russia manipulated social media in an attempt to sow chaos and swing the vote for Donald Trump. Republican lawmakers even have proposed cutting funding for combating foreign disinformation and subpoenaed government agencies, including the State Department's Global Engagement Center, which counters foreign propa-

For months, researchers in government and academia have warned that a barrage of lawsuits, SEE DISINFORMATION ON A2

## After speaker ouster, a flash of bad blood for GOP allies

In a tense call, Trump told McCarthy why he didn't try to rescue him

#### BY JACQUELINE ALEMANY AND LEIGH ANN CALDWELL

In the weeks after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, then-House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) traveled down to Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club and threw a lifeline to the former president, who was under a cloud of controversy for provoking the historic assault.

The fence-mending session between the two Republican leaders ended with a photo op of the two men, grinning side by side in a gilded, frescoed room. The stunning turnabout of the House GOP leader, who had previously blamed Trump for the deadly attack, paved the way for the former president's return to de facto leader of the Republican

When the tables were turned almost three years later, however, SEE MCCARTHY ON A4

### **IMPERFECT UNION**

## The hidden biases at play in the U.S. Senate

#### BY DAN BALZ, **CLARA ENCE MORSE** AND NICK MOURTOUPALAS

The United States Senate was never designed to represent all people equally. But over recent decades, it has become unrepresentative in ways the founders could not have imagined.

In the negotiations that created the Constitution, the House was to be apportioned proportionally, based on the population of the state. When a proposal was offered to apportion the Senate in the same way, representatives from the less populated states objected.

The solution is what became known as the Great Compromise, a Senate that was designed to treat every state equally, regardless of population: two senators for the states with the least population, two senators for the states

And that's not the only way things are skewed.

People of color get notably less representation.

The five most populous states (Calif., Fla., N.Y., Pa. and Tex.) and the five least populous states (Alaska, N.D., S.D., Vt. and Wyo.) have the same representation in the Senate, but the most

populous states are much more racially diverse.			
MOST POPULOUS		LEAST POPULOUS	
White	46%		78%
Hispanic	31	5	
Black	10	2	
Asian	8	3	
Multiracial/Other	4	6	
American Indians and Alaska Natives	0	6	

with the most population.

The new nation in 1790 consisted of 13 states arrayed along the Eastern Seaboard, with political parties still in their infancy. At that time, only White male landowners could vote. Today the United States is a transcontinental behemoth. It's increasingly diverse, with the franchise open to adult citizens, regardless of race or landowning status. And it's increasingly sorting itself along rigid partisan lines.

The result of the country's evolution has been a Senate that suffers from three fundamental imbalances, according to a Washington Post data analysis of population growth, demographic changes and shifts in voting pat-

First, the disparities in power among voters in different states have widened as states have SEE SENATE ON A6

### IN THE NEWS

FBI site selection The GSA inspector general's office will review the decision to place the agency headquarters in Greenbelt, Md., after an outcry from Virginia officials. B1

Big name, big bets LeBron James's longtime manager, Maverick Carter, admitted to betting on NBA games through an illegal bookie. D1

### THE NATION

A federal contractor provided poor migrant care, a whistleblower complaint alleges. A3 **Senate Democrats** voted to subpoena two allies of conservative Su-

preme Court justices. A4

### **THE WORLD**

At COP28, nations struck a deal on a "loss and damage" fund for climate emergencies. A8 Russia's Supreme Court banned the global LGBTQ+ movement as an extremist group. A9

#### THE ECONOMY LinkedIn has AI to

help improve your profile, but early users say that the tool feels robotic and that it can introduce inaccuracies. A17 Tesla launched its

long-anticipated Cybertruck after years of false starts and a sharp price increase. A18

### **THE REGION**

Police have arrested an 18-year-old in connection with robberies along the Metropolitan Branch Trail. B1

**D.C. home buyers** have been left with significantly less aid after changes to the Home Purchase Assistance Program. B1

### **STYLE**

**Journalists** in small towns find themselves on the front lines in First Amendment battles. C1

### **WEEKEND** Food critic Tom

Sietsema talks about some great restaurants in the D.C. area ahead of the holiday season.

BUSINESS NEWS	A17
COMICS	C5
OPINION PAGES	A19
OBITUARIES	B4
TELEVISION	C4
WORLD NEWS	A8

CONTENT © 2023 The Washington Post Year 146, No. 53686