

Organ procurers targeted in probe

U.S. investigates possible fraud by some groups in transplant industry

BY LENNY BERNSTEIN, MARK JOHNSON AND LISA REIN

Federal authorities have launched a wide-ranging investigation of the nonprofit organizations that collect organs for transplant in the United States, according to six people familiar with the inquiry, which seeks to determine whether any of the groups have been defrauding the government.

The probe involves U.S. attorneys in various parts of the country who are investigating organ procurement organizations in at least five states. Their team includes investigators from the Department of Health and Human Services and the office of Michael Missal, the inspector general of the Department of Veterans Affairs. They are seeking to determine, among other things, whether any of these groups have been overbilling the government for their costs.

The investigation has been underway for at least several months, the people said. But in a sign the probe is intensifying, investigators from the VA inspector general were “dispatched” to the offices and homes of 10 chief executives of organ procurement organizations at the beginning of February “as part of an inquiry,” according to a notice that Steve Miller, chief executive of the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations, sent to his membership.

Serious deficiencies in the SEE ORGANS ON A2

Leaders ‘optimistic’ on averting shutdown

BY JACOB BOGAGE

President Biden and congressional leaders appear to be closing in on a deal that could keep the government open past the weekend — but lawmakers don’t seem any closer on a breakthrough to send more U.S. aid to Ukraine, even as supplies on the front lines of the war against Russian invaders dwindle.

Facing a Saturday deadline, Biden and leaders in the House and Senate said Tuesday that they hoped to pass legislation to avert a looming partial shutdown, after what lawmakers described as a productive and intense Oval Office meeting on federal spending.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) said after the gathering that top leaders of both parties in Congress were “optimistic” about passing new measures to prevent the partial shutdown, set to begin at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, which would sideline a vast swath of vital services and federal workers. The closure would force critical services at the Department of Transportation offline. Food stamp programs could quickly run low on funding. Housing assistance for millions of families would fall into jeopardy. Another, SEE SHUTDOWN ON A4

The geography of abortion



Cristina, 35, travels from São Paulo, Brazil, to Buenos Aires, where she could get a legal abortion.

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL — She’d taken an overnight bus from the countryside, then a train across the urban sprawl of São Paulo, and now she was staring out the plane window, head full of worry. There was a pink rosary in her pocket. But she didn’t see the point of praying. She feared she was a sinner, a criminal, and this trip, her first time out of Brazil, would be a secret she’d carry for the rest of her life. Cristina was 35 years old. She

By bus, car and plane, women travel across Latin America to end pregnancies in countries that allow the procedure

BY MARINA DIAS AND TERENCE MCCOY

was 11 weeks pregnant. She came from a conservative Christian family in a conservative Christian nation where abortion was largely illegal, so she’d decided to travel to a country where it was not and bring an end to the pregnancy she didn’t want.

Not that long ago, such a trip would have almost certainly meant a journey out of Latin America, which historically has had some of the world’s most SEE ABORTION ON A10

The economy is roaring, and immigration is a key reason

Momentum in the job market has picked up aggressively — all while Washington is deadlocked on a border deal

BY RACHEL SIEGEL, LAUREN KAORI GURLEY AND MERYL KORNFELD

Immigration has propelled the U.S. job market further than just about anyone expected, helping cement the country’s economic rebound from the pandemic as the most robust in the world.

That momentum picked up aggressively over the past year. About 50 percent of the labor market’s extraordinary recent growth came from foreign-born workers between January 2023 and January 2024, according to an Economic Policy Institute analysis of federal data. And even before that, by the middle of 2022, the foreign-born labor force had grown so fast that it closed the labor force gap created by the



Alexander Santander, 49, and his family trekked for two months from Venezuela last fall. “Thank God we made it here,” he said.

pandemic, according to research from the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

Immigrant workers also recovered much faster than native-born workers from the pandemic’s disruptions, and many saw some of the largest wage gains in industries eager to hire. Economists and labor experts say the surge in employment was ultimately key to solving unprecedented gaps in the economy that threatened the country’s ability to recover from prolonged shutdowns.

“Immigration has not slowed. It has just been absolutely astronomical,” said Pia Orrenius, vice president and senior economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. “And that’s been instrumental. You can’t grow like this

with just the native workforce. It’s not possible.”

Yet immigration remains an intensely polarizing issue in American politics. Fresh survey data from Gallup showed Americans now cite immigration as the country’s top problem, surpassing inflation, the economy and issues with government. A record number of migrants have crossed the southern border since President Biden took office, with apprehensions topping 2 million for the second straight year in fiscal 2023, among the highest in U.S. history. Cities like New York, Chicago and Denver have struggled to keep up with the busloads of immigrants sent from Texas who are overwhelming local shelters.

Washington is deadlocked on a SEE IMMIGRATION ON A20

IN THE NEWS

Space mission ending early Odysseus, the first privately developed craft to touch down on the moon, tipped over upon landing and on Tuesday had only hours of power left. A7

Cherry blossom season The trees around D.C.’s Tidal Basin are likely to hit peak bloom 10 days early, between March 19 and 23. B1

THE NATION A “star witness” testified that his claims about Fani T. Willis were “speculation.” A3 The head of the National Republican Senatorial Committee is taking charge of primaries. A4

THE WORLD Some South Koreans are defying rigid gender norms by staying single or sharing chores. A8 President Biden touted progress on a ceasefire deal, but Hamas and Israel downplayed it. A13

THE ECONOMY The Help Desk put two new AI tools to the test with common work tasks. Using Gemini for Google Workspace and Microsoft’s Copilot was helpful but a pain. A15 Last year’s stock market surge pushed more workers into the 401(k) millionaires club. A20

THE REGION Lawmakers from Maryland, home of the Commanders, say they’ll vote no on a House bill that could pave the way for a D.C. stadium. B1 Loudoun County will randomly use drug-sniffing dogs in its high schools to root out fentanyl in buildings. B1

SPORTS Sports Illustrated the magazine is foundering, but Sports Illustrated the brand seems to be thriving. D1

FOOD Nearly 50 years later, “Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine” remains the standard for cookbook memoirs.

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