

ELECTION 2024

Voters’ message on economy lays bare deep well of angst

A campaign lost by Biden, Harris and a party that was out of touch

BY ASHLEY PARKER, TYLER PAGER, JOSH DAWSEY AND MICHAEL SCHERER

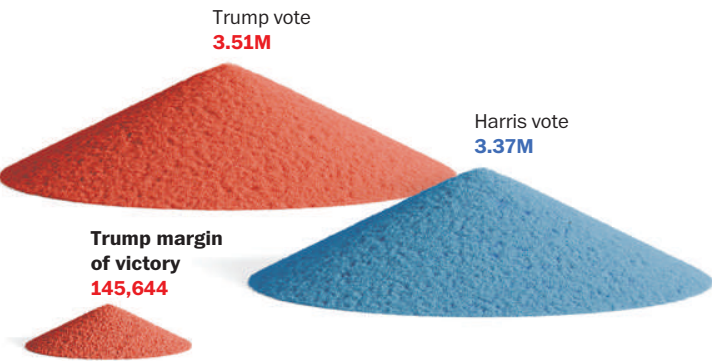
When President Joe Biden was the Democratic nominee, he surrounded himself with an insular circle of longtime aides, often prompting complaints about his operation being a black box. He refused to meet with his pollsters, and many on his campaign saw ads at the same time the public did — when they first ran.

“There was somewhere be-

tween never and hardly ever any real strategy conversation,” said one person familiar with the dynamic.

When Vice President Kamala Harris replaced Biden in July, the dynamic flipped. Campaign chair Jen O’Malley Dillon insisted on having a larger role in the messaging process, and over several weeks in the late fall convened three “step back” messaging Zooms to strategize about how to negatively define former president

SEE CAMPAIGN ON A5



With grains of sand to represent each vote, see how Trump won a second term

In the key battleground state of Pennsylvania, Trump won 3.5 million votes. This sounds like a lot, but his winning margin is just a sliver of that. U.S. elections are, for the most part, decided by a few thousand people — or a handful of sand. This one was no exception. Pages A12-13

LOSS SPURS DEMOCRATIC SOUL-SEARCHING

Leaders differ on how to answer bruising repudiation

BY ABHA BHATTARAI AND JEFF STEIN

Americans told the Democratic Party this past week that the economy, even beyond inflation, isn’t working for them, thrusting party leaders into a scramble for a new economic strategy that can reverse the losses of working-class voters.

The country’s decisive swing toward President-elect Donald Trump reflects not just dissatisfaction with the recent run-up in

prices but also deeper fears about slipping financial security. Americans are saving less than they were before the pandemic, and they are falling increasingly delinquent on car loans and credit cards at rates not seen since the aftermath of the Great Recession.

Three in 10 voters said they were “falling behind” financially, a 50 percent increase from 2020, according to AP VoteCast. Meanwhile, 8 in 10 said they hoped for

SEE ECONOMY ON A6

Job unease in region: Federal workers brace for Trump’s second term. C1

Jewish Americans feel the pull of Israel

As war fears loom, a surge of U.S. residents seek to immigrate there

BY RACHEL CHASON

TEL AVIV — Yocheved Ruttenberg was living in a mostly Christian community in Dallas and feeling largely disconnected from her Jewish identity when she woke one morning in October last year to a friend’s text: “Have you seen what’s happening in Israel?”

Ruttenberg, a 23-year-old who had grown up in an Orthodox Jewish home in Baltimore but drifted from religion as a teenager, felt paralyzed in her bed as she watched videos of Hamas fighters attacking Israeli civilians. Eventually, she shocked her friends by declaring: “I need to go to Israel.”

Within two weeks, Ruttenberg was in Tel Aviv for what was meant to be a two-week trip. Now, more than a year later, she’s still in Israel and in the process of becoming a citizen — one in the surge of Jewish Americans seeking closer ties to the country, despite uncertainty and risk as war engulfs the region.

“I couldn’t imagine not being here,” Ruttenberg said. “It was just this gut feeling — I felt pulled.”

Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas fighters streamed out of Gaza to kill an estimated 1,200 Israelis in communities and kibbutzim near the enclave, was the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. The Israeli government has responded with a military campaign that has killed more than 43,000 people in Gaza, authorities there say, and has launched attacks in Lebanon aimed at destroying Hezbollah, raising the specter of an all-out regional war. The election of Donald Trump has injected further uncertainty into the direction of Israel’s multifront conflict, including its escalating confrontations with Iran.

Since the Hamas attack, more than 11,700 Americans have opened applications for aliyah, the Israeli naturalization process for people with at least one Jewish grandparent. That’s nearly double the number from the year before, according to Nefesh B’Nefesh, a nonprofit that facilitates aliyah — literally, “ascending” or “going

SEE ISRAEL ON A10

Gaza: Panel warns of famine; Qatar halts role in cease-fire talks. A19



Leveled trees surround a cabin in Buncombe County, North Carolina. Residents wonder how long the forest will take to recover.

A landscape transformed by Helene

The storm’s intense winds destroyed millions of trees in western North Carolina forests

BY SIMON DUCROQUET, SCOTT DANCE, NIKO KOMMENDA AND JOHN MUYSKENS

This cabin used to be a refuge in the forests of western North Carolina.

But since Hurricane Helene barreled through, the once leafy landscape that surrounded it is now barren.

While deadly floodwaters inundated valley communities, extreme winds battered forests along steep slopes and atop mountains.

The winds’ force was uneven, leaving some forests intact and resilient, but others decimated. Millions of trees were lost.

The recovery will be long and daunting.

There’s a tranquility to western North Carolina’s forests. The quiet here is part of the reason Leo Temko and Janice Barnes chose a hillside northeast of Asheville as an escape from New York City, where they spend half their time.

Mountainsides draped in the green of tulip poplar, oak and hickory lure people by the thousands: retirees and campers, naturalists and adventurers. But serenity was shattered when Helene blasted through with extreme winds on Sept. 27. Days of rain had soaked the soils, which made trees on steep slopes more vulnerable when Helene arrived.

SEE HELENE ON A16

Commanders’ rise has merchandise sales booming

BY NICKI JHABVALA

There’s perhaps no greater sign of the Washington Commanders’ makeover than the Dick’s Sporting Goods outpost near the team’s Northern Virginia headquarters. Six display racks along the center aisle of the store brim with Commanders merchandise, including dozens of Jayden Daniels’s No. 5 jerseys, licensed hoodies and a

“Hail Jayden” T-shirt commemorating his Hail Mary touchdown pass. There are rows of footballs, stacks of ball caps, plastic fan chains, burgundy and gold beanies, pompoms and all the “W”-embossed tailgating accessories one could want — a Commanders wireless boom box, anyone?

Who would’ve thunk? For years, Washington’s National

Football League team was an afterthought in this store, its gear often stashed in the back with limited jerseys and hoodies that inevitably ended up on clearance.

But now, the Commanders are 7-2 for the first time in 28 years, thanks to their exciting young quarterback, dynamic offense and new owner, Josh Harris, who has invested millions since purchasing the team last year. The

franchise that was a perennial disappointment is working its way back to becoming must-see entertainment — and rediscovering some of the perks that come with it.

In short: Business is starting to boom again for the Commanders. Daniels leads all NFL players in merchandise sales from retail giant Fanatics this season, the

SEE COMMANDERS ON A14

METRO The surprising precinct in blue D.C. that swung hardest toward Trump.

BOOK WORLD Richard Price’s “Lazarus Man” is a fast-paced but thoughtful urban thriller.



SPORTS How Trinity Rodman does the “Trin Spin,” her dazzling signature move.

ARTS & STYLE In this August Wilson film adaptation, Washington family roots run deep.



TRAVEL A family goes to Norway for a surreal light show in the dark countryside.

BUSINESS Your medicine comes from unexpected places, but sources are at risk.

\$112 SUNDAY COUPON INSERTS

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