

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

VOL. CLXXIII . . . No. 60,008

© 2023 The New York Times Company

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2023

Prices in Canada may be higher

\$4.00

Many Voters See Criminality But Support Trump Anyway

Indictments No Obstacle Among G.O.P., Poll Shows

*This article is by **Shane Goldmacher**, **Ruth Igielnik** and **Camille Baker**.*

Donald J. Trump continues to march to the 2024 Republican presidential nomination with a commanding lead over his primary rivals, even as a strong majority of voters nationwide believe he has committed serious federal crimes, including a growing faction of Republicans, according to a new poll from The New York Times and Siena College.

The results show the remarkable degree to which Republican voters are willing to look past Mr. Trump’s legal jeopardy — the former president has been indicted four times in 2023 and faces 91 felony counts — and line up behind his potential return to power.

Overall, 58 percent of voters nationwide believe Mr. Trump committed serious federal crimes, according to the survey, including 66 percent of independent voters.

Yet Mr. Trump continues to clobber his closest Republican competitors in the primary by more than 50 percentage points, pulling in the support of 64 percent of Republican primary voters nationwide. Nikki Haley, the former United Nations ambassador, is now in a distant second place, with 11 percent, followed by Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, who has fallen to third, with 9 percent.

The poll was conducted before a court ruling on Tuesday injected more legal uncertainty into the 2024 presidential race. The Colorado Supreme Court ruled that Mr. Trump is disqualified from holding office again because he engaged in insurrection leading up to the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol, a decision the former president plans to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mr. Trump’s primary lead has swelled since the summer, even though the share of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who believe he engaged in criminality rose to 27 percent from 17 percent in July. Mr. Trump is leading not only because he dominates among the large share of Republicans who see him as innocent, but also because he is winning one in three Republican voters who think he engaged in serious criminality.

Support for Mr. Trump in the Times/Siena poll is so thorough that 62 percent of Republicans think that if the former president wins the primary he should remain the Republican Party’s nominee — even if he is subsequently convicted of a federal crime.

“What they’re doing to the man is a crime,” James Howe, 81, a retired airline worker in Phoenix, said of Mr. Trump. “There’s been nobody in the history of this country

Continued on Page A17

G.O.P. Primary Voters’ Choices

If the election for the Republican nominee for president were held today, which candidate would you be most likely to vote for?

JULY POLL **DEC. POLL**

54% 64%

Donald Trump

17% 11%

Ron DeSantis Nikki Haley

3% 9%

2% 5%

Vivek Ramaswamy

Source: New York Times/Siena College polls conducted nationwide July 23-27 (932 likely Republican primary voters) and Dec. 10-14 (380 likely Republican primary voters)

LAZARO GAMIO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Colorado Court Deems Trump Unfit for Ballot

By **MAGGIE ASTOR**

Colorado’s top court ruled on Tuesday that former President Donald J. Trump is disqualified from holding office again because he engaged in insurrection with his actions leading up to the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol, an explosive ruling that is likely to put the basic contours of the 2024 election in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Colorado Supreme Court was the first in the nation to find that Section 3 of the 14th Amendment — which disqualifies people who engage in insurrection against the Constitution after taking an oath to support it — applies to Mr. Trump, an argument that his opponents have been making around the country.

The ruling directs the Colorado secretary of state to exclude Mr. Trump’s name from the state’s Republican primary ballot. It does not address the general election.

“We do not reach these conclusions lightly,” a four-justice majority wrote, with three justices dissenting. “We are mindful of the magnitude and weight of the questions now before us. We are likewise mindful of our solemn duty to apply the law, without fear or favor, and without being swayed by public reaction to the decisions that the law mandates we reach.”

Mr. Trump’s campaign said immediately that it would appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, a likelihood that the Colorado justices anticipated by putting their ruling on hold until January. And while Tuesday’s ruling

Continued on Page A18

Gay Catholics Hear History: ‘God Bless You’

*This article is by **Amy Harmon**, **Ruth Graham** and **Sarah Maslin Nir**.*

As a Jesuit priest for more than two decades, the Rev. James Martin has bestowed thousands of blessings — on rosary beads, on babies, on homes, boats, and meals, on statues of saints, on the sick, on brides and on grooms.

Never before, though, was he permitted to bless a same-sex couple — not until Monday, when the pope said he would allow such blessings, an announcement that reverberated through the church.

On Tuesday morning, Damian Steidl Jack, 44, and his husband, Jason Steidl Jack, 38, stood before Father Martin in a living room on Manhattan’s West Side. The couple, running a bit late because of subway delays, dressed casually. Damian, a floral designer, complimented Father Martin on the pine smell of the Christmas tree.

In keeping with the Vatican’s admonition that such a blessing should not be performed with “any clothing, gestures or words that are proper to a wedding,” Father Martin wore no robes, and read from no text. There is no blessing for same-sex couples in the thick book of blessings published by the U.S. Conference of Bishops. Instead he selected a favorite of his own from the Old Testament.

“May the Lord bless and keep you,” Father Martin began, touching the two men’s shoulders. They bowed their heads slightly, and held hands.

Continued on Page A18



KRISTIN ELISABET GUNNARSDOTTIR/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Local residents witnessing the volcanic eruption on Iceland’s Reykjanes Peninsula on Tuesday.

After Weeks of Buildup, a Must-See Nature Show

By **EGILL BJARNASON** and **JENNY GROSS**

HUSAVIK, Iceland — Pall Viggoisson, a tour guide in Iceland, was driving a van carrying nine British tourists on Monday night in search of the northern lights. But instead of the greenish glow of the aurora borealis, he saw red — flames and smoke from a volcanic eruption that Iceland had been uneasily awaiting.

The area, the Reykjanes Peninsula, had been experiencing strong seismic activity since October, a harbinger of an imminent eruption. The earthquakes — there were as many as 1,400 in a single 24-hour period in November — prompted the evacuation of the town of Grindavik and the temporary closing of the Blue Lagoon, a top tourist attraction. With these shaky warnings, Icelanders were girding for the eruption that came Monday night.

“I realized quickly this was no ordinary light pollution,” Mr. Viggoisson said. He pulled over on the highway so the tourists could take photos.

Soon, the highway, which connects the capital to Keflavik International Airport, became busy, as other curious spectators drove from Reykjavik and nearby towns to catch a glimpse of the spectacle for themselves: reddish and orange skies, billowing smoke and lava fountains reaching over 300 feet into the air.

Continued on Page A6



JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

Texas Sued Over Migrant Law

Officials in El Paso County argued that the sweeping new law violated the Constitution. Page A16.

THE WEATHER

Today, plenty of sunshine, dry, a light northwest wind, high 46. Tonight, clear, low 36. Tomorrow, sunny, dry, a north wind, high 43. Weather map appears on Page B12.

RED SEA ATTACKS IMPERIL SHIPPING AND THE ECONOMY

IRAN-BACKED FIGHTERS

Vessels Avoid Suez Canal
— U.S. Tries to Blunt
Global Trade Risk

By **PETER EAVIS**

The wave of attacks against merchant ships in the Red Sea is forcing companies to send ships on longer routes and threatens to hurt an already wobbly global economy.

The Houthis, an armed group backed by Iran that controls much of northern Yemen, have been using drones and missiles to target ships since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7. That has forced some shipping giants and oil companies to avoid the Suez Canal, a development that could hamper global trade and push up the cost of imported goods.

The Suez is a vital artery for container ships and fuel tankers. Goods and fuel from Asia and the Middle East have made their way to Europe and the United States through the passage since it opened in 1869. Britain and other world powers have fought wars and engaged in geopolitical intrigue over the canal, controlled by Egypt now, for more than a century.

About 50 vessels go through the Suez Canal a day, and recent data suggested that, as of Monday, at least 32 had been diverted, said Chris Rogers, head of supply chain research at S&P Global Market Intelligence. He noted that nearly 15 percent of European imports were transported by sea from Asia and the Persian Gulf, most of which go through the Suez.

Peter Sand, chief analyst at Xeneta, a shipping market analytics company, described the problems in the Red Sea and the canal as “a slow-burning disaster that really blew up on the weekend.”

He added, “Everybody involved in global shipping, especially with supply chains connected by the Suez Canal, is trying to find out

Continued on Page A8

Duped, Trapped Then Tortured In Scam Camp

By **ISABELLE QIAN**

He had been promised a generous salary. A better work-life balance. A chance to live in the vibrant metropolis of Bangkok. His fluency in English would be put to good use as a translator for an e-commerce company, the recruiter had said.

More than anything else, Neo Lu, a 28-year-old Chinese office worker, believed the gig would be the new start he needed to save money for his dream of emigrating to the West. So in June of last year, he said his goodbyes, flew to Thailand and headed for his new job.

But when he arrived, his head was spinning from the scorching sun — and the feeling that something was very wrong. Instead of an office building in a city, Mr. Lu had been dumped at what looked like a labor camp haphazardly built on a patch of jungle and muddy fields.

Within the compound were spartan, low-rise concrete buildings with barred windows and doors. Two men in combat fatigues, carrying rifles, guarded the main entrance. High walls and fences topped with razor wire surrounded the compound, clearly

Continued on Page A12

NATIONAL A14-20

New York Weighs Reparations

Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a bill that will create a task force to examine the lasting impact of slavery. PAGE A19

Tributes for a Trailblazer

President Biden was among those honoring Justice Sandra Day O’Connor at her funeral. PAGE A15



INTERNATIONAL A4-13

How Russia Flouts Tech Bans

Using shipping workarounds and middlemen, Moscow has obtained the technology it needs to keep its economy and its war in Ukraine going. PAGE A10

Kidnapped in Myanmar

The ruling military, which is struggling with recruitment, denies abductions. But five men say it happened. PAGE A4

OBITUARIES A21

A Towering Sculptor

Richard Hunt, who was at Emmett Till’s funeral, transformed public spaces with works that exuded freedom. He was 88.

BUSINESS B1-7

‘Bond Vigilantes’ Are Back

The financial world is debating if market appetite for U.S. debt is nearing a limit. Not everyone agrees that this is something to panic about. PAGE B1

Antigay Law Hurts Uganda

Passed in May, the Anti-Homosexuality Act is harming businesses that rely on foreign travelers and trade. PAGE B1

SPORTS B8-11

Unprecedented Recruitment

Twenty years ago, college football coaches did things they had never done before to sign Adrian Peterson. PAGE B8

FOOD D1-10

Future Told in Cookie Cutters

From Barbie to unicorns to presidential candidates, the shape-shifting baking tools mirror America’s culture. PAGE D1

It’s Really All About the Mess

The Feast of the Seven Fishes is meaningful for the time spent cooking together as much as the eating. PAGE D4



ARTS C1-6

In an Attic, Satirizing Nazis

Curt Bloch created 95 issues of a magazine, now drawing attention, in the crawl space of a Dutch home. PAGE C1

‘Coppelia’ Awakens With Joy

As with his “Swan Lake” and “Giselle,” Alexei Ratmansk enlivens a staging of the Romantic ballet, at La Scala. PAGE C5

OPINION A22-23

Michelle Goldberg PAGE A22

