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Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2020 • \$2



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr testifies before the House Judiciary Committee, where he faced questions about the deployment of federal agents to racial justice protests around the country and his intervention in criminal cases involving the president's allies.

Barr is confronted in caustic hearing

BY DEVLIN BARRETT,
MATT ZAPOTOSKY,
KAROUN DEMIRJIAN
AND FELICIA SONMEZ

Democrats clashed with Attorney General William P. Barr on Tuesday at a congressional hearing marked by angry recriminations over racial justice protests in Portland, Ore., and around the country, as the nation's top law enforcement official said additional agents were needed to subdue aggressive, violent crowds.

Democrats unleash accusations of political bias in Justice Dept.

The hearing before the House Judiciary Committee was acrimonious from the outset, as liberal lawmakers accused the conservative attorney general of politicizing the Justice Department through his deployment of federal

agents to U.S. cities, his involvement in high-profile prosecutions of people connected to President Trump, and his posture toward the upcoming presidential election.

Lawmakers spent months seeking Barr's testimony on a host of issues related to the Trump administration's interactions with the Justice Department. With the attorney general finally seated at the witness table, Democrats mostly made speeches or talked over him as he at-

tempted to answer their questions, seemingly squandering any chance of getting new information or an admission out of him.

"This is a hearing; I thought I was the one who was supposed to be heard," Barr said in exasperation.

In a thick fog of partisan bickering, indignant lawmakers argued about everything from mask-wearing etiquette to bathroom breaks. In the afternoon,

SEE BARR ON A4

Trump shrugs at virus aid bill

CALLS REPUBLICAN PLAN 'SEMI-IRRELEVANT'

Disputes over FBI building, unemployment benefits

BY ERICA WERNER,
SEUNG MIN KIM
AND JEFF STEIN

President Trump brushed off the new \$1 trillion Senate GOP coronavirus legislation as "sort of semi-irrelevant" Tuesday, dismissing its significance just a day after Senate Republican leaders overcame contentious internal divisions to roll it out.

At the Capitol, meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) disavowed a key Trump administration priority in the bill — funding for a new FBI headquarters — while the second-ranking GOP senator suggested that Congress might be

unable to make a deal in time to avert the expiration of emergency unemployment benefits on Friday.

Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) said Congress might have to pass a stand-alone extension of the unemployment benefits, a piecemeal approach that administration officials have floated but that Senate Republican leaders had avoided publicly embracing before now.

"If things are, the wheels have come off by then, then I think it would probably argue for doing something skinnier or smaller and then, you know, regrouping," Thune told reporters. "But again,

SEE STIMULUS ON A15

In resisting masks, U.S. lost early virus weapon

BY GRIFF WITTE,
ARIANA EUNJUNG CHA
AND JOSH DAWSEY

Mike DeWine had blazed a trail in March with his forceful response to the coronavirus pandemic, rapidly shutting down his state to protect it from the worst ravages of disease.

A month later, Ohio's governor made what seemed, by comparison, a modest proposal: If businesses wanted to reopen, customers and employees would have to wear masks.

The backlash came instantly. An avalanche of abuse on social

media. Calls from anguished citizens. Angry recriminations and threats.

The next day, a chastened DeWine backed down. Asking people to wear a mask "is offensive to some of our fellow Ohioans," the Republican declared somberly. "And I understand that."

It would be three months — plus tens of thousands of cases and thousands of deaths — before the governor would try again.

The mask is the simplest and among the most effective weapons against the coronavirus in the public health arsenal. Yet from the

SEE MASKS ON A11

Biden seeking to boost black, Latino finances

Plan would spend tens of billions to 'advance racial equity' in economy

BY MAURA EWING
AND SEAN SULLIVAN

WILMINGTON, DEL. — Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, announced a plan Tuesday to spend tens of billions of dollars to help people of color overcome inequities in the economy, a move that comes amid financial and racial upheaval nationwide.

The plan calls for dedicating \$30 billion of previously proposed spending on a small-business opportunity fund for black, brown and Native American entrepreneurs. Biden also proposed tripling the goal for federal contracting with small disadvantaged businesses, from 5 percent to at least 15 percent of all spending on materials and services by 2025.

"We need to make bold, practical investments to recover from the economic mess we're in and to rebuild for the economic future our country deserves," Biden said, adding that his plan would "deal with systemic racism and advance racial equity in our economy."

The former vice president said he wants President Trump and Congress to create an emergency housing support program, along with promoting a refundable tax credit of up to \$15,000 to help families purchase their first homes.

The plan, outlined in a speech Biden gave in Wilmington on Tuesday, came as race and the economy have taken a high profile in the presidential contest. That process has been rocked by protests in the wake of several killings of unarmed black people and by the coronavirus pandemic, which has hit communities of color especially hard.

SEE BIDEN ON A6

VP choice: Biden pushes back his Aug. 1 target date by a week. **A6**

Politics at the point of a gun

Amid backlash against protests and pandemic orders, members of armed groups run for office



STUART ISETT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Matt Marshall, center, founder and former leader of the Washington Three Percenters, attends a fundraiser and Fourth of July barbecue in Eatonville for his state House run on the GOP ticket.

BY JOSHUA PARTLOW
IN OLYMPIA, WASH.

Before his political awakening this spring, Peter Diaz lived a quiet life near this leafy liberal bastion at the base of the Puget Sound. He ran a tree-trimming service and a business that built office cubicles. He was 37 and had never voted.

Now he has formed his own political party and is the leader of American Wolf, a roving band of civilians who have anointed themselves "peacekeepers" amid months of tense protests over racism and policing. In the name of law and order, members of his informal group have shot paintballs at demonstrators and carry zip ties and bear spray as they look for antifascists. Diaz has done "recon" in Minneapolis and Seattle's "autonomous zone," and drove his American Wolf mobile home to Mount Rushmore to celebrate Independence Day with President Trump.

America's summer of anxiety and rage has swept up men like

SEE ARMED GROUPS ON A5

IN THE NEWS

Virus setback in Hong Kong Heralded until recently as a model in battling the pandemic, the city has seen a spike in cases that experts blame in part on quarantine exemptions. **A12**

Twitter penalizes Trump Jr. The president's son had posted what the platform said was misinformation on hydroxychloroquine. **A18**

THE NATION
An aide to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos played a role in helping failing for-profit colleges, texts and emails show. **A3**
Speculation grew over whether President Trump could reach for

the military in a disputed election amid its involvement in recent protests. **A7**
The president of a national teachers union announced its council has authorized teachers to stage a strike if forced into unsafe schools. **A10**

THE WORLD
Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has turned to drug war tactics to fight the coronavirus pandemic. **A13**

THE ECONOMY
Joe Biden's Democratic critics are looking for him to break with past views on trade as the Trump campaign takes

aim at his record. **A16**

THE REGION
Gov. Larry Hogan writes in a memoir that the Trump era may bolster GOP moderates. **B1**
A holographic portrait of George Floyd is to be taken on a tour of the South, starting at the Robert E. Lee statue in Richmond. **B1**

FOOD
A chef's journey Jerome Grant left the African American Museum for a chance to tell his own story. **E1**

STYLE
New post at Post Krissah Thompson is named its first managing editor for diversity and inclusion. **C1**

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