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Trump suggests taking over the District

Attack raises alarms; he asserts that city leaders aren't effective on crime

BY PAUL SCHWARTZMAN, PETER HERMANN, EMILY DAVIES AND JENNY GATHRIGHT

President Donald Trump, in his sharpest attack on D.C.'s right to self-governance since returning to power, said the federal government "should take over" management of the city because he believes its leaders are not reducing crime, cleaning up graffiti and dismantling homeless encampments.

"I think that we should run it strong, run it with law and order, make it absolutely, flawlessly beautiful," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One late Wednesday.

His remarks prompted a swift response from local leaders in the federal enclave, including Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D), who said Thursday that the president's impressions of the city are out-of-date and rooted in the "covid environment" that he left in 2021 at the end of his first term.

The mayor, at an already scheduled news conference, refrained from directly criticizing Trump and repeated that she would focus on their "shared priorities" to improve the city. Yet, in her most expansive remarks since his inauguration about the threat of a federal takeover, Bowser said Trump's

SEE D.C. ON A5

Presidential fellows: Trump ends federal leadership program. B1

JFK library: Following Trump cuts, Boston center lets people in free. C1

Hamas returns four bodies, but IDF says one does not belong to a hostage



JEHAD ALSHRAFI/AP

Palestinians gather as Hamas fighters escort Red Cross vehicles carrying remains that the militants said belonged to four Israeli hostages — a mother, her two children and a retired journalist — in Gaza on Thursday. But the Israel Defense Forces later said the remains did not include a forensic match for the mother. **Story, A11**

President is expected to wrest control of USPS

BY JACOB BOGAGE

President Donald Trump is preparing to dissolve the leadership of the U.S. Postal Service and absorb the independent mail agency into his administration, potentially throwing the 250-year-old mail provider and trillions of dollars of e-commerce transactions into turmoil.

Trump is expected to issue an executive order as soon as this week to fire the members of the

Postal Service's governing board and place the agency under the control of the Commerce Department and Secretary Howard Lutnick, according to six people familiar with the plans, who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of fear of reprisals.

The board is planning to fight Trump's order, three of those people told The Washington Post. In an emergency meeting Thursday, the board retained outside counsel and gave in-

structions to sue the White House if the president were to remove members of the board or attempt to alter the agency's independent status.

Two of the group's GOP members — Derek Kan, a former Trump administration official, and Mike Duncan, a former chair of the Republican National Committee — were not in attendance, according to a person familiar with the gathering. The two did not immediately respond to re-

quests for comment.

Trump's order to place the Commerce Department in charge of the Postal Service would probably violate federal law, according to postal experts. Another executive order earlier this week instructed independent agencies to align more closely with the White House, though that order is likely to prompt court challenges and the Postal Service by law is generally ex-

SEE USPS ON A8

Occupancy of offices hits a high in big cities

Average of 54.2% filled at end of January, marking largest share since 2020

BY DANIELLE ABRIL

Eric Matzke used to be able to find a seat on the train when commuting to his office in Chinatown in downtown D.C. But on a recent day in February, he stood alongside the crowd of government and business workers who have steadily trickled back to their offices.

"I remember getting drinks after work in 2021, and it still felt like you were human furniture in a way. Now, it feels like you're a part of something," he said, noting that the growing number of in-person workers has injected some liveliness back into the city.

With employer mandates across the country taking effect, the number of people coming into an office is at its highest point since the pandemic, according to data released from property management company Kastle Systems. During the final week of January, office occupancy — or the percentage of office space that is filled — hit a record-

SEE OFFICES ON A15



MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

Miriam Schulman's house still stands, but she isn't sure when it will be safe to move back in.

Relief, then a hard reality

Their homes survived the L.A. fires, but little around them remains

BY REIS THEBAULT

LOS ANGELES — First, they felt relief. The firestorm had blown through their neighborhoods and leveled entire communities, but somehow — miraculously — their homes still stood. Then, reality set in.

For residents whose houses narrowly survived the Palisades and Eaton fires last month, what initially seemed like good fortune has quickly given way to grief and uncertainty. One of the most destructive disasters in Los Angeles history spared their properties, but the lucky ones now find themselves reckoning with what remains all around them: lonely moonscapes

that look nothing like the places they once loved. Most won't be able to return for good anytime soon, and the long recovery period means their isolation could persist for years to come.

"This won't be the same community that it was — or even a new version of it — for a very long time," said Grace Dzilenki as she loaded her car with belongings recovered from the home she shared with her fiancé in a hilly part of Pacific Palisades. Their low-slung house was intact, but the rest of their street looked like a scene from a war movie.

"You hate to sound like an ingrate, but there's something bittersweet about your house being

SEE FIRES ON A20

One month in, a tireless pursuit of more power

President maneuvers to build muscular executive beyond historical bounds

BY NAFTALI BENDAVID

In just one month in office, President Donald Trump has made it clear that he sees the presidency in starkly different terms from virtually any of his 44 predecessors.

He is not the first president to push the bounds of his authority. Andrew Johnson fired a Cabinet secretary in defiance of Congress. Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to pack the Supreme Court. Richard M. Nixon dismissed a prosecutor who threatened his hold on power.

But to a degree possibly unprecedented in the country's nearly 250 years, Trump is barreling through the executive branch with the conviction that it is his to rule alone, no matter the laws Congress has enacted — even if that means destroying agencies, intervening in the justice system or granting enormous authority to a wealthy donor.

That is not how most presidents have seen a job that the Constitution arguably defines — beyond its military and diplomatic duties — as essentially doing what Congress tells him, saying he must "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed."

"We are in a new kind of presi-

dency with Donald Trump," said H.W. Brands, a historian at the University of Texas at Austin. "He is trying to make the presidency like a CEO position in a corporation."

Trump is the first president who is essentially ignoring the existence of Congress, added Brands, a biographer of Andrew Jackson, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. "Presidents before Trump have not led with executive orders — they have fallen back on executive orders when Congress wouldn't do what they wanted it to do," Brands said. "But they all agreed that it was better to get Congress to pass legislation than to issue an executive order."

Trump's first month is striking not just because of the president's actions, but also because a significant number of Americans and members of Congress are applauding his aggressive approach to the job. The country appears to

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Kash Patel takes helm at FBI
The close Trump ally has called for profound changes at the agency. A4

Compliance: Trump close to line of defying judges, experts say. A9

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POLITICS & THE NATION

These workers took the ‘fork’ in the road — then they got lost in the system

BY HANNAH NATANSON

Dave Elmstrom knew what he would do when the Trump administration's resignation offer, titled “Fork in the Road,” landed in his inbox: take it.

Elmstrom, a probationary employee at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, had a job giving green-energy grants to farmers: an immediate target for Trump, he suspected.

He replied “resign” on Feb. 5, according to an email reviewed by The Washington Post. He also signed a resignation agreement, although no supervisor could tell him where to send it.

Eight days later, Elmstrom was fired for “performance.” A human resources worker told him probationary employees were no longer eligible for the “fork” offer. Plunged into doubt, he pondered tapping into his savings — until, hours after The Washington Post contacted the Office of Personnel Management on Wednesday to ask about cases like Elmstrom's, he received an email declaring he was accepted after all.

“This whole thing has just been a bundle of uncertainty,” he said. “It's very disorganized. I feel like they're just making it up as they go.”

The Trump administration's sweeping offer of deferred resignations — which the government says will allow workers to get paid until September — was to many a guarantee of short-term financial security amid the tumult of massive cuts in the federal workforce. But, across agencies, some probationary employees were mistakenly fired after taking or attempting to take the “fork” offer, according to interviews with dozens of federal workers and records obtained by The Post.

And now, administration officials and agency leads are scrambling to fix their blunders and get back in touch with employees who have lost access to government emails and work devices.

An official with the Office of Personnel Management said that pool of workers, who have fewer job protections than permanent



CRAIG HUDSON/REUTERS

Labor union activists rally in support of federal workers during a protest on Capitol Hill on Feb. 11.

employees, were always eligible for the deal. But The Post documented instances of such firings at several agencies, including the Education Department, the Small Business Administration and the U.S. Forest Service. Officials with at least two agencies, the USDA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, told probationary employees they were deemed ineligible for the “fork” offer by the Office of Personnel Management, known as OPM, according to emails obtained by The Post.

On Wednesday, some agencies began to issue corrections, reinstating fired workers to the resignation program. It was not clear how many employees were affected or how many of the approximately 200,000 probationary employees working across the government took the deal. Tens of thousands of them have been fired in the past week, according to a Washington Post analysis, but the administration has not provided an official tally.

“This is obviously a case of the

right hand not talking to the left hand in every possible way,” said Debra D'Agostino, a founding partner of the D.C.-based Federal Practice Group, which represents civil servants. With many supervisors left out of decisions on whom to let go, agencies are likely to have neglected to cross-reference lists of employees who took the resignation offer with lists of those on probation, she said.

“It was just, pull the trigger and clean up the mess later,” she said.

The apparent miscommunication between OPM and agencies, and the resulting back-and-forth for workers, is the latest issue for the Trump administration as it rushes to downsize the 2.3 million-person civilian workforce. A push to fire thousands over Presidents' Day weekend led to errors large and small, and the swift reversals of some dismissals, as the administration sought to un-fire essential workers such as those who bolster the nation's nuclear defense.

The ensuing turmoil has up-

ended people's lives, stressing employees unsure of their status who have begun applying for other jobs, or unemployment benefits, and calculating how to survive on a shoestring budget. But even for workers skeptical of the offer, seeing the administration apparently fail to keep its “fork” promises stung, especially given how frequently — and loudly — the White House and billionaire Elon Musk had trumpeted the benefits of the program.

The Trump administration kept promising “we should have no fear that it would be honored,” said a U.S. Forest Service employee who, like others interviewed for this article, spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation. The employee tried to accept the resignation deal Feb. 6, only to be fired three months before she would have graduated out of her probationary status.

The government-wide email blast sent Jan. 28 was an opening shot in the Trump administra-

tion's campaign to radically reduce the federal workforce. The email told workers to reply “resign” if they wanted to accept and said they had until Feb. 6 to decide.

A legal challenge soon followed and the program was paused, then resumed, creating confusion over the deadline. An OPM spokesperson said 75,000 employees accepted the deal, which the administration abruptly closed to participants on Feb. 12.

Throughout the turbulent court proceedings, confused federal employees in group chats and online forums questioned whether the offer was legitimate. Some urged their colleagues not to accept, pointing out that the “fork” email resembled one that Musk — who is spearheading efforts to shrink the government through his work with the U.S. DOGE Service — sent to employees at Twitter, before he reduced the workforce by 80 percent and refused to pay promised severance.

Administration officials repeatedly reassured employees that the offer was real. White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told reporters that the resignation program was a “very generous, once-in-a-lifetime offer.”

An FAQ on OPM's site published about the program reads, “Will I really get my full pay and benefits ... through September 30 ... ?” And it promises the answer is “Yes.”

“The government will honor the deferred resignation offer,” OPM posted on X on Feb. 6.

At no point did any public communication from OPM state that probationary employees were ineligible. The FAQ says “all full-time federal employees” could resign, except for military personnel, U.S. Postal Service employees, workers in immigration enforcement, national security and public safety, and “other positions specifically excluded” by agencies.

But some agencies evidently came to believe probationary workers shouldn't be allowed to resign early.

When Elmstrom, the USDA worker, received notice he was terminated, he swiftly wrote to the director of human resources to complain.

“The Deferred Resignation Program is an OPM program,” the director replied. “Personnel terminated during their probationary period were deemed recently as not eligible for the program.”

A similar email went out on Feb. 17 to employees at FEMA, according to a message obtained by The Post. “If you elected to participate in the deferred resignation program,” the email stated, “a determination was made that probationary employees are not eligible and will be terminated.”

Amid the confusion, at least one probationary employee has been fired twice, from a post at the Small Business Administration.

First, she was mistakenly fired on a Friday, then reinstated on a Monday, according to emails she provided to The Post.

That same afternoon in early February, tired and dispirited, she accepted the resignation offer, even though she loved her job and had hoped to spend her career working for the federal government, she said. Twenty-four hours later, she checked her email to find she was fired again — effective within an hour.

As she was submitting applications for other jobs a week later, she got a message from her boss: She was admitted into the deferred resignation program after all. OPM had sent a formal agreement to her work email — which she could no longer access, because she had been terminated. Her boss forwarded it, and she signed it.

At this point, she has little confidence she will get paid through September, and no trust in the people leading efforts to shrink the government.

“You just don't know what they're going to do next,” she said. “There's no rhyme or reason.”

Lisa Rein, Brianna Sacks and Emily Davies contributed to this report.

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Patel becomes director of FBI, which he vows to remake

Senate confirms staunch Trump ally on notably narrow 51-49 vote

BY MARK BERMAN
AND JEREMY ROEBUCK

The Senate on Thursday narrowly voted to confirm Kash Patel as the FBI's ninth director, installing a close ally of President Donald Trump and a staunch critic of the bureau to lead the country's premier law enforcement agency.

Patel will take command of an organization with far-reaching surveillance powers and access to sensitive intelligence at a moment when the agency is engulfed by turbulence and uncertainty.

Since Trump's inauguration, at least eight top officials have been forced out, and people familiar with the bureau's workforce say morale has plummeted amid fears of further staffing shake-ups.

Patel, a former Trump aide, federal prosecutor and assistant public defender, said he would work with the bureau's employees to "rebuild an FBI the American people can be proud of."

"The American people deserve an FBI that is transparent, accountable, and committed to justice," Patel posted in a message on social media after his confirmation. "The politicalization of our justice system has eroded public trust — but that ends today."

Patel was approved 51-49, a remarkably tight margin for a position that historically has seen nominees win overwhelming bipartisan support. The three most recent FBI directors each garnered at least 92 votes.

Senators Susan Collins (Maine) and Lisa Murkowski (Alaska) were the only Republicans to vote against Patel.

The GOP-majority Senate has approved every Trump nominee to come before the chamber, though three Republican defections on Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth meant Vice President JD Vance, who serves as Senate president, was called in to cast the tiebreaking vote.

Patel's record diverges from those of his recent predecessors at the FBI, who had held senior roles with the Justice Department before being tapped as directors. Patel spent Trump's first



RICKY CARIOTI/THE WASHINGTON POST

Kash Patel has been a robust Donald Trump defender, in contrast to recent bureau leaders, who have kept the White House at arm's length.

term working as a congressional staffer, White House aide and Pentagon staffer. Since then, he has found lucrative work as a consultant and has been a dedicated defender of Trump on podcasts and television.

His nomination prompted alarm from many national security veterans and people who have worked with him, who said he lacked the temperament and experience needed for such a pivotal and powerful law enforcement role.

While Democratic senators also expressed deep concerns, pointing to Patel's history of inflammatory rhetoric and calls for retribution against perceived enemies, many of their Republican counterparts hailed him as the person needed to fix an agency they see as biased against conservatives.

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois), who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, has accused Patel of

directing purges at the FBI while awaiting confirmation, citing information from "credible whistleblowers." Patel's spokeswoman denied the allegation.

FBI leaders in the modern era have sought to keep some distance between themselves and presidents, and Patel appears to be the first director to have so closely allied himself with the commander in chief who nominated him. He was a campaign surrogate for Trump and served on the board of the president's media company.

In his new position, Patel will lead a mammoth organization with more than 30,000 employees, hundreds of offices nationwide and a sprawling mandate to investigate cases involving national security, terrorism and violent crimes.

Since long before his nomination, Patel has called for profound changes within the FBI. His 2023 book described the bureau as "a

tool of surveillance and suppression of American citizens" and said its powers should be dramatically curtailed.

Trump announced his plans to make Patel the FBI director in November, making clear that he would oust Christopher A. Wray, whom Trump appointed during his first term. Wray was more than seven years into a 10-year term limit for FBI directors, a period instituted to shield the job from political swings. He opted to resign before Trump retook the White House.

Patel's supporters include a group of former agents who have previously been accused of misconduct and were suspended. These former agents, who deny wrongdoing, have accepted financial help from Patel's nonprofit foundation in some cases and say they have been in touch with him since he was nominated.

Attorney General Pam Bondi,

who was confirmed earlier this month and is also a Trump loyalist, endorsed Patel for his new job, though during her confirmation hearing she noted that as FBI director, he would report to her.

"We've got Kash Patel now, so they better look out," Bondi said at a conservative conference late Thursday afternoon. She did not specify whom she meant by "they."

Thursday morning, Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee made a public plea to their GOP colleagues to oppose Patel's nomination.

"Mr. Patel will be a political and national security disaster if confirmed," Durbin said at a news conference outside the FBI headquarters — a building Patel has said he would shut down and reopen as a museum for the so-called deep state. In an interview afterward, Durbin said some Republican lawmakers had privately expressed concerns about

Patel leading the bureau but were too fearful about losing reelection campaigns to vote against him.

Democrats have questioned Patel's financial ties to a Chinese company, history of incendiary rhetoric and support for right-wing conspiracy theories and rioters involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, which Patel has said the FBI had planned for a year.

But Senate Republicans almost uniformly backed him. Before voting to support Patel's nomination, Majority Leader John Thune (R-South Dakota) said he looked "forward to working with Mr. Patel to restore the integrity of the FBI and get it focused on its critical mission."

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), who chairs the Judiciary Committee, called Patel a reformer who would bring needed change to the bureau.

"Over the past several years, political infection has diminished the FBI's credibility and distracted the Bureau from its core law enforcement responsibilities," Grassley said in a statement after the confirmation vote. "As FBI Director, Kash Patel promises to restore the FBI's primary focus on law and order, as well as national security, and do right by the brave FBI agents who work day in and day out to keep Americans safe."

The two Republicans who opposed Patel's nomination pointed to his history of political actions. In a statement before voting no, Collins said she doubted Patel could lead the FBI "in a way that is free from the appearance of political motivation."

Murkowski posted on social media that she had reservations due to Patel's "own prior political activities and how they may influence his leadership."

"I truly hope that he proves me wrong about the reservations I have of him today," she added.

Some Democrats said they had lost that hope before the vote.

"We will vote no," Sen. Adam Schiff (D-California) said at the morning news conference. "Our Republican colleagues, intimidated by this president and threats of primary challenges from MAGA world, may vote to confirm him. But ... they will have to live with that vote."

Perry Stein and Liz Goodwin contributed to this report.

Warren challenges Musk to defend cuts to CFPB

The senator invites the tech billionaire to speak at an informal hearing

BY LIZ GOODWIN

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts) invited tech billionaire Elon Musk to testify at an informal hearing focusing on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau next week, as the Trump adviser pledges to destroy the agency she helped create.

Warren, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Banking Committee, is organizing the hearing for the afternoon of Feb. 25, giving Senate Democrats an opportunity to question witnesses and highlight the work the agency has done to protect consumers from scams.

"Musk has said that he is trying to kill the agency — he should have the courage to show up in public and answer questions about why he's doing that and how it would help working people," Warren said in an interview.

Musk posted "CFPB RIP" on his X social media platform as the Trump administration ordered CFPB employees to stop nearly all of their work earlier this month. A district judge ordered the Trump administration not to fire the agency's employees or delete its data for now, pending a March 3 hearing on a lawsuit filed by the National Treasury Employees Union, whose members include CFPB workers.

Republicans have long targeted the regulatory agency, arguing that it has too much power. Democrats are hoping to highlight what they see as the folly behind Republicans dismantling an agency designed to prevent consumers from being taken advantage of by lenders or other financial institutions. The group has returned \$21 billion to consumers since it was created in the Dodd-Frank financial reform law in 2010, which was aimed at preventing another financial crisis.

Warren has invited Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea



VALERIE PLESCH/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Sen. Elizabeth Warren was an early backer of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Campbell and Lorelei Salas, the former head of supervision at the CFPB who recently resigned after refusing an order to stop work at the agency, to testify. Campbell will speak about a recent \$51 million settlement she reached with the help of the CFPB against a credit repair company that was claiming to boost credit scores for a fee. The forum will also feature people who have relied on the CFPB to get their money back.

Democrats are in the minority in the Senate, meaning Warren does not have the power to convene a formal hearing under the auspices of the banking committee and compel testimony.

"President Trump ran on lowering costs for Americans immediately on day one — those were his words," Warren said. "It's been a month now and he's done nothing to lower the cost of groceries, health care or housing, but he and co-president Elon Musk are running up the cost of ordinary financial transactions like credit cards and checking accounts for people all across this country."

Musk's social media company X is launching its own payment

product called "X Money" — an area regulated by the consumer agency.

Warren said she believes Musk is targeting the agency to launch that service with less oversight.

"By sidelining the CFPB, he gets that only obstacle out of the way," Warren said. "Like a bank robber who sidelines the cops just before he waltzes into the lobby of the bank."

A representative for Musk did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But the tech billionaire has said that he's being "maximally transparent" and that the public would be able to judge for themselves if he is "doing something that benefits one of my companies or not."

The issue is personal for Warren, who unsuccessfully ran for the Democratic nomination in 2020 on a platform of economic populism.

As a consumer debt expert in her law professor days, Warren argued that U.S. credit institutions frequently took advantage of average Americans with tricks and traps that mostly went unpunished. In a 2007 article, she

proposed the idea of a watchdog consumer organization that would serve as a "cop on the beat" for people with mortgages, car loans and other forms of credit.

That idea became reality after the Dodd-Frank financial reform law in 2010 created the agency, in part as a response to the 2008 Wall Street meltdown that was spurred by financial institutions pushing irresponsible subprime mortgages. President Barack Obama appointed Warren to set up the new agency and hire its staff, but stopped short of making her its first director.

The CFPB has survived multiple lawsuits challenging its funding structure and the first Trump administration, when its acting head, who opposed the agency's existence, dramatically slowed the pace of enforcement actions.

"The giant banks resisted this agency from before it was born," Warren said. "Republicans have preached the gospel for decades that government is always bad, always stupid and always inept. The CFPB proves every single day that we can make government work for people."

Court won't reinstate Trump citizenship order

Potential Supreme Court showdown is closer after appeals panel's decision

BY LEO SANDS

A federal appeals court panel denied a Justice Department bid to reinstate President Donald Trump's executive order aimed at curbing birthright citizenship, edging the battle over the order's constitutionality closer to a potential Supreme Court showdown.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit on Wednesday declined the administration's emergency request to immediately lift a nationwide block on Trump's executive order, rejecting its claim that the preliminary injunction was overly broad. It is the first time an appellate panel has weighed in on one of the several lawsuits challenging Trump's birthright citizenship order.

Justice Department lawyers had argued that the court's injunction — which blocked Trump's order nationwide after a lawsuit from four Democratic-led states — was harmful because it stymied Trump's effort to "address the ongoing crisis at the southern border" and implement an immigration policy designed to combat "significant threats to national security and public safety."

The three-judge panel unanimously rejected the request, with Judges William C. Canby Jr. and Milan D. Smith Jr. writing in their order that the administration had not made a "strong showing" that it would succeed on the merits of its appeal.

In a six-page concurring opinion, Judge Danielle Forrest wrote that setting aside a court order on an emergency basis should be the exception rather than the rule, and that the injunction did not meet the bar.

"A controversy, yes. Even an important controversy, yes. An

emergency, not necessarily," wrote Forrest, who was nominated to her seat by Trump in 2019.

In rejecting the emergency plea, the panel upheld a nationwide injunction ordered Feb. 6 by U.S. District Judge John C. Coughenour in Seattle, who called Trump's executive order "blatantly unconstitutional," while paving the way for the case to be brought before the Supreme Court.

The lawsuit, filed Jan. 21 in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington and joined by Oregon, Arizona and Illinois, is one of at least six legal challenges to be brought by states and civil rights groups challenging the constitutionality of Trump's efforts to restrict birthright citizenship by executive order.

So far, federal judges in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maryland have also blocked the executive order following separate legal challenges.

"Our argument is simple and true — birthright citizenship is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution," Nick Brown, the attorney general of Washington state — a lead plaintiff in the case — said in a statement this month. "The president may not care about the Constitution or the rule of law, but we do."

Trump's executive order — signed the day of his inauguration — seeks to deny birthright citizenship for the babies of undocumented immigrants and certain categories of foreigners by directing U.S. government agencies to no longer grant them documentation.

It seeks to reinterpret the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1868, which automatically grants citizenship to all people born on U.S. soil.

The Supreme Court upheld this right in 1898 when it ruled that Wong Kim Ark, who was born in San Francisco but had been denied reentry to the United States after a trip abroad because of his Chinese descent, was a U.S. citizen.

Vivian Ho contributed to this report.

Trump remarks elicit swift response from D.C. officials

D.C. FROM A1

comments, along with Republican lawmakers' pending legislation to capture control of the city, are an "unnecessary distraction" that cause Washingtonians anxiety.

At the same time, the mayor went out of her way to tout declines in the city's crime rate and homeless population and assured reporters and her audience beyond that she feels secure in her role. "I'm the duly elected mayor of the District of Columbia and the lawful CEO of the District of Columbia," she said. "So we don't approach our work with any uncertainty."

The power wielded by D.C. officials is limited because of the city's status as a federal enclave, which means that Congress can nullify local laws and can give the president's administration control of much of the city's public safety apparatus. The White House, for example, selects local judges and its top prosecutor; and the president, not the mayor, can deploy the National Guard.

Trump made a point of vilifying D.C. during the 2024 presidential campaign, often invoking harsh and even crude language to describe the city as crime-addled, dysfunctional and dirty. But his seemingly unscripted comments about D.C. Wednesday night, delivered as he flew back to Washington from Miami, were his most pointed since his return to the White House.

"People are getting killed; people are being hurt. You have a great police department there," the president said. "But somehow they're not utilized properly. We should govern D.C. I think the federal government should take over the governance of D.C. and run it really, really properly."

Though he noted that he gets "along great with" Bowser, Trump said local officials are "not doing the job — too much crime, too much graffiti, too many tents on the lawns. There's magnificent lawns, and there's tents. It's a sad thing, homeless people all over the place. We've got to take care of the homeless. But we can't have that in Washington, D.C."

Trump said he wanted to spruce up the city for when foreign leaders such as French President Em-



SHEDRICK PELT/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Demonstrators protest President Donald Trump's suggested takeover of the District on Valentine's Day.

manuel Macron and Chinese leader Xi Jinping are "coming over to see me."

"You can't have tents all over your beautiful, your once magnificent plazas, lawns and all," the president said. "Just can't do it."

Trump's criticism opened another front in the GOP's attacks on the city.

Earlier this month, Republicans in Congress reintroduced legislation to repeal the Home Rule Act, the 1973 law that gave the city limited self-governance. In a dig at the mayor, Sen. Mike Lee (Utah) and Rep. Andrew Ogles (Tennessee), the bill's authors, tagged the legislation with the same acronym the GOP has used before — "BOWSER" for the "Bringing Oversight to Washington and Safety to Every Resident Act."

Trump, in his remarks Wednesday, did not refer to the pending legislation or an executive order D.C. officials have been expecting him to issue that would target crime and encourage the beautification of the city. The White House is still weighing how aggressively it will take aim at the District, according to a person familiar with Trump administration conversations. That person said the

order is still in draft form as White House officials consider their relationship with D.C. leaders and possible legal roadblocks.

"There have been conversations with Muriel Bowser, who has made some commitments to the White House," said the person, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss private talks. "It's like, okay, she's made some commitments about how to better the city, but the president also has a priority in revitalizing the city."

The person said "there are different legal theories of how you can actually get this done, and we are pursuing all options that fall within the executive branch's power."

"Obviously, everything we do here will be following the Constitution," the person said, declining to elaborate on the promises they said Bowser made or which laws posed potential obstacles to the White House's vision.

Susana Castillo, a spokeswoman for Bowser, declined to comment on private talks the mayor may have had with Trump or his administration. "We don't discuss the mayor's conversations or meetings," Castillo said in a text to a Washington Post reporter.

Asked at the news conference about any promises she or her administration have made to Trump, Bowser answered: "None." She said officials don't know what the reported executive order will contain, or if there even is one.

The mayor typically responds to reporters at the conclusion of public appearances. But, signaling the urgency of the issue, she scuttled the usual order Thursday and took questions about Trump's remarks at the start of her appearance at a ribbon-cutting.

She said she had reached out to the White House about Trump's comments but had not heard back as of late morning. She also said she had not spoken to Trump since they met at Mar-a-Lago in December, though she added that she talks regularly with other administration officials.

Recalling their meeting two months ago, Bowser said she told Trump "why our system of government works and why it works best for the people of D.C." and that she left with "the impression that his concern was infrastructure and homelessness, and to a lesser degree public safety."

She also suggested that it's incongruous for Republicans, a par-

ty that favors less government, to want the federal bureaucracy to expand its responsibilities to include the city. "It really doesn't make sense for small government people to want to make the federal government become the local government," she said.

Since Trump won the election, D.C. officials, including Bowser, have largely avoided criticizing him publicly, hoping not to provoke his ire. On Thursday, though, after the president's remarks, D.C. officials were quick to respond.

Council Chairman Phil Mendelson (D), in a statement, said he planned to point out what he believes are failures of the federal government if the Trump administration or lawmakers "come after us." The list of missteps, he said, include leaving Superior Court judge positions unfilled and repeated threats of government shutdowns. The police department that Trump said isn't "utilized properly" has gone underfunded by \$83 million for four years because the federal government did not reimburse D.C. for the cost of national security events such as inaugurations, he said.

"We have a very good story to tell of how we have managed the city the past half-century," Mendelson said. "Not only is our Home Rule government far, far more responsible to our citizens than the federal commissioners ever were, but our government is far, far better."

Eleanor Holmes Norton (D), D.C.'s nonvoting delegate in the House, called Trump's comments "anti-democratic" and "belittling" to the city's almost 700,000 residents, who have no voting representative in Congress. "The Revolutionary War was fought to give consent to the governed and to end taxation without representation," Norton said in a statement. "President Trump's rhetoric runs counter to this history."

D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwab (D), in his own statement, said: "A federal takeover of DC would violate the fundamental principle of self governance on which this nation was founded. We will defend the rule of law, Home Rule, and the right to govern ourselves."

Crime in D.C., including homicides and carjackings, dropped

sharply in 2024, a decline that the police department touted in a statement it issued after Bowser's news conference. The decrease followed a year in which violence soared to levels not seen in a generation. D.C. police say that last year's downward trend is continuing through the first two months of 2025, with a 26 percent drop in violent crime, including robberies and shootings. But homicides are running above last year's pace.

During the 2024 campaign, Trump referred to D.C. as a "rat-infested, graffiti-infested shithole" and threatened to take over the city "so there is no longer a nightmare of murder and crime." He branded the city a "horrible killing field" at the Republican National Convention, where the party promised in its platform to "reassert greater Federal Control over Washington, DC to restore Law and Order."

At the start of Trump's first term, Bowser was often measured when talking about him, a posture that made her the target of criticism among activists. She became far more combative later in his presidency, especially after George Floyd's death in Minneapolis in 2020, when she ordered the painting of Black Lives Matter in oversize bright yellow lettering near the White House.

Since Trump's reelection, Bowser has refrained from criticizing the president, even as elected leaders such as Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine (D) have assailed him for laying off federal workers and pardoning Jan. 6 rioters, including those who attacked D.C. police officers. Instead, she has sought to highlight issues on which she and the president are aligned, including returning federal workers to downtown offices and adding resources to deter crime.

Asked at Thursday's news conference if she feared criticizing Trump because of his power over the city, Bowser said, "I'm not afraid ... but I am strategic. And I will continue to be. I think that's why D.C. residents elected me."

Another reporter asked if she thought Trump was merely "stirring the pot" with his remarks and whether she was taking him seriously.

"Yes," the mayor replied. "And yes."



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In poll, 45% say they approve of way Trump handling job

POLL FROM AI

Democrats oppose them. Among independents, about 1 in 3 support what he's done, and half oppose. The remainder are unsure whether they support or oppose what is taking place.

Trump's initiatives have drawn numerous lawsuits attempting to block or slow his progress, along with claims from critics that he lacks the authority to do many of the things he has proposed. While most Americans agree with the view that he has exceeded his authority, 40 percent say he has the power to do what he's doing. About 2 in 3 say Trump should have to get approval from Congress to freeze funding for programs previously approved by Congress and past presidents.

Americans also are clear on what the president should do if a federal court rules that he has done something illegal. More than 8 in 10 say he should follow the court ruling. That includes more than 9 in 10 Democrats along with roughly 8 in 10 Republicans and independents.

A majority of Americans believe the Supreme Court will try to stop Trump if he goes beyond his authority, but when asked whether Republicans in Congress will try to stop him if that happens, a majority say that Republican lawmakers are likely to go along with what Trump wants to do.

Overall, the Post-Ipsos poll finds 45 percent of adults approve of the way Trump is handling his job, while 53 percent disapprove. That net-negative rating is worse than findings in other public polls. A Washington Post average of February polls shows 47 percent approving and 49 percent disapproving. Whether the difference reflects normal variation in public polls or a more negative reaction to recent actions is not clear.

Trump's approval in the Post-Ipsos poll is significantly better than it was when he left office in January 2021, when 38 percent said they approved of the job he was doing. It is also somewhat better than where he stood early in his first term.

On specific areas of responsibility, a majority disapprove of how he is handling the economy (53 percent vs. 45 percent approving), and a similar majority disapprove of how he is managing the federal government (54 percent). On immigration, opinions are closely divided, with 50 percent approving of how he's handling the issue and 48 percent disapproving.

On two personal attributes, most Americans say Trump is not "honest and trustworthy" (62 percent), while they are divided over whether he "has the mental sharpness it takes to effectively serve as president" — 47 percent say he does, and 50 percent say he does not.

Assessments of Musk, the billionaire entrepreneur who oversees the effort to reshape the executive branch of government, are more negative than those of the president. The poll finds 34 percent saying they approve of the way Musk is handling his job, with 49 percent disapproving and 14 percent not sure.

Americans disapprove by a 2-



A person at a Feb. 5 Capitol Hill protest of the Trump administration's efforts to dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development.

to-1 margin of Musk shutting down federal agencies that he decides are unnecessary, and most (63 percent) are concerned that his team is gaining access to sensitive personal data of individuals. But the public is closely divided on whether he is mostly cutting wasteful spending or slashing necessary programs, 37 percent versus 34 percent, with 26 percent saying they are not sure.

Trump's most popular initiative is on immigration, where 51 percent initially say they support the idea of deporting the roughly 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country. There is overwhelming support for deporting those who have been accused of committing violent crimes, and a solid majority back the deportation of those who have been accused of committing nonviolent offenses.

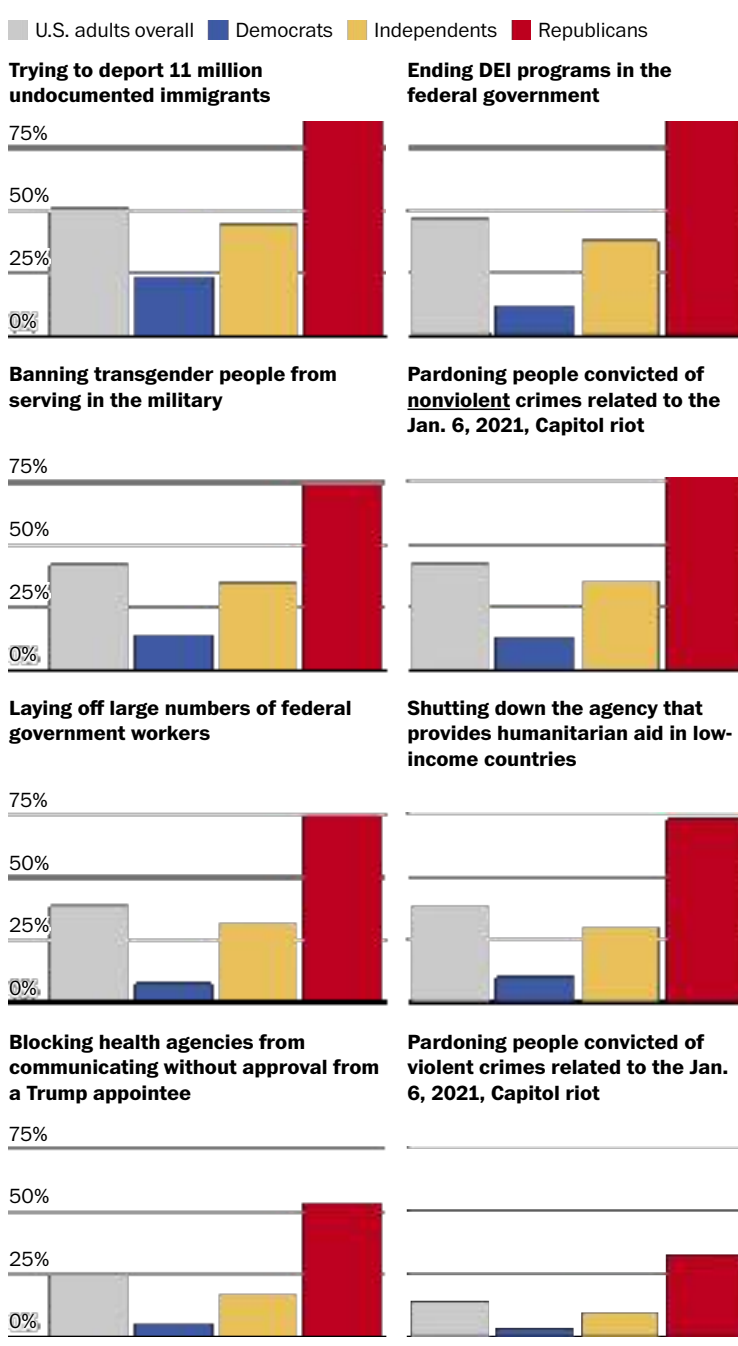
Opinions turn negative, however, on questions about deporting immigrants who have broken only immigration laws, those who have lived in the country more than 10 years, arrived as children or are parents of children who are U.S. citizens. Trump's proposal to end birthright citizenship, which faces a serious court test, also draws majority disapproval.

The president's least popular action is his decision to pardon all those convicted of crimes in the wake of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. More than 8 in 10 oppose the pardons for those who were convicted of violent crimes, and 55 percent oppose the pardons for those convicted of nonviolent crimes.

Trump's order to end all diversity, equity and inclusion programs within the federal government draws slightly more negative views than positive, but the difference is within the margin of error. Overall, 46 percent approve of what Trump has ordered on DEI, while 49 percent disapprove. Republicans largely support Trump's position, while Democrats overwhelmingly oppose it. Support is greater among

About half support mass deportations, but many other Trump policies are unpopular

Percent supporting each policy



Note: "Oppose," "no opinion" and skipped not shown.
Source: Feb. 13-18, 2025, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 1,299 to 1,302 U.S. adults with a margin of sampling error of +/- 3 percentage points. Margin of error larger among subgroups.

Americans over age 50, while opposition is strong among non-White Americans and those with postgraduate degrees.

Beyond that, the president's specific actions tested in the poll are viewed negatively.

About 6 in 10 oppose shutting down the U.S. Agency for International Development, which provides humanitarian aid in low-income countries. The agency was created by an act of Congress, and the administration would need congressional approval to eliminate it. But the administration has all but shut it down by freezing funding and cutting the workforce.

At a time when each day brings reports of firings at one agency after another, almost 6 in 10 Americans say they oppose laying off large numbers of federal government workers or making it easier to fire longtime government employees. Also, more than 2 in 3 oppose blocking federal health agencies from communicating with the public without approval from a Trump appointee.

Trump has taken several actions related to transgender people, from trying to ban transgender athletes from participating in women's and girls' sports to targeting transgender members of the military. The Post-Ipsos poll finds that a majority (53 percent) oppose banning transgender people from military service.

The Post-Ipsos poll did not ask about Trump's attempt to bar transgender girls and women from participating in girls' and women's sports. But previous polls have found support for such bans.

Trump's signature economic initiative to date is to apply tariffs to products from overseas. The poll asked about his call for 25 percent tariffs on Mexico and Canada (which have been suspended for now) and 10 percent additional tariffs on goods from China. Other proposed tariffs were not tested.

More than 6 in 10 Americans oppose tariffs on Canadian goods, and nearly 6 in 10 oppose them on Mexican products. Americans narrowly support (50 percent to 45 percent) the tariffs on China.

Americans also see negative consequences from these actions. About 7 in 10 say tariffs on products from Mexico, Canada and China will increase prices for those goods. Pluralities also say the tariffs would hurt U.S. workers and U.S. manufacturers.

Economic issues helped Trump prevail in the election against Vice President Kamala Harris. Early in his new term, overall impressions of the economy remain distinctly negative, with 73 percent saying the economy is either "not so good" or "poor" and 26 percent rating it "good" or "excellent." The percentage rating it as poor has dropped from 33 percent in August and 42 percent in September 2023 to 21 percent now.

Pessimism prevails on specific aspects of the economy, with over 9 in 10 expressing negative views about food prices, about 3 in 4 feeling negative about gas and energy prices, more than 7 in 10 about the incomes of average Americans, and a majority

The best and worst things Trump has done, in respondents' own words:

"Hiring Elon Musk to gut the government. Elon Musk may be a brilliant man, but he is not good working with people and does not know what he is doing quite frankly."
— Independent White woman from Texas who opposes what Trump has done

"Securing the border and deporting illegal aliens who are known criminals. Also cleaning up the massive corrupt debt in the government."
— Republican White woman from Florida who supports what Trump has done

"Allow Elon Musk access to government institutions without oversight and tons of conflicts of interest."
— Democratic Black man from California who opposes what Trump has done

"He has taken strong action for immigration, has kept his word on tariffs and also did some drastic actions about controlling federal government expenses."
— Independent Asian man from Vermont who supports what Trump has done

"Deportations. It's sad watching them take good, hardworking people and treat them like livestock."
— Independent White woman from New Jersey who opposes what Trump has done

"He has started to clean the government of all the wasteful spending."
— Republican Hispanic woman from California who supports what Trump has done

"Pardoning the people who attacked our Capitol, representatives and law enforcement."
— Democratic White woman from Ohio who opposes what Trump has done

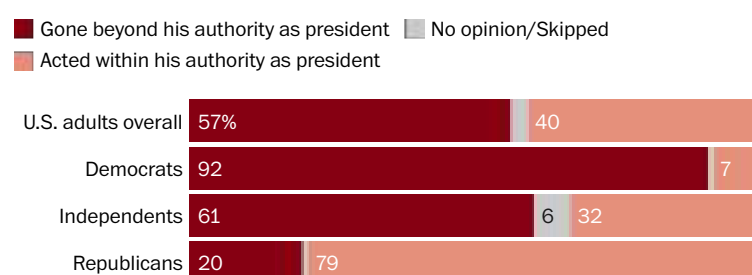
even giving negative reviews about the unemployment rate, which has held steady around 4 percent in recent months.

One indicator of how elections change attitudes is the partisan shift that has occurred with respect to the state of the economy. This past summer, 50 percent of Republicans rated the economy as poor. Today, it's just 11 percent. Among Democrats, the percentage rating the economy poorly has risen from 11 percent last summer to 26 percent in the new poll.

The Post-Ipsos poll was conducted online Feb. 13-18 among 2,601 U.S. adults. The sample was drawn through the Ipsos KnowledgePanel, an ongoing panel of U.S. households recruited by mail using random sampling methods. Overall results have a margin of error of plus or minus 2.1 points; questions on support for some policies were asked of a random half-sample and carry a three-point error margin.

Most say Trump has exceeded his presidential authority

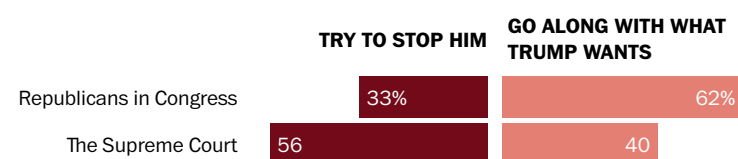
Q: Since taking office, do you think Trump has acted within his authority as president or gone beyond his authority as president?



Note: Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Feb. 13-18, 2025, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 2,601 U.S. adults with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.1 percentage points. Margin of error larger among subgroups.

Most Americans think that Republicans in Congress will go along with Trump but that the Supreme Court will stop him if he goes beyond his authority

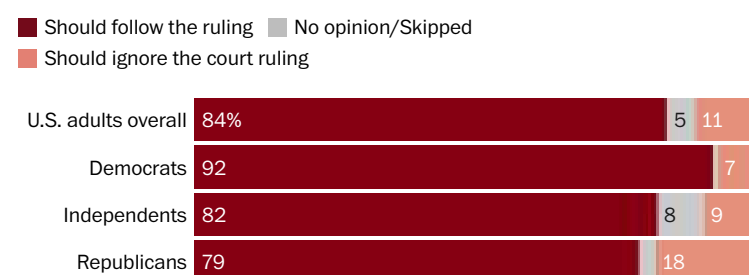
Q: If Trump goes beyond his authority as president, do you think Republicans in Congress/the Supreme Court will try to stop him or go along with what Trump wants?



Note: "No opinion" and skipped not shown.
Source: Feb. 13-18, 2025, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 2,601 U.S. adults with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.1 percentage points

Overwhelming majority of Americans say Trump should follow federal court rulings

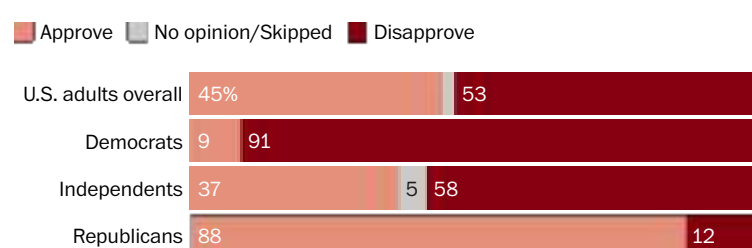
Q: If a federal court rules that something the Trump administration did is illegal, do you think Trump administration ...



Note: Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Feb. 13-18, 2025, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 2,601 U.S. adults with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.1 percentage points. Margin of error larger among subgroups.

Trump's approval rating is underwater one month into his second term

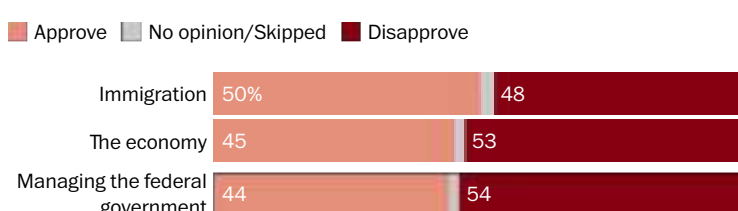
Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?



Source: Feb. 13-18, 2025, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 2,601 U.S. adults with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.1 percentage points. Margin of error larger among subgroups.

How Americans rate Trump's handling of immigration and the economy, and managing of the federal government

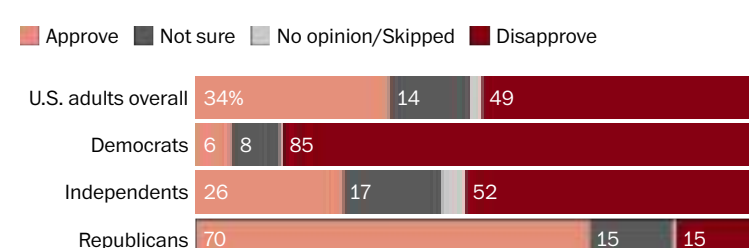
Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Trump is handling each of the following?



Note: Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Feb. 13-18, 2025, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 2,601 U.S. adults with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.1 percentage points.

More Americans disapprove of Musk than approve of him

Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the job that Elon Musk is doing within the federal government?



Note: Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Feb. 13-18, 2025, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 2,601 U.S. adults with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.1 percentage points. Margin of error larger among subgroups.

In first month, a relentless effort to remake the presidency

TRUMP FROM AI

be in a dark mood, with some voters' hunger for disruption outweighing their impulse to follow American traditions.

"What makes this moment particularly dangerous for those who care about our constitutional system is that Donald Trump believes he has a mandate to act this way — and so far, the American people haven't pushed back," said Timothy Naftali, a historian at Columbia University's School for International and Public Affairs.

Trump's unconventional actions have been numerous and varied, but they all reflect his belief that Congress has no business telling him how to run the executive branch. He has set about slashing the federal workforce with little regard to the myriad laws aimed at protecting it.

He continued that push on Tuesday by claiming direct control over agencies, such as the Federal Communications Commission, that Congress has granted a measure of independence to protect them from political interference.

"He is not the first president to strain against the limitations of the office," Naftali said. "But he is the first president to deny the importance of the checks and balances of the system. He is the first president to deny the possibility of nonpartisan, professional advice. He is the first president who has publicly committed himself to politicizing the Justice Department."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement: "In one month, President Donald J. Trump has already accomplished more than most presidents do in their entire term as he makes good on his promise to usher in the New Golden Age of America. President Trump has taken historic action to secure the southern border, unleash America's energy dominance, protect American workers, and re-establish American strength abroad."

At a recent international gathering on international security in Munich, European leaders made clear their sense that the United



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

President Donald Trump signs executive orders early this month in the Oval Office. He has set about slashing the federal workforce with little regard to the myriad laws aimed at protecting it.

States had changed its approach to democracy under the Trump presidency.

"I am a staunch ally and friend of America. The American Dream is something that has always fascinated me and influenced me, and this is why I cannot just ignore what we heard before," said German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius, before rejecting comments by Vice President JD Vance that questioned European nations' approach to democracy.

Some conservative scholars have for years said the Constitution gives the president unfettered control over the executive branch. The federal courts have not agreed, but Trump's challenges appear certain to trigger a new Supreme Court review of this theory.

If Trump's move to assert such expansive power is novel, so, too, is Congress's willingness to cede

it.

In 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt, frustrated that the Supreme Court was blocking important elements of the New Deal, proposed a bill to let him appoint a half-dozen more justices. Members of Congress, led by a Democratic senator, killed the idea.

Four decades later, a trio of Republican lawmakers, including Barry Goldwater of Arizona, advised Nixon during the Watergate scandal that his support had evaporated, prompting Nixon to resign the next day. And in 1999, senators from both parties met informally to discuss how to conduct the impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton.

Today, that desire to assert Congress's prerogative has all but evaporated. And Trump is showing little interest in moving bills through Congress regardless.

"Here is somebody who has a

congressional majority and isn't using it," said Eric Rauchway, a historian at the University of California at Davis. "That is relatively unusual — you might say unique. I don't know of a similar example."

Some are comparing Trump's early flurry of activity to the famous first 100 days of Roosevelt's presidency. But during that honeymoon period, FDR was working with Congress, not around it.

Brands noted that Roosevelt in those 100 days pushed through 15 major bills, creating 15 federal agencies, as he worked to combat the Great Depression. "That is how a presidency used to get started," Brands said.

Tevi Troy, a senior official in the George W. Bush administration who has written several books about presidential history, argued that Trump's approach is more of a continuation of history

than a break with it.

"I think that all the presidents of the 21st century have had an expanded view of presidential authority," said Troy, now a senior fellow at the Ronald Reagan Institute. "I think he is building on what we have been seeing — a sense that Congress isn't going to do it so we have to do it, even if we have to break things."

Trump's rhetoric also suggests that he sees himself as having a higher mission. He has said his role is divinely ordained, contending that he was saved by God from an assassination attempt in July so that he could rescue the country from its current ills. He has also suggested that, as America's savior, he is above the law, posting recently on social media, "He who saves his Country does not violate any Law."

On Wednesday, Trump posted another message, taking credit for the end of congestion pricing in New York. "Manhattan, and all of New York, is SAVED," he wrote. "LONG LIVE THE KING!"

Such language does not suggest restraint, though it can be difficult to discern when Trump is simply needling his critics. The president has said he will head the courts, but some legal experts say the administration is already finding ways to walk up to the line of defiance without crossing it.

Among Trump's most notable deviations from precedent in his first month has been his shrugging off the independence of the justice system. Federal prosecutors were ordered to drop a case against New York Mayor Eric Adams (D), a Trump ally. And government lawyers who prosecuted people involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol have been fired, as Trump tries to redefine the riot as a patriotic act.

Trump's salvos in some ways mark the end of the post-Watergate era in Washington. The president has discarded many of the safeguards that were installed to prevent a repeat of Nixon's abuses of power.

Congress in the late 1970s placed inspectors general in federal agencies, for example, but Trump fired a slew of them upon taking office. Watergate also led

to limits on the president's ability to discuss criminal cases with the attorney general, and Trump has jettisoned that as well.

When historians cast about for comparisons with Trump, they often land on Presidents Andrew Jackson, who won election in 1828, and Andrew Johnson, who governed after the Civil War. In each case, the differences with Trump are as instructive as the similarities.

Jackson ran for office denouncing elites with a message reminiscent of Trump's today. He was dismissive of the Supreme Court when it prohibited the removal of Cherokee tribe members from Georgia. But the American government at the time was in its infancy, with few similarities to today's landscape.

As for Johnson, he fired a Cabinet secretary after Congress passed a law prohibiting him from doing so, leading to his impeachment. But that clash was tied up in a bigger fight over America's post-Civil War landscape, giving it limited relevance today.

What seems clear is that any new powers that Trump wins for the presidency will be seized on by future occupants of the White House, raising the prospect that if Trump succeeds in significantly expanding his power, he will permanently change the office.

"Presidents in the past have almost never given back authority that a previous president has managed to bring to the White House," Brands said.

Historian Robert Dallek said Trump's self-centered qualities are not what make him different from his predecessors; that is a characteristic common to presidential aspirants. Where Trump differs, he said, is in his determination to bend the government to that view of himself.

"Everyone who runs for president has impulses to be the central figure in the country, the central political figure and a star. So they have to be driven by a kind of egotism, it seems to me," Dallek said. "What sets him apart is how far he may be willing to go in centralizing authority. Does he know the limits of his power?"



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Trump and Postal Service have long had tense relationship

USPS FROM A1

empt from executive orders.

Members of the Postal Service's bipartisan board are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

Trump, at Lutnick's urging, has mused about privatizing the Postal Service, and Trump's presidential transition team vetted candidates to replace Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a retired logistics executive and GOP fundraising official who took office in 2020 during Trump's first term.

"There is a lot of talk about the Postal Service being taken private," Trump said in December. "It's a lot different today, between Amazon and UPS and FedEx and all the things that you didn't have. But there is talk about that. It's an idea that a lot of people have liked for a long time."

DeJoy earlier this week announced plans to resign.

"This is a somewhat regal approach that says the king knows better than his subjects and he will do his best for them. But it also removes any sense that there's oversight, impartiality and fairness and that some states wouldn't be treated better than other states or cities better than other cities," said James O'Rourke, who studies the Postal Service at the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business. "The anxiety over the Postal Service is not only three-quarters of a million workers. It's that this is something that does not belong to the president or the White House. It belongs to the American people."

Representatives for the Trump administration and the Postal Service did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The immediate effects of moving the Postal Service into the Commerce Department are uncertain. The Postal Regulatory Commission has direct oversight of the mail system and closely watches for geographic discrimination in delivery service and prices. It is unclear if Trump's



PATRICK T. FALLON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: The USPS is in the midst of a 10-year cost-cutting and modernization plan and is adding electric vehicles to update its aging fleet. **BELOW:** President Donald Trump with Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, whose department could be placed in charge of the USPS.

order will effect that group, as well.

From its founding in 1775 until 1970, the U.S. mail system was a political organ of the White House. Presidents were known to appoint their political allies or campaign leaders as postmaster general, and the mail chief was often a key White House negotiator with Congress.

But the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, the product of a crippling nationwide mail strike, led Congress to split the agency off into a freestanding organization, purposefully walling it off from political tinkering.

Americans consistently rank



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

the Postal Service among their most-beloved government agencies, second only to the National Park Service.

Trump's first administration sought to test the agency's independence. Steven Mnuchin, Trump's first-term treasury secretary, attempted to control the 2020 hiring process that brought DeJoy to the Postal Service, and a task force run out of Mnuchin's department recommended dramatically shrinking the scope of the agency and preparing it for privatization via an initial public offering.

The president's pending moves elicited immediate criti-

cism from congressional Democrats.

"Privatizing the Postal Service is an attack on Americans' access to critical information, benefits and life-saving medical care," Rep. Gerry Connolly (Virginia), the top Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Accountability Committee, told The Post. "It is clear that Trump and his cronies value lining their own pockets more than the lives and connection of the American public."

Trump has long had a tense relationship with the mail agency. He once derided it from the Oval Office as "a joke" and in a social media post as Amazon's "Delivery Boy." In the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, Trump threatened to withhold emergency assistance from the Postal Service unless it quadrupled package prices, and Mnuchin authorized a loan for the mail agency only in exchange for access to its confidential contracts with top customers. (Amazon founder Jeff Bezos owns The Post.)

Ahead of the 2020 election, Trump said the Postal Service was incapable of facilitating mail-in voting because the agency could not access the emergency funding he was blocking. The Postal Service ultimately delivered 97.9 percent of ballots from voters to election officials within three days. The successful delivery of ballots turned Trump's opinion of DeJoy. The Post has previously reported.

The postmaster is in the midst of a 10-year cost-cutting and modernization plan for the agency that last month bore its most promising results. It posted a profit — excluding expenses on pension and health-care payments — in the quarter that ended Dec. 31, its first profitable period since the height of the pandemic.

But on-time delivery service has struggled under DeJoy's tenure, and the rocky rollout of his "Delivering for America" plan has cost him and the Postal Service allies on Capitol Hill.

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from *The Washington Post*



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Experts say Trump's legal maneuvers approach red line

BY JUSTIN JOUVENAL,
LEO SANDS
AND ANN E. MARIMOW

Federal judges have blocked President Donald Trump's attempts to freeze trillions in federal grants and loans, halt billions in foreign assistance and dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development.

But in each case, the administration has said it still has legal authority to do at least some of what it wants, prompting judges and those challenging Trump's actions to accuse him of failing to comply.

Legal experts said the administration's aggressive maneuvers have approached the red line of openly flouting court orders, as Trump and his top aides and advisers assert vast presidential powers.

The most dramatic example came Thursday. U.S. District Court Judge Amir H. Ali ordered the Trump administration to comply with a temporary restraining order (TRO) lifting its 90-day pause on foreign aid. He stopped short of saying Trump officials were in contempt of his ruling as the plaintiffs in the case had wanted.

"The TRO does not permit Defendants to simply search for and invoke new legal authorities as a post-hoc rationalization for the enjoined agency action," Ali wrote.

On Tuesday, attorneys for the government said agencies could keep a hold on much of the funding despite Ali's order, based on statutes and regulations that exist separately from Trump's executive directive. The government said Ali's order was "silent" on those other powers and vowed to continue suspension of aid unless the judge clarified his ruling.

Legal experts and a former federal judge said doing so despite a court order was extraordinary and troubling. David Super, a Georgetown University law professor, said the administration was "one step short of outright defiance" of a federal judge.

"This response is quite consistent with what I am seeing across many of the challenges to the new administration's sweeping actions: They insist that injunctions relate only to one source of legal authority and then manufacture another to keep doing what they have been ordered not to do," Super wrote in an email.

He pointed to an episode this month, when U.S. District Judge John J. McConnell Jr. of Rhode Island ruled that the administration had violated the "plain text" of his order lifting a temporary freeze on trillions of dollars in federal grants and loans.

In the USAID funding case, the administration said it had "worked diligently" to comply with Ali's decision and had released \$250 million in foreign aid this week, a fraction of the overall pot of assistance.

The assertions drew a furious response from the health organi-



KENT NISHIMURA/REUTERS

A protest in D.C. on Feb. 3. On Thursday, a judge ordered the administration to comply with his earlier order lifting a pause on foreign aid.

zations that brought the suit. They wrote in their motion to hold Trump officials in contempt that the hold on funding to combat diseases and provide cash assistance to foreign governments had caused deaths and "irreparable harm" for millions globally.

The government "makes the remarkable assertion that Defendants have reviewed thousands of affected State Department and USAID grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements, and concludes that — despite this Court's unambiguous order — terminating nearly all foreign assistance funding was legal," the organizations wrote. "This Court should not brook such brazen defiance of the express terms of its order."

The filing included a declaration from a USAID officer who said the Trump administration's moves to oust agency employees also made it impossible to comply with Ali's order to restart the foreign aid. "Without USAID Foreign Service Officers managing the many steps required, from budget, to contracting, to financial support, none of the Agency's overseas programs will be effectively restarted under the [temporary restraining order]," the employee identified as "Jessica Doe" said.

The government again denied violating the ruling Thursday, saying Ali's order "clearly and unambiguously authorizes Defendants

to enforce their rights under the terms of contracts and grants, including by terminating them."

The judge's order blocked Trump's effort to pause the aid and a separate State Department move that stopped nearly all current and new funding for foreign assistance.

Trump said the aid was not aligned with American interests and values. Ali, an appointee of President Joe Biden, ruled that the pause was "arbitrary and capricious" and not a rational precursor to reviewing the programs.

In the Rhode Island case, McConnell accused the administration of violating his order after nearly two dozen Democratic state attorneys general told him millions in funding for clean energy and transportation projects was still being impounded by the Trump administration.

The Justice Department responded that it had worked "in good faith" to comply with McConnell's temporary restraining order but believed that some funding was exempt from the order and could still be frozen because it had been paused by a separate action by the Office of Management and Budget.

McConnell, an appointee of President Barack Obama, rejected that idea, writing that his order was "clear and unambiguous, and there are no impediments to the

Defendants' compliance."

On Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Carl J. Nichols, a Trump appointee from his first term in office, questioned whether the administration was meeting the terms of a different temporary restraining order that prohibits an administration plan to immediately place overseas USAID workers on administrative leave. Such a move could threaten the workers' safety because many are deployed in unstable regions, Nichols said when blocking the effort.

USAID head Peter Marocco said in a sworn statement Feb. 10 that those stationed abroad would be given the choice to remain at their posts and could keep existing benefits even if they were placed on leave. But Marocco told the court four days later that any USAID employee who fails to leave a post would no longer officially be considered to be serving overseas and could lose access to benefits.

Nichols called the situation a "mess" during a hearing Wednesday and said Marocco's shifting statements seemed to violate the "crystal-clear" understanding of how overseas staff should be handled. Nichols, who like Ali is a judge for the U.S. District Court in D.C., is weighing whether to extend his restraining order.

Nancy Gertner, a senior lecturer on law at Harvard University and former federal judge, said at-

tempts to skirt temporary restraining orders are unusual because such orders in general last only a couple of weeks. After that, the administration gets a fresh chance to make its case as judges weigh whether to issue preliminary injunctions against executive orders. "It's particularly troubling that someone says they can't wait out 14 days," Gertner said. "If you don't like the order, you oppose it at the preliminary injunction phase, and then you appeal. You don't thumb your nose at the courts in the interim."

Jonathan H. Adler, a law professor at Case Western Reserve University, said presidents have regularly sought workarounds when judges restrict their actions.

"I'd be careful about characterizing stuff as outright defiance as opposed to aggressive or clever efforts to get around the limits imposed by a judicial order," Adler said. "Government officials often try to do that."

As an example, Adler pointed to the Biden administration formulating a new student-loan-forgiveness plan after the Supreme Court ruled that Biden's initial initiative did not pass legal muster. Conservatives said Biden was exceeding his legal authority.

But Super, the Georgetown professor, noted that the Supreme Court rejected Biden's initial plan based on the legal authority that

the president had cited to support it.

"The court had no occasion to say that all student loan forgiveness was unlawful," Super wrote in his email. Biden "therefore did not violate any court order when he issued a new student loan forgiveness plan (and duly obeyed court orders against that plan when they came down)."

Peter M. Shane, a distinguished scholar in residence at the New York University School of Law, said Trump has frequently tested judges' rulings but often pulls back before violating them. "His technique in private litigation is, 'How close to the line can I get?'" Shane said. "Let's see what happens in the next round in court."

The Trump administration, which has been on the losing end of most of the early legal battles over its executive orders, has chafed at judges imposing limits on the government's efforts, with Vice President JD Vance and Trump aide Elon Musk issuing calls to defy court orders.

Trump's top advocate at the Supreme Court also vented frustration in filings this week that asked the justices to clear the way for the president to fire the leader of an independent agency that investigates whistleblower reports.

Acting solicitor general Sarah M. Harris said the court should make clear that the president can immediately appeal court orders that "usurp core Article II powers," a reference to the part of the Constitution that vests power in the president. Temporary orders restraining the administration's initiatives are "not blank checks for district courts to stop any and all presidential actions for up to a month at a time," Harris wrote.

Shane said he sees the Trump court filings as part of an effort by the president to amass authority. The administration has pushed an aggressive version of a conservative philosophy called the unitary executive theory, which posits that the executive has total control over policy and firing decisions.

On Tuesday, Trump issued an executive order challenging the independence of agencies that handle trade, communications and financial regulations and have long been insulated from the political influence of the executive. Trump has also asserted he has the right to impound funds, a key power the Constitution says is the prerogative of Congress. He and his aides have fired inspectors general and prosecutors who worked on his criminal cases.

Trump wrote on social media Saturday that "He who saves his Country does not violate any Law."

"The president wants to push a view of constitutional authority where he gets the authority for how funds are spent, for how government functions are structured, for how subordinate officials behave," Shane said. "And he wants to be able to do that without being checked by congressional oversight or judicial review."

McConnell won't seek reelection, ending his decades-long Senate tenure

BY MAEGAN VAZQUEZ
AND MARIANA ALFARO

Sen. Mitch McConnell, the former Senate Republican leader, will not seek reelection next year, he announced in a Senate floor speech on Thursday.

McConnell, who celebrated his 83rd birthday Thursday, is the longest-serving Senate party leader in history.

"Seven times my fellow Kentuckians have sent me to the Senate," McConnell said. "Every day in between, I've been humbled by the trust they placed in me to do their business right here. Representing our commonwealth has been the honor of a lifetime. I will not seek this honor an eighth time. My current term in the Senate will be my last."

On the Senate floor, McConnell emphasized Congress's crucial role in protecting national security.

"Here, every debate over agriculture or infrastructure or education or taxes is downstream of the obligations of national security," he said. He then cited the Constitution, noting that "Every question of policy here at home is contingent on our duty to provide for the common defense."

The Kentucky Republican, who stepped down from Senate leadership after the November elections, will leave the chamber having forged a legacy as a master negotiator and strategist — helping shape the conservative makeup of the Supreme Court and securing tax cuts during President Donald Trump's first term.

In recent years, the seven-term senator has faced questions



DEMETRIUS FREEMAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) voted against three of Donald Trump's Cabinet nominees.

about his health. In 2023, he fell and suffered a concussion at a fundraiser, and at a news conference on Capitol Hill, he abruptly froze midsentence. Last month, he suffered a series of falls.

McConnell and Trump worked together during Trump's first presidential term, and McConnell's wife, Elaine Chao, served as secretary of transportation at the time. But McConnell and Trump have had an acrimonious relationship in recent years as the GOP has become more populist.

McConnell said Trump was "practically and morally responsible" for the Jan. 6, 2021, attack

on the U.S. Capitol and blamed Trump for the GOP's abysmal 2020 and 2022 election results.

In 2023, Trump repeatedly referred to Chao, who was born in Taiwan, by a racist nickname and called for the Republican Party to remove McConnell as leader.

The pair did not speak for years, but McConnell ultimately endorsed Trump as the Republican nominee in 2024 and made clear he is not planning to oppose most of the president's agenda.

On the floor Thursday, McConnell delivered a stark rebuke of Trump and the administration's recent moves to block spending

that has already been approved by Congress, warning that "there's no place to hide from Article I, the Senate's unique relationship with Article III, or our role in equipping the powers of Article II."

Article I establishes Congress as the legislative branch of government; Article II outlines the president's powers; and Article III defines the powers of the Supreme Court and establishes Congress's power to create lower courts. Experts and watchdogs have warned that Trump's recent actions threaten these constitutional markers.

McConnell's decision not to run for reelection did not come as a surprise to many senators. Still, his announcement drew some emotion on the Senate floor. Senators and aides were granted a 30-second period to applaud McConnell as he wrapped up his remarks. After the speech, Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) hugged McConnell, and he wiped away some tears as a group of other Republicans greeted him.

Immediately after McConnell's speech, two Kentucky Republicans expressed interest in filling his Senate seat — former state attorney general Daniel Cameron and Rep. Andy Barr. A spokesman for Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear (D), Eric Hyers, attempted to crush talk of Beshear running for the seat.

"To spare my inbox, texts and voicemail today, just putting this here and on the record: He is not running for Senate," Hyers said on X.

Since he stepped down from Senate leadership, McConnell has broken with the party a handful of times in opposition to some of Trump's Cabinet nominees, further angering the president. McConnell opposed the nominations of Pete Hegseth to be defense secretary, Tulsi Gabbard to be national intelligence director, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

McConnell, a polio survivor, said he objected to Kennedy's nomination because the longtime anti-vaccine activist failed to prove to him that "he is the best possible person to lead America's largest health agency."

McConnell's vote against Ken-

nedy angered Trump, who questioned whether the senator actually suffered from polio. During his floor remarks Thursday, McConnell noted that without his mother's care, his condition "could have turned out a lot worse."

After the Kennedy vote, Trump has also said McConnell was "not equipped mentally" to lead the Republican Party and called him "bitter," claiming that McConnell won support from Republicans because of his fundraising ability in his previous Senate leadership positions.

McConnell said last year that he planned to make promoting a "Reagan-esque" vision on foreign policy — which includes funding for Ukraine's defense — as his "number one focus" upon leaving his Senate leadership role. The effort runs counter to Trump's perspective on Ukraine, a country he said is led by a "dictator" who wanted to keep the "gray train" of American aid flowing.

During his floor remarks, McConnell said he has often watched departing senators "mourning what they perceive to be" a decline of the Senate and its norms. The longtime leader sought to strike a more optimistic tone.

"I assure my colleagues I will depart with great hope for the endurance of the Senate as an institution," he said. "There are any number of reasons for pessimism, but the strength of the Senate is not one of them."

He added: "The Senate is still equipped for work of great consequence, and, to the disappointment of my critics, I'm still here on the job."

THE WORLD

Musk's foray into German politics isn't likely to affect vote

Billionaire won the far-right AfD party a huge new audience on X, but analysis shows most in it are English speakers who won't be casting ballots Sunday

BY ADAM TAYLOR,
JEREMY B. MERRILL AND
ADRIÁN BLANCO RAMOS

Elon Musk has shown no qualms about weighing in on this weekend's German election. Since endorsing the far-right, anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party — declaring on Dec. 20 that “only the AfD can save Germany” — the billionaire White House appointee has posted about the party and its leader more than 70 times on his social media site X, promoting the AfD to his 218 million followers.

His advocacy has prompted cries of election interference from German politicians and fueled a European Union investigation into whether X manipulated its algorithms to influence voters.

But while Musk has boosted the AfD's reach on social media, a data analysis shared with The Washington Post shows that Musk's promotion of the party on X could have limited impact on Sunday's voting. AfD leader Alice Weidel's number of followers on X has doubled since Musk started posting about the party, but a large share of her newly engaged followers do not appear to be German.

“The Musk bump is real. He has significantly amplified the AfD leader on X. But the data also shows that that amplification is primarily within an English-language audience,” said Mark Scott, senior resident fellow at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab) and co-author of findings published Thursday in partnership with the German tech watchdog AlgorithmWatch.

The data analysis shows that Musk's sudden interest propelled the AfD and Weidel to receive many more views on X than all other major German political parties since the election was called on Dec. 16.

Partnership with the AfD has long been taboo in mainstream German politics — as well as among high-level foreign officials. German intelligence has classified the party as a suspected extremist organization.

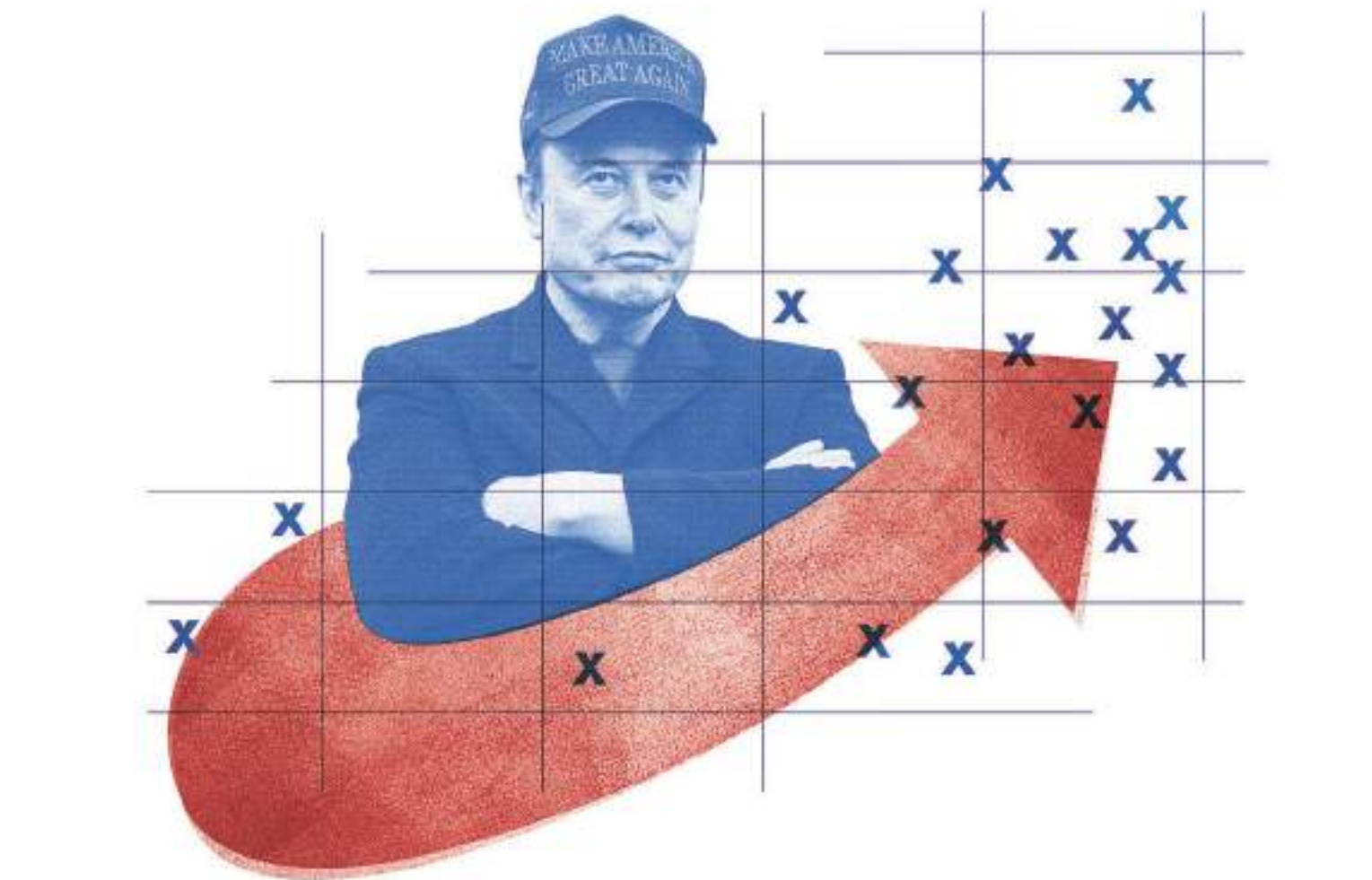
But Musk, whose U.S. DOGE Service has become a key implement of Donald Trump's White House, reflects a broader willingness by the administration to get involved. Vice President JD Vance met with Weidel in Munich last week — becoming the highest-ranking U.S. official to do so — and denounced European “fire walls” that seek to isolate far-right groups.

German officials have reacted with fury, accusing the Trump administration of election interference. Friedrich Merz, leader of the center-right Christian Democratic Union and widely expected to be Germany's next chancellor, said Musk should face political or legal consequences.

Musk has more followers than any other X user. Ahead of the U.S. election in November, he used the account as a megaphone to promote Trump. His critics now accuse him of exporting the strategy to Germany.

However, the data analysis suggests that many members of the AfD's new audience are probably not voters in Germany's election Sunday. Instead, user engagement on AfD-related posts during the campaign suggests a surge in English-language followers, as classified by Meltwater, a social media analytics tool used by DFRLab and AlgorithmWatch.

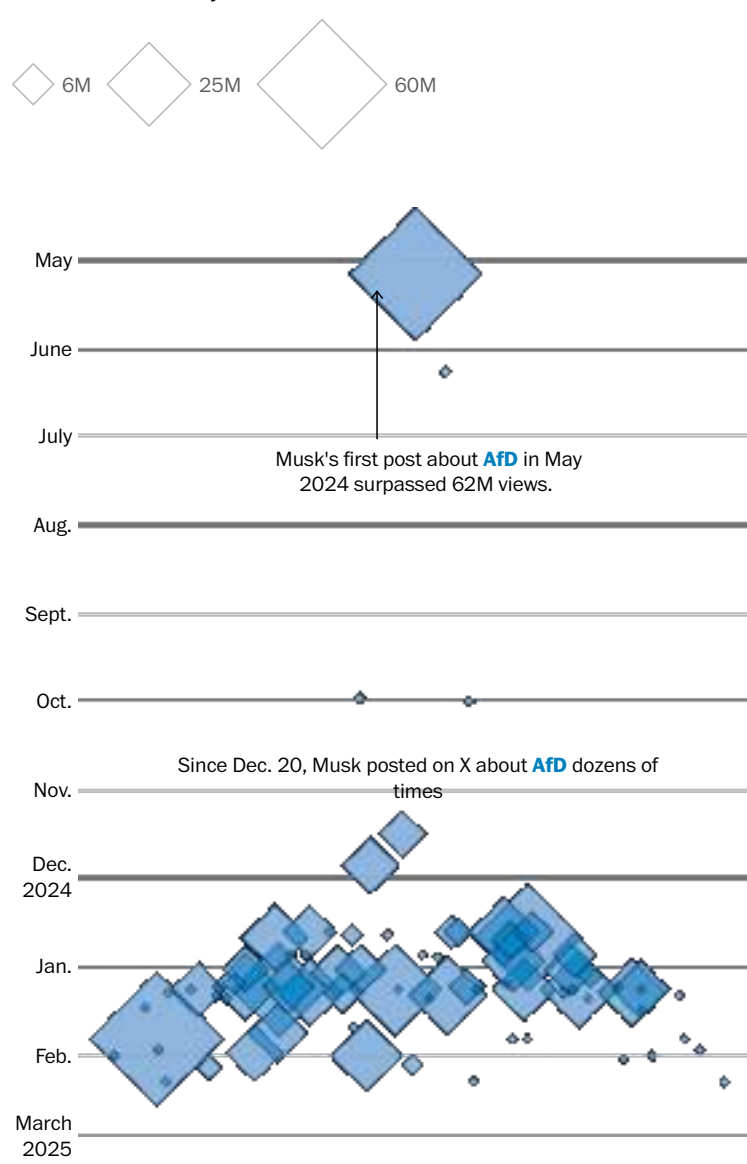
Musk's involvement in German politics has shocked many in Europe, escalating a legal dispute between X and the European Union. Last month, the European Commission asked X to hand over



ÁLVARO VALIÑO/THE WASHINGTON POST

Musk's posts about AfD

Diamonds sized by number of views



Source: Atlantic Council Digital Forensic Research Lab and AlgorithmWatch

internal documents about its algorithm, while a German court later ordered the platform to provide researchers with political data related to elections.

It remains uncertain whether Musk's promotion of the AfD on X broke any laws. Since 2023, the social media network has provided only limited data to researchers, restricting analysis of how and why it shows posts to users.

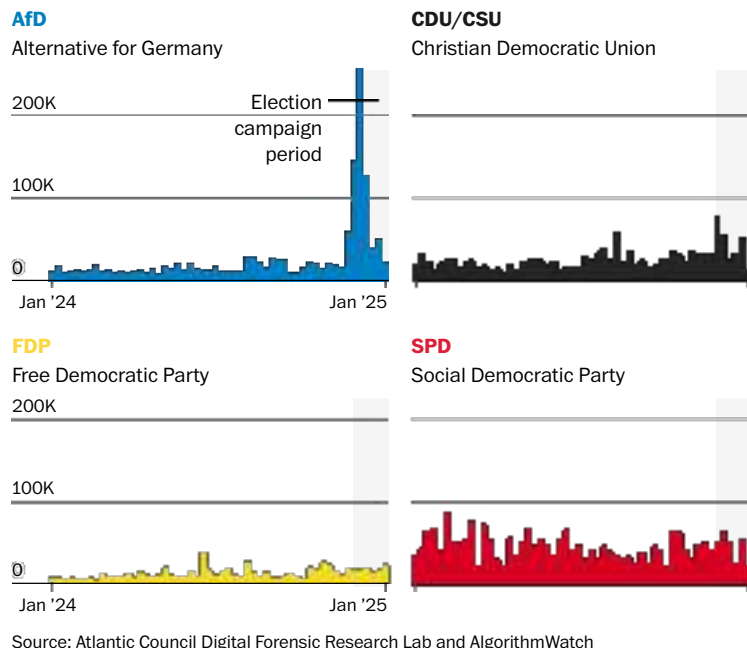
“It's really hard to work out what's going on, and X is, as far as we can tell, deliberately making it harder,” said Oliver Marsh, head of tech research at Algorithm-

Watch and a co-author of the report.

The data analysis does not suggest algorithmic changes designed to benefit the AfD and Weidel, though the findings do not rule out the possibility. DFRLab and AlgorithmWatch concluded that Musk's apparent organic sharing of social media content would not breach the E.U.'s Digital Services Act.

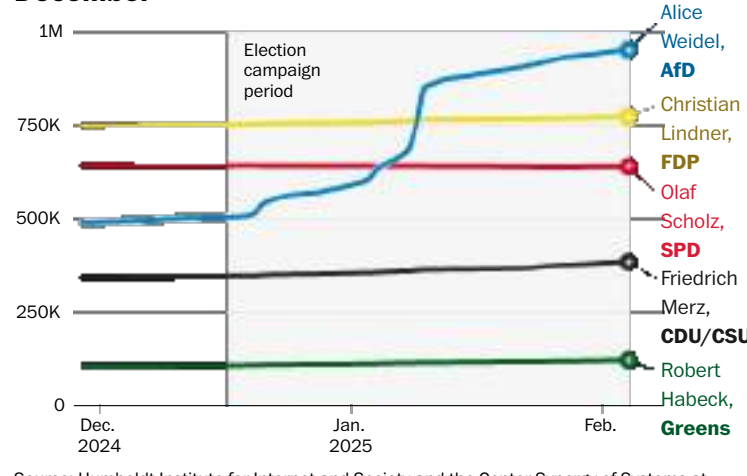
Legal implications aside, experts watching Germany's election said Musk's involvement could set an unwelcome precedent. Musk is having “a big influ-

Weekly views on X by party



Source: Atlantic Council Digital Forensic Research Lab and AlgorithmWatch

German candidates by number of X followers since December



Source: Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society and the Center Synergy of Systems at Technical University Dresden

ence, normalizing and legitimizing the AfD's policy suggestions, as well as the rhetoric and the vocabulary the AfD uses,” said Julia Ebner, an expert on political extremism at the University of Oxford.

Representatives of X did not respond to a request for comment.

Musk's interest in the AfD is a recent phenomenon. He had mentioned the party only a handful of times before Dec. 20. After that day, the world's richest man began a campaign of support for AfD. He published opinion col-

umns praising the party, live-streamed a friendly interview with Weidel and spoke at an AfD rally, where he told Germans to move beyond “past guilt” over Nazi history.

The AfD, formed in 2013, has surged in popularity in recent years with an anti-migration and anti-establishment stance. Three of Germany's 16 states label its regional branches as “confirmed right-wing extremist.”

The party first won seats in the 2017 national election, when it won 12.6 percent of the vote. It lost

seats in the 2021 election but has been on the upswing ahead of Sunday's vote, running second in most opinion polls. All major German parties have ruled out forming a government with the AfD.

Exactly what impact Musk's promotion of the party will have on the election is uncertain: Polls show that Musk is unpopular in Germany, with just 19 percent having a favorable view of him in a survey conducted in January.

“I think, in the short term, very few Germans will vote for the AfD just because an American billionaire tells them, ‘This is the last salvation,’” said Thorsten Benner, director of the Berlin-based Global Public Policy Institute.

Musk holds numerous business interests in Germany. His company Tesla manufactures electric cars at a factory outside Berlin, which led to some early criticism from the company about the German bureaucracy and red tape.

Musk's initial interest in the AfD last year appears to have been sparked by Naomi Seibt, 24, an influencer and political activist known for her skepticism of climate change. Seibt has more than 400,000 followers on X.

The billionaire came to engage regularly with Weidel, 46, who is the AfD's first candidate for chancellor. As a Chinese-speaking economist raising two children with her Sri Lanka-born female partner, Weidel has helped alter the AfD's image of intolerance.

“I think Alice Weidel is a very reasonable person,” Musk said after his live-stream interview with the AfD leader on Jan. 9.

German researchers have found that Weidel's follower count on X has more than doubled since Musk took an interest in the AfD last year. Weidel has about a million followers, significantly more than Merz (who has more than 390,000) and Christian Lindner of the Free Democratic Party (who has more than 770,000 and was the most-followed German candidate before December).

“Weidel's visibility on social media has surged in recent months, and this sharp increase coincides with Elon Musk's promotion of the AfD,” said Sami Nanno, a researcher at the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society and co-author of the report. But, Nanno added, “success on social media does not directly translate to election outcomes, which are influenced by numerous factors beyond visibility on X.”

While X does not release language or location data, DFRLab and AlgorithmWatch conducted qualitative research on each major German party's X posts and found there had been a surge in engagement from English-language users on AfD posts. That surge was not found for other parties, they said.

One possible factor is X's relative lack of popularity in Germany. Last year, X reported that it had fewer than 17 million active users a month in the country, less than half of Instagram's reported 45 million.

“It's emblematic that most of Weidel's top retweeted posts are in English,” said Marsh, of AlgorithmWatch.

While political donations are tightly regulated in Germany, some experts said Musk could find other ways to influence future elections. He spent \$288 million in his effort to help Trump get elected last year. His posts to X, whatever their impact, have cost him nothing.

Kate Brady in Berlin contributed to this report.

DIGEST

SOUTH KOREA

Impeached president appears in two courts

Shuttled around Seoul in a prison transport vehicle, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol appeared in two courtrooms Thursday, contesting his arrest on rebellion charges in one and fighting an effort to remove him from office in the other.

Both cases — one criminal, the other an impeachment — are related to his brief imposition of martial law in December.

Security was tight at Seoul Central District Court as Yoon arrived for a preliminary hearing that involved discussions of witnesses, proposed evidence

and other preparations for his criminal trial.

The court, which set another preliminary hearing for March, was also reviewing a request by Yoon's lawyers to revoke his arrest order and release him from custody. Such challenges are rarely successful.

Yoon next traveled to the Constitutional Court, which is nearing a decision on whether to formally remove him from office after he was impeached by the National Assembly. The court said it will hold final arguments Tuesday, which possibly sets up a decision sometime in March.

After the hearing, Yoon's motorcade took him back to a detention center near Seoul.

— Associated Press

THAILAND

Chinese rescued from scam centers go home

A group of 200 Chinese nationals plucked from scam centers in Myanmar crossed into Thailand and were flown home Thursday, as part of a multinational effort to repatriate hundreds forced to work in massive internet fraud schemes, a senior Thai minister said.

For years, criminal gangs have trafficked hundreds of thousands of people to scam compounds across Southeast Asia, including sites on the Thai-Myanmar frontier, the United Nations says.

An initial group of 50 Chinese nationals, guarded by armed

soldiers and military vehicles mounted with machine guns, crossed into Thailand at Mae Sot early Thursday from the town of Myawaddy in Myanmar.

A total of 600 Chinese nationals will be sent home via Thailand this week, Thai Deputy Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said.

The Mae Sot arrivals were part of a renewed effort by Thailand to dismantle the compounds with Beijing's backing, after the rescue of Chinese actor Wang Xing, who disappeared there after being promised an acting job. The plight of Wang, spirited across the border to the Myawaddy area and now home, drew wide interest in China

— Reuters

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has escalated his battle

with a top business group, raising the stakes for his economic turnaround program, analysts say. On Thursday, a court banned international travel by two TUSIAD executives in an investigation of remarks in which they criticized a government crackdown on the opposition and journalists. On Wednesday, Erdogan accused TUSIAD leaders of meddling in politics and profiting at the nation's expense. The probe has brought questions from some foreign investors who had cheered a U-turn toward more orthodox economic policies.

Ivory Coast officially took

control of the last French military base in the country as French forces leave nations across West Africa. About 80 service members will remain to advise and train Ivorian forces. Troops for France, a former colonial power, have in recent years been kicked out of Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Chad.

Greece's air traffic controllers said they will join a general strike to demand justice for victims of the nation's worst rail disaster two years ago. Their part in the Feb. 28 strike, called by unions for public- and private-sector workers, is expected to ground all airline flights to and from Greek airports.

— From news services

After backing Trump, some Venezuelans fear deportation

Many feel betrayed by government's decision to stop protecting them

BY SABRINA RODRIGUEZ
AND RESHMA KIRPALANI

DORAL, FLA. — Ronald Bellorin decided to flee Venezuela for the United States during President Donald Trump's first administration, convinced the Republican leader would protect people like him who had been targeted by an autocratic regime.

Now the university professor is worried the Trump administration is going to deport him. The Department of Homeland Security has canceled the temporary protected status given to thousands of Venezuelans who have arrived in recent years. Bellorin's permission to work in the United States is set to expire in April, and his shield from deportation in September.

"Today, I feel the same way I felt in Venezuela — that they're going to come take me somewhere I won't be able to escape from," Bellorin said, tearing up as he described his family's ordeal. "It's terrible to feel this way here in the United States."

He paused for a moment to compose himself. "I thought we would be safe here."

The decision to cancel temporary protected status (TPS) for hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans has ignited fear, confusion and outrage in this Miami suburb, which is affectionately known as "Doralzuela." Venezuelans here have been some of Trump's biggest proponents. Even if many could not vote, they attended rallies, decorated their front lawns with Trump flags, and took to social media to support the man they thought would prioritize removing Nicolás Maduro from power.

For many Venezuelans, Trump's decision feels like betrayal.

"The Venezuelan community gave President Trump their support," said John De La Vega, a Venezuelan American immigration lawyer and Army veteran. "This is completely different of what I thought it was going to be."

Perhaps nowhere have Venezuelans put down roots as firmly in the United States as in Doral. Children born in Venezuela or to Venezuelan parents in the United States fill the city's schools. Family-owned restaurants that shuttered in Caracas have reopened in strip malls. Many business owners, lawyers and doctors have now been here so long that they have reestablished professional careers, purchased homes and built the suburb into one of Miami's fastest-growing communities.

The city is also home to a Trump golf course and resort, and the president visited Doral often during his first term, and while campaigning to meet with community leaders and boast of his fight against the Maduro regime.

Some of Trump's most dramatic inroads with Latino voters were made in Doral, where roughly 40 percent of the city's residents have Venezuelan roots. He went from losing the city in 2016 to narrowly winning it in 2020. In the 2024 election, he won 62 percent of the vote in Doral, beating Vice President Kamala Harris by 25 percentage points, according to an analysis of Miami-Dade County precinct data.

Andrea Gabriela Rangel Walther, 29, is among those who thought Trump would shield Venezuelans from deportation. She said the overwhelming majority of her friends and family supported Trump — including her father, who is now at risk of being removed from the country. His TPS expires in April.

She knew Trump had vowed to deport immigrants who committed crimes and singled out members of Venezuela's feared Tren de Aragua gang as initial targets. That was something she agreed with and welcomed. But she didn't expect Trump to conflate criminals with Venezuelans like her parents and younger brother.

"He's been to Doral. He's been to Miami," she said between bites of an empanada at a small Venezuelan restaurant. "He knows all Venezuelans aren't Tren de Aragua."

Rangel Walther pointed to Venezuelans' contributions to South Florida. Visit any business — whether it's an office, hotel or store — and there are Venezuelans working inside. New shopping centers and apartment complexes are being built to meet the demand of new residents — many Venezuelan — who have moved in. "Esto es Doralzuela," she said, referring to the city's nickname. *This is Doralzuela.*

Rangel Walther, a U.S. resident, said her husband, who is Venezuelan and a U.S. citizen, voted for Harris and now chides her father for his support of Trump.



PHOTOS BY RESHMA KIRPALANI/THE WASHINGTON POST

Andrea Gabriela Rangel Walther cries with parents Franklin Rangel and Andreina Walther at their home in Miami. Her father's temporary protected status expires in April.



Local leaders speak against the administration's decision on Venezuelans on Feb. 3 in Doral, Florida.

"My husband told my father: 'Tu querías votar por Trump y mira ahora él te está botando,'" she said. *You wanted to vote for Trump and now he's kicking you out.*

Her father was blindsided by Trump's decision to eliminate TPS for Venezuelans, but Rangel Walther said he still supports the president.

"He says that Trump is doing right by his country, that we did invade his country, and he's defending it," she said.

Her parents are now going to apply for political asylum, a process she said they didn't start before because of how costly it can be. Rangel Walther's hope is that a pending asylum case will allow them to remain in the United States until she becomes a U.S. citizen next year and can try to claim them.

She looked over at another table and noticed a stack of fliers for a prominent local immigration lawyer. "That's actually who I think they're going to go with," she said. That same lawyer has a large billboard on a major intersection in Doral advertising his firm's work on asylum claims.

Mid-conversation, Rangel Walther paused to listen in as a man chatted with workers preparing orders behind a counter. The customer, also Venezuelan, said Trump had turned his back on the community that lifted him up: "Es más falso que un billete de mil." *He's more fake than a thousand-dollar bill.*

"You see?" she said. "Everyone is in shock."

Immigration lawyers like De La Vega said they have been inundated with calls and emails from nervous immigrants. Some are

parents asking if it is safe to go to work and send their kids to school. Others want to know if they should apply for asylum and whether they could be deported.

De La Vega was shocked by the decision to rescind temporary protected status for Venezuelans. The initial notice from DHS applies to approximately 350,000 Venezuelans — but in total, about 600,000 Venezuelans are recipients of the protections, which President Joe Biden first extended to them in 2021 and again in 2023. Venezuelans are by far the largest group protected from deportation under a 1990 law that authorizes the government to award undocumented immigrants TPS if their countries are experiencing war, disaster or another crisis.

De La Vega's dismay turned into anger when he read Homeland Security Secretary Kristi L.

Noem's termination notice. In it, she argued that Venezuelans no longer needed protection, in part because there had been "notable improvements in several areas such as the economy, public health, and crime."

"Trump knows exactly what's going on in Venezuela, and these actions and these reports that they're filing are completely inconsistent with the reality," he said. "Was 'America First' policy then for us to send innocent people back to a regime? Is that what we do?"

De La Vega warned that Trump and Republicans will suffer at the ballot box. Many TPS holders have U.S. citizen relatives who can vote. He said the decision will influence how he votes in the midterms and the next presidential election.

"There's a lot of people here saying, 'Hey, we gave you this. This is our gift to you, our vote,'" he said. "And then you do all this stuff?"

Not everyone is as surprised. Samir Luzardo had been growing concerned as Trump ramped up his rhetoric against Venezuelans on the campaign trail. The Republican candidate spoke frequently of an invasion and mentioned Tren de Aragua gang members as if they were everywhere.

It reminded Luzardo of Trump's description of Mexican immigrants during his 2015 presidential campaign, in which he alleged they were "bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."

"We're the new target," said Luzardo, 55, an independent journalist.

Luzardo once served on Venezuela's equivalent of the Federal Communications Commission. But he said his efforts to fight government censorship made him a target. He said he decided to flee with his family in 2016 after regime officials began threatening his son. He has been waiting

nine years for his asylum case to be heard.

When Luzardo received TPS in 2021, he felt some relief, he said. Now he is worried about whether his family will be able to stay.

Going back to Venezuela, he said, is not an option. And he is alarmed by Trump's initial gestures toward the Maduro regime. The president sent his special missions envoy, Richard Grenell, to meet with Maduro in Caracas in late January. The two reached an agreement for Venezuela to accept deportees and release hostages. The Trump administration did not address last year's presidential election in Venezuela — widely considered fraudulent — or Maduro's arrests of more than 1,700 political prisoners in recent months in its communications about the meeting.

"A photo of a Trump envoy shaking hands with Maduro in the middle of the Miraflores presidential palace? All smiling? It gives legitimacy to an illegitimate government," Luzardo said, shaking his head.

The journalist said that most Venezuelans, if not all, "want to go home" but "under the right circumstances."

Bellorin, the university professor who fled in 2018, said he never wanted to leave his home country. He loved his career teaching electronic technology at the University of Oriente and couldn't imagine a life away from Puerto La Cruz, a port city surrounded by beaches. Though he had long been outspoken against the country's leftist leadership, he said he didn't feel his life was in danger until Maduro became president and empowered gangs and regime supporters to go after the opposition.

Bellorin applied for political asylum when he arrived in Miami. The process can take years, so he registered for temporary protected status as well in 2021. The U.S. government denied his asylum claim in 2023, saying that while his testimony was "found credible," "the events you described and the harm you fear are not serious enough to rise to the level of persecution," according to court documents he shared.

On a recent morning, he rushed to El Arepazo, a widely known Venezuelan restaurant located within a gas station here, after hearing on Telemundo that community leaders were gathering to condemn the administration's decision. He hoped to get answers on what comes next.

At a minimum, he thought, it would make him feel like he was taking action. He hadn't been hungry in days and was unable to think of anything else.

Bellorin is considering hiring an attorney and is going to write to his local lawmakers to ask for help, but he's not sure what options are left. The threats he fled back home, he said, remain. He swiped through social media posts on his phone describing Venezuelan professors who had been disappeared or arrested.

"I simply don't know what to do," Bellorin said, looking down at a leather portfolio he had filled with his legal documents. "We cannot go back to Venezuela."

Dan Keating contributed to this report.



Independent journalist Samir Luzardo received temporary protected status in 2021 after fleeing Venezuela with his family in 2016.

DHS move could make 520,000 Haitian migrants eligible for deportation

BY MARIANNE LEVINE
AND SARRINA RODRIGUEZ

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi L. Noem announced Thursday that the agency is partially vacating a Biden-era extension of temporary protected status for Haitian migrants, a move that could make thousands eligible for deportation in August.

Former DHS secretary Alejandro Mayorkas extended TPS for Haitian migrants until February of 2026, but the Trump administration contends he did not sufficiently explain his reasoning.

Joseph N. Mazzara, acting DHS general counsel, wrote in a memo that the Trump administration now has until June to make a decision on whether to issue its own extension for Haitian migrants. If no decision is made, TPS would expire for an estimated 520,000 Haitians in August.

Haiti received temporary protected status designation in 2010, after a powerful earthquake killed thousands of people.

"Biden and Mayorkas attempted to tie the hands of the Trump Administration by extending Haiti's Temporary Protected Status by 18 months — far longer than just-

fied or necessary," DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement. "We are returning integrity to the TPS system, which has been abused and exploited by illegal aliens for decades."

The move marks another escalation of the Trump administration's efforts to revoke the special status that has been granted to scores of migrants fleeing crises in their homelands. DHS recently revoked TPS for hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants.

The Trump administration's decisions on TPS are likely to be challenged in court. In recent days, Venezuelan migrants and civil rights organizations have filed two lawsuits.

The first suit, filed in U.S. District Court in the Northern District of California, argues that Noem and the Department of Homeland Security have no legal authority to undo a TPS extension once it has been made — and that the administration's actions are motivated by racism, in violation of the Fifth Amendment, which guarantees due process.

"That is based on a mountain of racist statements made by both her and President Trump against Venezuelan refugees going back now for several years, calling them

animals, calling them dirtbags, falsely claiming that they are people who are let out of prisons and let out of mental institutions and just broad, completely false statements that just restate racist tropes," said Ahilan Arulanantham, one of the lawyers on the case and co-director of the Center for Immigration Law and Policy at the UCLA School of Law.

CASA, a national immigrant advocacy group, and Make the Road New York, a community organization, filed a separate lawsuit Thursday in U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland.

"DHS's recent actions ignore the statutory scheme that Congress enacted and instead threaten to force lawfully-admitted and TPS-eligible Venezuelans and their families to return to a country experiencing one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the Western Hemisphere," CASA and Make the Road New York's lawsuit reads.

While campaigning, Trump spoke often against Venezuelans, talking about an invasion and mentioning Tren de Aragua gang members as if they were everywhere.

In Trump's first month back in the White House, he and adminis-

tration officials have kept up their crusade against the Venezuelan gang. The Trump administration has designated Tren de Aragua and seven other Latin American crime organizations as "foreign terrorist organizations," according to a document published in the Federal Register on Thursday. Trump officials have also begun to send migrants to Guantánamo Bay, claiming that everyone on the first flight were members of Tren de Aragua. Interviews with relatives of some of those migrants and an analysis of records cast doubt on whether they were "the worst of the worst," as Noem described them.

Arulanantham pointed out one specific instance of Noem using racist language on television when talking about the end of TPS for Venezuelans. Days before she officially issued the termination notice, Noem went on "Fox & Friends" and said she was ending the 18-month extension Biden implemented days before leaving the White House.

"The people of this country want these dirtbags out," Noem said on the show.

Noem has stressed in multiple TV interviews and on social media that the administration is focused

on deporting criminal gang members. Criminals are ineligible for protection under TPS.

During the first Trump administration, the Department of Homeland Security also sought to end temporary protected status for Haitian migrants, but that decision was challenged in court.

Arulanantham, who led the lawsuit that blocked Trump from terminating protections for Haitians and other groups during his first term, said Noem's move to rescind TPS for Venezuelans after Mayorkas's extension is the first time in the 35-year history of the temporary protected status statute that an administration has ever taken back an extension early. Arulanantham said the ultimate goal is for a judge to restore the extension. But in the immediate term, he said, the lawyers on the first case will ask that the court postpone the effective date so that it is "no longer hanging over everybody's head."

The first case is being handled by the Center for Immigration Law and Policy at UCLA Law, ACLU of Southern California, ACLU of Northern California and the National Day Laborer Organizing Network. They are representing the National TPS Alliance,

a grassroots alliance of TPS recipients across the country that has thousands of members who are Venezuelans, and several individual Venezuelan TPS recipients.

The second case is being handled by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and Cleary Gottlieb.

Venezuelans are by far the largest group protected from deportation under a 1990 law that authorizes the government to award undocumented immigrants TPS if their countries are experiencing war, disaster or another crisis.

The Biden administration had granted them TPS in 2021 and 2023. The 2023 group's protections are set to expire in April, while the 2021 group's status will expire in September.

Venezuelan TPS recipients have expressed fear and concern over the possibility of having to return to their home country as the Maduro regime — which Trump has previously ruled against — remains in power.

In the termination notice, Noem argued that Venezuelans no longer needed protection, in part because there had been "notable improvements in several areas such as the economy, public health, and crime."

Amid war of words, Trump envoy meets Ukraine leader

The two talk as Europe fears U.S. will abandon the war-torn nation

BY DAVID L. STERN
AND ELLEN FRANCIS

KYIV — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met with President Donald Trump's envoy on Thursday, as barbed exchanges between the two leaders deepened uncertainty about the future of U.S. backing for Kyiv.

Retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, Trump's envoy on the war in Ukraine, arrived in Kyiv soon after the spat erupted, with Trump describing the Ukrainian president as failing and blaming him for Russia's 2022 invasion of the country. Zelensky countered that Trump was repeating misinformation about him and the war. Ukrainian officials appeared to be seeking to calm the waters during Kellogg's visit Thursday, though it was not immediately clear how his meeting with Zelensky went, as the two did not hold a planned press briefing afterward.

"At the request of the American side, the format of the meeting is for a protocol photo op and does not include statements or questions," said Serhii Nykyforov, a Ukrainian presidency spokesman.

As the cameras clicked, Zelensky responded to a question about how he was doing by describing himself as in a "fighting spirit."



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, left, meets with U.S. envoy Keith Kellogg in Kyiv on Thursday.

Writing on Telegram after the meeting, Zelensky said their conversation was "good ... with lots of details."

"Ukraine is ready for a strong, truly beneficial agreement with the President of the United States on investments and security," Zelensky wrote, adding that Ukraine had "proposed the fastest and most constructive way to achieve a result. Our team is ready to work 24/7."

Beyond Ukraine, European leaders rallied behind Kyiv after Trump's broadside not only angered Ukrainians, but also compounded European alarm over a U.S. president who is rapidly re-drawing alliances.

Trump's latest comments, echoing the Kremlin's narrative and blaming Ukraine for the war,

have reinforced a sense among many Europeans that Washington may one day desert its long-standing allies. Behind the traded insults, there is mounting anxiety about how Trump's shift from decades of U.S. policy on Russia could transform the transatlantic relationship that has underpinned European security since World War II.

French President Emmanuel Macron is due to visit Trump in Washington on Monday, and will be followed by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer later in the week.

France and Britain, the only nuclear powers among the Europeans, have been drawing up plans for a "reassurance" force that could be deployed to Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire deal,

proposal that would require U.S. support, The Washington Post reported. The plan envisions a European force of under 30,000 troops that would not be stationed at any future front line but could help deter Russia from attempts to reignite a full-blown conflict.

Macron will be in Washington to defend European interests and will seek to shape the contours of a "durable peace," said Benjamin Haddad, France's minister delegate for Europe.

Macron convened a meeting Wednesday evening as part of his efforts to bring together a crisis coalition of sorts. Leaders of 19 countries, including European allies and Canada, joined mostly by video link.

It was the second urgent meeting this week at the Élysée presidential palace, where the continent's leaders gathered Monday to forge a consensus on backing Ukraine as U.S.-Russia talks began without Europeans or Ukrainians. European leaders have also sought a coordinated response to bolster their own defenses and to reevaluate relations with the United States, as the Trump administration moves toward direct negotiations with Russia on halting the conflict.

After the meeting, Macron said late Wednesday that France and its partners have "a clear and united position." He outlined three conditions for a "long-lasting and solid peace": Ukraine must be included, an agreement must have "robust and credible guarantees," and Europe's security concerns "must be taken into account."

"We stand with Ukraine and will take full responsibility to ensure peace and security in Europe," Macron said. "We are convinced of the need to increase our defense and security spending and capabilities for Europe and each of our countries."

The Kremlin, which has demanded Ukraine's demilitarization, said Thursday that talk of European troops, and particularly from NATO countries, in Ukraine "causes concern for us" and that Moscow is "monitoring this very closely."

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk warned Thursday that "a forced capitulation of Ukraine would mean a capitulation of the whole community of the West ... with all the consequences of this fact."

"And let no one pretend that they don't see this," he added.

Trump's national security adviser Michael Waltz, speaking at the White House briefing, said the president is "very frustrated" with Zelensky, referring to a deal that would give the United States a stake in Ukraine's natural resources.

"The fact that he hasn't come to the table, that he hasn't been willing to take this opportunity that we've offered," Waltz said, adding that he hopes there will be an agreement "very soon." He declined to say if Russian President Vladimir Putin is a dictator, as Trump described Zelensky, or to ascribe blame for the start of the war in Ukraine. Trump's "goal here is to bring this war to an end, period," Waltz said. "And there has been ongoing fighting on both sides."

While Kyiv rejected a Trump administration request this month to hand over 50 percent of its mineral resources — a demand that could significantly overshadow the value of aid sent to Ukraine — Ukrainian officials had been working on a counterproposal that would still offer Washington more access but would bolster U.S. security guarantees for Ukraine, people familiar with the discussions said.

Waltz also pushed back Thursday against concerns that Ukraine was being shut out of negotiations over its own future. "We've had plenty of engagement and dialogue," he said, adding that Kellogg "is literally there right now" and that the administration was consulting with European allies.

In Ukraine, Trump's insults aimed at Zelensky have triggered a rare show of unity from some of the Ukrainian leader's fiercest domestic political critics.

Starmer called Zelensky on Wednesday to express support and said it was "perfectly reasonable to suspend elections during wartime," according to the British prime minister's office. Elections were supposed to be held in 2024, but Ukrainian law says voting cannot happen during martial law.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store called Trump's claims "deeply unfounded," and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz described them as "wrong and dangerous."

Francis reported from Brussels. Serhiy Morgunov in Kyiv contributed to this report.



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ECONOMY & BUSINESS

Airlines seek to reverse Biden rule on wheelchairs

BY LORI ARATANI

Major U.S. airlines are seeking to overturn a sweeping set of Biden-era rules that offered consumer protections to passengers with disabilities — including people who depend on wheelchairs, scooters and walkers — arguing in court filings that the Transportation Department exceeded its authority in putting the new requirements in place.

In a five-page filing with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit on Tuesday, the airline trade group Airlines for America and five carriers — American, Delta, JetBlue, Southwest and United — argued that the rule is unlawful. The challenge to wheelchair rules is likely to be one of many as carriers seek to overturn or derail mandates put into place during the Biden administration.

The Trump administration has made it a goal to eliminate many of the Biden administration's rules and initiatives, but so far it has not targeted Biden's initiatives around air travel. The Transportation Department did not respond to a request for comment.

In addition to protections for people with wheelchairs and other passengers with disabilities, President Joe Biden had imposed requirements that airlines dis-

close fees for checking bags and changing or canceling a reservation. That rule was put on hold after a challenge by airlines.

The measures to protect disabled passengers, finalized in December, included requirements that airlines provide enhanced annual training for employees and contractors who interact with disabled passengers. The new rule stated that passengers with disabilities should receive "prompt" assistance during their trip.

Under the rule, if a wheelchair or other device such as a scooter is checked but is delayed, missing or damaged, airlines must notify the passenger of their options, including that they have a right to file a claim with the airline or receive a loaner device. Government data shows that 1 in every 100 wheelchairs or scooters handled by carriers on domestic flights is damaged, delayed or lost.

The rule imposed stricter penalties on carriers that mishandle passengers' mobility devices. The administration also required that bathrooms on single-aisle aircraft be accessible to passengers with disabilities.

The new provisions were hailed by members of the disabled community, who have long complained about substandard



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Passengers in wheelchairs are helped to their gate at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston in May 2020.

treatment when they traveled, including long waits to be assisted on or off planes and frequent mishandling of wheelchairs.

American, Delta, JetBlue, Southwest and United declined to comment, referring inquires to Airlines for America, which said in a statement that such rules are unnecessary because carriers have been making "meaningful

progress enhancing service for passengers with disabilities" since signing a 2022 pledge.

"Progress has been made in four key areas aimed at improving the travel experience for passengers with mobility aids — reducing instances of wheelchair mishandling, advancing employee training and education programs, forming passenger ac-

cessibility advisory groups and supporting research for onboard accessibility solutions," the trade group said.

In October, the Transportation Department fined American Airlines \$50 million for multiple violations of laws aimed at protecting passengers who use wheelchairs after it found that between 2019 and 2023, the carri-

er failed to properly help travelers on and off planes, provided them with unsafe help and mishandled thousands of wheelchairs.

The airline agreed to pay the penalty and resolve the investigation, but it did not admit to any of the violations.

Ian Duncan contributed to this report.

Trump moves to narrow independence of Fed, other Wall Street regulators

BY ANDREW ACKERMAN

The Trump administration took another swing at the Federal Reserve's independence late Tuesday with a new executive order that seeks more control over federal agencies that have traditionally operated with day-to-day autonomy.

Even as the White House executive order said it would protect the Fed's monetary policy — including its powers to set interest rates — it sought to scoop up all of Wall Street's biggest regulators and make their budgets subject to the authority of the White House budget office.

It's just the latest political attack on the Fed, a 111-year institution responsible for setting short-term borrowing costs that trickle through the financial sector and influence what millions of consumers and businesses pay to borrow money. It also plays a key role supervising and regulating Wall Street.

It's possible little of Tuesday's order will ultimately apply to the Fed because Congress established the central bank to operate with significant independence in determining how to use its resources. The order notes it does not seek to "impair" any authorities Congress has given to independent agencies.

"Time, the courts and Congress will ultimately determine whether and how much of this sticks," said Scott Alvarez, a former general counsel at the Fed. "What's important at this point is the president has announced he wants to dismantle a system of independent agencies that Congress has established and the courts have upheld and wants to shift funding decisions from Congress and the appropriations process to himself."

Laws and norms have traditionally protected the Fed from the executive branch, with the aim of demonstrating to global markets that U.S. monetary policy isn't at the mercy of the political

whims of the White House. But President Donald Trump has made clear he thinks he should get more of a say.

The Fed declined to comment. A White House spokesman had no immediate comment.

For their part, Fed officials of their own volition have already made a series of decisions in the first weeks of the Trump administration to align internal policies with lawful directives from the White House, with the aim of avoiding a dispute with the administration, Fed watchers say.

Almost immediately after Trump was sworn into office, Fed officials announced a suspension of "diversity, equity and inclusion" programs, as well as a systemwide hiring freeze, according to emails reviewed by The Washington Post. The Fed is also trying to align to Trump's return-to-office policies, with officials considering reductions to remote work.

"As has been our practice over many administrations, we are working to align our policies with the executive orders as appropriate and consistent with applicable law," Federal Reserve Board Chair Jerome H. Powell told reporters late last month.

What's different in the move on Tuesday is that the White House appears to be trying to force the changes on the Fed when it comes to its oversight and regulation of Wall Street. The order requires that independent agencies submit major regulations to the White House Office of Management and Budget for review.

The new order also states that only the president and the attorney general — "subject to the President's supervision and control" — will interpret law on behalf of the executive branch, blocking independent federal agencies from adopting legal interpretations that are at odds with the Trump White House.

OMB is run by Russell Vought, a fiscal hawk who helped to craft Project 2025, a controversial policy blueprint that has informed



ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell testifies Feb. 12 for the House Financial Services Committee.

Trump's return to the White House. Specifically, Project 2025 suggests the Fed's role should be narrowed to only keeping the money supply stable, not regulating Wall Street banks or acting as a lender of last resort when big banks fail, because "political pressure has led the Federal Reserve to use its power to regulate banks as a way to promote politically favorable initiatives," the paper said.

Fed watchers say the central bank's actions to date suggest it wants to choose its battles carefully, avoiding conflicts with Trump that don't directly threaten its control over monetary policy. The Fed has fiercely protected its independence since the high-inflation era of the 1970s. That period was partly driven by the central bank's own missteps under pressure from President Richard M. Nixon to keep rates low, despite signs that the economy was overheating, to help his reelection campaign.

"The Fed is willing to go all 15 rounds with the sitting president to preserve its ability to make interest rate policy separate from the Oval Office," said Peter Conti-Brown, a Fed historian at the University of Pennsylvania. "It is not willing to separate itself from the Oval Office on nearly anything else."

"The White House — for now, at least — appears to insist on precisely this balance of power," he added. "The question only remains whether President Trump and those closest to him will continue to regard even monetary policy as outside of his immediate control."

For months, Trump officials have privately discussed ways to streamline the alphabet soup of agencies responsible for overseeing Wall Street. One approach envisions consolidating agencies such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency into

a single entity, according to people familiar with the discussions who spoke on the condition of anonymity to convey internal plans.

Lacking sufficient votes in the Senate to overhaul the financial regulatory system, the White House's order could provide a backup approach to trying to consolidate at least some control of financial regulation, even if it remains unlikely the Fed's regulatory functions wind up under the direct purview of the president. The Fed, the FDIC and the comptroller are the three primary federal banking regulators.

It's not the first time the Fed has moved quickly to align its policies with those of a new administration. At the start of Trump's first term, the central bank similarly adopted a hiring freeze ordered across the government by the president.

This time, the political environment is more hostile to the Fed.

During Trump's first term, some Republican senators backed Powell against repeated efforts by Trump to undermine the independence of the Fed. Most of those lawmakers are no longer in office.

The push for more say over the Fed comes after Michael Barr, the Fed's vice chairman for banking supervision, last month said he would step down from the role at the end of this month, avoiding a potential legal fight over whether Trump had the authority to demote him.

The Fed's move to comply with earlier orders from the White House has been evident in the way it immediately removed public-facing webpages highlighting the board's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts following a directive from Trump that agencies cease such work.

The shift is notable at some regional Fed banks. At the New York Fed, officials canceled a reception scheduled for Thursday and also withdrew from a summer fellowship program that aimed to support women and underrepresented groups in economics, according to a social media post from Yana van der Meulen Rodgers, an economist at Rutgers University. A bank official attributed the cancellations to the suspension of DEI work, according to an email reviewed by The Post.

The New York Fed declined to comment.

At the Kansas City Fed, top officials told staff members on Halloween — less than a week before the presidential election — that the bank's commitment to DEI "remains steadfast," according to a message to the bank's roughly 2,000 employees reviewed by The Post.

That contrasted sharply with a Jan. 28 message from the top two officials at each Fed bank announcing that the system was "temporarily pausing" diversity initiatives through at least February.

Jeff Stein contributed to this report.

DIGEST

STOCK MARKET

Walmart's slide pulls market off record

A sharp slide for Walmart on Thursday helped pull Wall Street off of its record.

The S&P 500 slipped 0.4 percent to 6,117.52 for its first drop after setting all-time highs in each of the previous two days. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1 percent to 44,176.65, and the Nasdaq composite index sank 0.5 percent to 19,962.36.

Walmart drove the market lower after falling 6.5 percent,

even though the retailer reported stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. The retail chain gave a forecast for upcoming profit that fell short of analysts' expectations.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.50 percent from 4.54 percent late Wednesday. The yield on the two-year Treasury, which more closely tracks expectations for upcoming Fed moves, held steady. It remained at 4.27 percent, where it was late Wednesday. In the bond market, Treasury yields edged lower after a report showed more U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last

week than economists expected. — *Associated Press*

INVESTING

Fidelity launches two all-ETF models

Fidelity Investments said on Thursday that it has launched two all-ETF model portfolios for use by wealth management firms.

The new models will offer both active and passive exchange-traded funds employing an range of investment strategies, and will include not only Fidelity ETFs but also those of other providers. The Fidelity Target Allocation

ETF Model Portfolios will offer a core, multi-asset class model, while the Fidelity Target Risk ETF Model Portfolios will include liquid alternative investments and function as a complementary addition.

— *Reuters*

MANUFACTURING

Hasbro outlines \$1B cost-savings plan

Hasbro laid out a \$1 billion cost-savings plan on Thursday as the U.S. toy maker navigates subdued demand for its products, sending its shares up

about 13 percent despite a lackluster annual revenue forecast.

In its new strategic plan, the Nerf gun and Play-Doh maker will also target an average of mid-single-digit revenue growth and 50 to 100 basis points of annual operating profit margin improvement through 2027.

— *Reuters*

ALSO IN BUSINESS

ChatGPT developer OpenAI's weekly active users surged past 400 million in February, a company spokesperson said Thursday, highlighting rapid

growth in the adoption of artificial intelligence tools. The start-up had 300 million weekly active users in December.

AstraZeneca will buy longtime partner FibroGen's China unit for about \$160 million to gain rights to its anemia drug in the country, further boosting its presence in the world's second-biggest economy. The deal comes at a time when the Anglo-Swedish pharma company is facing a string of investigations in China. The deal is expected to close by mid-2025, pending conditions.

— *From news services*

Office occupancy rises as mandates enter into effect

OFFICES FROM A1

high average of 54.2 percent in 10 major cities, with Houston, Austin and Dallas leading the way. At 51.5 percent occupancy, D.C. had its highest week since March 2020. The rise in people working from the office is expected to continue to climb slowly, commercial property experts said, even as some employers continue to offer flexible work arrangements.

As of the first week of February, office occupancy remained stable at 54.1 percent on average in those 10 cities, according to Kastle. Houston led at 65.1 percent, while San Francisco brought up the rear at 43.2 percent.

"As more people come back, it makes it easier for other companies to ask their people to come back," said Mark Ein, chairman of Kastle, which offers software that can track who accesses the office for 2.5 million global users.

Federal workers are expected to be back in full force in upcoming weeks to comply with an executive order signed by President Donald Trump. Meanwhile, some companies are jumping on the return-to-office bandwagon, with Gap, JPMorgan, AT&T and Amazon among the most recent. Employers commonly cite collaboration, innovation and productivity as factors in return-to-office mandates. But some workers say the move feels like a push toward micromanaging or to force resignations.

For some companies, the return has had a rocky start. AT&T and Amazon said they have been addressing complaints of lack of space, desks and parking for some returning workers. Federal workers are also worried about space.

As companies make longer-term office plans, commercial leasing across the country has been on the rise, with the most notable jump happening in the fourth quarter of last year, said Julie Whelan, with the commercial real estate services company CBRE. Smaller companies are

driving consistent growth, while larger employers vary depending on industry. That said, commercial leasing isn't expected to rapidly grow back to pre-pandemic levels.

"People are [often] coming in three to 3½ days a week," Whelan said, adding that office occupancy is about 75 percent to 80 percent on peak days. "I don't imagine even a gentle push to get people more to the office is going to drive leasing."

D.C.-area workers say they see more traffic and lines at stores, restaurants and coffee shops. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority ridership increased by 10 percent on weekdays in October — the latest data available — compared with the previous year, but it still paled in comparison to pre-pandemic levels.

"People are coming back, and the foot traffic is going to give the city a little more energy," said Chris Jones, founder of staffing agency PoliTemps, adding that there is an air of uncertainty for federal workers under the new administration.

At Old Ebbitt Grill, near the White House, more workers are dining at the restaurant and bar for breakfasts, lunches, happy hours and dinners, said John Grace, general manager. While traffic is still not at pre-pandemic levels, the restaurant has had to staff up its bars and prepare for longer rush periods. Fewer workers frequent the restaurant on Mondays and Fridays, Grace said.

"We expect to see an increase with more and more workers coming back," he said.

Workers in Seattle are similarly seeing a shift. The city is home to the main headquarters of Amazon, which ordered workers back in office five days a week starting in January.

Kevin Logan Jr., a recruiter for Amazon who lives in a Seattle suburb, said his commute took about 30 minutes when more people were working from home. Now, it can be double or triple the time. He has also noticed more foot traffic. Logan, who enjoys



Commuters line the platform of the L'Enfant Plaza rail station in downtown Washington in late January.

CRAIG HUDSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

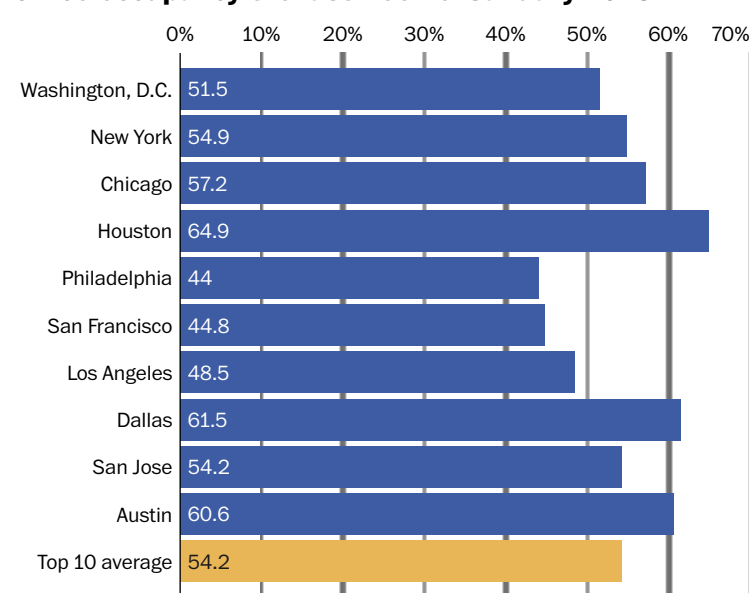
working from the office, expects more employers to send workers back to offices, but he hopes they'll retain some flexibility — something he says his managers provide.

"There will be great companies that understand that human beings have agency and autonomy," he said.

Amazon has heard "ideas for improvement from a relatively small number of employees" since the return and is working to address those, the company said in a statement. The company, founded by Jeff Bezos, who owns The Washington Post, said it's mostly seeing "great energy" in its offices. It also touted the innovation, collaboration and connection it says comes from teams working in person.

Many people enjoy seeing the influx of workers in their cities — whether for a boost of energy or to feel safer in a city with more people around. Jennifer Rock, a city product engineer, said she remembers when Seattle felt like a "ghost town." But now she has to leave at least an hour earlier than before to ensure her bus doesn't get stuck in traffic. She

Office occupancy the last week of January 2025



Source: Kastle Systems

often arrives at the office an hour to an hour and a half early.

"For me, the issue is more about the commute and the mental load," she said. "It's tough managing the household, getting to work and everything that comes along with it."

Texas is also seeing a big rise in office occupancy, with Houston's 64.9 percent office occupancy rate leading Kastle's data at the end of January. Austin's occupancy rate hit 60.6 percent last month, though it had a couple of bigger pops in 2023 and 2024.

In Austin, lines are forming at popular restaurants and even at fast-casual spots such as Chipotle, said Mercy Vettese, a sales support manager for construction equipment supplier Astrak US. The 24-year-old has resorted to ordering lunch online or popping into a small local grocery instead. Though the drive to her office previously had taken as little as five minutes, her commute these days can take up to 20 minutes.

"Everything is hustle and bustle, and it really feels like things have been restored," said Vettese, who moved to Austin in 2022. "I'm seeing a lot of people in and out, compared to when I moved here. It was really quiet."

Matzke, the worker in D.C., echoes others across the nation suggesting the change wasn't overnight. He chose to mostly work from an office, even during the height of the pandemic, he said. As workers have slowly returned, it's easy to forget just how quiet things used to be.

"Then one day you'll just notice. . . . 'Oh yeah, I guess it was different' the past few years, he said.

N.Y. says vape makers created public health crisis

Lawsuit accuses firms of marketing products that appeal to young people

BY ANUMITA KAUR

New York Attorney General Letitia James filed a sweeping lawsuit Thursday against several major e-cigarette companies, arguing that the distributors and manufacturers have caused a public health crisis by strategically marketing their products to young people.

The companies promoted "deceptive and misleading" messages about e-cigarettes' safety despite knowing that their products pose health risks to users, the lawsuit alleges. It also accuses the firms of flouting a 2020 state law banning flavored vapes, which studies have shown young people prefer.

"The vaping industry is taking a page out of Big Tobacco's playbook: they're making nicotine seem cool, getting kids hooked and creating a massive public health crisis in the process," James said in a statement. "For too long, these companies have disregarded our laws in order to profit off of our young people."

The 192-page complaint targets 13 companies — Puff Bar, Evo Brands, PVG2, Demand Vape, Magellan, Happy Distro, Midwest Goods, Pod Juice, Safa Goods, Mi-One, Mylé, MVH I and Price Point — arguing that they are responsible for illegally distributing, marketing and selling flavored disposable vapes in New York.

The lawsuit seeks to levy potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties on the companies, which the attorney general's office bills as a conservative estimate. This would include fines for breaking federal and state law, damages, and restitution for the companies' public health impact; the recovery of all revenue from the sale of illegal vapes; and the establishment of a fund to address the youth vaping crisis in New York.

The companies did not immediately respond to request for



2020 PHOTO BY MARSHALL RITZEL/AP

New York Attorney General Letitia James said vape makers "have disregarded our laws in order to profit off of our young people."

comment Thursday.

Tony Abboud, executive director of the Vapor Technology Association, said the lawsuit's discussion of a youth vaping epidemic is a "false claim."

"The facts are that since President Donald Trump raised the age to buy all tobacco products in 2019, youth vaping has dropped to the lowest level in over a decade," Abboud said. "This suit is the latest example of why President Trump needs to take bold and decisive action to end the government law-fare against the flavored vaping industry."

Flavored e-cigarettes — and their appeal to youth — have ignited enduring controversy, with questions regarding the industry's regulations winding up at the Supreme Court. The vaping industry has argued that e-cigarettes should remain available because they are not associated with the same risk of cancer and disease as traditional cigarettes. Anti-tobacco advocates contend that nicotine in e-cigarettes harms the developing brains of youth who get addicted and often vape along with smoking traditional cigarettes.

As of 2024, e-cigarettes were the most common tobacco product in use by American middle and high school students, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About 1.6 million — or nearly 6 percent — of students

use e-cigarettes, and of these, 87.6 percent used flavored e-cigarettes. But the trend is on the decline: Youth e-cigarette use has decreased nearly 70 percent since its peak in 2019.

Federal health officials credit the decline to the enforcement of national policies that curtail the industry, such as levying fines against e-cigarette manufacturers and retailers for selling unauthorized vapes, as well as seizing illegal products shipped from overseas. Eight states, including New York, and about 400 cities or counties have also restricted sales of flavored e-cigarettes. But e-commerce and online sales often remain murky territory.

The New York attorney general's lawsuit argues that the vape companies it is suing ignored the state's efforts to protect its residents, which included banning flavored e-cigarettes, vape-branded merchandise and social events promoting the products and discounts.

"At every turn, each defendant's New York-touching commercial conduct in the flavored e-cigarette industry undercuts New York's efforts and law — which must be now enforced to protect the public," the lawsuit says.

Each of the companies, through its marketing, has "convinced the public" the flavored e-cigarettes "are casual fun," with flavors labeled "Strawberry Do-

nut," "Tropical Rainbow Blast" and "Pink Lemonade" to appeal to young people, the lawsuit argues. The products are colorfully packaged and promoted through social media and influencer campaigns that claim the products are "safe" alternatives to cigarettes.

The complaint cites as an example a social media advertisement by Puff Bar, which ran during covid shutdowns, that cast its vapes as "the perfect escape from back-to-back zoom calls [and] parental texts."

The lawsuit alleges that companies have used illegal shipping methods to supply retailers, such as shipments of flavored vapes to New York residential addresses. Many of these retailers are concentrated around public middle and high schools, the lawsuit says, with over 80 percent of some of the company's retailers "located within 1.5 miles of a school, and the median distance from a middle or high school was just 0.75 miles."

These actions have violated a federal statute known as the Prevent All Cigarette Trafficking Act, enacted by Congress in 2010, and have broken New York law, which imposes a total ban on flavored e-cigarette products, the lawsuit argues.

"By first dodging all of New York's regulatory safeguards, then making these products as cheap as possible and as abundantly available as possible in our communities, each defendant cashes in without regard to the lasting harm they cause," the complaint says.

Anti-tobacco advocates celebrated the New York lawsuit, saying that it marked a milestone pushback against the vaping industry.

Last year, Juul, a major e-cigarette company, agreed to pay \$255 million as part of a settlement in a class-action lawsuit brought on by consumers arguing that the company misled them about the risks and addictiveness of its products. The nation's high court in December heard arguments on a case regarding the regulation of flavored e-cigarettes — which could upend how the Food and Drug Administration regulates tobacco products.

About 7,000 employees are said to be targeted as firings begin at IRS

BY JACOB BOGAGE AND SHANNON NAJMABADI

The Internal Revenue Service on Thursday began firing employees in a massive layoff ordered by the Trump administration, federal workers said, shaking the foundations of the tax agency during filing season.

About 7,000 employees were expected to lose their jobs, according to a person familiar with the decision, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information. That's 7 percent of the roughly 100,000-person agency. Most of the cuts, about 5,000, came in the enforcement and collections section of the tax service, the person said.

Many of the laid-off employees were part of a recent hiring surge meant to improve service and update technology at the agency, which has seen its budget reduced repeatedly since 2010. Taxpayer advocates and Democrats said the loss of several thousand employees could hamstring the agency's ability to help taxpayers during the filing season, which ends April 15. Losing those workers, critics said, also could jeopardize initiatives that the agency undertook to improve collections, such as increased audits of wealthy people and stricter enforcement of rules governing certain businesses.

The IRS and Treasury Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Plans for IRS layoffs emerged last week. The job cuts are part of a sweeping effort steered by billionaire Elon Musk and the U.S. DOGE Service, which stands for Department of Government Efficiency, to remake the federal government and reduce its workforce. Thousands of probationary employees have been laid off at the National Park Service and at agencies that work on veterans affairs, health and human services, and disease prevention. About 75,000 employees accepted buyouts through a "deferred resignation" program that closed earlier this month. Administra-

tion officials have also dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development and ordered the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, created in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, to stop nearly all its work.

Managers were crying Thursday at an IRS campus in New Orleans, said David Carrone, a revenue agent and president of the Louisiana/Arkansas National Treasury Employees Union chapter. Elsewhere, IRS workers who had been told to come to their offices and return their equipment sat and waited for termination notices, employees told The Washington Post.

Carrone's daughter, Elizabeth, was one of those laid off.

She started as a revenue agent in New Orleans last year, a position she considered a dream job after seeing her dad's nearly 40-year career with the agency, she said. She bought a house and never expected to be unemployed.

"I told multiple people [that] I thought this was my last job," she said.

But on Thursday morning, she got a note well after she had been locked out of her work computer — saying she was terminated effective that day, she said. She doesn't know what will happen to the roughly 30 cases she was working on, and she isn't sure about what she will do next, though she said may go to work at an accounting firm.

Later Thursday, some probationary employees who still had not received a termination notice were told to go home and wait for a notice to be mailed to them, workers said.

Probationary workers had done nothing to justify losing their jobs and had little time to prepare, said Shannon Ellis, president of the National Treasury Employees Union's Kansas City chapter, before the layoffs were announced. Some may not know how to get needed medications without health insurance or might struggle to make mortgage payments, she said.

FRIDAY OPINION

RAMESH PONNURU

If DOGE wants to cut the fat, it should lay off Elon Musk

Elon Musk, leader of the new U.S. DOGE Service, is not one to shrink from making bold promises. By eliminating waste and fraud from the federal budget, he says, he will halve the deficit over the next year. Then, he adds, deregulation will so supercharge the economy that new revenue will erase the other half. President Donald Trump says Musk has already identified “tens of billions” in fraud and abuse.

Millions of Americans, this columnist included, would like to see the federal government slimmed down and made to focus on its core responsibilities. Musk is probably the smartest man to take on the job of downsizing government in modern times.

Still, I’m betting that big government will beat the Musketeers.

Start with the fact that Musk, having busied himself with so many lucrative pursuits, does not appear to have spent any time learning about the government he means to reform. A recent X post of his hinted that there was something suspicious about how quickly the number of American households that receive child tax credits in excess of what they pay in income taxes jumped in recent years. No one who follows tax policy would have been surprised, given that first Trump and then President Joe Biden temporarily expanded the credit.

To the extent that his persona on social media reflects his true beliefs, Musk appears fond of accusing anyone who gets in his way of corruption and is not too careful about making sure he has his facts right. In December, he claimed that Congress was considering a bill to give its members a 40 percent pay raise; it was actually less than 4 percent.

His promise to erase the federal deficit depends on similarly flawed math. Musk claims that spending cuts and deregulation could yield as much as 5 percent economic growth. Even in that unlikely event, however, the deficit would be cut by less than a fifth of the \$1 trillion he’s expecting.

Political and legal constraints also limit the potential of DOGE, which stands for Department of Government Efficiency, to fulfill its ambitions. Trump and most congressional Republicans want to extend and expand the tax cuts they enacted during his first term. Tax cuts, contrary to a common Republican claim, almost always cause revenue to come in lower than it otherwise would have. That surely won’t bring Musk’s deficit promise any closer.

Musk does not appear to have spent any time learning about the government he means to reform.

Nor will Trump’s promise to spare Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from any cuts. Perhaps Musk believes he can generate large savings by squeezing fraud and waste out of these programs rather than cutting their substance. But much of what Musk has identified as fraud is no such thing — he has either misunderstood or misrepresented Social Security data — and much of the waste is embedded in these programs. One example: Because the federal government sends money to state governments based on how much they spend on Medicaid, states have an incentive to inflate their recorded outlays to get more federal funding. That can’t be fixed without structural reforms that would be vanishingly unlikely to pass through Congress, even if Trump hadn’t already said he would leave the programs intact.

Oh, right: Congress. The Constitution assigned it the power to determine how the federal government will spend money. DOGE can’t unilaterally end programs or Cabinet departments that Congress has authorized. And it’s unlikely that the courts will conclude that the executive branch can spend less money on a program than Congress has directed it to spend. So, if Trump obeys court orders as he promises, then major changes will have to wait on Congress to agree with Musk.

Fans of DOGE sometimes suggest that by increasing public awareness of the extent of fraud and waste in federal spending, political support will build for Congress to take dramatic action.

So far, though, Musk has not identified enough fraud to make a dent in the deficit. At the time Trump talked about “tens of billions” in uncovered fraud, Musk had made public only \$6 billion in planned savings in the federal government’s \$6 trillion budget. Two-thirds of it came from a change to grantmaking by the National Institutes of Health that Congress has already passed a law rejecting.

Musk’s buyout offer to federal employees has not lived up to expectations, either. He said it might save the government up to \$100 billion. Only about 3 percent of employees took the offer, though, which cuts payroll by \$10 billion at most. The true number could be much smaller, or even negative, since about 6 percent of federal workers leave their jobs in a normal year without receiving any payout. Other firings might save some money, even if it’s not enough to shrink the deficit meaningfully. Whether they will make the government more efficient is an open question.

DOGE is the kind of initiative that both political parties have opposite incentives to hype: The Republicans say it will revolutionize government, the Democrats that it will destroy it. Musk has generated enough news and controversy to provide the illusion of long-term impact. But the conventional wisdom of just a few weeks ago — that DOGE will not substantially alter the trajectory of the federal government — remains likely to prove true. Before we conclude that Musk will curtail government in a way no one else has, let’s wait to see the receipts.



Ed Martin, acting U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, at a 2020 D.C. news conference as president of the Phyllis Schlafly Eagles.

RUTH MARCUS

These are not the actions of a prosecutor

For a prosecutor to drop a case for political reasons is an appalling breach of professional ethics. That’s exactly what seems to have happened in the Trump Justice Department’s move to dismiss the corruption charges against New York Mayor Eric Adams.

But even worse than abandoning a legitimate prosecution is knowingly launching an unwarranted one. And that’s exactly what seems to have happened in a case that led a senior official in the U.S. attorney’s office in D.C. to resign this week.

This episode may not sound terribly alarming; It boiled down to whether there was an adequate basis for federal prosecutors to order a bank to freeze funding for climate projects. But it signals a dangerous instinct on the part of the Trump Justice Department to misuse laws to pursue and punish political enemies. One of the touchstones of criminal law is that investigators and prosecutors don’t get to root around in people’s affairs hunting for crimes. As set out in Justice Department guidelines, they need to have a basis — the legal term is “predication” — for believing a crime may have taken or is taking place.

This isn’t a high standard — anything but. It doesn’t require the probable cause required to obtain a search warrant, for example — just “information or an allegation indicating” the possible commission of a crime.

Which is precisely why we should be so worried that Denise Cheung, a 24-year Justice Department veteran and head of the criminal division in the U.S. attorney’s office, felt she could not in good conscience comply with demands that she launch a criminal investigation and order the bank to freeze the funds.

Cheung set out what happened in a letter of resignation to interim U.S. attorney Ed Martin. A man who had no prosecutorial experience but had shown loyalty to Trump as a leader in the “Stop the Steal” movement and a defender of Jan. 6 rioters, Martin is emerging as one of the more dangerous characters in the Trump Justice Department.

Cheung’s account of their interactions is complex and technical, but it sketches a department not only bent on exercising extraordinary top-down control to execute Trump’s political priorities but also willing to stretch, if not ignore, fundamental legal principles in the service of that goal.

On Monday, Cheung was asked, based on information supplied by the office of acting deputy attorney general Emil Bove, to open a criminal investigation into and issue grand jury subpoenas over whether federal contracts — identified in other reports as \$20 billion in Biden-era Environmental Protection Agency

grants for climate change initiatives — had been unlawfully awarded.

According to Cheung’s resignation letter, she was told that “action had to be taken that day” because of fear that the contract recipients could continue to draw down funds. “I conferred with others in the Office, all of whom have substantial white collar criminal prosecution experience ... in determining whether the predicate for opening such a grand jury investigation existed.”

It didn’t, in their view. Nonetheless, she wrote, “Despite assessing that the existing documents on their face did not seem to meet this threshold, an ODAG [Office of the Deputy Attorney General] representative stated that he believed sufficient predication existed, including in the form of a video where statements were made by a former political appointee of the executive agency in question.”

The video in question appears to be one made by the right-wing Project Veritas, featuring a low-level EPA political appointee who boasted in a surreptitiously recorded video that the Biden administration was “trying to get the money out as fast as possible before they come in and stop it all. ... It truly feels like we’re on the Titanic and we’re throwing, like, gold bars off the edge.”

With the career prosecutors resisting launching a grand jury investigation on what they considered a flimsy basis and the political officials insisting on going forward, the group settled on a compromise: issuing a “freeze letter” requesting that the bank holding the climate change funds halt making payments.

Despite the federal holiday, the FBI’s Washington Field Office was alerted to help draft the letter. But FBI officials were also leery of acting precipitously, Cheung wrote, “expressing some concern about the current lack of evidence of any apparent crime and the need to send out any such freeze letter.”

The FBI sought bureaucratic cover from Cheung, who complied in the form of an email confirming that prosecutors believe “there may be conduct that constitutes potential violations” of federal conspiracy and wire fraud law. Based on that, the FBI sent a letter to Citibank recommending a 30-day freeze on disbursing funds. Cheung had her reservations, but one of the striking things in her account is how hard she and others tried to satisfy the demands of Trump’s operatives at Main Justice.

That wasn’t enough for Martin, the new U.S. attorney in D.C. He didn’t want a recommendation letter but one, signed by himself and Cheung, “ordering the

bank not to release any funds ... pursuant to a criminal investigation.”

The “quantum of evidence did not support that action,” Cheung responded. “Because I believed that I lacked the legal authority to issue such a letter, I told you that I would not do so,” she wrote to Martin. “You then asked for my resignation.”

So here we are. Frantic to spin up their case about the Biden administration’s supposed misuse of funds, Trump political appointees were willing to override basic legal rules to get their way.

What about the next time — because this incident surely won’t be the last. Think of all the individuals who Trump has declared should be behind bars for committing unspecified crimes.

The chilling lesson of Cheung’s encounter is that political appointees will barrel through the guardrails that are intended to prevent the massive powers of law enforcement from being deployed without an adequate basis in facts and law. The Trump officials will roll over any career prosecutors or FBI agents who dare to stand in their way.

And lest you think these are overwrought imaginings, consider Martin’s newly proclaimed “Operation Whirlwind,” probing the supposed “storm of threats” to government workers, including U.S. DOGE Service employees. Martin dispatched letters to Democratic lawmakers, including Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (New York), demanding that he “clarify” comments he made in March 2020 that conservative Supreme Court justices “will pay the price” of their rulings.

Schumer apologized the next day for the remarks, but more to the point: Real prosecutors don’t announce their investigations on X. They keep silent unless and until there are charges to bring.

Who will guard these “guardians”? Here I turn to the famous address by Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, when he served as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s attorney general. “The prosecutor has more control over life, liberty, and reputation than any other person in America,” Jackson said in 1940, adding: “If the prosecutor is obliged to choose his cases, it follows that he can choose his defendants. Therein is the most dangerous power of the prosecutor: that he will pick people that he thinks he should get, rather than pick cases that need to be prosecuted.”

This is a dangerous moment, and we should heed Jackson’s warning: “While the prosecutor at his best is one of the most beneficent forces in our society, when he acts from malice or other base motives, he is one of the worst.”

On AI, we’re in too deep

BY KATY STEINMETZ

When the news broke in late January that a Chinese start-up called DeepSeek had supposedly developed cutting-edge AI for a relative song, the story reverberated across the world’s boardrooms and social feeds. But in the corners of the internet devoted to professional naming, a question quickly followed: Have we reached peak “deep”?

True, the d-word has been a cultural touchstone for decades, and the contexts reflect the rich multitudes of the word. A yogi takes a deep breath. A quarterback throws a deep pass. We can do a deep clean or fear the deep state or have a deep thought. We might be deeply in love or deeply in debt, and sometimes both. “Deep” has associations with everything from secrecy and sexuality (Deep Throat) to interplanetary travel (“Star Trek: Deep Space Nine”).

But lately, one meaning has become trendier than the rest. Close ties to artificial intelligence have led to a surge in “deep” being used for AI-related endeavors, to the point that the word is fast becoming shorthand for “cutting-edge tech” — and is already starting to feel derivative. In 2025, “deep” is to the tech world what the plus sign became a few years ago to streaming platforms such as Apple TV+, Disney+ and Paramount+.

Tech didn’t always own “deep” the way it does today. The OG “deep” is the ocean, whose depths have always promised adventure, riches and understanding to those bold enough to plumb them. It has been on trend in other ages, too: From “deep-fried” to “deep cuts” to “Deep South,” the word has fulfilled our need to describe the relationship between us and the beyond.

The thread that connects all these is an exploratory instinct, a going into something, but what follows can be bad (sadness, defeat, death) or wonderful (revelation, relaxation, breathing).

DeepSeek may have extra resonance in the wake of IBM’s Deep Blue, a supercomputer that bested a world chess champion in the 1990s, and Google’s DeepMind, an AI outfit founded in 2010. The earliest uses of “deep” in computing go back at least to the 1960s,

In 2025, the d-word is to the tech world what the plus sign was a few years ago to streaming platforms such as Apple TV+, Disney+ and Paramount+.

according to the Oxford English Dictionary, in reference to models with multiple layers. In ensuing decades, we get variations such as “deep tech,” a term for solutions that involve substantial engineering challenges, and “deep learning,” a reference to machines imitating thinking processes.

Though the association between “deep” and “tech” is well established, the word has lately become more widely deployed, as a simple way to suggest complex stuff that is otherwise a mouthful to explain. A search of start-up indexer Crunchbase returns hundreds of

results for “deep,” many of them companies in the AI space. There’s Deepwave Digital (AI + radio frequency), Deep Instinct (AI + cybersecurity), Deepgram (AI + voices), DeepL (AI + translation), Deep Vision (AI + images and video) and DeepMap (AI + um, maps).

In the wake of DeepSeek’s splashy arrival, OpenAI announced its own offering this month: a “deep research” AI agent. The company said it was “launching deep research in ChatGPT, a new agentic capability that conducts multistep research on the internet for complex tasks.” Sounds great, but “agentic capability”? Robert Frost was right: These woods are lovely, dark and deep.

Best of all, though “deep” evokes visions of neural networks and unprecedented superskills, it makes no specific promises that a company *must* deliver on — much like previous buzzwords “bright” and “cyber” and “micro.” The appeal is generic, analogous to the long-lost fervor around words such as “green” (vague promises of environmental responsibility) and “smart” (vague promises that something is beneficial to use).

A general sense of ineffable progress is part of tech’s appeal, of course. Things must be oversimplified not only for commercial reasons but also for our sake, as we come along for a ride with baffling mechanisms and an uncertain destination. “Deep” may be veering into cliché, but it also works because, let’s be honest, most of us have no idea what layers are involved here.

We’re little more than ankle-deep, at the deepest.

The writer is a creative director at Catchword, a naming agency based in Oakland, California, and former San Francisco bureau chief for Time.

OPINION

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Misfiring line

RESIDENT DONALD TRUMP and Elon Musk have been rapidly firing federal workers with little consideration for which ones are critical to government functioning.

EDITORIAL 400 staffers were let go mere days after one of the deadliest airplane crashes in U.S. history. And the Agriculture Department is attempting to bring back people fired despite being part of the effort to stop avian flu, which has decimated chicken farms and sent egg prices soaring.

Americans widely agree that their government is burdened by "waste, fraud and abuse." But the U.S. DOGE Service is simply taking a sledgehammer to federal operations. The result is predictable: Vital functions — including safeguarding nuclear weapons — that should have been nowhere near the chopping block have been axed.

The White House has yet to disclose the total number of people precipitously fired. About 77,000 of 2.4 million civilian federal workers opted for deferred resignation, which is supposed to pay them through September. Then Trump fired many of the 200,000 federal employees on "probationary

status," meaning they had spent less than two years in their current roles. It's unclear how many probationary workers were let go in the "Valentine's Day Massacre," but thousands of them have joined class-action lawsuits to challenge Trump's ability to fire them without proof of "poor performance."

The dismissals were so chaotic and rushed, termination letters often listed wrong start dates or wrong jobs, or left the agency name blank, as if a form letter hadn't been properly filled out. Some workers notified their own bosses that they had been fired.

This mass firing has been compared to President Bill Clinton's reducing the government headcount by 351,000 positions — or about 20 percent. "The era of big government is over," Clinton said in 1996.

But Clinton's approach was quite different. He launched a six-month review of agencies to identify positions that could safely be eliminated and then slimmed the workforce gradually. In short, his administration did the hard work that Musk only claimed DOGE, which stands for Department of Government Efficiency, would do. Clinton also spoke frequently about the need to help the remaining federal workers become even more productive.

In contrast, Trump and Musk often denigrate

federal workers. Musk has claimed they are "getting wealthy at taxpayer expense."

Americans will experience the fallout from DOGE's haste soon enough. The National Park Service has let go about 1,000 employees, and many of them have been sharing their stories on social media. These are Americans who love the outdoors

percent of taxpayer calls were answered, and there were long delays in processing paperwork. The agency was recently granted funding to upgrade its antiquated computer systems and pursue unpaid taxes from wealthy scofflaws. But Trump is rolling back that effort.

Trump and Musk celebrate their layoffs as if they will bring significant savings. They won't. The U.S. government spent \$6.75 trillion last year.

Cutting 10 percent of the federal workforce stands to save about \$25 billion, economists at Deutsche Bank have calculated — less than 1 percent of the total. Musk has also claimed that Social Security has been paying benefits to millions of people older than 100 who are likely dead. But last year, only 86,000 Americans 99 and older were receiving payments, and this number tracks with census data.

Yes, the government needs to evolve and continually strive for greater efficiency. For years, the Government Accountability Office, among other entities, has been urging technology upgrades and more checks on wasteful spending. But Musk's approach will not achieve lasting change that benefits America. It's a "fire first, figure it out later" strategy. That's not the way to improve nuclear security or any other critical government objectives.

U.S. DOGE Service is simply taking a sledgehammer to federal operations. The result is predictable, ineffective and damaging.

and often are willing to live in remote areas or earn less than they could make in the private sector because they want to preserve — and share their enthusiasm for — the country's parks. Without them, it will be difficult to keep the parks maintained, clean and open.

The IRS, for its part, has laid off thousands of employees in the midst of tax-filing season. IRS staffing was already so low that, in 2022, only 10

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trump's actions reflect an anti-trans America

For three years, my husband and I have been part of a support group for parents whose children are gender diverse and neurodiverse — all of the children have autism spectrum disorder. The group, formed through the hospital where our children receive care, has been in crisis since President Donald Trump signed an executive order attempting to end federal support for providers of gender transition care for people under the age of 19.

In the past few weeks, families in our support group have been scrambling for information about where they can continue to receive care and what treatment our doctors — who we've trusted, relied on and put faith in for years — can still provide. Parents are counting prescription refills and checking whether pharmacies will still honor them. Some are compiling a list of states they could afford to travel to for care and providers who might accept new patients if they can no longer see their current doctors. Some fear the order will destroy their children's delicate mental health.

Those with autism spectrum disorder are more likely to be transgender. In fact, transgender and gender-diverse individuals are three to six times more likely to be autistic than cisgender individuals. On top of our children's struggles with social interactions, lack of executive functioning skills and developmental delay, they have the added stress of not feeling comfortable in their own bodies. This deeply impacts their well-being and our group often talks about the "dark periods" or times when our children have experienced debilitating depression, suicidal ideation and elevated anxiety.

Our community includes some of the most thoughtful, loving and resilient caregivers I have ever had the honor of knowing. As any good parents would, we've sought to address all the dimensions of our children's well-being. The multidisciplinary team that they see includes pediatric specialists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, gynecologists and social workers who collectively coordinate care plans tailored to each child. The medical care they offer includes mental health treatment, executive-functioning courses and in-person or online groups where they play games such as Dungeons & Dragons and talk with like-minded youths. Some of our children who are past puberty receive hormone therapy after an extensive evaluation process. The hospital that our children go to does not provide gender-affirming surgery for anyone under 18.

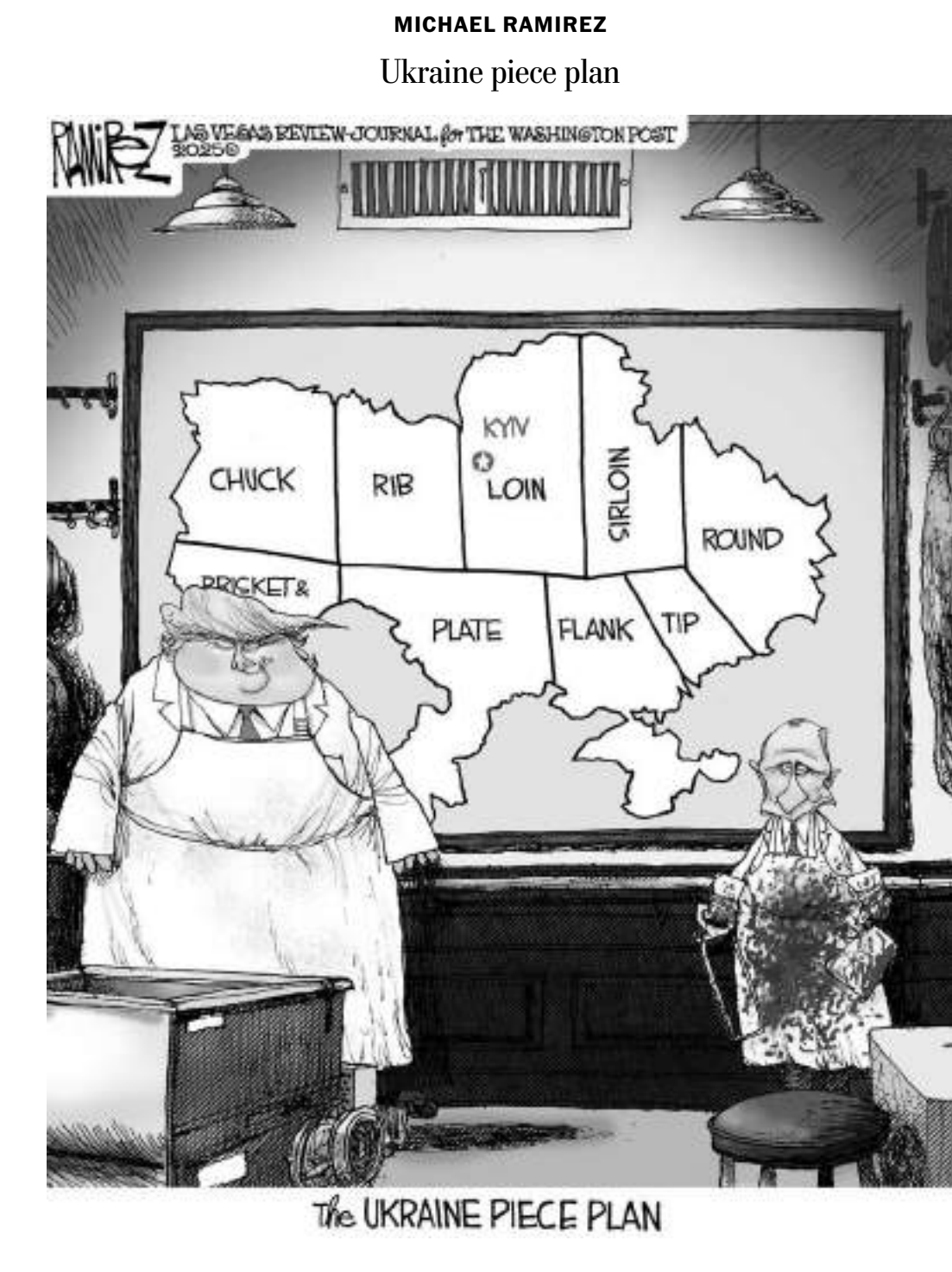
Parents in our group run the gamut. Some have struggled to accept their child's gender diversity or autism diagnosis. Some have taken different approaches to hormone therapy. All of us spend considerable time consulting with our doctors on every medical decision we make to ensure our children are healthy and safe.

We are parents, not boogymen. Our children are lovingly cared for and listened to, not abused. Our doctors have dedicated their lives to improving the mental and physical health of a vulnerable population. We are all intelligent, informed and good people — and now we are all frightened. Anyone celebrating this order should spend just one hour with these parents, children and their doctors. Their definition of our children's welfare might change.

Sarah Zogby, Washington

Follow the law

It's difficult to envision a more dizzying exercise in judicial gymnastics than the temporary restraining order and accompanying memorandum opinion from U.S. District Judge Brendan A. Hurson in PFLAG et al. v. Donald Trump et al. Hurson's decision halts the directives of President Donald Trump's Jan. 28 executive order "Protecting



MICHAEL RAMIREZ Ukraine piece plan

Children From Chemical and Surgical Mutilation." While Hurson seems content indulging overwrought questions about whether the president "den[ies] that this [transgender] population exists, or even has the right to exist," he patently ignores a correct application of guiding law that gives the president the authority to halt further governmental federal funding of "gender-affirming care" for minors.

The Department of Health and Human Services under President Joe Biden took the position that funding appropriated by Congress through the Medicaid, Medicare and Affordable Care Act appropriations bill could be used to support such care.

But appropriations bills do not — unless otherwise specified — create substantive law. And in this case, the bills did not create a requirement that funds be used in this way. Just as the Biden administration said that, for example, a contract with a state Medicaid recipient could provide "gender-affirming care," the Trump administration is well within its right to say "stop."

The plaintiffs in PFLAG v. Donald Trump have not alleged that Trump's executive order violates the law — because there is no law for him to violate. They simply want the government to pay for transgender surgeries and treatments for minors from which many developed nations have retreated. Hospitals, clinics and medical providers are free to offer these services all they want. But the

government is under no obligation to pay for them.

Thankfully, Hurson's order is not a determination on the merits of the plaintiffs' case, but merely a procedural determination. He still has time to get it right.

Sarah Parshall Perry, Washington The writer is a senior legal fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

Avoid word salad

Donald Trump's executive order that attempted to end federal support for providers of gender transition care for people under the age of 19 contains a doozy of an Easter egg: Among other things, it denies federal funding for "surgical procedures that attempt to transform an individual's physical appearance to align with an identity that differs from his or her sex or that attempt to alter or remove an individual's sexual organs to minimize or destroy their natural biological functions."

It looks as though an 18-year-old with cancer in her uterus might not be able to get federal coverage for a hysterectomy because removing a uterus destroys its natural biological function. Trump's people need to learn that there are consequences to spewing out executive orders willy-nilly. Careful consideration is in order.

Word salads can have unintended consequences. The intended ones are bad enough.

Kathie Sowell, Vienna

Show mercy

Sally Jenkins's Feb. 6 Sports column, "Trump's cruel ban of trans athletes aims to demonize, not protect," powerfully exposed the cruelty and insensitivity behind President Donald Trump's executive order targeting trans athletes. It is unnerving to see the government wield its power in such a way — not with thoughtful deliberation, but with blunt force, stripping away dignity and targeting individuals for persecution. As Jenkins rightly points out, this is not simply about policy; it is about a fundamental lack of mercy.

The Right Rev. Mariann Budde pleaded with Trump to show mercy when crafting policies that profoundly affect the lives of so many who are simply trying to understand themselves and live in peace. He does not listen. Instead, he wields his power in ways that dehumanize and divide, failing to grasp the very foundation of Jesus' teaching: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt claims these orders merely restore "common sense." But they don't. They are brutish and written with the specific aim of persecution and branding certain groups as dishonorable and undeserving of empathy. Jenkins is right — whatever one's stance on trans athletes, surely the issue demands nuance, understanding and mercy.

John Mudd, Washington The writer is a retired Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Washington.

Show empathy

After President Donald Trump signed the executive order ensuring Title IX protection of female athletes by banning transgender athletes from competing in women's sports, Sally Jenkins, in her Feb. 6 Sports column, said the Trump administration is "terrorizing" transgender athletes that represent "0.6 percent" of the American population. She said the order was framed with a lack of empathy, but most Americans also have empathy for the girls and women who want to compete on a level playing field; nearly 70 percent of Americans say trans athletes should be allowed to compete only on sports teams that conform with their birth gender, according to a 2023 Gallup poll. A better way forward might have been for Jenkins instead to offer options such as a separate category for transgender athletes to compete.

Philip P. Garrett, Alexandria

Show neutrality

Regarding the Feb. 7 Sports article "After Trump order, NCAA bans trans athletes":

The debate over transgender athletes will continue to rage on. But when objective news sources write about transgender students, they should not take one side or the other. Yet many mainstream media outlets, including The Post, do take a side by using female pronouns when referring to students who were assigned male at birth but identify as female (and vice versa).

Instead, the media should use gender-agnostic terms such as "student," "individual," "athlete" and "person" instead of the biased pronouns. Or outlets can just use the person's last name. Nothing prevents news organizations from using neutral terms except a desire to promote a politically correct agenda.

Matthew Barry, Issaquah, Washington

Letter submissions

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the World Health Organization's declaration that covid-19 was a pandemic, Post Opinions wants to know: How did covid-19, and any aspect of the response to the virus, change your life? Share your responses with Post Opinions at https://wapo.st/covidchange, and they might be published in the Letters to the Editor section. Letters can be sent to letters@washpost.com.

OPINION



The Kennedy Center in D.C. last Friday.

MARC FISHER

The show must go on at the Kennedy Center

The new boss at the Kennedy Center has never actually attended a performance at the place, as he readily admits.

No matter: Donald Trump knows what he likes and, more to the point, what he doesn't.

So what do Trump, now chairman of the Kennedy Center; Richard Grenell, the center's new interim director; and the president's freshly appointed board members have in store for Washingtonians who might wish to take in a show at the marble shoebox along the Potomac?

Skeptics might see Trump's appointment of Mel Gibson, Sylvester Stallone and Jon Voight to be "special ambassadors" to the movie industry as evidence that the president may not have cutting-edge performances in mind for the Kennedy Center.

The Trump-selected board members also do not exactly represent the avant-garde. At least four of them live within walking distance of Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club.

Eight of the 14 Trump appointees are Floridians, and four are New Yorkers, so they're totally plugged into the D.C. arts scene. "If you don't know the market intimately, you can get your head handed to you," said Michael Jaworek, the longtime booker and promoter at the Birchmere music hall in Alexandria. "You've got to know the territory."

A lot of the criticism of Trump's power grab at the Kennedy Center — which is a big deal in D.C. but not exactly a venue that molds the nation's cultural tastes — pokes fun at the presi-

dent's lack of interest in the arts. It has always been easy to paint Trump as a cultural ignoramus, given the over-the-top decor of his Manhattan apartment, his buildings' casino-inspired designs and the music selections at his rallies.

But what many folks don't know is that Trump takes pride in his taste in art and architecture; he came close to going to film school at the University of Southern California and knows his movies. (He once told me that "Citizen

Some performers will leave.

But those who stick it out and push the envelope will find grateful audiences.

Kane," his all-time favorite, "was really about accumulation, and at the end of the accumulation ... it's not necessarily all positive. ... In real life, I believe that wealth does in fact isolate you from other people.")

He thinks of himself as something of an art critic, even if his judgments (old is bad, brash beats subtle) have led him to do things such as hire 200 undocumented Polish workers to jackhammer beloved art deco friezes and sculptures on the exterior of the Bonwit Teller building on New York's Fifth Avenue. When Trump tore down the landmark department store in 1980 to make way for his Trump Tower, he used the

pseudonym John Barron, a fictitious PR man, to call reporters and tell them the friezes were "without artistic merit."

Trump has been rebelling against elites — and their arts and culture — for almost his entire life. He instinctively leans toward the unchallenging. At boarding school, when classmates were checking out the new rock-and-roll, Trump preferred to blast his Johnny Mathis albums.

But he yearns for the respect of the people in charge, the same establishment he rails against at rallies. So maybe he doesn't force embarrassing junk into the Kennedy Center lineup. But if the center were to persist in hosting drag shows or staging a play about the plight of illegal immigrants — if it gives him the gift he craves — he will declare war and relish every second of it.

So how should artists who perform there handle the Trump takeover?

During the Cold War, artists behind the Iron Curtain struggled with whether and how to perform under the thumb of an authoritarian regime. Some decided that presenting their work under the auspices of the regime would condone its restraints on freedom; they either went into exile or retreated into their own private worlds. Some appeared the beast and played on. And others went ahead and performed but found ways to embed strains of protest into their music or telling embraces of resistance into their acting or their dance.

There is no one right answer, but artists ought not retreat — and good artists will use their work to counter the forces of conformity.

When I covered the collapse of communist control of East Germany for The Post, I visited Kurt Masur, the world-famous conductor of Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra. To Germans, Masur was a confusing figure, at once a deflating example of how artists were co-opted by the regime and a stirring symbol of the East German people's revolution against the communists.

Unlike many German artists, Masur had chosen to stay in the East and work under the Soviet-installed regime, lending it some of the shine of his global reputation. But in 1989, as violent confrontation between the communist military forces and their own people loomed, Masur suddenly shifted from close cooperation with the regime to active, even daring, opposition — a display of resistance that saved lives and accelerated the revolution.

Let's hope American artists never face such a dramatic pivot point. But the coming months at the Kennedy Center will confront artists with a decision. Some have already bailed out; others intend to perform as scheduled. Those who stick it out and push the envelope will find grateful audiences.

The other night, at the opening of Sarah Silverman's musical "The Bedwetter" at Arena Stage, the theater's top executive promised the audience that it would hold tight to the freedom of being a "private, independent" institution. It was a little dig at the Kennedy Center and an assertion of intent to provide the cultural ammunition and solace that art delivers. The crowd roared its approval.

LEE HOCKSTADER

Listen to France about U.S. power

PARIS
The last time Washington ignored Dominique de Villepin, the result was a \$1.8 trillion war in Iraq that cost the lives of 4,500 U.S. soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis over nearly nine years, sapping America's prestige and plunging the Middle East into turmoil.

Maybe it's worth listening to him now. De Villepin is a conservative French statesman who, as foreign minister in 2003, delivered an impassioned rebuttal to Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech at the United Nations defending the George W. Bush administration's plan to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein. In an address that proved prophetic, the Frenchman argued that war was unjustified by the available intelligence, urged that Iraq be disarmed through U.N. inspections and warned of an invasion's "incalculable consequences," not least the daunting prospect of rebuilding a shattered country.

Amid America's post-9/11 jingoism, de Villepin's address — and the U.N.'s refusal to accede to Washington's demand that it authorize the invasion — was met with derision on Capitol Hill. French fries were out in the cafeterias of the House of Representatives. "Freedom fries" were in.

Anti-Americanism was never de Villepin's calling card. He spent his youth in the United States, graduated from high school in New York and admires American culture. "For every lover of liberty and democracy, the USA is always an inspirational source," he told an interviewer in 2012.

Dominique de Villepin tried to warn America about going to war in Iraq. We should heed him on Ukraine and Gaza.

Now 71 years old and eyeing a run at the French presidency in 2027, he has another message that Americans should hear, one as attuned today to Washington's hubris as it was 22 years ago on the eve of the Iraq War.

In President Donald Trump's machinations to foist an unjust peace on Ukraine and to employ diplomacy by diktat in Gaza, de Villepin recognizes another administration blind to the likely fallout of its policies.

"Chaos was inscribed [from] the first day in the decision of the United States to go to war in Iraq," he told a group of foreign correspondents in Paris the other day. "And I tell you that [from] the first day ... of Donald Trump, chaos and a very heavy economic and strategic price [will be] the end of the road" for the new American president.

In Ukraine, de Villepin is mystified by Trump's forced concessions to Vladimir Putin, given Russia's anemic economic prospects as the war grinds on. In Gaza, he is contemptuous of the idea that Trump will replace 2 million Palestinians with an American-owned resort on the Mediterranean. "You don't have enough soldiers in the United States to protect the Riviera in Gaza," he said.

The Frenchman acknowledges the contrasting circumstances confronting Bush and Trump, but he is alert to the through line then and now — namely, the arrogant presumption that American brawn can carry the day.

"Trump is not making the same mistake as Bush [by] thinking he can exert a military solution" in Ukraine, de Villepin said. "But Donald Trump believes he can solve the problems of the world through power — full, unilateral power. And I can tell you today that the same logic is going to have the same negative, disruptive consequences around the world."

De Villepin spoke on Feb. 14, two days after Trump shocked Europeans by conducting a 90-minute phone call with Putin, with no advance notice to Washington's allies. The evidence has since mounted that the White House is more intent on resurrecting ties with the Kremlin than on securing a just peace for Ukraine, and that Trump might seek Kyiv's "capitulation," as de Villepin put it.

He predicts a reaction to Trump's attempts to exert his will — in Gaza as in Ukraine — and to the president's indifference toward democracy and human rights. The idea that principles, values and rules can be disregarded in favor of what he called "the law of the jungle" is "the biggest stupidity of this American administration," and it will leave the United States isolated and despised.

"If Donald Trump believes in illiberal democracy, here in Europe, we don't," de Villepin said. "And we are going to fight for liberal democracy more than ever."

In fact, liberal democracy's prospects these days are darkening across Europe, where illiberal forces, often aligned with Putin, are ascendant. Populists on both sides of the Atlantic, de Villepin argued, have no answers to the despair, anxiety and fear they stoke. Yet liberalism, he acknowledged, is flummoxed by the blizzard of disinformation on social media platforms controlled by what he called techno-oligarchs.

De Villepin is stunned by Trump's attempt to exert his will — in Ukraine — and by the dawning reality that Washington is indifferent to European security. "We should be today in a European state of emergency," he said, "to make sure we are heading to full, complete sovereignty and independence."

Europe, he said, can rise to the occasion. As for America's prestige in the world, he struck a less-than-encouraging note: "I won't say it is forever tarnished."

PERRY BACON JR.

A college president's master class on standing up to Trump

Many college presidents and deans are issuing mealy-mouthed statements, ending long-standing programs, removing content from websites and otherwise covering in the face of the Trump administration's attacks on higher education. Then there's Michael S. Roth.

The president of Connecticut's Wesleyan University wrote a piece in Slate that described some of the Trump administration's rhetoric as authoritarian. He consistently reposts articles criticizing Trump's decisions. He speaks and blogs firmly in defense of diversity, equity and inclusion, transgender rights and immigration.

Roth is demonstrating the kind of eloquence and resistance we desperately need from the leaders of not only colleges but also corporations, nonprofits and other organizations in the face of Trump's onslaught against the rule of law, civil society and key American institutions.

"Leaders in higher educational institutions should stand up for their values. Not to pick a fight with Donald Trump or JD Vance," Roth told me in an interview last week. "We should stand up for our values because we've said we believed in them for the last many decades now."

In our conversation, Roth slammed prominent Republicans, specifically naming the president, vice president and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, for using their Ivy League degrees to advance professionally but now portraying themselves as anti-elite populists.

"The story of American higher education has been hijacked by people who've benefited from it. They've succeeded in life in part because of the education they've had. But they get out and then they kind of pull up the ladder," said Roth, who has been president of Wesleyan since 2007.

But Roth also criticizes his counterparts who lead universities and other nonpartisan institutions. Trying to address criticisms that they are too left-leaning, many universities in recent years have embraced a policy of "institutional neutrality," namely that the college president and the school itself won't take stances on high-profile political issues.

Roth correctly argues that approach is wrongheaded. Universities must engage in politics, because, as Trump is showing now, their funding and very survival depend in part on decisions by government leaders.

"Leaders in civil society shouldn't be 'demure' in the face of authoritarian attempts to align all power with a president's agenda, civil society be damned," Roth wrote this month. "Business and civic officials, religious authorities and college presidents should weigh in when they see the missions of their institutions — not to speak of the health of their country — compromised."

And on the flip side, American democracy needs universities for the countless benefits they provide.

"There's so many ways in which American higher education has contributed to the culture of innovation and discovery in this country. And everyone around the world knows that. The Chinese are trying to do what we've done. They're building university after university," Roth told me.

Roth, of course, isn't the only higher-education leader making this case. The American Council on Education, a lobbying group that represents many universities, has been sharply criticizing Trump. Some schools have joined lawsuits against Trump's executive orders.

And Roth, 67, is in a safer position to criticize the administration than most college presidents. Wesleyan is small (approximately 3,000 students) and in a

blue state. As a private school, it's not as reliant on government funds as public universities. Wesleyan is the 14th-best liberal arts college in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report. But what happens on the university's campus in Middletown doesn't get the outside attention of universities such as the one 26 miles south (Yale).



Michael S. Roth, president of Wesleyan University.

All that said, Roth is a surprising figure to be perhaps Trump's strongest critic among college presidents. He isn't particularly left-leaning or from an activist background. Roth is an intellectual historian who teaches classes where students read Aristotle and other long-dead White men — the kind of works many conservatives say don't have a prominent enough role in modern curriculums.

Nor is Roth a reflexive defender of universities. He argues that elite colleges have too many kids from wealthy families. (Wesleyan offers plenty of financial aid, but its sticker price of about \$70,000 is probably off-putting for middle- and working-class parents.) And the Wesleyan president has long conceded a key talking point of the right: Elite Northeastern colleges, including his own, don't have enough conservative voices on campus and should increase those ranks.

Roth joked that students on campus view him as a conservative.

Roth instead described himself as ideologically and politically pragmatic. So though he is very critical of the Trump administration, he has emphasized that the university will follow federal law. Wesleyan is looking carefully at its policies on diversity and inclusion to prevent them from becoming a target for lawsuits from conservatives.

Roth, though, is making one decision that is perhaps not so pragmatic: sharply criticizing an authoritarian leader in a prominent news outlet (The Post) that the leader and his aides likely read. When I asked Roth whether he was nervous about agreeing to my interview request, he laughed.

"I laugh because of course I'm nervous," he said. "This is an administration that is prioritizing loyalty and attacking people who stand, not against them necessarily, but for their own ideals and missions. That is the authoritarian playbook. If I were hiding — Wesleyan is a small school — maybe they would never notice us."

He added, "But that's how tyranny gets instituted in a country. ... I'm a professor, a teacher. I don't look for trouble. But I would feel ashamed if I didn't speak up for the values that have guided my institution and many others."

After fires, spared homes are left in lonely neighborhoods

FIRES FROM A1

the only one that survives when everything around you is out of 'Saving Private Ryan.'

The two blazes burned more than 16,000 structures, many of them houses, but even those that remain have been declared uninhabitable, contaminated by smoke and ash, cut off from necessary utilities like water and gas. Some have electricity; others do not. Their residents are unsure when they'll be able to move back in or if it will even be safe to do so.

Federal environmental teams have so far removed the most dangerous bits of wreckage from the destroyed lots, but large-scale debris removal is only now beginning. Those who do return must first live through that extended cleanup, which could send more toxic dust into the air. Then, construction begins. Probably years of it, on block after block.

As homeowners from Pacific Palisades to Altadena confront these daunting prospects and challenging questions, they say they have received little guidance from officials, who have been scrambling to organize the recovery from an unprecedented disaster.

At town halls and local meetings, residents with homes in the burn zones have peppered representatives from federal, state and local agencies with queries about air quality and remediation. Los Angeles County is not preventing people from moving back into structurally sound houses, but its health department has advised residents to hold off until after teams from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or private contractors finish removing the remaining fire debris from all nearby tracts — which could take up to a year.

"You have to make an informed personal risk decision," Col. Eric Swenson, the Army Corps' debris removal field commander, said at a community meeting this month when asked when it would be safe to return.

It's a "distressing and challenging" situation, said Traci Park, whose Los Angeles City Council district includes the Palisades. It may be months, she said, before water is deemed safe and pipes repaired so service can return to all the homes in the fire footprint. Park said she is pushing the tangle of government agencies to issue more specific guidance.

"People want to understand timelines: Can they come home? When is it going to be safe enough, with the air and the water, that they could come home? And what will be there for them when they get home?" she said. "They're in a really unique situation."

A community lost

After fast-moving flames forced Phyllis Hampton and her family out of their longtime Altadena home, her 8-year-old great-grandson had some prophetic words of comfort: "Granny, don't worry," he said. "You have a shield around your house."

And he was right, said Angela Wess, Hampton's daughter. The family home is standing.

But there's still plenty to worry about. The Hamptons have been staying at a hotel, and Wess has had to joust with their insurance company to get reimbursed for the cost. She said she and her parents — who are in their 70s — haven't received enough support from the unincorporated town's leaders.

"They don't reach out, they don't say anything," Wess said. "I get all these robocalls from people wanting to fix the roof, but I never get calls from the county."

Even those whose insurance will pay for alternate accommodations are nervous that their plans will run out of money, giving them no option but to return home before it's safe.

Xheryl Durham lives next door to the Hamptons on a block where most of the other homes were leveled. Like the Hamptons, Durham has worn an N95 mask whenever she visits her still-standing place, and she's worried that the toxic substances emitted during the fires will linger for years. She's unsure when she'll feel comfortable returning, and she's mourning the loss of a community that warmly welcomed her when she moved in two years ago.

"My neighbors have lost everything," Durham said. "My struggle is smaller, but it's genuine and hard."

A half mile away, it was no accident that the home where Douglas and Myran Rogers have lived for 30 years survived. Douglas, a nurse, stayed behind to fight the fire himself, armed with only a couple buckets and a



PHOTOS BY MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The Palisades Fire left a few houses standing but razed most others in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles. Chuck Emerick greets his neighbor Miriam Schulman on Feb. 12. With her husband, James Gunderson, right, Schulman retrieves items from their smoke-damaged living room.

Jacuzzi full of water. After a harrowing six hours, he saved a row of houses on Glenrose Avenue, including his own.

But after the adrenaline wore off and a few days passed, the scale of what was lost — and the enormity of the task ahead — came into focus. In the month since the fires, they've bounced from hotel to hotel with their dog and are still looking for something more long-term.

As soon as they're able to safely move back, they will. They're just not sure what will await them when they do. The Rogerses' block had camaraderie and character, Myran said, and she was just beginning to compile a taxonomy of all she'll miss: Her neighbors' homes, with their quirky architectural touches; the Little Red Hen, a cafe in walking distance; all the many dog walk-

ers, even those who didn't always clean up after their pets.

They remain hopeful that much of their cherished community will bounce back, but there's also a practical financial concern: With their neighborhood razed, what will their home — their nest egg — be worth?

"We've lost equity because everybody else's property is now gone," Myran Rogers said.

And, Douglas Rogers added: "To what extent are they going to rebuild around us? Are they going to build homes equal to what was here before? Are they going to build homes that are more fancy and worth more money? ... Who knows?"

'A happy noise'

Across the county, on a winding street in the Palisades, near the foothills of the Santa Monica

Mountains, Chuck Emerick was asking many of the same questions. The 82-year-old Vietnam veteran also stayed with his home through the fire, battling back a blaze that claimed most of the other houses in the area.

"I said, 'I'm going to die to save this house,'" Emerick said. "It reminded me of 'Nam, except I didn't have bullets coming at me."

Now, fed up with their hunt for cat-friendly short-term accommodations, Emerick and his wife are moving back, before receiving an official blessing and without potable water or working gas.

Despite a visible police presence, they're worried about looters, so they're willing to rough it to protect their home, even if it means constant cleaning and frequent mask-wearing to guard

against the environmental contaminants.

"We're lucky, but the cleanup is going to be horrible," Emerick said. "We'll say, 'God, why are we here? Why can't we just go away for three years and then come back?' But I got through that first part. I survived the fire, so I'm willing to do the second part."

Most others, however, are not willing, or not able, to spend day and night in the burn zone. Emerick's neighbors, Miriam Schulman and James Gunderson, don't think their home will be safe to move back into for at least two years.

Schulman has studied the toxic aftermath of fire, and she knows her house — and everything inside — could be contaminated by asbestos or other dangerous carcinogens. The couple is now waiting to find out which belongings they'll be able to keep and clean, and which they must throw out.

"They're going to tell me something I love isn't salvageable," she

said. It's an agonizing, protracted process.

"I would be mourning if my house burned down, but then you could start fresh," Schulman said. "To know something is there, but you can't get it, use it, clean it, save it. That's hard."

Fred Kessler and his wife live on an especially devastated block near the Palisades town center, and on a recent afternoon they wore special boots and respirators to visit their property for the first time since the fires. Everything inside was covered in a thick coat of harmful ash.

Kessler's wife has a lung condition, and the couple may need to strip the house entirely to make it fully safe. They've owned the place since 1992, and they were planning to pass it down to their daughter. But now the family is mulling whether they'll even come back once the area is livable again.

"Part of me feels like, I want to come back here, this is my home," Kessler said. "It's one of the best places in America. You have the oceans, the mountains, all the culture in the city."

"But then, we're not sure what we'd be coming back to, or if it's even safe."

Several of their friends have decided not to return after losing their houses, he said — a tragic toll, but one that comes with a sense of finality that his family does not have.

"They know they're not coming back here," he said. "So at least they have that certainty."

Many residents cited the prospect of living amid constant construction, which could last for years, as one of their chief concerns as they looked to the future. Even during normal times, the sound of hammers and drills at a single site could be grating. Going forward, the exponentially louder din will serve as yet another reminder of the disaster and all that's been lost.

At least that's one way to look at it.

William Horrigan has a different perspective. His family's Palisades home survived, and he can't wait to hear the rattle and clank of rebuilding.

"That's going to be a happy noise," he said. "It's a step closer to normal."



Phyllis Hampton and great-grandson D'Angelo Swinney Jr. at the church where she stayed during the Eaton Fire in Altadena, California.

N. Kirkpatrick, Alice Li and Maeve Reston contributed to this report.



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

GU students are working to end legacy admissions

BY DAN ROSENZWEIG-ZIFF AND SUSAN SVRLUGA

Felix Rice was so overwhelmed with excitement when he moved into his dorm room at Georgetown University as a freshman, he sat down on his bed and cried.

He was coming from Texas, relying on financial aid and money he had earned at a sweaty and difficult summer job at a warehouse — a job that made the stakes of a college education very clear, he said.

Something else felt just as stark: Everyone was rich. He could see it in peoples' clothes, in the way their parents looked, in the way they talked. He could feel it in discussions in class and in dorms, in the ways students spend their breaks, in the issues that spark activism on campus or just ... don't.

After the Supreme Court banned race-conscious admissions in 2023, Rice and some friends talked about what they could do to make elite colleges like theirs more diverse. They soon zeroed in on legacy admissions preferences — an advantage sometimes factored into decisions about applicants who are

D.C. State Board of Education backs a proposal that would end the practice

Georgetown students, from left, Ethan Henshaw, Asher Maxwell, Felix Rice and Darius Wagner are pushing to end legacy admissions after the Supreme Court banned race-conscious admissions.

children of alumni — which felt like it helped people who were already privileged.

“The fact that they would get further preference in getting in — it's ridiculous to me,” Rice said.

The friends have written letters to administrators, started a petition, handed out stickers and founded an organization since then to press the issue on campus and beyond.

On Wednesday night, the group, now formally known as Hoyas Against Legacy Admissions, scored their most significant win to date: The D.C. State Board of Education voted seven yeses to one abstention to introduce a bill banning legacy and donor admissions preferences at some private universities in the city to the D.C. Council. If passed, the legislation could affect some private universities in the city, but not those where at least 30 percent of students receive federal Pell Grants.

“We together can take a step to knock down a long-dormant barrier that perpetuates inequality: That barrier is legacy admissions,”

SEE GEORGETOWN ON B2

Former safety official charged

D.C. BRIBERY CASE LINKED TO ONSE

Agency awarded grants to violence interrupters

BY JENNY GATHRIGHT AND PAUL SCHWARTZMAN

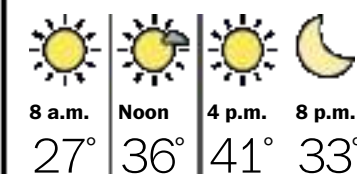
A former high-ranking official at a D.C. agency tasked with reducing gun violence has been charged with bribery, according to a document filed in D.C. federal court. It's the second bribery case linked to that agency and follows the August arrest of a council member accused of accepting cash to steer violence prevention contracts.

Prosecutors say that Dana McDaniel, who was deputy director of the city's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE), accepted at least \$10,000 in cash from an associate in exchange for agreeing to use her position to steer contracts toward the associate's businesses. Former D.C. Council member Trayon White Sr. (D-Ward 8) was previously arrested on federal allegations that he took payoffs in exchange for promising to influence contracts at ONSE.

The bribery cases have intensified scrutiny on ONSE, which awards millions of dollars in grants each year to community-based organizations charged with quelling gun violence in D.C. neighborhoods. The agency's new

SEE ONSE ON B3

TODAY'S WEATHER



High today at approx. 4 p.m.: 41°

Precip: 0% Wind: WNW 12-25 mph

For weather news, go to B6

THE DISTRICT

The Kennedy Center got a bomb threat regarding Shen Yun's shows. B6

VIRGINIA

U-Va.'s governing board has called a meeting to address gender care. B3

OBITUARIES

M. Paul Friedberg, who brought play to landscape design, was 93. B4

Trump severs key talent pipeline in federal cuts

BY OLIVIA GEORGE

The Trump administration ended the Presidential Management Fellows Program in a late-night executive order Wednesday, axing a decades-old initiative that has long been celebrated as a pipeline to draw talent into civil service careers.

The two-year, full-time fellowship brings recent graduate students into agencies across the government with pay, benefits, training and mentorship. It bills itself as “the premier leadership development program” and has helped thousands of graduates get into government roles since its founding in 1977.

President Donald Trump instructed the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to “promptly terminate” the program in the executive order, which targeted “elements of the Federal bureaucracy” that he had “determined are unnecessary.”

The order also eliminated or dramatically diminished a handful of other programs and federal advisory committees, including the U.S. Institute of Peace, which works to prevent and resolve violent conflict, and the U.S. African Development Foundation, which invests in African grassroots enterprises.



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

Elon Musk and President Donald Trump return to the White House aboard Marine One on Wednesday.

“This is one of the most unsettling, tragic pieces of news yet,” said Sean O’Keefe, a member of the presidential management program’s inaugural class who went on to become the NASA administrator under President

George W. Bush. “This is a firing of convenience. They are looking for a headcount reduction; there is nothing qualitative about this.”

Critics say ending the fellowship is counter to Trump’s pledge to improve efficiency and ensure

Americans are served by the world’s “highest-skilled” federal workforce.

“You don’t destroy your lead pipeline for best-in-class talent if your motivation is to make the

SEE TRUMP ON B3

Rowhouse owner found guilty of murder in fire

2019 blaze in NW killed two; code violations were cited before their deaths

BY KEITH L. ALEXANDER

A D.C. Superior Court jury on Thursday convicted a former rowhouse owner of second-degree murder in a fire that caused the deaths of two tenants, agreeing with prosecutors who argued that he had failed to maintain a safe environment for his renters.

Killed were 10-year-old Yafet Solomon, and Fitsum Kebede, 40, the neighbor watching over him as Yafet’s mother worked a housekeeping shift at George Washington University. Prosecutors say the two were trapped in the basement in the home on Kennedy Street NW in Brightwood Park, unable to exit a locked, metal security door.

The case against James Walker, 67, marked a rare partnership between federal prosecutors with the U.S. attorney’s office and local prosecutors in the Office of the

Attorney General, who charged him with both criminal and civil code violations. A D.C. police officer had warned Walker of fire hazards at the property five months before it went up in flames on a Sunday morning in August 2019, according to court testimony.

The officer, prosecutors said in court, was trained to spot code issues and told Walker that the home needed smoke detectors in the bedrooms and improvements to doors and windows, among other fixes. The officer then alerted D.C. housing agencies to investigate further, noting the height of the ceilings and small size of rooms did not appear to meet residential zoning requirements. After the fire, D.C. housing code inspectors found 26 violations.

In court, they argued that the D.C. agencies tasked with overseeing zoning and safety issues never followed up to tell him exactly what needed to be fixed. But prosecutors argued it was Walker’s responsibility to maintain a safe home for his tenants — especially after a police officer had warned previously of the worst-case scenario that ultimately

SEE VERDICT ON B2

D.C. Council may consider banning legacy admissions

GEORGETOWN FROM B1

said student body vice president Darius Wagner, a Black first-generation student who is Pell-eligible, at the hearing.

The proposed bill, known as the Furthering Admissions Inclusion and Representation (FAIR) Act of 2025, will likely move to the desk of Council Chairman Phil Mendelson (D), who will decide how to move forward. The measure could be referred to committee, where it could see a hearing or sit there indefinitely. It's not clear if the support to pass. Mendelson's office declined a request for comment.

While there has been talk of barring legacy and donor admissions preferences in the region and country for years, the move by the city's education board comes as similar efforts have escalated nationally in the wake of the 2023 Supreme Court ruling.

Legacy preferences in admissions typically give a tip to applicants whose mother or father went to the school. Proponents of the practice argue that it can strengthen alumni ties to a school, bolstering support and, perhaps, donations. Those gifts could then be used to provide more financial aid for needy students, they say. And some alumni say the preferences can now finally benefit groups that had historically been excluded from elite universities, and advocate to keep them in place.

In 2015, almost half of four-year colleges considered legacy status in admissions, according to Education Reform Now, an advocacy group that is tracking the issue, but by their count, just under a quarter do now.

States have also taken action in the last year. Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) and Maryland Gov. Wes Moore (D) signed bills last year banning legacy preferences at the states' public colleges. In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) signed legislation in the fall to ban legacy and donor preferences in admissions at private, nonprofit universities in that state. Illinois has also restricted legacy preferences in the past year.

The D.C. measure, if passed by the council, would prohibit certain universities that consider legacy or donor status from receiving city resources, including tax breaks, permits, contracts and grants. The proposal would also mandate increased disclo-



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

The Hoyas Against Legacy Admissions brought their proposal to the D.C. State Board of Education, which approved it Wednesday.

sures on recruitment, acceptance and enrollment of D.C. residents to the city.

The FAIR Act would create an exemption for the descendants of the GU272, a group of 272 people enslaved by Maryland's Jesuit priests who were sold in 1838 to save Georgetown when it was on the cusp of financial disaster.

American University, another private school in D.C., already does not take legacy into account in admissions. George Washington University spokesperson Shannon McClendon said that institution does not "have a legacy path" in the application process and recent surveys show about 4 to 6 percent of enrolled students report being related to a GW graduate.

George Washington University has included alumni relations in public disclosures on its website as one factor among many that university officials consider in admissions decisions. While some factors, such as rigor of high school classes and grades, were ranked by the schools as "very important," alumni relations were marked as

something that was "considered" in admissions.

Georgetown spokesperson Meghan Dubyak said in a statement that the university began considering students' Pell eligibility this past year in admissions, which resulted in a recent record high of 15 percent of the Class of 2028 being eligible for the federal grant. She said the university is continuing to consider other changes to its admissions policies and has met with the students advocating for the end to legacy admissions.

"At Georgetown, we continually evaluate potential changes to our admissions policies to ensure

we recruit and enroll students with a variety of backgrounds and talents," she said.

Eric Goulet, who represents Ward 3 on the State Board of Education and voted for the legislation, said he was quickly convinced of the students' argument that banning affirmative action meant legacy admissions, which is also not a merit-based trait, should be banned, too.

Goulet first met with the students last March as a petition they circulated was gaining traction. He soon helped write up a resolution modeled on California's law.

"There's no justification why

the family someone is born into or the donations their family makes should be used in admissions but other traits can't be," Goulet said.

He hopes the D.C. Council will hold hearings on the proposed legislation in the coming months.

Most council members declined to comment about the bill. But Ward 5 council member Zachary Parker (D) said in a statement that he found the arguments suggesting the universities and city examine legacy admissions preferences "compelling."

He said legacy admissions, especially at elite institutions, can give students a "leg-up" that is "compounded by unique access to opportunities for employment and future success."

The move also comes after a 2022 lawsuit challenged financial aid practices of some of the nation's top universities, including Georgetown. The suit alleged a former Georgetown president used to draw up a list of about 80 applicants based on a tracking list that often included information about the students' family

wealth and donations, but not the applicants' transcripts, teacher recommendations or personal essays.

"Please Admit," was often written at the top of the list, the lawsuit contended, and most were.

A spokeswoman for Georgetown has said the university strongly disagrees with the lawsuit's claims and is vigorously defending itself in court.

For Rice and his classmates, the lawsuit's allegations only affirmed their feeling that wealth works its way into everything at their school.

Student body president Ethan Henshaw, who works with Rice at Hoyas Against Legacy Admissions, said the group saw a spike in interest when the allegations came out.

At the hearing Wednesday evening, more than 30 Georgetown students and alumni testified in favor of banning legacy admissions, including low-income and first-generation students who argued that doors needed to be opened for qualified applicants like them.

Among the speakers was freshman Abdi Hernández. He said he's heard arguments from other first-generation students like him that they want to keep legacy admissions so their future children can benefit from a privilege they feel they've long lost out on.

While he understood that sentiment, Hernández said he felt attending a place like Georgetown could allow first-gen students to get jobs that will allow them to pay for tutoring and other help for future children to follow their footsteps without the need for a legacy preference in admissions.

The youngest of five, Hernández is the first in his family to go to college. The 19-year-old lost three loved ones to opioids and violence in recent years and, like Rice, has worked in difficult jobs before getting to Georgetown to help support himself.

"I don't see too many people like me when I look around here," he said in an interview before Wednesday's meeting. "Opening the admissions process can be life or death for a lot of communities like me."

When the vote passed around midnight Wednesday, he and the other students who had spent hours at the hearing cheered, hugged and took a group photo. They then set their sights on the council.

"There's no justification why the family someone is born into or the donations their family makes should be used in admissions but other traits can't be."

Eric Goulet, State Board of Education member for Ward 3

Owner of rowhouse in NW that caught fire, killing two, found guilty of murder

VERDICT FROM B1

mately unfolded that Sunday around 9:30 a.m.

"James Walker failed these people in every single way," Assistant U.S. Attorney Vinet Bryant told the jurors in her closing arguments Wednesday. "He gambled with their lives. And they lost."

It took jurors less than five hours to return their verdict at the close of a trial that lasted nearly three weeks, involved dozens of witnesses and thousands of pieces of evidence.

Walker was convicted on two counts of second-degree murder and all 26 misdemeanor city code violations. He showed no emotion Thursday, sitting next to his attorneys, as the forewoman read aloud all 28 guilty verdicts.

Judge Todd E. Edelman said Walker faced a minimum of 24 years in prison on the murder convictions alone, which, based on his age, "could be a life sentence." He ordered Walker held in D.C. jail until his sentencing in May.

Authorities were unable to determine what started the fire and Walker was not charged with setting it. He was only charged with indirectly causing the deaths of his two tenants after failing to ensure his low-income tenants were safe.

All of the tenants were Ethiopian immigrants who found their way to Walker through community connections at church and a local restaurant, according to court testimony. Prosecutors argued that Walker "preyed" upon people desperate for housing in



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

A memorial for fire victims Yafet Solomon, 10, and Fitsum Kebede, 40, was erected in 2019.

Washington, requiring them to pay him between \$250 and \$400 for their rooms, in cash, when he arrived each month.

"He preyed upon people who clearly had nowhere else to go, the elderly, immigrants, women with children, people he believed should be grateful for a place to stay," Bryant said. "He ran an illegal rooming house, a death trap, for years and was unchecked. And he knew how to scam the city's housing code system."

Edelman dealt a blow to Walker's

defense in refusing to allow his lawyers to remind the jury before it left to deliberate that city agencies never followed up with Walker to explain exactly what he had to fix. The judge determined that argument lacked a legal foundation because Walker had already been warned about the violations by a police officer, and regardless, was responsible for abiding by city code.

Walker said in a deposition in a civil suit filed against him by Yafet's mother and played in

court that "if any of my tenants ever complained about something, I tried to take care of it."

A Baltimore resident, he told the attorney in the deposition that he earned his law degree from Howard University in 1985 and is licensed to practice in Washington. Walker said that he was part of the D.C. Superior Court's panel of court-appointed lawyers for indigent clients and practiced law, often representing landlords who were evicting tenants, through 2019 when the fire occurred.



Yafet Solomon

Fitsum Kebede

At trial, jurors wiped away tears as Yafet's mother, Helen Kasay, reacted to a photo Bryant produced of her child.

"That's my son," Kasay said. "He was such a smart boy. He cared a lot for his mom. He was like an adult, open and bright-minded." A third grader at Bernard Elementary, he had dreams of one day becoming a lawyer, she said.

Jurors also watched video from a police officer's body camera as the officer and neighbors frantically tried to remove the bars from the doors and windows to get the tenants out. One man who came running to help testified about hearing a child's cries for help pierce the thick, summer air as black smoke billowed from the home.

Walker had a previous property he owned in Virginia destroyed by fire in 2010, Bryant told the jury. And another property Walker and his sister owned on Kennedy Street, just two blocks down from the rowhouse, had been cited by the city for similar violations, years before the fire.

One of Walker's attorneys, Douglas B. Evans Sr., told jurors there was no evidence that Kebede and Yafet were unable to exit the building.

"No one knows actually what happened in that basement," Evans said. With temperatures of more than 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit, Evans said as soon as firefighters opened an outside door, the air caused the fire to grow more intense. Evans also reminded the jury that the bodies of the victims were found feet away from the door, suggesting that they collapsed before reaching the metal security door.

"The fire was the reason they could not escape, not the gate," Evans told the jury. "Don't allow yourselves to indulge in grief for a child and Mr. Kebede. Just as they deserve justice, my client deserves justice."

Evans also said it took firefighters four minutes after being summoned by 911 to arrive at the rowhouse, a delay he argued resulted in the deaths.

When he testified earlier this week, Walker repeatedly argued he provided had a certificate of occupancy, even though he did not have one for residency. He also said he provided working smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. Evans later noted his client's demeanor to jurors.

"You may not like Mr. Walker and find him distasteful and combative, but that does not make him guilty of murder or the crimes charged in this case," he said.

As he testified, Walker's aggressive disposition softened when he began to talk about Yafet, whose 10th birthday was the day of the fire.

"I loved him. He and I were good friends," Walker said. "He was a good kid."



The Guide to Offers
The Washington Post

Enter for the chance to win a pair of tickets to
Rumours ATL: A Fleetwood Mac Tribute on March 21 at the Lincoln Theatre

"Rumours prides [itself] on being the most authentic Fleetwood Mac Tribute... [The group] will make you dance, sing along at the top of your lungs and you'll even learn something new about Fleetwood Mac at each performance" (rumoursattribution.com). Songs include "Don't Stop," "Dreams" and "You Make Loving Fun." "With such a great selection of hits from one of the most beloved bands in music history, Rumours ATL is sure to please even the most discerning fan" (protributebands.com).

See details at washingtonpost.com/entertainment/events/lists/388



OBITUARIES

VIRGINIA MCCASKEY, 102

Bears matriarch saw family as 'custodian' of franchise

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Virginia McCaskey, who inherited the Chicago Bears from her father, George Halas, and largely avoided the spotlight during four-plus decades as principal owner, died Feb. 6 at 102.

Mrs. McCaskey's family announced the death but did not provide more details. She had owned the Bears since her father's death in 1983.

Like her father, a co-founder of the NFL, Mrs. McCaskey kept the team in family hands. She gave operational control and the title of president to her eldest son, Michael McCaskey, who served as chairman until being succeeded by brother George McCaskey in 2011.

During her stewardship, the Bears won a Super Bowl in 1986 and lost a second 21 years later.

Four of Mrs. McCaskey's sons remain with the Bears' board of directors: George, Patrick, Brian and Ed. A recent valuation by *Forbes.com* pegged the team's

worth at \$6.4 billion.

Mrs. McCaskey, the older of Halas's two children, never expected to find herself in charge. Her brother, George "Mugs" Halas Jr., was being groomed to take over the team until he died in 1979 after a heart attack.

After Mrs. McCaskey assumed ownership, her husband, Ed McCaskey, succeeded Halas as chairman. Not long after, she turned over control to Michael, the eldest of her 11 children.

"I think it's important that all of our family remembers that we really haven't done anything to earn this," Mrs. McCaskey said in a 2006 interview. "We're just the recipients of a tremendous legacy. I use the word 'custodian,' and we want to pass it on the best way we can."

Mrs. McCaskey's official title was secretary to the board of directors. Despite her generally hands-off approach and low public profile, she occasionally exercised ultimate authority on team decisions as matriarch of the fam-

ily.

One of those involved a 1987 lawsuit brought by the children of "Mugs" Halas, which was resolved by a stock buyout of their shares. A more recent reminder came in December 2014, when George McCaskey announced the firings of coach Marc Trestman and general manager Phil Emery at a news conference, and was asked to describe his mother's role in the process.

He paused, struggling to describe her unhappiness with the just-ended 5-11 season, and the team's generally fading fortunes.

"She's pissed off," George McCaskey said. "Virginia McCaskey has been on this earth for eight of the Bears' nine championships, and she wants more. She feels that it's been too long since the last [Super Bowl win]. ... She's fed up with mediocrity. She feels that she and Bears fans everywhere deserve better."

According to family members, Mrs. McCaskey often wouldn't serve dessert on Sundays when



AL MESSERSCHMIDT/GETTY IMAGES

the Bears lost.

Virginia Marion Halas was born in Chicago on Jan. 5, 1923. She attended what is now Drexel University in Philadelphia and married in 1943. Her husband died in 2003.

Mrs. McCaskey's tenure as the Bears' owner included the establishment of the Bears Care pro-

gram in 2005. The Bears said that Bears Care has issued grants totaling more than \$31.5 million to 225 qualifying agencies to improve the quality of life for people in the Chicago area, especially disadvantaged children and their families. Bears Care also supported health awareness programs focusing on breast and ovarian cancer.

Tony Dorsett presents the George S. Halas trophy to Virginia McCaskey and her son Michael after the Chicago Bears won the NFC championship game in 2007.

M. PAUL FRIEDBERG, 93

Landscape architect brought play into his design of parks

BY BRIAN MURPHY

M. Paul Friedberg, a landscape architect who reimagined the city playground as a place of climbable shapes and fanciful passageways in projects that began in the 1960s with a celebrated break from tradition at a New York housing project, died Feb. 15 at a hospital in Manhattan. He was 93.

The cause was complications from covid, said his wife, Dorit Shahar.

The undulating and slightly surreal design of the play area opened in 1966 at Riis Park Plaza in Manhattan's Lower East Side established Mr. Friedberg as an innovator in capturing the spontaneity and wonder of childhood imagination. He went on to craft urban pockets around the world that also included spaces of serenity such as Washington's Pershing Park.

Mr. Friedberg often sought out neglected or underused slices of the cityscape, mixing structures as wide stairways, ledges and pergolas with the natural world of grasses and water that change

tone with the weather and angle of the sun.

He began his career at a time when many cities were struggling with middle-class flight to the suburbs and an expanding highways network that carved through downtown neighborhoods. Urban planners, meanwhile, were forging ahead with grand visions such as housing projects that often left bleak and soulless expanses.

Mr. Friedberg saw himself as a miniaturist amid the sweeping changes. He favored smaller-scale projects intended to elevate city life. Even the simple act of sitting, he said, can be transformative.

"Consider the bench as an orchestra seat in a play, a performance in which you have walk on parts," he wrote in a manuscript excerpted by the Cultural Landscape Foundation, a Washington-based group whose mission includes chronicling the work of renowned landscape architects.

"Except here, the players do not perceive themselves as a player," Mr. Friedberg continued.

"They're animating the space for whatever their purpose is — movement, strolling, hanging out. They are unscripted actors that are a critical component of the design."

In Minneapolis's Peavey Plaza, Mr. Friedberg's 1975 design included cascading and spraying fountains and lawn terraces that he called a fusion of "American green space and the European hard space."

Pershing Park, a former traffic island near the White House, became in 1981 a granite-anchored public space named for Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I. Mr. Friedberg added clusters of grasses and plants centered on a waterfall-style fountain and reflecting pool. "You had permanence and impermanence working together," he said. (The park suffered from neglect over the years and was redesigned as the National World War I Memorial, which opened in 2021.)

In Lower Manhattan's Battery Park City development, Mr. Friedberg collaborated on the World Financial Center Plaza (1986) in a design that includes a fence with snippets of verse from Walt Whitman and words taken from the poem "Meditations in an Emergency" by Frank O'Hara: "One need never leave the confines of New York to get all the greenery one wishes."

Mr. Friedberg seemed most inspired when exploring the essence of childhood play — recalling his experiences as a Brooklyn-born kid who discovered country life after his family moved to rural Pennsylvania.

At Riis Park Plaza, located in the Jacob Riis Houses complex, Mr. Friedberg incorporated styles of antiquity — domes, zigzags, temple-like columns — interlaced with arched ladders, slides and tunnels.

The playground and adjacent spaces, whose funding included donations from a foundation led by heiress and philanthropist Brooke Astor, marked a bold experiment in a city where the existing play areas had aging swings and seesaws put in place under New York's public works master builder Robert Moses.

Mr. Friedberg became a student of creating spaces that speak to childhood curiosity, constructing playgrounds around Manhattan, San Francisco and other cities. He also developed a philosophy of play as a powerful force for well-being — arguing in his book "Play and Interplay" (1970), written with architecture expert Ellen Perry Berkeley, that compelling play areas are as essential to urban life as transportation links and commerce.

"In play is where we are most creative," Mr. Friedberg said in 2006 as part of oral history interviews with the Cultural Landscape Foundation's founder, Charles A. Birnbaum. "And therefore the idea of looking at a playground design, we should really be looking at the nature of play and then designing to the nature of play."

He added: "There are people whose whole life is dedicated to



2008 PHOTO BY CHARLES A. BIRNBAUM/CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION

M. Paul Friedberg in a park within New York's Battery Park City; he also designed Yards Park in D.C.



M. PAUL FRIEDBERG & PARTNERS/COURTESY CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION

Children play at Riis Park Plaza, which was one of Mr. Friedberg's earliest projects and a radical departure from the norm of the '60s.

play and those are the people we call artists."

Mr. Friedberg encouraged amateur designers, especially those in cities, to try their hand at creating play areas with his books "Handcrafted Playgrounds" (1975) and "Do-It-Yourself Playgrounds" (1976).

He helped explore the potential in other overlooked urban spaces such as rooftops, redesigning a public area atop a building at Fordham University in Manhattan into a green space in 1998 with a sculpture garden.

Mr. Friedberg's playground at Yerba Buena Gardens (1998) at San Francisco's Moscone Center, a convention venue, incorporated a xylophone, sundial, catwalks and other elements as part of an updated homage to the Riis site, which was demolished in 2000 because of disrepair. (The surrounding 14-story apartment buildings remain.)

Most of Mr. Friedberg's projects and collaborations were in the United States in his early years. He later took on international commissions including segments of the Olympic Plaza in

Calgary, in Canada's Alberta province, before the 1988 Winter Olympics, Queen's Square in Yokohama, Japan (1999) and the DLF Cyber Hub near New Delhi (2014).

"Designing the landscape is an abstraction, as is the creation of music. Its function is a search for beauty," Mr. Friedberg said at a 2008 conference in Chicago. "The musician achieves it by arranging sound. The landscape architect arranges space to be experienced by inhabiting it."

Marvin Paul Friedberg was born in Brooklyn on Oct. 11, 1931. His father was a city milk inspector, and his mother cared for their home.

He was 5 when his father grew tired of city life and moved the family to Winfield, Pennsylvania. As a child, Mr. Friedberg attended a one-room schoolhouse and played in the nearby woods. The family then moved to Middletown, New York, where his father ran a nursery and landscape business.

Mr. Friedberg received a bachelor's degree in horticulture from Cornell University in 1954 before

serving two years in the Army. He created a landscape design firm in 1958, M. Paul Friedberg and Partners, as he replaced his first name with an initial, a style he used his entire career. "The whole reason for my success," he once joked, "is that I'm living down my first name."

In 1970, Mr. Friedberg established the landscape architecture program at the City College of New York, focusing on urban projects. His awards included recognition in 1980 from the American Institute of Architects for "introducing new dimensions of life for different ages and social groups in the urban environment."

His other projects included the Loring Greenway in the 1970s in Minneapolis and the Yards Park (2011) along the Anacostia River in Washington.

His wife of 20 years, Esther Hiday, died in 1982. In addition to Shahar, whom he married in 1988, survivors include their daughter; two sons from his first marriage; and four grandchildren.

Some of Mr. Friedberg's most acclaimed projects now exist only in photographs. In the years after the razing of Riis Park Plaza, both Peavey Plaza and Pershing Park were slated to be fully restructured. Preservationists were able to save some of Mr. Friedberg's work even as both sites underwent extensive redesign.

He said he understood that change was inevitable, but he always mourned the loss of Riis Park Plaza for its connection to generations of New York children and their families.

"I don't think everything that I do should be preserved," he said. "I think cultural landscapes are landscapes that are products of a particular time and place that inform the present and add to the future. More than that, I don't know."

The Washington Post SUNDAY PREVIEW



ARTS & STYLE

Spring Arts Preview: Start planning your spring entertainment calendar. Our critics deliver an advance peek at the most anticipated shows, concerts, events and exhibitions headed our way in the coming months.

BUSINESS

Flirting with AI: AI tools like chatbots are increasingly used in dating, offering support and advice post-breakup. We advise when to use artificial intelligence for your dating life — and when to keep it human.

TRAVEL

From Michelin to modest: San Sebastián, Spain, is a magnet for Michelin stars. Now you can also find great pizza and ceviche, thanks to a new wave of innovative chefs in the Basque Country.

NO280 2x8

*Some stories may not run due to breaking news



PHOTOS BY MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

A home for go-go

At new museum, D.C.'s homegrown music has place to call its own

BY CHRIS RICHARDS

Should you happen to step through the front doors of the new Go-Go Museum in historical Anacostia having no idea what go-go music actually is, turn to your right, swap smiles with the many-times-larger-than-life image of the late Chuck Brown, then check the seven-point definition offered in the wall text below:

Go-go is

- A musical genre native to Washington, D.C. known for live instrumentation, call and response and an endless beat of African percussion.

- An art form invented by guitarist Chuck Brown in the 1970s.

- Party music.

- A spiritual and political force.

- A collection of fiercely independent small businesses.

- Among the only popular Black music genres that has not been colonized.

- The Official Music of Washington, D.C.

Pretty tight for such a broad definition. Poetic, too. For nearly 50 years now, Washington's homegrown dialect of dance music

has proved itself taut in execution and expansive in form, a densely woven continuity, a hyper-funky ongoingness that continues to consecrate a community's bond. Brown famously gave go-go its name because the music's syncopated, stitched-together beat "goes and goes." Now, with the founders of the Go-Go Museum & Cafe attempting to cram all of that metaphorical meaning into a two-story, 8,000-square-foot storefront on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE, the music has a place to stay.

The space itself doesn't feel crowded, but Wednesday it was teeming with media types, community supporters and local students from Anacostia High School and Duke Ellington School of the Arts — all gathered for the museum's grand opening "press concert." That meant a morning performance from the Experience Band & Show, which gently kicked off the proceedings with a dewdrop-soft cover of Sade's "No Ordinary Love." Fourteen minutes later, it was a party, drums thundering. And then, suddenly, it

SEE GO-GO MUSEUM ON C2



TOP: The Experience Band & Show performs Wednesday at the Go-Go Museum & Cafe in Washington. ABOVE: Merchandise available for sale at the new Anacostia institution.

Q&A

Thinking like a Hollywood producer

BY HELENA ANDREWS-DYER

In his new book, "Who Better Than You? The Art of Healthy Arrogance & Dreaming Big," Hollywood super-producer Will Packer has a Will Smith story to tell. It's just probably not the one you were expecting.

Packer, of course, famously co-produced the 94th Academy Awards, when Smith slapped comedian Chris Rock live onstage before returning to his front-row seat. The chaos that inevitably ensued backstage is not the stuff of Packer's Smith story. Instead, in "Who Better Than You?" — part memoir and part manifesto about how to make it as a Hollywood outsider — Packer talks about how, in 1999, he sneaked into the ShoWest movie theater convention using a buddy's press pass.

Back then, Packer was a young independent film producer trying to get his erotic thriller, "Trois," in theaters, and he needed industry connections. But he played the part of reporter so well that, during a news conference featuring Smith, Packer was actually called on to ask the movie star a question. It was a clunker, but Smith played along.

SEE Q&A ON C2

MOVIES IN WEEKEND



The Monkey

★★★☆☆

Killer toy brings yuks and yucks. 17



Cleaner

★★★☆☆

Daisy Ridley as an action hero. 18

JFK library reopens after Trump cuts

BY GEOFF EDGERS

BOSTON — There were some new faces greeting visitors Wednesday morning when the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum reopened, a day after shutting down abruptly due to employee cuts ordered by the Trump administration. Director Alan Price and Deputy Director James Roth worked the ticket counter.

"If that isn't the dream team at the desk, I don't know what is," said a woman walking toward the desk.

Until 2 p.m. the day before, that woman worked in the museum's visitor services and special-events department. She was smiling at the moment, but she said she was heartbroken and declined to give her name. She had come in simply to turn in her laptop.

Price gave her a hug.

"These staff are amazing; they're dedicated. Even after being fired, some of

SEE JFK LIBRARY ON C3

Amazon MGM gains creative control for 007

BY HERB SCRIBNER

The family who has long held the intellectual property rights to the James Bond film franchise announced Thursday they will cede creative control of the character to Amazon MGM Studios, marking a major shift in what's been a battle over the creative direction for the British secret agent for years.

Through a new deal with Amazon, the longtime stewards of Bond's creative rights, Michael Wilson and Barbara Broccoli, will remain as co-owners of the James Bond IP, while Amazon MGM will have creative freedom over the character moving forward.

The IP rights to the Bond franchise have been held by a family for decades. They were originally controlled by Eon Productions, which was started by Harry Saltzman and producer Albert "Cubby" Broccoli in 1961. Cubby eventually passed on the rights to his stepson Wilson and his daughter Barbara Broccoli in the '90s.

SEE JAMES BOND ON C3

“Go-go” is also a place’ – and now has one of its own

GO-GO MUSEUM FROM CI

was a news conference, with remarks from museum founder and president Ronald L. Moten, chief curator Natalie Hopkinson and D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D), whose promise to invest \$1 billion dollars in Ward 8 involved the District funneling \$2.5 million into the museum. “What I know about history is that it *can* be lost,” Bowser said from the dais. “It can be forgotten, both intentionally and by neglect. So it’s up to us to be intentional about how we preserve our music.”

Accordingly, the Go-Go Museum tells the story of go-go’s creation and endurance through more than a dozen interactive touch screen video exhibits — one of which allows visitors to chitchat with an artificial-intelligence version of Gregory “Sugar Bear” Elliott of go-go legends E.U. about how his band’s hit single “Da Butt” made go-go a momentary national phenomenon back in 1988. Other components of the museum are more concerned with go-go’s future. The basement level includes a recording studio and a stage, and there’s an outdoor performance space behind the museum expected to open later this year. “This is going to be a great thing,” Moten told the assembled. “We want to make this a living museum, a community space for the people.”

That aspect feels especially critical right now, with federal Washington suddenly casting a darkening shadow over the city. (Later in the day, President Donald Trump proposed that the federal government “take over the governance of D.C.”) Hopkinson — a former Washington Post reporter and author of the book “Go-Go Live: The Musical Life and Death of a Chocolate City” — used her time at the microphone to broaden the picture, addressing the Trump administration’s crackdown on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. “Not just our music but our whole identities are being criminalized,” she said. “We’re being erased. So this work is really democracy work. ... Community-led museums, we don’t have corporate support. We don’t even have federal support. We have community support. ...



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Go-go fans dance Wednesday at the new Go-Go Museum & Cafe in Washington. Memorabilia on display in the two-story, 8,000-square-foot center on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE. A kiosk details women’s contributions to go-go music.

PHOTOS BY MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

“We want to make this a living museum, a community space for the people.”

Ronald L. Moten, founder and president of the Go-Go Museum & Cafe

Film producer Packer: Strategies for dealing with Hollywood can be universal

Q&A FROM CI

“Will kind of looked at me again, like, I wonder what’s up with that dude. Whatever. I was in the room, so why not? I just should’ve had a better question ready. I figured our paths would cross again. [Narrator: *Such a poorly veiled foreshadow. Dun dun dun!*]” writes Packer, who would eventually go from sneaking into conventions to earning more than \$1 billion at the box office with combined successes such as “Stomp the Yard,” “Straight Outta Compton” and “Girls Trip.”

The Smith story is a lesson in a book chock-full of them about how an engineering student from St. Petersburg, Florida, became one of the hardest-working Hollywood producers who, in fact, does not live in Hollywood. Sure, he has plenty of stories in the bank about big stars gone wild, but what Packer wants to relay is how he got from the outside in. “Overambition is a myth of the complacent,” writes Packer, who once tried to make extra money with his former producing partner, Rob Hardy, by cleaning Atlanta strip clubs after hours. The man will outwork anyone.

In a conversation about “Who Better Than You?,” which published Tuesday, the “Think Like A Man” producer makes it clear that what everyone should do is think like a producer. Tips about how to break into the movie business, deal with larger-than-life egos and get Kevin Hart on a plane can be applied to nearly any hard thing worth doing.

“After 30 years of dealing with some of the most successful, famous, difficult, amazing, toxic people in the world, you learn not only some key traits about those people, but about successful people in general,” Packer says during our interview. “You learn to be focused and to trust your own instincts. That’s something that I think we could all use a little bit more of, especially in a world that is so polarized and is so unpredictable and challenging.”

This interview has been edited

for length and clarity.

We first met backstage before a screening of the Peacock miniseries you produced, “Fight Night: The Million Dollar Heist.” I asked Don Cheadle about how you pitched him and you answered. Cheadle laughed and said you like to grab the mic. With all due respect to Mr. Cheadle, I think that I was grabbing the mic in order to help him stay on track with the right direction. I don’t just go around grabbing mics. I don’t think I’m *that* guy. Let’s say I’m a mic facilitator. Let’s not say grabber. I’m the pass-the-mic guy.

I believe everyone falls into two camps: those who love a group project and those who’d do anything to avoid them. Writing is a solo effort, and making films less so. What camp do you fall in?

I used to hate those teachers who’d say, “I’m going to pick the group and everybody’s getting the same grade.” I don’t know these people! I do not want to be shackled by the mediocrity of the people that you have randomly put in my group! Movies are the ultimate group project. But here’s the thing: I like a group project with the right group.

In the book, you write about selling newspapers as a side hustle while trying to get financing for a film project. But you hated the idea of sales. I’m making up the math here, but isn’t 99.9 percent of a movie producer’s job to sell?

Selling newspapers was something I could do because the schedule was flexible and I was good at it. I could get people when I knocked on their doors to not shoot me in the face. So that was a plus. I just didn’t like the thought of sales. It sounded like somebody in a bad suit getting off a plane in a small airport. But my dad was the one who said: “Listen, everything is sales, and everybody is selling. The president of the United States is selling his agenda.” Honing your



DAMON CASAREZ/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

The new book by Will Packer, a producer for the movies “Straight Outta Compton” and “Girls Trip,” is part memoir, part self-improvement guide.

ability to get others to see the value in you or your project or your endeavor is invaluable.

Speaking of selling, Hollywood has been in budget-slashing mode. Everyone is talking about how hard it is to get anything made in this time of constriction. How do you cut through that?

It’s tough no matter what you look like, no matter what your last name is, no matter how high on the totem pole you sit. But then, if you happen to be part of a marginalized group, especially in an environment where you’ve got a certain segment of people that have said diversity, equity or inclusion are bad words, now you really know what you’re up against. But what that means is there is an opportunity for you to go out and create something. And this is not just Hollywood, but create something that you can take direct to an audience and then force other folks to recognize that value and pay you for it.

Talk about that argument. Because you make this distinction between people who will spend a lot of time yelling at that closed door and those who figure out how to get in. Is that a “pull yourself up from your own bootstraps” argument? Or is there more to it?

No, it’s definitely more nuanced. I have always been somebody who will say, “Yes, we know that this system, this time period, this economic situation is inequitable. What can we do?” Action is necessary because faith without works is dead. We have to be able to do both. So I am

somebody that says I got to figure out how to get around this closed door.

This sounds like it’s circling back to the “all you need is one (white) guy” theory you float in the book. The metaphorical White guy. Find the person in the position of power.

Basically whoever’s behind the door who can unlock it and let you in. For you, it was Clint Culpepper at Screen Gems who helped you get “Stomp the Yard” made. Okay, how does one do that?

Make sure that you’re clear on what that person needs. Mentorship is a two-way street. You can’t sit back and say, “I need somebody that can come and help me get to the next level.” You’ve got to have some momentum on your own. You’ve got to fight against inertia so that you are easier to help.

It also struck me that we’re now all dealing with larger-than-life personalities on wildly important stages. Best advice on managing that?

It’s not fight fire with fire, I will say that. It’s this concept of taking the thunder out. When you’re in a room full of egomaniacal, driven people, it may seem like a weakness to say: “I didn’t do what I was supposed to do. I apologize.” But you now have the leverage, because you’ve taken away their major argument. All they want to do is fight and tell you how they were right and you were wrong. Well, take that away. Now we got to talk about something else, and hopefully something else is getting us closer to our ultimate goal.

Another one of your super-producer skills is elevating talent. You put Kevin Hart in his first real breakout role and did the same for Tiffany Haddish. How does one spot the next big thing? You have to understand that

We are built for this moment. We can survive in this moment. In fact, we can thrive in this moment.”

Hopkinson’s sentences felt go-go-like, rhythmic and propulsive as they connected one idea to the next. And they’re all over the walls of this place, too. On the museum’s main floor, it’s impossible to miss an exhibit mapping out the greater go-go timeline as it spans a bright-red slab made to resemble a stripe in the D.C. flag. One particular line here teems with subtext: “Go-go’ is also a place. If you are at a club, firehouse, school, park — any venue where the music is playing — you are ‘at the go-go.’”

It’s a sentence that provides context and decodes slang. But maybe even more than that, it posits go-go as an immaterial force that draws community together as it moves from place to place. With luck, that will never change. But here’s what has changed with the creation of this museum: Go-go now has a bricks-and-mortar structure that it can always return home to. Inside, there are memorabilia displays (a Rare Essence wristwatch, an E.U. bucket hat), walls covered in Day-Glo concert posters, light fixtures made out of timbale drums, and Wednesday morning the museum even had its own scent: the smell of jollof rice, wings and corn wafting from the cafe service window on the museum’s main floor.

And as the “press concert” eventually wound down, it also had a mayor on the conga drums — Bowser patting out a beat with the band as the crowd chanted, “Go May-or! Go May-or!” Then she headed upstairs to the museum’s main room to answer questions in front of a scrum of television cameras — but her words became hard to make out as the sound underfoot grew louder and louder. The Experience Band wasn’t quite finished, and when they hit the refrain of Rare Essence’s “Overnight Scenario,” a classic go-go anthem that outlines a tiny-hours tryst with updates every 60 minutes, it felt impossible to believe it was only four minutes past noon. The dancing crowd might not have known when they were, but they certainly knew where.

talent is not universal. And I say that with nothing but love.

You mean everyone isn’t talented?

I mean that every talent isn’t good for everything. Specific talents are not universally applicable. So when you’re thinking about spotting talent, you need to think about what is it that you’re looking for. You have to match them up with the right time and the right moment. I didn’t create Kevin Hart’s talent, but I certainly put him in a position with the role that he had for him to shoot to the stars. I didn’t say, “Wait till you see this horror movie that I’m putting Kevin Hart in!”

And, of course, Haddish broke out in “Girls Trip” . . . This is my way of asking if we’re getting “Girls Trip 2”?

Yes, it’s happening. We are in the lab, as they say. One of the things I talk about in the book is you don’t have to tell everybody everything you’re doing, even though we’re in an environment where people want to TikTok every single element of their incremental success on a day-to-day basis. I get it. I know the urge to do that is strong, because you want people to say, “You’re doing good, keep going.” But sometimes you’ve just got to put your head down and grind, because you will get so much further ahead. You cannot move as fast looking around.

There is a lot of hand-wringing about the potential cultural shift coming during the next four years of the Trump administration. Do you feel that?

No question. Hollywood as an industry has always been reactive. You see projects being made that ebb and flow with the consciousness, I’m going to call it, of the country. There’s not a lot of forward thinking because that’s risky, and Hollywood is very risk-averse. I haven’t been pitched the MAGA movie yet. Maybe it’s coming.

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TELEVISION

Table of TV schedules for 2/21/25, listing channels, times, and program titles like 'The First 48', 'Dateline NBC', and 'American Masters'.

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

Sudoku puzzle grid with some numbers filled in and a difficulty rating of five stars.

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Game Break

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PREVIOUS SUDOKU SOLUTION

Grid showing the solution to the previous Sudoku puzzle.

SCRABBLE GRAMS puzzle interface with a grid and word lists.

JUMBLE CROSSWORDS puzzle interface with a crossword grid and clues.

PREVIOUS SCRABBLEGRAMS SOLUTION

Grid showing the solution to the previous Scrabble Grams puzzle.

HOROSCOPE

BIRTHDAY | FEBRUARY 21: You are instinctively trusting and endearing to others. Sometimes you hide behind a tough outer shell.

Moon Alert: There are no restrictions to shopping or important decisions today. The Moon is in Sagittarius.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): Tread lightly in discussions about politics, religion and racial issues, because you might come on a bit heavy in the eyes of others.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): Because you're the financial wizard of the zodiac, you're not casual about money. Actually, you like money.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): This is a tricky day. You're high-viz. You might be talking to bosses, parents and VIPs.

CANCER (JULY 21-JULY 22): Conversations related to your job, travel, the law, publishing and medicine might be challenging today.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Romantic arguments and disputes with kids might take place today, because your feelings are overriding your intellect.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22): Stay calm and cool with family discussions today, especially with partners and spouses.

LIBRA (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22): Work issues might be worrisome for you today. This will affect your conversations with others.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Financial discussions might create worries and difficulties when dealing with your kids or a romantic partner.

aside these negative issues today. The universe will be supportive to you this year. Factoid. Keep a positive attitude so you can let good things manifest in your world.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Today the Moon is in your sign at odds with Mercury and Saturn. This means your emotions are running the show.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Today the Moon is hiding in your chart, and it is challenged by two planets. This means you feel insecure, worried and too caught up in your emotions.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): A discussion with a friend might be difficult today because your feelings will override your logic.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): This is a poor day to talk to bosses and authority figures. You will not make a great impression.

— Georgia Nicolis © 2025, KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, INC.

BRIDGE

Bridge hand information including 'BOTH SIDES VULNERABLE', 'NORTH (D)', 'WEST', 'EAST', 'SOUTH', and 'The bidding:'.

Cy the Cynic defines "drawing a conclusion" as reaching a point where you're tired of thinking.

Against four spades, Cy led the king of hearts. Declarer took dummy's ace and let the nine of trumps ride.

Cy took his king and drew the conclusion that dummy's diamonds would give South club discards.

Cy beats the contract if he finds the strength to count. When Cy takes the king of diamonds, he knows South held one heart and five spades.

clubs, so Cy need not cash his ace. If Cy exits with a diamond, South must lead clubs himself and lose two more tricks.

DAILY QUESTION You hold: ♠ A Q 10 7 4 ♥ 7 ♦ A 8 3 ♣ K 10 8 4 Your partner opens one heart, you respond one spade and he bids two clubs.

ANSWER: Partner has not defined his strength or pattern. Your best contract could be anything from 3NT to seven clubs.

— Frank Stewart © 2025, TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY, LLC.

LA TIMES CROSSWORD

LA Times crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

LA Times crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

- 2 French city, in song
3 "A little birdie tells me ..."
4 Networking giant
5 Lousy piece of advice
6 Account of life after death?
7 Turn for the worse
8 Turkey's highest peak
9 Data recording device
10 Play thing
11 "The Paper Chase" setting
12 Letters in the news
13 "Get it?"
21 Busy airport
22 _ chi
26 Salty dog option
27 Saccharine
29 "Big Mouth" writer/voice actress Edebiri
30 Luxury home features
31 Credit report entries

THURSDAY'S LA TIMES SOLUTION

Grid showing the solution to the LA Times crossword puzzle.

CLASSIC DOONESBURY

GARRY TRUDEAU



PICKLES

BRIAN CRANE



RED AND ROVER

BRIAN BASSET



AGNES

TONY COCHRAN



FRANK AND ERNEST

TOM THAVES



WUMO

MIKAEL WULFF & ANDERS MORGENTHALER



CLASSIC PEANUTS

CHARLES SCHULZ



CRABGRASS

TAUHIH BONDIA



RHYMES WITH ORANGE

HILARY PRICE



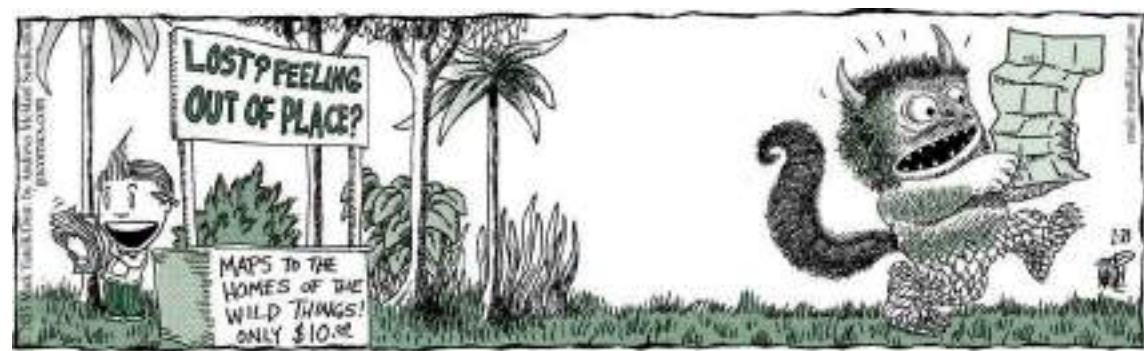
MARK TRAIL

JULES RIVERA



LIO

MARK TATULLI



MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

MIKE PETERS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

CHRIS BROWNE



BALDO

HECTOR CANTU & CARLOS CASTELLANOS



BLONDIE

DEAN YOUNG & JOHN MARSHALL



SALLY FORTH

FRANCESCO MARCIULIANO & JIM KEEFE



BREWSTER ROCKIT: SPACE GUY!

TIM RICKARD



SHERMAN'S LAGOON

JIM TOOMEY



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

STEPHAN PASTIS



CURTIS

RAY BILLINGSLEY



MUTTS

PATRICK McDONNELL



ZITS

JERRY SCOTT & JIM BORGMAN



HEART OF THE CITY

STEENZ



JUDGE PARKER

FRANCESCO MARCIULIANO & MIKE MANLEY



FRAZZ

JEFF MALLETT



SIX CHIX

BANNERMAN, XUNISE, KONAR, LAWTON, PATRINOS & PIRO



GARFIELD

JIM DAVIS



BARNEY AND CLYDE

WEINGARTENS & CLARK



DUSTIN

STEVE KELLEY & JEFF PARKER



FLASH GORDON

DAN SCHKADE



PRICKLY CITY

SCOTT STANTIS



LOOSE PARTS

DAVE BLAZEK



NON SEQUITUR

WILEY



BABY BLUES

RICK KIRKMAN & JERRY SCOTT



BIG NATE

LINCOLN PEIRCE

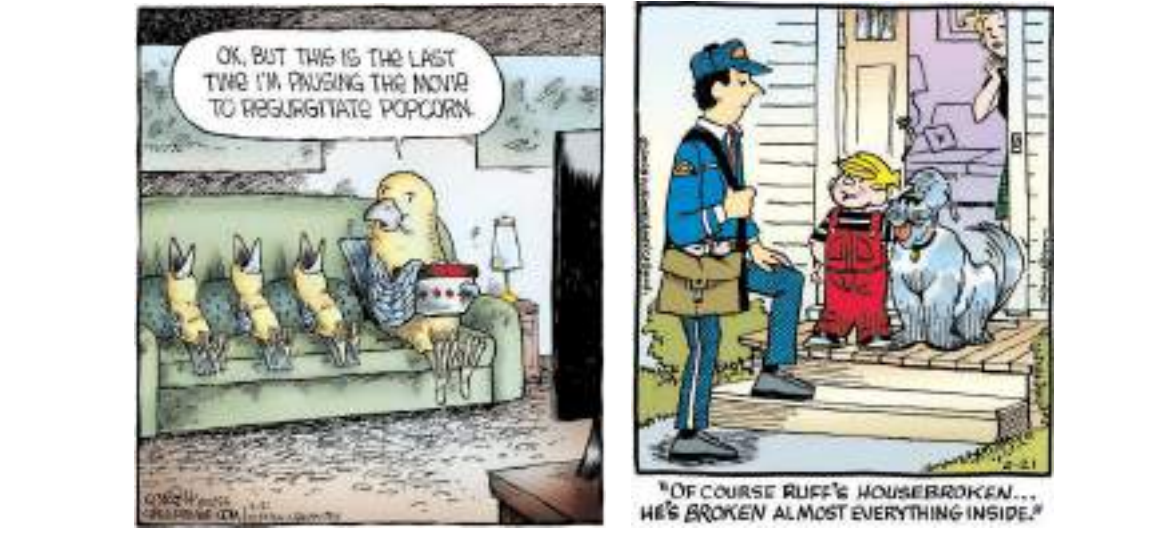


SPEED BUMP

DAVE COVERLY

DENNIS THE MENACE

H. KETCHAM



ON THE FASTTRACK

BILL HOLBROOK



FAMILY CIRCUS

BIL KEANE

REPLY ALL LITE

DONNA A. LEWIS



BEEBLE BAILEY

GREG, BRIAN & NEAL WALKER



SOCCER

The ex-president of Spain's soccer federation is found guilty of sexual assault for a nonconsensual kiss. **D2**

BASEBALL

MLB, ESPN will end broadcast deal after this season amid shifting landscape of regional sports networks. **D3**

HIGH SCHOOLS

The Cardozo boys and Coolidge girls capture DCIAA basketball titles — each ending a lengthy drought. **D5**



BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

CANADA 3, UNITED STATES 2 (OT): U.S. goalie Connor Hellebuyck leaves the ice after Connor McDavid's goal lifted Canada in the inaugural 4 Nations Face-Off.

Blood clot will end season for Spurs star

Wembanyama has deep vein thrombosis in his right shoulder

BY BEN GOLLIVER

In a stunning setback for the NBA's brightest young star, San Antonio Spurs center Victor Wembanyama will miss the remainder of the regular season because of deep vein thrombosis in his right shoulder, the team said in a statement Thursday.

Wembanyama, 21, competed in his first All-Star Game on Sunday in San Francisco before he returned to San Antonio, where he was diagnosed with the blood clot.

The Spurs hope Wembanyama will be ready to return for the start of the 2025-26 season, according to people with knowledge of the situation. Toronto Raptors forward Brandon Ingram and Detroit Pistons guard Ausar Thompson received similar diagnoses in recent years, and both returned to the court after making full recoveries.

Wembanyama, the reigning NBA rookie of the year, averaged 24.3 points, 11 rebounds and 3.8 blocks in 46 games this season, becoming the first player with those numbers since Hakeem Olajuwon in 1992-93. The 7-foot-3 Frenchman will not be eligible for end-of-season awards, such as defensive player of the year and the all-NBA and all-defensive teams, unless he plays in 65 games.

Since he arrived in San Antonio as the most hyped teenage prospect since LeBron James, the No. 1 pick in the 2023 draft led France to a silver medal at the Paris

SEE WEMBANYAMA ON D4

A triumph for hockey



Barry Svrluga

BOSTON — In the end, after more than a week of hockey that redefined how a professional league can stage an all-star competition, there was Connor McDavid, alone in front of the American net. Related: Connor McDavid cannot be left alone in front of any net, anywhere, at any time.

This was nearing the midway point of the first overtime period of the championship game of something called the 4 Nations Face-Off — a competition most Americans probably didn't know existed two weeks ago, one that enthralled millions in its first iteration. McDavid is a three-time Hart Trophy

The thrill of playing for country turned 4 Nations Face-Off final into something unforgettable

winner as the NHL's MVP with the Edmonton Oilers. Was this puck he fired past American goalie Connor Hellebuyck for a 3-2 victory that gave Team Canada the championship bigger than any of the 357 he had scored in his regular ol' career? The gloves flung to the rafters at TD Garden, the hugs in the corner, might indicate it was up there.

What a game. What a tournament. What a concept.

Long before the puck dropped, as groups of fans wearing maple leaf and red, white and blue sweaters moved boisterously through this city, one element of the entire affair was obvious: The NHL got this right. When the 4 Nations Face-Off was announced during the NHL's all-star break a year ago — at the same time the league outlined plans to put its players back in the Winter Olympics, beginning next year — it seemed contrived.

Four nations? Without Russia, still banned by the International Ice Hockey Federation because of the ongoing war in Ukraine, could this even count as a "best-on-best" competition? Probably not, right? Someone find Alex Ovechkin on a beach and ask him.

SEE SVRLUGA ON D2

Terps continue to feel more at home on road

MARYLAND 85, NORTHWESTERN 79

Women hold on to win another away game

BY KAREEM COPELAND

One of the things Maryland Coach Brenda Frese preaches is the importance of Big Ten road victories. In a conference with three teams ranked in the top 10 and six in the top 25, trips away from College Park can be perilous.

The No. 21 Terrapins, in a season with a few disappointing home defeats, are one of just three Big Ten teams with only one road loss after they knocked off Northwestern, 85-79, at Welsh-Ryan Arena in Evanston, Illinois. Those other two teams: No. 3 UCLA and No. 4 Southern California.

Frese seemed at a loss to explain her team's road success and home struggles. "I think there's less distractions for our girls. They seem to have a different level of focus. ... It's kind of perplexing," the coach said.

The Terps (21-6, 11-5 Big Ten) have won two in a row with two regular season games remaining — at Indiana on Feb. 27 and the home finale against No. 8 Ohio State on March 2.

"On the road, we know that we have to play more together and

come out and [punch first]," said junior guard Kaylene Smikle, who had a game-high 23 points to go with six assists and three rebounds. "Every time we're away, we always buy into that."

There was good injury news for Maryland with Shyanne Sellers back in the starting lineup after she reinjured her right knee late in the win over Michigan on Monday. She had been dealing with a sprain before she crashed on that kneecap. Medical staff immediately took Sellers to the locker room with a towel over her head. After Thursday's shoot-around, it was determined she was good to go, and she finished with 12 points and seven rebounds.

Sellers's presence helped soften the loss of another starter Thursday when Saylor Poffenbarger exited in the third quarter in the midst of one of her best all-around games of the season. The versatile 6-foot-2 forward rolled her left ankle on the defensive end and had to be carried off the court. She had 16 points in 24 minutes and added six rebounds and four assists before being ruled out.

Sarah Te-Biasu finished with 15 points for Maryland, and Melannie Daley led Northwestern with 22 points.

Maryland took command of the game in the second quarter,

SEE MARYLAND WOMEN ON D4

Maryland at Indiana Thursday, 7 p.m., Peacock



LUKE JOHNSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

"They do have a lot of confidence," Coach Kevin Willard said of the Terps, who have won eight of nine.

Terrapins are the hosts with the most

BY GENE WANG

The comforts of home continued to boost the fortunes of the surging Maryland men's basketball team, which overwhelmed Southern California early in the second half on the way to an 88-71 victory Thursday night amid a charged atmosphere at Xfinity Center.

The No. 20 Terrapins (21-6, 11-5 Big Ten) collected their 13th straight win at home, fourth in a row overall thanks in part to

MARYLAND 88, USC 71

20th-ranked men are 16-1 in College Park

every starter scoring in double figures. Rodney Rice had a game-high 22 points as the Terrapins improved to 16-1 in College Park.

"I just like the way they're

playing," Maryland Coach Kevin Willard said. "They do have a lot of confidence. I like our defensive intensity. More than anything I like that we can throw the ball inside on a consistent basis."

The victory, the Terps' eighth in nine games, kept them firmly in the mix for a double bye in the Big Ten tournament. Maryland is tied with Purdue for fourth place

SEE MARYLAND MEN ON D4

Michigan State at Maryland Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., BTN

Negotiations to reunite pro golf getting closer after Oval Office meeting

BY RICK MAESE

The PGA Tour's much-anticipated and scrutinized deal with Saudi investors could be getting closer to the finish line, with the two parties engaging in protracted negotiations Thursday in an Oval Office meeting alongside President Donald Trump.

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan and Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the governor of the Saudi Public Investment Fund, were both at the meeting with the president, talking through negotiations that lasted more than three hours and could reunite the fractured golf world, according to two of the people familiar with the schedule. Golfers Tiger Woods and Adam Scott also attended.

"Thanks to the leadership of President Trump, we have initiated a discussion about the reunification of golf," the tour said in a statement Thursday evening, signed by Monahan, Woods and Scott. "We are committed to moving as quickly as possible and will share additional details as appropriate."

Entering Thursday's meeting, the sides still had plenty to work out, but Trump is eager for them to agree to terms and close the gap that has imperiled professional golf, according to two people familiar with the meeting, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the details publicly.

SEE PGA TOUR ON D4

THE DAY IN SPORTS

PRO BASKETBALL

Bucks' Portis banned 25 games for painkiller

The NBA suspended Milwaukee Bucks forward **Bobby Portis Jr.** for 25 games without pay Thursday because he tested positive for the painkiller Tramadol, a violation of the league's antidrug program.

Portis cannot play again until April 8 — the 79th game of Milwaukee's 82-game regular season schedule — at the earliest. His suspension began with the Bucks' game Thursday against the Los Angeles Clippers. ...

Anthony Davis will be sidelined at least two more weeks with the groin injury suffered in his Dallas debut, while the Mavericks said Thursday their star forward is making good progress in his recovery. ...

Katie Lou Samuelson is headed back to the Seattle Storm, her agent, **Lindsay Kagawa Colas**, told the Associated Press. Samuelson, who played with the Storm in 2021, agreed to a one-year deal with Seattle. ...

Payton Pritchard made eight three-pointers and scored 28 points, **Jayson Tatum** finished with his fourth career triple-double, and the Boston Celtics beat the host Philadelphia 76ers, 124-104.

PRO FOOTBALL

Cowboys guard Martin retiring after 11 seasons

Zack Martin is retiring after a decorated career that included seven all-pro seasons at right guard with the Dallas Cowboys, two people with knowledge of the decision said.

Martin informed Cowboys owner and general manager **Jerry Jones** of his decision in a meeting, one of the people told the Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because no announcement was planned.

The 34-year-old Martin didn't make it through his 11th and final season with the Cowboys because of an ankle injury that eventually required surgery. ...

Cam Jurgens underwent back surgery this week to address an injury he played through during the Philadelphia Eagles' postseason run, according to people with knowledge of the NFL. ESPN was first to report the news.

The 25-year-old center had the procedure to alleviate nerve pain and is expected to make a full recovery in time for training camp in July.

SOCCER

U.S. handles Colombia in the SheBelieves Cup

Catarina Macario and **Ally Sedor** scored goals, and the United States beat Colombia, 2-0, in the SheBelieves Cup opener for both teams.

The United States extended its unbeaten streak to 21 matches since it lost to Mexico, 2-0, on Feb. 26, 2024. It has outscored its opponents 43-10 in that span with 13 clean sheets after goalkeeper **Jane Campbell** added another in Houston. ...

Mina Tanaka scored a pair of first-half goals and assisted on a second-half goal as Japan opened the SheBelieves Cup with a 4-0 win over Australia.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

La Salle's Dunphy, 76, to retire after season

La Salle's **Fran Dunphy**, who has won more than 600 games and made 17 NCAA tournament appearances in 33 seasons as



ORLANDO RAMIREZ/GETTY IMAGES

Lying in wait

Lanto Griffin of the United States waits to play a shot on the 15th hole in the first round of the Mexico Open in Puerto Vallarta.

SPOTLIGHT: SOCCER

Rubiales is found guilty of sexual assault

BY MATT BONESTEEL
AND BEATRIZ RIOS

Spain's high court on Thursday found Luis Rubiales, the former president of the country's national soccer federation, guilty of sexual assault over his nonconsensual kiss of player Jenni Hermoso after Spain's victory in the 2023 World Cup final in Sydney.

Prosecutors sought a 2½-year prison term for Rubiales, but Judge José Manuel Fernández-Prieto ruled instead that he must pay more than \$11,000 in fines and not contact or come within 200 meters of Hermoso for one year. Rubiales, whom the judge accused of committing a "reprehensible act," may appeal the sentence. The judge acquitted Rubiales and

Ex-Spanish soccer president fined more than \$11,000 for kissing Hermoso

three others — Jorge Vilda, Spain's former women's soccer coach; Albert Luque, Spain's former director of men's soccer; and Rubén Rivera, the federation's former head of marketing — of coercion. The judge ruled that the coercion charge was not proved during the trial.

Prosecutors alleged that the four officials pressured Hermoso to say the kiss was consensual, which Rubiales testified

in court last week while admitting that the kiss was a "mistake."

"I asked her if I could give her a little kiss, and she said, 'Okay,'" Rubiales said (via the Associated Press). "I'm totally sure [she consented]."

But Hermoso told the court this month that she had not consented and that the kiss "stained what was one of the happiest days of my life."

"I felt it was totally out of place, and I then realized my boss was kissing me, and this shouldn't happen in any social or workplace setting," she testified. "I felt disrespected."

Hermoso said she has not been able to enjoy her team's World Cup win because of the incident and that she hasn't been able "to live freely."

TELEVISION AND RADIO

NBA	
7 p.m.	Milwaukee at Washington » Monumental Sports Network, WTEM (980 AM)
7 p.m.	New York at Cleveland » ESPN
9:30 p.m.	Minnesota at Houston » ESPN
MLB SPRING TRAINING	
1 p.m.	Tampa Bay vs. New York Yankees » MLB Network
MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL	
6 p.m.	Bowling Green at Toledo » CBS Sports Network
7 p.m.	Dayton at Loyola Chicago » ESPN2
7 p.m.	Manhattan at Iona » ESPN
7 p.m.	Marquette at Villanova » Fox Sports 1
8 p.m.	Michigan State at Michigan » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)
8 p.m.	Kent State at Miami (Ohio) » CBS Sports Network
9 p.m.	Milwaukee at Youngstown State » ESPN
WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL — UNRIVALED	
7:15 p.m.	Lunar Owls vs. Rose » TNT
8:30 p.m.	Mist vs. Vinyl » TNT
AUTO RACING	
3 p.m.	NASCAR Truck Series: Fr8 208 qualifying » Fox Sports 1
GOLF	
5 a.m.	DP World Tour: Kenya Open, second round » Golf Channel
4 p.m.	PGA Tour: Mexico Open, second round » Golf Channel
10:30 p.m.	LPGA Tour: LPGA Thailand, third round » Golf Channel
4:30 a.m.	DP World Tour: Kenya Open, third round » Golf Channel (Saturday)

SOCCER	
9 a.m.	Saudi Arabian Pro League: Al-Ahli vs. Damac » Fox Sports 2
11:45 a.m.	Saudi Arabian Pro League: Al Nassr vs. Al Ittifaq » Fox Sports 2
2:30 p.m.	French Ligue 1: Reims at Rennes » BeIN Sports
3 p.m.	English Premier League: Brentford at Leicester City » USA Network
5:45 p.m.	Concacaf Women's U-20 qualifiers: Trinidad and Tobago vs. Bermuda » Fox Sports 2
TENNIS	
8 a.m.	ATP: Rio Open, quarterfinals and Qatar Open, semifinals; WTA: Dubai Tennis Championships, semifinals » Tennis Channel
COLLEGE BASEBALL	
4 p.m.	Andre Dawson Classic: Alabama State vs. Grambling » MLB Network
8 p.m.	Andre Dawson Classic: Missouri vs. Florida A&M » MLB Network
WOMEN'S COLLEGE GYMNASTICS	
7 p.m.	LSU at Kentucky » SEC Network
8:30 p.m.	Auburn at Alabama » SEC Network
9 p.m.	Florida at Oklahoma » ESPN2
MEN'S COLLEGE HOCKEY	
6 p.m.	Penn State at Michigan State » Big Ten Network
8:30 p.m.	Notre Dame at Wisconsin » Big Ten Network
COLLEGE WRESTLING	
7 p.m.	North Carolina State at Virginia Tech » ACC Network

BARRY SVRLUGA

First 4 Nations Face-Off was unmitigated triumph

SVRLUGA FROM D1

Turns out it didn't matter. What mattered was that when Canada and USA — and Finland (technically "Suomi"), and Sweden (technically the Tre Kronor logo) — were stitched onto the fronts of the sweaters, the format and the stakes became secondary to the pure competition. Imagine that: Elite players who make millions of dollars to perform professionally were reduced to pond-hockey scrappers just because someone told them it was for their country. Injured and sick players didn't want to bow out. They clawed to get back.

There was, too, a political overtone to it all — unfortunately. No, Team USA's Matthew Tkachuk didn't fight Canada's Brandon Hagel to open the first matchup between the teams Saturday in Montreal because he was defending President Donald Trump's proposed tariffs on Canada. Nor did Tkachuk's brother Brady take on Sam Bennett on the next faceoff because he believed in Trump's digs at Canada as, potentially, America's "51st state."

Trump took time away from trying to solve the problems in the world of professional golf Thursday to place a call to Team

USA General Manager Bill Guerin and Coach Mike Sullivan, who then put the president on speakerphone in the U.S. locker room after the morning skate. The message was positive, of the make-us-proud variety.

But the tenor and antics around the competition wasn't completely pure. The booing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in Montreal was real, as was the jawing between the two fan bases here as they made their way into the Garden for the championship. Thankfully, the exchange of anthems went off mostly without a hitch — "O! Canada" was met with a murmur of jeers early on, but by the end, the Canadian fans in attendance sang it full-throated uninhibited. The Americans in attendance — and they were the clear majority — followed by all but drowning out Isabel Leonard and the Boston Pops Orchestra, as high a rate of participation as you'll see at a stateside sporting event. That

alone might have been worth the \$1,200 or so even the worst seats were going for on the secondary market.

So it made sense that, after a first period completely devoid of fisticuffs, nothing was decided. If the Americans had a significant advantage — other than the backing of the home crowd — it was in net. Hellebuyck plays professionally in Winnipeg, but he is a Michigander by birth and rearing. He is also the best goaltender in the world, decidedly steadier than his counterpart, Canada's Jordan Binnington.

But not five minutes into the game, Nathan MacKinnon — one of so many Canadian skaters who make the jaw drop — glided between the circles and launched a blast through traffic at Hellebuyck. Who knows what can happen? It sneaked in, and the Canadians in the crowd — outnumbered but not out-enthused — rejoiced at first

blood.

This tournament, though, didn't seize the hockey world — and draw in new viewers — to be some sort of blowout. Brady Tkachuk equalized things with three minutes left in the first. Jake Sanderson gave the Americans their first lead 7½ minutes into the second — a goal that was followed not just by the typical "USA! USA!" chants but by the singsong, mocking "Jor-dan! Jor-dan!" directed at Binnington.

Still, Bennett drew the Canadians back to 2-2 by converting a pass from Mitch Marner. Why create all this buzz, all this jingoism and not have it come down to the final 20 minutes? That it did.

And why figure anything other than overtime? A tense third concluded with one final rush by Canada's Cole Makar, who ripped off a wrister charging up the middle that Hellebuyck gloved with — gulp — 5.6 seconds

coach at three of Philadelphia's Big Five schools, said he would retire at the end of the season.

The 76-year-old Dunphy will become special assistant to the president at La Salle. ...

In local men's action, James Madison defeated Georgia State, 83-63, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. ...

On the women's side, Virginia lost to California, 76-70, in Charlottesville; Virginia Tech lost to Stanford, 75-74, in overtime in Blacksburg; and George Mason had its 11-game winning streak snapped at Davidson, 66-50, in North Carolina.

TENNIS

Alcaraz's loss in Qatar just second of season

Top-seeded **Carlos Alcaraz** lost for just the second time this year when 25th-ranked **Jiri Lehecka** beat him, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, in the quarterfinals of the Qatar Open in Doha.

The 23-year-old Lehecka will next play eighth-seeded **Jack Draper**, who knocked out **Matteo Berrettini**, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Earlier, fifth-seeded **Andrey Rublev** saved one match point and needed eight of his own to subdue second-seeded **Alex de Minaur**, 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (10-8). Rublev reached his fourth semifinals in Doha.

He next will face Canada's **Félix Auger-Aliassime**, who beat **Daniil Medvedev** when the Russian retired after losing the first set 6-3. ...

Second-ranked **Iga Swiatek** lost to a player younger than 18 for the first time on tour when she was stunned by **Mirra Andreeva** in the Dubai Tennis Championships quarterfinals.

The 17-year-old Andreeva won, 6-3, 6-3, to become the youngest semifinalist in Dubai's 24-year history.

The Russian teenager will next face sixth-seeded **Elena Rybakina**, who beat **Sofia Kenin**, 6-2, 7-6 (7-2).

Clara Tauson, the Dane who beat **Aryna Sabalenka** on Wednesday, defeated **Linda Noskova** of the Czech Republic, 7-6 (7-4), 6-4, to reach her third semifinal of the year. She will play **Karolina Muchova**, who topped **Sorana Cirstea**, 6-2, 7-5.

MISC.

Texas's Sarkisian gets extension and raise

The University of Texas System Board of Regents approved a raise and contract extension for football coach **Steve Sarkisian** after the Longhorns advanced to the College Football Playoff semifinals for the second consecutive season.

The new deal extends Sarkisian's contract by one year through the 2031 season. It raises his salary this year from \$10.4 million to \$10.8 million. Annual raises will push his salary to \$12.3 million by the final year. ...

Aaron Boone and the New York Yankees agreed to a two-year contract extension through the 2027 season. ...

Six of the seven PGA Tour events this year had international winners, and the Mexico Open kept up with trend when **Jeremy Paul** of Germany, **Kris Ventura** of Norway and **Harry Hall** of England shared the lead at 7-under-par 64 after one round in Puerto Vallarta. ...

Akie Iwai made the best of a sponsor's invite to shoot a 10-under 62 and lead by three strokes after the first round of the LPGA's Thailand tournament at Siam Country Club's Pattaya Old Course in Chonburi.

— From news services

Trump looks to close deal for the reunification of golf

PGA TOUR FROM D1

Spokespeople for the Saudi PIF and the White House either declined to comment or didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Woods, Scott and Monahan all appeared with Trump at an event in the White House honoring Black History Month late Thursday afternoon, though no one addressed the day's negotiations. Woods wore the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which Trump bestowed on him in 2019, as attendees in the East Room chanted, "Tiger! Tiger!"

"We share a passion for the game and the importance of reunification," the tour's statement read. "Most importantly, we all want the best players in the world playing together more often and are committed to doing all we can to deliver that outcome for our fans."

The Saudis have been negotiating an investment in the PGA Tour of at least \$1 billion. The Saudi-backed LIV Golf circuit, whose existence split the professional golf world in two, is likely to continue operating independently, but the two sides could work more cooperatively, with golfers eventually allowed to compete in both. Exact details have yet to be worked out on whether LIV golfers hoping to compete on the PGA Tour would face any financial penalties for absconding from the tour, according to one person familiar with the talks.

Any agreement would still be subject to approval from the PGA Tour's policy board and would have to be vetted by the Justice Department, which raised red flags over antitrust concerns starting in 2023 when the two sides struck an initial agreement to partner. People familiar with the talks said they were hopeful that Trump's involvement would ease any regulatory hurdles.

The PIF launched LIV Golf in 2022 and has poured billions into competing with the PGA Tour. The dueling organizations have battled feverishly over players, fans and sponsors, resulting in escalating costs and lucrative salaries that were widely seen as unsustainable.

Despite its massive player contracts, LIV Golf, which features a team competition and stages its events around the world, has received mixed reviews, struggling to gain traction with a U.S. audience. It launched to serious headwinds, with attention largely focused on its Saudi ties, the 9/11 families protesting early events and the threat it posed to the PGA Tour.

The tour, meanwhile, was a diminished product after it lost some of its top players, including Jon Rahm and Bryson DeChambeau, and officials were forced to increase compensation offerings to retain its players and maintain its standing as the world's leading golf circuit.

Golf officials long felt a Trump presidency could help bring the two sides together to complete a deal. The tour and the Saudi wealth fund agreed to the initial framework of a proposed partnership in June 2023 and hoped to reach final terms by the end of that year. The two organizations dropped their lawsuits against each other that July, but the final deal has taken longer than anyone expected and faced complications at every turn, including scrutiny from the DOJ, a congressional investigation and initial backlash from PGA Tour members.

"When you're trying to solve for what we're trying to solve for, it's massively complex," Monahan said last week. "So I never underestimated that part of it. ... What's important as it relates to time is getting things right. Something could have happened earlier, but it might not have been right. I feel



Donald Trump and Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the governor of the Public Investment Fund, chatted during a LIV Golf event in May 2023.

a lot stronger and a lot more confident that ultimately we're getting this right."

Less than two weeks after Trump won reelection, he played a round of golf with Monahan. The next night, he sat between Elon Musk and Al-Rumayyan at a UFC event in New York.

On Feb. 4, Monahan met with Trump at the White House, and tour officials formally asked him to aid in the negotiations. At one point, Al-Rumayyan also joined the group via phone, according to one person familiar with that meeting. Thursday's meeting came the day after Trump spoke at an investment summit in Miami staged by the Saudi PIF.

"He has a very clear picture of what should happen, and he wants to help," Monahan told reporters last week. "The game means that much to him. And he's the ultimate dealmaker, so having him in the mix is a great thing for the game."

While many across the industry initially felt a tour alliance with the Saudi PIF would amount to a merger and LIV Golf's days might be numbered, LIV officials have only ramped up their ambitions, overhauling the leadership team, inking a television contract with Fox Sports and entering into other long-term contracts. Last week, the outfit extended its deal in Australia ensuring that its

most popular tour stop in Adelaide will continue through 2031.

Scott O'Neil, who recently replaced Greg Norman as LIV's chief executive, said this month a deal with the PGA Tour would only benefit the LIV brand.

"We are hoping that that unlocks opportunity," O'Neil said. "That may unlock opportunity with markets, with courses, with marketing partners, with television networks, with growing the game, with competition opportunities, with new formats."

Trump could stand to benefit, too. His golf portfolio includes several courses that he feels are worthy of hosting top-tier events. His properties have already hosted five LIV Golf events, with a sixth scheduled for April at Trump National Doral in Miami.

A Saudi investment could mark the second significant infusion of cash the tour has seen in the past year. A group of sports owners called Strategic Sports Group, which includes Red Sox owners John Henry and Tom Werner, the New York Mets' Steve Cohen and the Atlanta Falcons' Arthur Blank, among others, invested \$1.5 billion in the tour in January 2024, with the option of eventually doubling that figure. Monahan said last week the tour had yet to tap into the SSG money.

Matt Viser contributed to this report.

Blood clot to end season for Spurs' Wembanyama

WEMBANYAMA FROM D1

Olympics and has blossomed into one of the NBA's best players, ranking seventh in player efficiency rating and value over replacement player entering Thursday.

Wembanyama's diagnosis comes shortly after he was one of the biggest draws during NBA All-Star Weekend. Large crowds of reporters followed his every move, and Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards said Wembanyama was on track to become the face of the NBA.

"Basketball is what we do, not who we are. Life is so much more important," Spurs guard Chris Paul said Thursday.

"You can't replace Vic. I can't stand on a guy's shoulders and block every shot that comes to the rim. Aside from his basketball ability, his charisma and what he brings to the locker room is what we'll miss most."

The abrupt end to Wembanyama's season further complicates a Spurs campaign that has been both challenging and promising.

Spurs Coach Gregg Popovich has not coached since he suffered a mild stroke in November. With interim coach Mitch Johnson at the helm, San Antonio entered the all-star break with more wins this season than it managed in last year's 22-60 campaign.

Wembanyama, who is leading the league in blocks and was the midseason favorite to win defensive player of the year, served as the headliner for two games between the Spurs and Indiana Pacers held in Paris last month.

Before the Feb. 6 trade deadline, San Antonio acquired star guard De'Aaron Fox from the Sacramento Kings in a move aimed at improving Wembanyama's supporting cast. The Spurs entered Thursday in 12th place in the Western Conference with a 23-29 record and with an outside chance of reaching the play-in tournament.

Without Wembanyama, its leading scorer and defensive anchor, San Antonio is probably headed for its sixth straight appearance in the draft lottery.



Victor Wembanyama, the reigning rookie of the year, averaged 24.3 points, 11 rebounds and 3.8 blocks in 46 games this season.



Julian Reese finished with 19 points for Maryland, which had all five starters score in double figures Thursday night. The Terps won their 13th straight game in College Park.

Terps take care of business at home and cruise past the Trojans

MARYLAND MEN FROM D1

but lost the head-to-head tiebreaker. The top four teams in the regular season are awarded berths to the quarterfinals in the conference tournament in Indianapolis.

Point guard Ja'Kobi Gillespie added 20 points, making 5 of 8 from behind the arc, and forward Julian Reese chipped in 19 points, 10 rebounds and two assists.

The Terps, who also got 13 points and a game-high 17 rebounds from freshman center Derik Queen, shot 60 percent in the second half and committed just nine turnovers, marking the first time in five games they have been in the single digits. Maryland outrebounded the Trojans 41-26 and shot 18 for 21 (86 percent) at the free throw line.

"I feel like we're doing a good

job sharing the ball, getting everybody involved," said Queen, a projected first-round pick in the NBA draft. "I feel like the first five is going good, and the second five is going, too, bringing energy and playing defense and helping us out. We had 14 assists tonight. We just need to share the ball a little more."

Maryland's defense also stepped up, allowing the Trojans (14-12, 6-9) just two field goals over the final 6:30.

"There wasn't a whole lot of panic," Willard said of his team's defense down the stretch. "It was more about just getting back to what we were doing defensively. I thought they did a good job responding."

Wesley Yates III led USC with 21 points on 9-for-17 shooting, and Kevin Patton Jr. scored 11 in the Trojans' fourth loss in five games. USC shot 46 percent but

only 12 for 31 (38.7 percent) in the first half when it also was 2 of 10 on three-pointers.

After allowing a 20-point cushion to shrink to six midway through the second half, the Terps separated for good courtesy of a 12-3 burst for an 82-66 lead with 3:06 to play. It began with Gillespie's turnaround jumper and ended on Reese's second-chance dunk made possible by Queen's offensive rebound.

Maryland used a 22-5 run bridging the halves to open a 53-32 lead with 16:32 left in regulation. Reese punctuated the uprising, which included a three-pointer from Rice and Queen's contested jumper in the lane, when he dribbled between defenders to get to the rim.

The comfortable margin didn't last. USC punched back to trim the deficit to 58-51 with 11:44 to play on Clark Slajchert's

three-pointer. The Terps managed to increase the lead to double digits again at 69-59 after Queen dunked with two hands while shedding multiple defenders and guard Selton Miguel made a difficult turnaround jumper in the paint.

A 7-0 run over the final 1:59 of the first half gave Maryland a 37-27 lead at halftime. USC had trimmed the margin to as close 30-27 with 2:28 to play before the Terps began getting into the lane and drawing fouls. They made 5 of 6 at the free throw line in the closing minutes and added Queen's two-handed dunk off Rice's pass in transition.

Rice made the final two free throws of the half while drawing a third personal foul on Chibuzo Agbo, the Trojans' leader in three-point shooting, with 1.9 seconds to play. The graduate guard entered USC's cross-coun-

try trip averaging 2.2 made three-pointers per game, ranking eighth in the Big Ten.

An offensive wave has sparked Maryland recently, most notably during a 101-75 victory over visiting Iowa on Sunday. The lopsided result featured a program record for points in a Big Ten game. They also averaged 91.3 points over their previous three games.

Maryland extended the scoring momentum in the opening minutes against the Trojans, storming to an 11-0 lead that included three-pointers from Gillespie, Miguel and Rice. The early scoring binge compelled USC Coach Eric Musselman to call a timeout 90 seconds into the first half.

The lead swelled to 13 with 14:04 to play, but Maryland was unable to pull away after cooling off from the field.

Terrapins get another critical road win

MARYLAND WOMEN FROM D1

using a 15-4 stretch to take a 37-22 lead. The Terps closed the quarter on a 7-2 run that sent them into halftime up 48-30.

Northwestern (9-16, 2-12) had its only lead of the game at 2-0. A sloppy second quarter left the Wildcats with 16 turnovers at the break that the Terps turned into 22 points. Those turnovers were cleaned up in the second half, and Northwestern made a furious fourth-quarter run by forcing turnovers with a full-court press and getting to the free throw line, but the Wildcats couldn't complete the comeback.

"Disappointed in our second half," Frese said. "We knew they were going to come out and zone [and press] and make some adjustments, and it looked like we were surprised. We need our guard play to be able to start learning from these mistakes. Shy's a senior; you can't have seven turnovers. ... It's good that it's a bye week for us."

Sellers stressed the importance of the team maintaining its composure when leading.

"Settle down and go back to what was working," Sellers said. "Staying composed. Turnovers and [getting sped up]. Just kind of being more poised at the end of the game."

"It's an easy fix because if we finish like this we're going home."



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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARINGS March 4, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. Decline to sign up to speak is March 2 at 2:00 p.m.

840 Trustees Sale - DC

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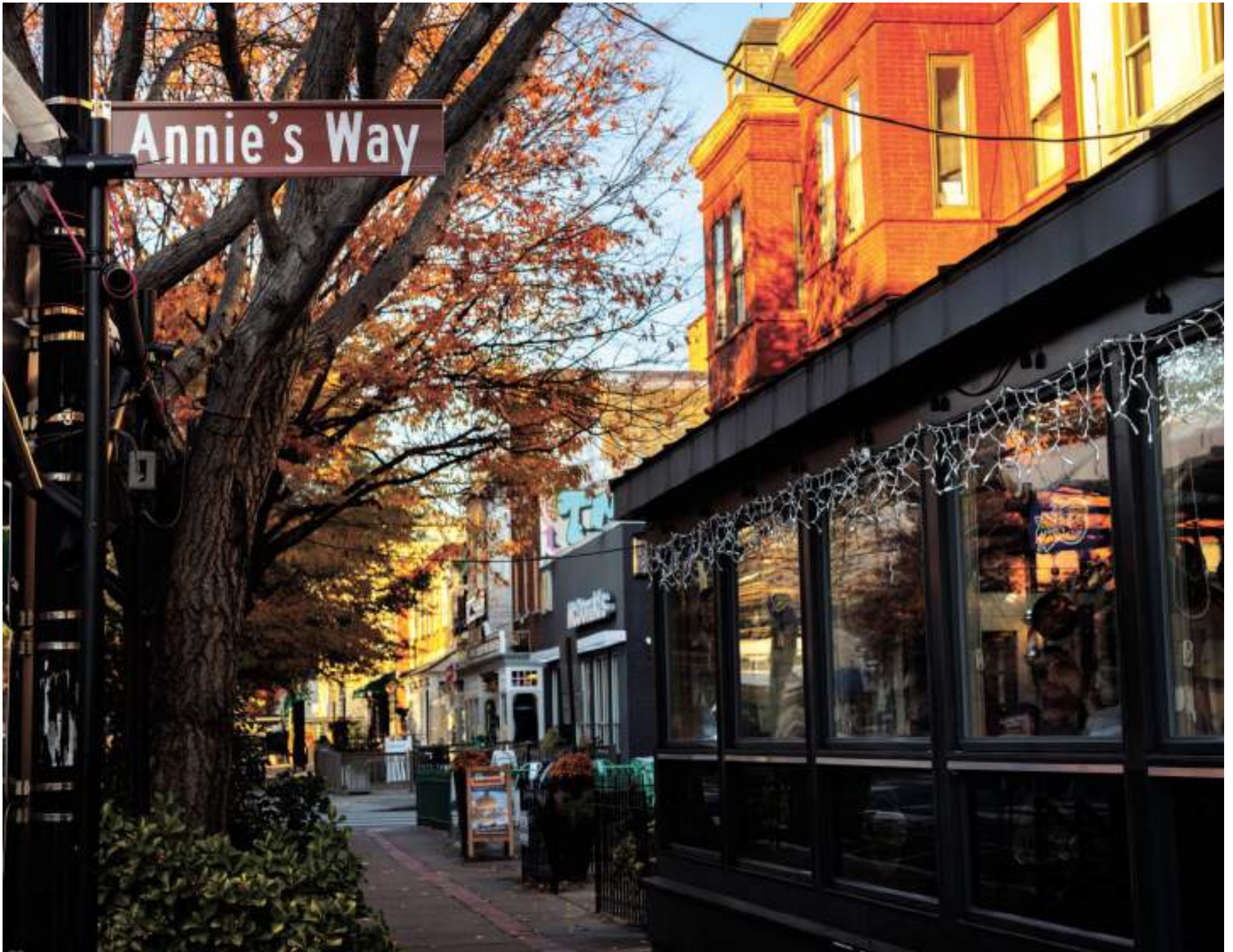
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WEEKEND



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Local artists' grand works feel cramped in outdoor garden. **8**

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SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

Cyclists prepare for the "Anything Goes" race at the 2023 Garage Racing National Championships.

Garage Racing National Championships

Between delivery drivers parked in the bike line and cars blowing through stop signs, cycling in the District can be challenging enough. Now picture yourself racing down the ramps of a closed parking garage at breakneck speed, negotiating tight turns and avoiding concrete pillars in the middle of a pack. Does that sound scary? Exhilarating? A bit of both? After a break in 2024, the Garage Racing National Championships return to an underground parking structure in National Landing, with a lively afternoon of competitions for novices, pros and kids ages 10 to 14, as well as a category for hardcore fixed-gear cyclists. The day is capped with the "Anything Goes" race, which brings a creative field dressed in wacky costumes riding anything from penny farthings to festively decorated unicycles. Spectators can try bike-themed activities and purchase food and drinks from pop-up vendors. And if you'd like to hop on your bike, registration is open through 5 p.m. Friday.

When: Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Spectators can enter at 10:30 a.m.
Where: 201 12th St. South, Arlington. nationallanding.org/racing.
Tickets: Free for spectators; \$12-\$25 for cyclists.

Savor Bethesda

It's Bethesda's turn in the parade of local restaurant weeks — this one actually stretches for 11 days — with more than 40 businesses offering lunch specials for \$10 or \$20 and dinners for \$10, \$20 or \$35. Highlights include multicourse meals at Ukrainian standout Ruta, three-course set menus at seafood destination the Salt Line and elevated vegetarian fare at Planta.

When: Through March 2.
Where: See bethesda.org for a list of participants and sample menus.

Prices: \$10-\$35.

'We Gather at the Edge: Contemporary Quilts by Black Women Artists'

See a selection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's newest acquisitions when the Renwick Gallery launches "We Gather at the Edge: Contemporary Quilts by Black Women Artists," an exhibit featuring quilts from the collection of Carolyn Mazloomi. This artist began her career as an aerospace engineer before becoming a force in the quilting world, founding the Women of Color Quilters Network in 1985. The exhibit pays tribute to her efforts and depicts the evolution of Black textile traditions, using works acquired by the Smithsonian in 2023.

When: Through June 22.

Where: Renwick Gallery, Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street NW. americanart.si.edu.

Admission: Free.

Winter Cask Classic

Cask-conditioned ales — the style of flavorful, naturally carbonated beer served in traditional British pubs — can be difficult to find on this side of the pond. The sixth Winter Cask Classic, hosted by Denizens Brewing, brings cask beers from 13 local breweries and meaderies to the Riverdale Park taproom. Tickets include unlimited samples of rare offerings from the Brewer's Art, Port City, Right Proper and Franklin's, as well as a quintet from Denizens. For hockey fans, there's a "friendly" shootout competition in the brewhouse.

When: Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m.

Where: Denizens Brewing, 4550 Van Buren St., Riverdale Park. denizensbrewingco.com.

Tickets: \$40. Free admission for designated drivers and those under 21.

Flurry Fest

The groundhog predicted six more weeks of winter, but regardless of this weekend's forecast, the Yards is planning a family-friendly party dedicated to frosty temperatures. Flurry Fest celebrates the season's ice and snow by creating a winter wonderland featuring activities for all ages, like bubble hockey and a "snow throw" game. Kids can accessorize with glittery temporary tattoos, snag a hot cocoa, and check out various craft stations and photo ops. You can also cheer on brave Polar Plungers at Yards Park, who will be jumping in a pool of ice-cold water to benefit D.C.'s chapter of the Special Olympics.

When: Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m.

Where: The Sundeck at the Yards, 305 Water St. SE. theyardsdc.com.

Admission: Free.



EATON WORKSHOP

Music lovers dig through the crates at the DC Record Fair.

DC Record Fair

After almost a year off, D.C.'s biggest record fair returns with more than 30 vinyl dealers from across the East Coast and a brand-new location: the iconic 9:30 Club. Browse thousands of records, from rare collectors' items to \$1 cutout bins, while listening to DJs, including Brendan Canty of Fugazi and the Messthetics and party-rocker Stereofaith, and sipping discounted mimosas. (Think of it as brunch for the musically inclined.)

When: Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: 9:30 Club, 815 V St. NW. 930.com.

Tickets: \$5 before noon, \$2 after.

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Plan Ahead

Noteworthy events over the next few weeks

March 2 Cheesetique Raclette Fest's Après-Ski Party

Del Ray cheese shop and restaurant Cheesetique is hosting its annual Raclette Fest, a gooey ode to the Swiss Alps that finds the eatery scraping melted cheese onto pork sausage, potatoes, pretzel bites — basically anything on the menu. Raclette Fest ends with an Après-Ski Party on March 2, where tickets cover an unlimited raclette feast set to a playlist by DJ Farrah Flosscett. Show up looking like you're fresh off a chairlift and you could win the "best dressed" ski-chic contest. Besides gorging on cheese, you can play ski lodge games and warm up with Alpine drinks (not included in the ticket price). 4 to 7 p.m. Cheesetique, 2411 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. cheesetique.com. \$45.

March 5 Akua Allrich

Washington Performing Arts' community engagement project Mars Arts D.C. is behind a series of free monthly concerts at Union Market district's indie music venue Songbyrd Music House, kicking off with a performance by singer Akua Allrich. This D.C. native is a prominent figure in the city's jazz scene, and at Songbyrd, she'll be accompanied by a live band as she pays tributes to musical legends like Nina Simone and Miriam Makeba. 8 p.m. Songbyrd Music House, 540 Penn St. NE. washingtonperformingarts.org. Free; online registration encouraged.

March 12 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The author of award-winning literary fiction like "Americanah" and "Half of a Yellow Sun," Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie became a cultural touchstone for her Tedx Talk-turned-essay "We Should All Be Feminists," which made its way into a Beyoncé song and onto pricey Dior T-shirts. Her newest book, "Dream Count," is a decade in the making. Fans can learn more when Adichie discusses this novel about mothers and daughters during a conversation at Sixth & I with Glory Edim, podcaster and founder of a literary community called Well-Read Black Girl. 7 p.m. Sixth & I, 600 I St. NW. sixthandi.org. \$40 for an in-person ticket and a signed book with bookplate purchased in advance; \$45 for day-of sales of an in-person ticket and a signed book with bookplate. \$12 for a virtual ticket, or \$40 for a virtual ticket and book with signed bookplate.

March 14-29 'Poppea'

Theater company IN Series concludes its Monteverdi trilogy with an innovative production of the composer's final opera,



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Chokha's "Rawat Gokul Das of Devgarh and Tilkayat Dauji II Worship Shri Nathji" (1823, opaque watercolor, tin and gold on paper) is part of "Delighting Krishna: Paintings of the Child-God."

incorporating the South Indian tradition of Bharatanatyam dance. Choreographer Hari Krishnan is collaborating with IN Series for "Poppea," which also features new dance music by sitar player Amrita Kaur Dang and mridangam percussionist Rajna Swaminathan to infuse Monteverdi's score with the music of South India. Opening night coincides with the Indian festival of Holi, and patrons are encouraged to wear white to this show in order to be bathed in colorful lights. "Poppea" begins its run at the Dupont Underground, then decamps to neighboring Baltimore for three nights at the Baltimore Theatre Project before returning to D.C.'s St. Mark's church on Capitol Hill. March 14 and 15 at 7:30 p.m. and March 16 at 2:30 p.m. at Dupont Underground, 19 Dupont Circle NW. March 28 at 7:30 p.m. and March 29 at 2:30 p.m. at St. Mark's Capitol Hill, 301 A St. SE. inseries.org. \$35-\$72.

March 15 'Delighting Krishna'

Monumental Indian artworks called pichwais are the focus of a new exhibit headed to the National Museum of Asian Art. The name comes from the Hindi word for "behind," and these vibrant, gilded paintings on cotton cloth are used as backdrops behind three-dimensional displays featuring icons of the child-god Krishna. For the first time in 50 years, visitors can see 14 pichwais from the museum's collection on view together as part of "Delighting Krishna: Paintings of the Child-God." The exhibit also folds in court paintings and mixed-media works that illustrate both the playful personality of Krishna and the artistic and spiritual traditions of the Hindu Pushtimarg community. Through Aug. 24. National Museum of Asian Art, 1050 Independence Ave. SW. asia.si.edu. Free.

— Adele Chapin



Del Ray restaurant Cheestique hosts an annual raclette festival that features the famous melted Alpine cheese poured over sausages, potatoes, pretzel bites, baguettes and anything else on the menu.

CHEESTIQUE

Q: Tom — what's the right etiquette on tipping after bad service in a restaurant? Is it EVER acceptable to tip less than 15 percent, even if the service is horrible?

A: I think cases can be made for tipping less than the traditional norm of 20 percent, but I think they should be accompanied by a chat with a manager about the slips. Otherwise, servers are just going to think you're cheap or unaware. You also don't want to hurt staff who may have been helpful: say, a welcoming host or efficient busser, colleagues who might share in tips that are pooled. Also keep in mind, some problems might be out of a server's control. Making a supervisor aware of a problem — hopefully as issues arise rather than after the fact — is apt to improve the lot for future diners.

Q: Hi, Tom, with the Kennedy Center takeover by Trump, thousands of us are canceling our memberships. Do restaurants nearby realize their customers will not return for the next four years?

A: Thanks to your early submission, I was able to talk to Ris Lacoste, owner of the American bistro **Ris** in the West End. She told me she's concerned. "We do a great preheater business, and any disruption in the flow of community service and theatergoers will affect us," says the veteran Washington chef. "And it seems that might happen with the recent political activity at the KC. We are in the wait-and-see game, as we are with the nearby State Department [and] regional federal workforce. In general, I do hear comments hither and thither that the efforts of the new administration will be good for our business?? As a small-business owner, I can only put my best foot forward at all times to keep business flowing and keep as many people happy as humanly possible. We can only hope."

Q: My wife's birthday is coming up, and she loves a good prime rib. So far, the only place in D.C. that we've been able to find that serves prime rib is the Prime Rib. The food is always good there, but sometimes it's a bit much. Are there any good alternatives in the D.C. metro area for a prime rib dinner?

A: What do you mean by "a bit much"? You don't like servers in black, a sleek dining room and the live music? For something more on the casual side, several Great American Restaurants in Northern Virginia offer prime rib dinners. They include **Jackson's Mighty Fine** in Reston (Friday and Saturday nights) and **Artie's**



REY LOPEZ/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Caviar on coconut sorbet at Rose's Luxury, a whimsical sibling restaurant to Little Pearl that's suitable for a birthday celebration.

in Fairfax (Thursday through Saturday).

Q: Hi, Tom. My wife and I will soon be celebrating a big anniversary and have looked in the Front Royal area for lodging and food. I suggested the Ashby Inn, but my wife was drawn to Berkeley Springs. We have, of course, booked a place at Berkeley Springs. (We've been married a long time. I know the secret to marital success: Always do what the wife wants to do.) Is there a place you recommend in Berkeley Springs? Ashby Inn isn't too far away, but I feel as though the die has been cast and

that we won't be traveling outside Berkeley Springs for the weekend. Thanks!

A: Good call on skipping the once-admired Ashby Inn in Paris, Virginia. I had a promising brunch followed by a dud of a dinner there last year. Very inconsistent. The place in Berkeley Springs, famous for its mineral baths, that gets the most (positive) attention is **Lot 12 Public House**. I have yet to try it out myself, however. The menu is three courses, with multiple choices per course, for \$79.

Q: My daughter is about to turn 29. We love good food and are

looking for a place for a celebratory dinner. We want something nice and memorable and are thinking of Little Pearl. My daughter has been before, so we are hoping for a good alternative. We are open in terms of cuisine; as for price, we want to be around the cost of Little Pearl or less. Many thanks for all your advice over the years.

A: If you want to stay in the family, **Rose's Luxury**, Little Pearl's whimsical sibling, is nearby on the Hill. The five-course spread starts with delicious challah and caraway-honey butter presented as ribbons and can end with a fresh fruit plate reimagined as a rainbow of shaved ice. Fun from soup to nuts, in other words.

Q: I'd love some more restaurant recommendations for the Laurel area, especially ones with vegetarian options. I enjoyed your suggestion of My Kabul. Thank you!

A: Are you familiar with **Amber Spice**? Much as I like the Goan shrimp curry and sizzling lamb kebabs on the list, I'm perfectly content feasting solely on vegetables. Highlights include forest-green spinach kofta, the dusky gold aloo gobi and

shocking red paneer chili — edible art worthy of frames.

Q: Hello, Tom, my girlfriend and I will be going to Wilmington, Lewes and Rehoboth Beach in a few months. She did the hotels search, and I'm doing the food search. Any must-haves? She's vegetarian, while I eat pretty much anything. Thanks in advance!

A: **Drift** in Rehoboth Beach is a must-book for dinner — try to sit in back, where it's not so noisy — and I always make time for lunch at **Matt's Fish Camp** in Lewes.

Q: Hi, Tom, any recommendations for restaurants to celebrate a George Washington University graduation? Looking for vegetarian and gluten-friendly. We've done Rasika and Zaytinya but would like something different. Something a bit more upscale. For a party of six people. **A:** What about the luxe **Imperfecto** in the West End? It's close to the university, and it offers both private and communal dining experiences.

● Tom Sietsema hosts a weekly Q&A on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. at live.washingtonpost.com.

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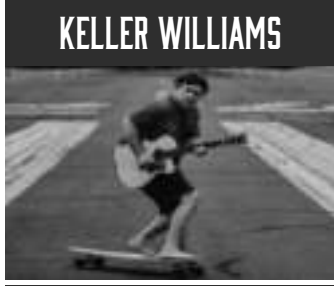
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Heaven Forbid serves cranked-up catharsis



CHRIS SUSPECT

BY CHRIS KELLY

Heaven Forbid is known for its All Hat No Cattle nights for all kinds of country fans.

When Heaven Forbid first put down stakes at the VFW Post 350 — “Hell’s Bottom” to regulars — bandleader Baby Bry Bry assumed the D.C. band would be working on its chops for a “gray-haired ponytail” crowd, proving to an audience of people who didn’t think they liked country music that they actually did. The reality was somewhat different.

“There was this old guy, and he was like, ‘Oh,

another punk band turned country band. I feel like there’s a story about that in the Old Testament somewhere,” Bry Bry recalls. “It’s well-trodden territory.”

Baby Bry Bry and the rest of Heaven Forbid — “Tennessee Dave” Epley, Tommy “The Chillbilly” Sherrod, Xaq “Science Boy” Rothman, “Lazy Adam” Stern and Noah Bein — have spent the past few years learning about the turf and their place in it. The group first got together just before the pandemic, after which its members de-

SEE HEAVEN FORBID ON 7

D.C. quartet iFiasco! floats between jazz and ‘not-jazz’

BY MARK JENKINS

What kind of music does D.C. instrumental quartet iFiasco! play? Guitarist Nelson Dougherty and saxophonist Andrew Frankhouse cordially disagree. The latter chooses the term “not-jazz.”

“What I like about calling it not-jazz is that it’s a way of creating an association with jazz, and some of the ethos of jazz,” explains Frankhouse, “without putting some of those expectations on it.”

“To me, it’s a way of saying, ‘There’s something jazz here, but it’s different.’”

“I always considered us jazz,” Dougherty responds. “He has a conflicting view on what jazz is. He’s like, ‘If this is jazz, then everything is jazz.’”

Sitting in Dougherty’s modest basement office at George Washington University, where the guitarist teaches part time, both musicians agree that there are non-jazz elements in the group’s sound. “In the move from the first two albums to what we’re doing now, I think we’ve fully embraced the rock-and-roll tendencies of the band,” says Frankhouse.

iFiasco! began in 2016, at first as a quintet to play the music of the late drummer-composer Paul Motian. (“Fiasco,” minus the exclamation marks, is the title of a Motian tune.) The group now comprises Frankhouse, Dougherty and drummer Keith Butler Jr., all between the ages of 35 and 40, and 29-year-old bassist Stephen Arnold. Each is a professionally trained musician; Butler and Frankhouse earned master’s degrees.

The quartet began recording in 2019 and released its fourth album, “Remember Your Flowers,” in October. The record has a live-in-the-studio sound. “We intentionally recorded in a bigger space, where we could all be together and everything could be loud,” the saxophonist says.

The group’s albums are made with minimal post-recording alteration, Frankhouse notes. “Everything that we’ve done in the studio we can execute in the live setting, which I think is exciting.”

Exactly where to play live can be tricky. The band’s eclecticism “is awesome from a musical perspective but makes it hard to find avenues and outlets” for the music, the saxophonist says. “It’s too loud for the jazz clubs; it’s too weird for some of the rock clubs.”

Next week, the quartet will perform at Rhizome, a Takoma bungalow where musicians play in the living room, which has no stage. Dougherty calls the

SEE iFIASCO! ON 7

iFIASCO! FROM 6

venue “really the perfect place for us.”

“I almost feel like an obligation to be a little more avant-garde than I would be at other places,” he says. “Which is great. It pushes me to explore that side of me.”

“It’s different from playing at a club, where we’re up here and you’re down there,” Frankhouse adds. “I love Rhizome for that. That we’re all in it together.”

Dougherty, Frankhouse and Arnold all use multiple effects pedals, whose sonic ornamentation the guitarist says has shaped his compositions. “I write toward those things now. Duke Ellington wrote toward Johnny Hodges, because he liked the way his saxophone sounded. I like this particular glitch delay pedal. How can I incorporate it into my song? I’ll make a space for that to happen.”

Frankhouse was initially skeptical of connecting his saxophone to effects devices designed for electric guitars. “It definitely took some convincing on Nelson’s part,” he says. But he’s come to appreciate the possibilities.

“The way that he can play a giant chord and fill the space, I can use a reverb or delay or some kind of pitch manipulation to sort of do the same thing. Create the same kind of clouds of sound.”

Such techniques fuse the indi-



JULIAN ORTIZ

vidual musicians’ contributions in a way that Dougherty finds remarkable. “We’ll make some sort of big group sound, and I won’t actually know what I’ve

done or what Andrew’s done. He’ll have played something that could be my guitar.”

“It’s really interesting. It’s like I don’t actually understand where I

end and he starts.”

Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Rhizome, 6950 Maple St. NW. rhizomedc.org. \$15-\$25.

iFiasco! began recording in 2019 and released its fourth album, “Remember Your Flowers,” in October.

HEAVEN FORBID FROM 6

camped to the porch of their pedal-steel player for a couple of years. Since the world reopened to live music, the group has brought its All Hat No Cattle night to venues around D.C., turning an insult about rhinestone cowboys into a badge of honor.

These days, All Hat No Cattle features a few sets for the band, which plays both originals and, in the country-western tradition, covers of classics by songwriters gone by. For Baby Bry Bry, transitioning from 20-minute punk sets that felt like marathons to nights full of music changed his relationship to the experience.

“Part of the joy of what we were doing was more about creating an atmosphere different than the traditional performance where everyone finishes smoking their cigarette, they come in, they stand politely in front of the stage, they observe and absorb the music, and then they go outside until the next band starts,” he explains. “We want to be part of the atmosphere, more than the focal point.”

In that way, All Hat No Cattle has become a place for newcomers to D.C.’s music scene as well as long-time residents, locals wearing new boots and Texpats digging cowboy hats out of their closets.

“Whether you grew up on a ranch or in a city, you can connect to the universal emotion,” he says. “The old adage is [country music] is two chords and the truth. To me, it’s the truth turned up to 11.”

That cranked-up catharsis is perfect for Baby Bry Bry, who has amped up simple songs to their

melodramatic extremes, whether crooning as the front man of Baby Bry Bry and the Apologists or flexing his falsetto in synth-pop duo Slow Love. Country’s anti-authoritarian, antiestablishment roots are familiar for a musician who grew up in punk bands, and a necessary antidote to the prevail-

ing mood in the early days of the second Trump administration.

“Our city feels like we’re facing an invading force, in a way, and more than ever, we’re going to be leaning on the strength of solidarity and the power of people,” he says. “Whether it’s a hardcore show where kids can let off steam

or a country show where we’ve got people dancing, hanging out, singing along ... we’re got to find our places and our people.”

Saturday at 8 p.m. at Songbyrd, 540 Penn St. NE. songbyrddc.com. \$10-\$15.

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‘Monumental’ art given minimal space

Sculptures by D.C.-area artists deserve more breathing room

BY KRISTON CAPPS

Get up close with Kenneth Hilker’s “Bookends” (2024). At first glance, the sculpture is standoffish: a great ramshackle contraption, with limblike appendages fastened together from wooden boards that project out in haphazard arcs. Near in, though, this kraken construction reveals its logic. Precisely placed metal hinges and rhythmic gaps between the planks read like a puzzle. Yet stand back and the orderly details give way to chaos. “Bookends” makes frozen fire out of solid wood.

At its longest, “Bookends” measures 24 feet. A sculpture this sprawling needs a stage. It could hold its own in any gallery at the American University Museum, but the piece is just one of 20 large sculptures on view — none of which have enough room to breathe.

“Monumental Washington” brings together works in wood, steel, aluminum, marble and fabric: some of it carved, much of it cast and all of it huge. The show is an invitational by the nonprofit

SEE MONUMENTAL ON 9



If you go

MONUMENTAL WASHINGTON
American University Museum, 4400
Massachusetts Ave. NW.
american.edu/cas/museum. 202-885-
3630.

Dates: Through May 18.

Prices: Free.

TOP: The works in “Monumental Washington” include, from left, Davide Prete’s “Icarus” (2023), forged steel and stainless steel; Nicholas Femia’s “Searching” (2024), steel; and Bobby Donovan’s “Dagmersellen” (2024), wood, steel, cement, tar, polystyrene and enamel. **LEFT:** Kenneth Hilker’s “Bookends” (2024), repurposed wood and metal, left, and Noël Kassewitz’s “O’er the Ramparts We Watched, Waiting” (2024), polypropylene sandbags, wood and cast resin.

MONUMENTAL FROM 8

Washington Sculptors Group, which has promoted local 3D artists for more than 40 years. While some of the work is quite strong, the show lacks presence: “Monumental Washington” occupies a space so packed with work that even powerful bronzes come off as cramped.

The show takes place in a courtyard off the main level, part of the museum’s sculpture garden. The walled-off plaza is easy to miss; it’s a dead end in a building whose nautilus-shell shape creates a number of spaces that are difficult for showing art. No doubt the courtyard is large enough to showcase large-scale sculpture. Just not this much of it.

Consider Alex Mayer’s “Double L” (1985). The steel piece comprises two L-shaped beams, which intersect each other at their longest end. The components are oriented at odds with each other: One lies flat on the ground while the other stands at an angle. The piece is a drawing in space, a minimalist gesture. It’s the kind of sculpture that relies on the space around it to help convey its simplicity — to reveal its imperfect resolution of geometric tensions. But there’s no way to look at “Double L” alone. Too many other works crowd into the frame.

Not all the works suffer from the presentation. Michael Wolf’s “Deconstructed” (2024) is a screen that comprises fractured pieces of a home (fence, tree, window, gable) at a personable, intimate scale. It draws viewers in as close as they can get. “O’er the Ramparts We Watched, Waiting” (2024), a piece by Noël Kassewitz



PHOTO BY GREG STALEY/COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS/WASHINGTON SCULPTORS GROUP/AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

ABOVE: A view of “Monumental Washington,” including Michael Wolf’s “Deconstructed” (2024), cedar wood and branch. BELOW: At left, Kristina Penhoet’s “More Likely Than Not Equal” (2024), crocheted ribbon yarn made from recycled textiles, next to Luc Fiedler’s “Gravity Threshold” (2017), steel and cast bronze.



— an artist known for her climate-oriented works — sees a raised fist emerging from a pile of sandbags in a gesture of climate resilience. The composition is reminiscent of Michelangelo Pistoletto’s “Venus of the Rags” (1967), but the human scale works fine in close quarters.

“Katzen Pegaea” (2024-2025) by Barbara Liotta makes the most of the space. Her sculptural installation hugs one of the corners of the courtyard. For the piece, the artist suspended chunks of marble, granite and quartz using rope line to form rows of rocks that float in space. This sculpture was made as a kind of spatial line drawing with this site in mind, and it shows. “Katzen Pegaea” is one of the few pieces that afford the viewer the opportunity to stand back and take them in on their own terms.

As an invitational, this show wasn’t organized by a curator, per se; the goal was to showcase the Washington Sculptors Group, not any specific artist or genre. That lines up with the approach favored by American University Museum director and curator Jack Rasmussen, who regularly mounts half a dozen simultaneous exhibitions at any given time, each one packed to the gills. Argu-

ably, it’s a democratic way to do programming, and no question, the American University Museum shows more work by local artists than other institutions.

But volume isn’t the only factor for a museum to consider — and at the American University Museum, quality suffers from quantity.

Space isn’t a luxury to be afforded to sculpture when possible. The same way that a restaurant’s vibe affects how its food lands, a gallery’s decisions will change how visitors see the work. At any museum, sculpture gardens are usually overlooked by both curators and audiences, since it’s not easy to update them to keep up with changing ideas about how to showcase artworks. But even a modest concrete plaza like the courtyard of the Katzen will do.

“Monumental Washington” wants to make the case that the city is full of artists doing big things. That’s true, of course, and it’s admirable that one of the city’s museums is so dedicated to making sure that every artist gets the spotlight. But less is more, and a truly monumental show might feature two or three sculptures at most. A museum needs to serve the viewer, not just the participating artists — and in this case, it’s doing neither.

MUSEUMS

The following special exhibitions are on view at area museums. For a complete list of all permanent, indefinite and long-term exhibitions, please consult individual museum websites. Museums marked with an * are free. Note: The National Geographic Museum and the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building are temporarily closed for renovations.

***AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AT THE KATZEN ARTS CENTER** "A Sight to Behold," through March 30. A collection of 19th- and early 20th-century American landscape paintings.

Five exhibitions are on view through May 18: "Bruce and Jean Conner in Mexico, 1961-62," "Monumental Washington," "Otho Branson: Paintings," "#SerbiaInRealLife" and "Fred Folsom: Women Smoking and Last Call." 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW. american.edu/cas/museum

***ANACOSTIA COMMUNITY MUSEUM** "A Bold and Beautiful Vision: A Century of Black Arts Education in Washington, DC, 1900-2000," through March 2. Artifacts and original artworks highlight this exhibition honoring African American artist-educators. 1901 Fort Pl. SE. anacostia.si.edu

CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM "JewCE: The Jewish Comics Experience," through March 23. This exhibition highlights comic book superheroes who came from the minds of Jewish creators, writers and artists, as well as contemporary graphic novels that explore Jewish themes. The museum features two ongoing exhibitions about Jewish history, from 1790 to today, and how to build a better future in the National Capital Region: "What Is Jewish Washington?" and "Connect. Reflect. Act." 575 Third St. NW. capitaljewishmuseum.org

***DUMBARTON OAKS** "Perú: 200 Years," through March. This exhibition marks two centuries of independence in the South American nation by highlighting objects from ancient Peruvian civilizations. "Striking Designs: Communicating Through Coins," through May 31. An exploration of how the Roman and Byzantine Empire used money to spread ideology. "The White House," through June. This installation by Colombian artist Santiago Montoya features 12 houses of varying sizes — 11 made of coal and one made of white chocolate. 1703 32nd St. NW. doaks.org

***FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY** "How to Be a Power Player: Tudor Edition," through July 31. More than 60 objects from the Folger collection exemplify social climbing in Tudor England. 201 East Capitol St. SE

***GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AND TEXTILE MUSEUM** "Art Uncovered: Visionary Textile Scholars and Their Archives," through April 5. A global selection of letters, photos and more from the Arthur D. Jenkins Library's archives. "A Tale of Two Houses," through May 17. An exploration of two houses central to D.C. history: the Woodhull House in Foggy Bottom and George Hewitt Myers's Kalamazoo residence. "Intrinsic Beauty: Celebrating the Art of Textiles," Saturday through June 14. The museum celebrates its 100-year anniversary with a showcase of its collection's masterworks. 701 21st St. NW. museum.gwu.edu

***GLENSTONE** "Cady Noland," through Sunday. This sequence of three galleries represents the elusive American sculptor's first U.S. museum survey. 12100 Glen Rd., Potomac. glenstone.org

HILLWOOD ESTATE, MUSEUM AND GARDEN "Setting Sail: The Story of Sea Cloud," through June 15. Photographs, models, paintings and more tell the story of the sailing yacht built by Marjorie Merriweather Post and husband E.F. Hutton in the early 20th century. 4155 Linnean Ave. NW. hillwoodmuseum.org

***HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN** "Osgemeos: Endless Story," through Aug. 3. This full-floor presentation tracks the collaboration and artistic trajectory of Brazilian identical twins Gustavo and Otavio Pandolfo. "Basquiat x Banksy," through Oct. 26. The exhibition highlighting two paintings, one by



RON AMSTUTZ

"Cady Noland" at Glenstone offers a comprehensive view of Noland's sculpture. The sequence of three galleries represents the elusive American artist's first U.S. museum survey.

Jean-Michel Basquiat and one by Banksy, marks the first time either artist's work has been presented at the museum. "Revolutions: Art From the Hirshhorn Collection, 1860-1960," through Jan. 3, 2027. This collection presents 208 artworks made during a period defined by evolutions in science, philosophy and mechanization. Seventh Street and Independence Avenue SW. hirshhorn.si.edu

INTERNATIONAL SPY MUSEUM "Bond in Motion," through September. A celebration of the James Bond film franchise featuring props and scale models alongside cars, motorcycles and more 007 vehicles. 700 L'Enfant Plaza SW. spymuseum.org

***LIBRARY OF CONGRESS** "Collecting Memories: Treasures From the Library of Congress," through December. The David M. Rubenstein Treasures Gallery's first exhibition examines the ways in which cultures preserve memory. Thomas Jefferson Building, 10 First St. SE. loc.gov

***MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE ART GALLERY** "Maximal Miniatures," through May 23. A showcase of 13 contemporary Iranian artists reimagining Persian miniature painting. 1763 N St. NW. mei.edu/art-gallery

MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE "The Megiddo Mosaic: Foundations of Faith," through July 6. This interactive exhibit showcases an ancient mosaic floor discovered by archaeologists in 2005. 400 Fourth St. SW. museumofthebible.org

***NATIONAL ARCHIVES MUSEUM** "Power & Light: Russell Lee's Coal Survey," through Dec. 7. A display of more than 200 images of coal communities from American documentary photographer Russell Lee. 701 Constitution Ave. NW. museum.archives.gov

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM "Frank Lloyd Wright's Southwestern Pennsylvania," through March 17. This exhibition shines a light on projects the architect designed for the region from the 1930s through the 1950s. "Capital Brutalism," through June 30. An exploration of the Metro system and seven D.C. buildings designed in the polarizing brutalist style. "A South Forty: Contemporary Architecture and Design in the American South," through winter 2026. An overview of design in the South zeroes in on architectural trends that have defined the region since 1990. "Brick City," through August 2026. U.K.-based artist Warren Elmore uses Lego pieces to re-create destinations from all seven continents, including New Orleans during Mardi Gras and medieval Japanese castles. "Mini Memories: Souvenir Buildings From the David Weingarten Collection," ongoing. A showcase of 400 miniature building souvenirs from nearly 70 countries. "House & Home," ongoing. A collection of

photographs, models, films and objects that examine American homes both familiar and unconventional.

"Building Stories," ongoing. This immersive exhibition dives into the world of architecture, engineering, construction and design as depicted in children's books. 401 F St. NW. nbnm.org

***NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART** "Spirit & Strength: Modern Art From Haiti," through March 9. Haiti's significance to the African diaspora is put on display in this exhibition featuring 21 recently gifted works. "The '70s Lens: Reimagining Documentary Photography," through April 6. Around 100 works highlight how a period of societal upheaval set the stage for artistic experimentation. Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW. nga.gov

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE** "In Slavery's Wake," through June 8. This immersive exhibition uses hundreds of objects, images and multimedia elements to explore the impacts of colonialism and slavery, as well as the legacies of Black freedom makers.

"Reclaiming My Time," through January 2026. An exhibition highlighting work by contemporary Black designers about issues of cultural heritage, bodies at rest, labor and leisure.

"Reckoning: Protest. Defiance. Resilience," ongoing. The exhibition focuses on the Black Lives Matter movement and art that depicts resistance and protest. 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. nmaahc.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART**

"John Akomfrah: Five Murmurations," through Aug. 24. The Ghanaian-born, London-based artist and filmmaker addresses the covid-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and the worldwide protests in support of Black Lives Matter in this visual essay of our times.

"Benin Bronzes: Ambassadors of the Oba," through Dec. 31, 2026. Nine bronze artifacts taken by the British during the Benin Punitive Expedition of 1897 are on display as part of a long-term loan from the National Commission for Museum and Monuments in Nigeria.

"Sanctuary: Mekdes," ongoing. Through seven sculptures, Ethiopian American artist Tsedaye Makonnen confronts the dehumanization of Black women, femme people and their communities. 950 Independence Ave. SW. africa.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY** "Forensic Science on Trial," through June. An exhibition breaking down how forensic science has been used in more than 150 years of trials.

"Present! A Latino History of the United States." The Molina Family Latino Gallery is the first gallery space of the new National Museum of the American Latino; it tells U.S. history from the perspective of members of

the diverse Latino community and covers themes such as immigration, identity and legacy. Constitution Avenue NW, between 12th and 14th streets. americanhistory.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN**

"Sublime Light: Tapestry Art of DY Begay," through July 13. The first retrospective of the Navajo fiber artist's career features 48 tapestries spanning three decades of work. "Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains," through Jan. 20, 2026. Historical hides, muslins and ledger books from the Great Plains are presented alongside 50 contemporary works commissioned by the museum.

"Water's Edge: The Art of Truman Lowe," through January 2027. Featuring 50 sculptures, drawings, and paintings, this is the first major retrospective of the Ho-Chunk artist. Fourth Street and Independence Avenue SW. americanindian.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART** "The Print Generation," through April 27. This exhibition highlights artists who broke Japanese printmaking traditions in the early decades of the 20th century. "Striking Objects: Contemporary Japanese Metalwork," through Jan. 11. Works from the collection of Shirley Z. Johnson highlight the ways in which modern Japanese metalworking is used in traditional methods.

"Shifting Boundaries: Perspectives on American Landscapes," through July 26, 2026. A variety of experts were recruited to develop themes, curate artworks and write labels for this exhibition that casts paintings of New England landscapes in a new light. "Ruffled Feathers: Creating Whistler's Peacock Room," through Jan. 31, 2027. This exhibition, situated next to artist James McNeill Whistler's Peacock Room, uses paintings and other art to explore the room's history. 1050 Independence Ave. SW. asia.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY** "Lights Out: Recovering Our Night Sky," through December. Photographs, objects, models and interactive elements are used to explore the effects of light pollution. "Dazzling Diversity," through Dec. 16. Early natural history books from the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives put scientific knowledge of the insect world on display. "Cellphone: Unseen Connections," through 2026. This exhibition, about the way phones connect us to the natural world, features multimedia installations, a sprawling graphic novel and more than 750 objects. 10th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. naturalhistory.si.edu

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS "Samantha Box: Confluences," through March 23. This display highlights

the Bronx-based photographer's black-and-white work exploring race, gender, class, and sexuality. "In Focus: Artists at Work," through April 20. Video documentaries explore the creative processes of eight contemporary artists. 1250 New York Ave. NW. nmwa.org

***NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY** "Brilliant Exiles: American Women in Paris, 1900-1939," through Sunday. An exhibition highlighting the feats of 60 American women who traversed the Atlantic in the early 20th century in pursuit of creative freedom.

"This Morning, This Evening, So Soon: James Baldwin and the Voices of Queer Resistance," through April 20. Curated by Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Hilton Als, this collection explores the interconnected lives of Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Bayard Rustin and other queer civil rights activists. "Picturing the Presidents: Daguerreotypes and Ambrotypes from the National Portrait Gallery's Collection," through June 8. This exhibition features photographs of 11 U.S. presidents.

"Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Always to Return," through July 6. The artist's work is presented in D.C. for the first time in more than 30 years, with a focus on his groundbreaking portraiture.

"Recent Acquisitions," through Oct. 26. This display showcases 21 additions to the museum's collection, all representing female subjects or made by women.

Subjects include singer Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, writer Octavia Butler and actress Greta Garbo.

"Star Power: Photographs From Hollywood's Golden Age by George Hurrell," through Jan. 4, 2026. This exhibition highlights the work of Hurrell, a Hollywood photographer whose portraits captured the likes of Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy and Joan Crawford. Eighth and F streets NW. npg.si.edu

***NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM** "Voting by Mail: Civil War to Covid-19," through Sunday. This election-year exhibition features objects spanning three centuries that have been used to help U.S. citizens vote by mail. 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE. postalmuseum.si.edu

PHILLIPS COLLECTION "Timeless Mucha: The Magic of Line," Saturday through May 18. More than 100 works from Czech painter and decorative artist Alphonse Mucha track his creative evolution. 1600 21st St. NW. phillipscollection.org

***RENWICK GALLERY** "Contemporary Craft at the Renwick Gallery," ongoing. More than 100 works composed of fiber, ceramics, glass, metal, wood and other materials showcase handmade art of the 21st century.

"Janet Echelman's 1.8 Renwick," ongoing. The American sculptor's fiber and lighting installation projects shadow drawings in colors that move from wall to wall. Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street NW. americanart.si.edu

***RUBELL MUSEUM** "American Vignettes: Symbols, Society and Satire," through fall. A trio of themes encapsulate nearly 100 works from contemporary artists who were born in the United States or call the country home. 65 I St. SW. rubellmuseum.org/dc

***SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM** "Pictures of Belonging: Miki Hayakawa, Hisako Hibi and Miné Okubo," through Aug. 17. An examination of the art from three trailblazing American women of Japanese descent.

"The Shape of Power: Stories of Race and American Sculpture," through Sept. 14. A collection of 82 works created between 1792 and 2023 examines how sculpture and race in America have intersected. "Sightlines: Chinatown and Beyond," through Nov. 30. This gallery overlooking D.C.'s Chinatown neighborhood highlights Asian Americans' cultural impact on the nation's capital.

"Artist to Artist," through Aug. 2, 2026. This rotating exhibition highlights eight artist pairings, each of which features two figures whose trajectories intersected at a key moment.

"Isaac Julien: Lessons of the Hour — Frederick Douglass," through 2026. A joint purchase by the Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, this five-screen video installation uses period reenactments to create a portrait of the activist, writer, orator and philosopher Frederick Douglass. G and Eighth streets NW. americanart.si.edu



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Eat your way through a historic slice of the District

10 of the best restaurants in Dupont Circle include inventive Mexican and 'atypical' Thai

BY WARREN ROJAS

Talk about an embarrassment of riches.

Dupont Circle hosts blocks and blocks of award-winning restaurants and chefs, many of whom are classically trained but also inclined to put their own delicious stamp on D.C.'s culinary landscape. And with menus as diverse as the United Nations — feast on Sichuan, Tuscan and Korean cuisines as well as unconventional gourmet pizzas, all within walking distance — there's no reason to fret when hunger pangs strike.

Follow these dining recommendations from Washington Post food critic Tom Sietsema, Post food writer Tim Carman and

your intrepid local dining reporter to fully enjoy this historic slice of Washington.

Anju

1805 18th St. NW. anjurestaurant.com.

Partaking in executive chef Angel Barreto's daring cuisine transports Sietsema to a festive dinner party in Seoul, he writes in his 2024 fall dining guide. "The menu is half contemporary, half traditional, an attempt to show off the range of Korea," Sietsema raves, marveling at tongue-teasing banchan (including "little dishes of acorn jelly," "candied anchovies crisped with pecans" and papaya-laced kimchi), striking starters ("boiled, roasted corn on the cob, slathered with garlic-ginger aioli

and served on honey barbecue sauce") and robust mains ("fried rice chockablock with rib-eye, Spam, an egg on top and some crunch from fried ramen noodles"). And while there are opportunities to feast like visiting dignitaries — Barreto was tapped to cook for visiting South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's 2023 state luncheon — Sietsema recommends indulging in "at least one homey dish" inspired by co-founder Danny Lee's mother, Ye-soon Lee. The traditional offerings include spicy braised chicken thighs, stewed pork belly stoked by aged kimchi, and beefy bibimbap. (Entrées \$25 to \$42.)

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The pozole at Amparo Fondita, an eatery that marries "sophistication with companionable charm."

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Obelisk*2029 P St. NW. obeliskdc.com.*

Ready to be coddled by a “gracious host who cooks better than you do”? Then Sietsema suggests pulling up a seat at this recent inductee into his D.C. restaurant hall of fame. “Everything from the kitchen of chef/owner Esther Lee is a model of good taste,” he writes in the 2024 fall dining guide, praising offerings ranging from the bread basket to a “divine” prune-plum dessert. Recent highlights include alluring anti-pasti (“shrimp swaddled in lardo,” “nubby eggplant croquettes that go down like an idyllic Italian picnic”) and other must-tries (a Tuscan bread soup bathed in tomatoes, olive oil and basil; lamp chops bolstered by melting pearl onions and artichoke salad). “Pasta with some bite might be tossed with whatever mushrooms are prime,” he says of the seasonally inspired menu. Care to add people watching to the mix? Request table No. 8 — prime real estate “whose big window frames passersby in Dupont Circle.” (*\$125-per-person five-course tasting menu.*)

Amparo Fondita*2002 P St. NW. amparofondita.com.*

This inventive Mexican newcomer made a splash in the area “by marrying sophistication with companionable charm,” Sietsema writes in his 2024 spring dining guide, praising chef-owner Christian Irabién for leading the charge. Irabién’s arsenal includes ceviche broth that “stings, pleasantly so,” with serrano pepper heat; “bodacious” pork pozole punctuated by hominy and avocado; and “awesome tortillas” made in-house from colorful Oaxacan corn. “You’ll want some tacos here, too,” Sietsema says of foldable favorites (three per order) filled with grilled skirt steak, pineapple-sweetened pork belly, roasted potatoes smothered in black beans, Baja-style catch of the day offerings crowned with purple cabbage and more. “I thought the prize was a fat finger of flounder cooked on the plancha and garnished with shredded purple cabbage and mayonnaise shot through with fruity guajillo chiles until I tried the lamb braised in chiles, garlic, onion and Oaxacan chocolate,” Sietsema writes of the surprises that await adventurous diners. (*Entrées \$32 to \$47.*)



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

ABOVE: Caesar and Macha 'Roni pizzas at Boogy and Peel, a self-styled pizza lab that goes beyond conventional combos. **RIGHT:** The dining room at La Tomate, a mainstay that's nearly 40 years old.

Annie's Paramount Steak House*1609 17th St. NW. anniesparamountdc.com.*

The James Beard Foundation named this landmark eatery an American classic in 2019. Locals have cherished it for decades. “Annie’s has been a beacon for the rainbow coalition decades before there was a Pride flag,” Sietsema writes in his 2023 fall dining guide, adding that the 76-year-old sanctuary “plays the role of a small-town diner in a world capital.” He touts selling points that go beyond its place in history, including “stiff drinks that meet the rim of their big glasses,” “housemade pies served in mongenerous slices,” and the “fat” baked potatoes and snazzy coleslaw that have accompanied countless dinners here. Sietsema vouches for the signature sirloin tips; chicken parmesan — which summons “cheesy, saucy goodness splayed across a field of penne pasta”; ham- and pepper-flecked omelets framed with fresh fruit, whole wheat toast and

onion-laced potatoes; and the coconut cream pie for dessert. (*Entrées \$20 to \$46.*)

Chang Chang*1200 19th St. NW. changchangdc.com.*

Cult chef Peter Chang’s long-awaited debut within the District instantly “became the top spot” for Sichuan cooking, per Sietsema. “Dishes you’ve tried in other Chinese places taste like truer, elevated versions here,” he writes in his 2023 spring dining guide. Chang’s slow march from the surrounding suburbs to Northwest was worth it, Sietsema says, for provocative creations like kung pao chicken kicked up a notch by a free-range bird, boldly spiced green beans tossed with pickled cabbage, and a labor-intensive duck dish. “Patience is rewarded by a platter of sliced, smoked, five-spiced duck, plus a ginger-spiked broth and a phyllo-swaddled pie stuffed with forbidden rice and shredded duck confit,” he writes of the gustatory showstopper. Sietsema hails a “tongue-



MAANSI SRIVASTAVA/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

numbing tofu skin salad” and hot mustard-spiked yellowtail crudo as other thrill rides but notes that surprises abound. “There’s no getting bored with the ever-evolving menu.” (*Entrées \$22 to \$80.*)

Sura*2016 P St. NW. suradcrestaurant.com.*

“Don’t come looking for fish cakes or tom yum soup,” Sietsema writes of this “atypical” Thai restaurant in his 2022 fall dining guide. The groundbreakers here

are brothers Billy Thammasathiti (food) and Andy Thammasathiti (drinks), who are shaking up their culinary heritage within the same four walls where their grandmother once dished out more traditional fare. Modern flourishes include marinated beef skewers seasoned with “fish sauce, palm sugar and salt and sprinkled with what Billy calls ‘rice spice’ — roasted sticky rice, lemongrass, lime leaves” before grilling; fried pork belly zapped with a chile-garlic sauce “that



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

rages from hot to tangy and back”; and snacks that arouse the senses. An innocuous-sounding order of chips and dip comes to life once garlic-scented sesame rice crackers meet seasoned pork and roasted peanuts “souped up” with coconut milk. “Munch, munch, gone,” he writes. (*Entrées \$17 to \$25.*)

The Palm*1225 19th St. NW. thepalm.com.*

A power dining destination since the Nixon administration, D.C.’s Palm remains steeped in tradition. Staff members, some of whom have been around since the 1980s, are “treated as family.” Chicago meat-packers produce its signature New York strip, and the creamed spinach that’s graced the table of countless bull sessions has been a house specialty for nearly a century, general manager Michael Melore tells Sietsema. “The old-timer revels in fine points,” Sietsema writes, hailing the “nice chew” of a 14-ounce New York strip flanked by a “head of melting garlic,” the appearance of a pretzel roll in the

complimentary bread basket and the convenience of a three-course lunch deal (\$32). Not in the mood for red meat? Seek out salt and pepper ahi tuna “splayed on minty pearl couscous,” Sietsema advises. “The Palm definitely takes any work out of a meal — save, of course, for the work you do eavesdropping on the lawyers and lobbyists who populate the place.” (*Entrées \$34 to \$155.*)

La Tomate*1701 Connecticut Ave. NW. latomatebistro.com.*

Breaking bread at owner Natalina Koropoulos’s nearly 40-year-old restaurant shouldn’t be taken for granted. “La Tomate is one of those places where you can pretty much walk in and get a seat — and a meal that can lead to a habit,” Sietsema writes of the homey mainstay. Dishes that offer comfort here include sautéed calamari “sparked” with black olives and caper berries, cacio e pepe souped up with free-range brown eggs and pickled truffles, and branzino layered over green beans and peas. “Dinner finds me



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



DEB LINDSEY/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Vegetarian fried dumplings at Anju; steamed mussels and fries at Ellington Park Bistro; and owner and bar manager Andy Thammasathiti mixes a daiquiri at Sura.

Boogy and Peel*1 Dupont Circle NW. boogyandpeel.com.*

Conformity is not on the menu at chef Rachael Jennings’s self-styled pizza lab. “Boogy and Peel is not the place to go if you’re seeking a Hawaiian pizza or one of those now-ubiquitous slabs of Detroit pie,” Carman writes of an irreverent pie slinger with hot takes on everything from deli sandwiches to Big Macs. One such homage “looks like it’s been dragged through the sandwich stations at Mickey D’s,” he says of a pizza crowned with ground beef, melted American cheese, sliced onions, housemade dilly pickle chips and drizzles of tangy special sauce. Other devilishly good deviants include a Reuben-esque tapestry of pastrami, sauerkraut, Swiss, pickled mustard seeds and caraway powder, as well as a next-level pepperoni party. “The Macha ‘Roni comes buried under enough meaty cups to satisfy any pepperoni lover, but the pizza hits Defcon 4 with a secondary blast wave of salsa macha,” Carman says of the tantalizing Mexican chile paste championed by sous chef Saul Zelaya. (*Entrées \$12 to \$22.*)

slicing into thin but juicy lamb chops, whispering of oregano and arranged like a teepee ringed with eggplant, zucchini and bell peppers,” Sietsema writes of the heartier fare he favors after the nightly aperitivo service. And don’t sleep on dreamy panna cotta “whipped up with Greek yogurt and topped with strawberry sauce.” (*Entrées \$27 to \$38.*)

Ellington Park Bistro*2033 M St. NW. ellingtonparkbistro.com.*

Veteran chef Frank Morales is so good at his job, he drove Sietsema and some other dinner guests wild with a side of fries. “They’re meant to be paired with a bowl of tender steamed mussels, but their mere fragrance finds everyone’s fingers diving for the hot bouquet,” Sietsema writes of a feeding frenzy that culminated in the

seductive spuds sopping up a sea of coconut milk, pastis and mussel liquor. Other Gallic treasures include absinthe-spiked escargots nestled atop pepper-spiked gougères; tarte flambé “slathered with fromage blanc and truffe butter and scattered with curls of smoked ham and sweet Vidalia onion”; flounder stuffed with zesty mousseline (“soft as meeringue and lit with harissa”); and cordon bleu sporting a shell of crispy, duck-fat-washed skin, a Swiss-chard-wrapped core of melted Gruyère and ham, and a base of tender lentils, carrots and lardons. Looking to get your hands dirty? Dig into a house smashburger that “ought to be dropped off with gloves.” The “saucy feast packed in a pretzel bun” features Wagyu beef, French pickles, Gruyère, garlic aioli and more. (*Entrées \$22 to \$68.*)



MIKKI SCHAFFNER

Shaking up the Shakespeare canon

To bring the Bard into this century, playwrights reimagine supporting characters in 'Hamlet' and 'The Merchant of Venice'

BY CELIA WREN

To say that playwright Sarah Mantell is no fan of "The Merchant of Venice" would be several thousand ducats' worth of understatement.

"It's a really deeply antisemitic play. It's a really sexist play. It's a really racist, anti-Black play," the New York City-based writer says. A memorable glimpse of the work at the Yale School of Drama left Mantell "extremely disturbed and upset" and with a self-imposed mandate: "Shakespeare didn't know what he was doing, and I need to fix it for him."

That fix is currently running at Baltimore Center Stage. "Everything That Never Happened" retells "Merchant" from the perspective of several less-prominent characters: Jessica, the daughter of the Jewish moneylender Shylock; Lorenzo, the Christian man she falls in love with; and the servant Gobbo, who in Mantell's telling is much more than Shakespeare's malaprop-

prone comic device. When Shylock makes an appearance, it's as a tender, anxious, often baffled father. (The prince of Morocco, whose dark skin color is disparaged in "Merchant," does not appear.)

Mantell's is not the only current play foregrounding the Bard's supporting characters. Opening next month at the Folger Theatre is Lauren M. Gunderson's "A Room in the Castle," which reimagines "Hamlet" from the viewpoints of Ophelia and Gertrude, plus a newly conceived servant figure, Anna. The world-premiere staging is co-produced with Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, which debuted the piece last month.

The works by Mantell, who is nonbinary, and Gunderson arrive amid a burst of plays that refashion, rebuke or riff on the male-written canon. "Problems Between Sisters," a response to Sam Shepard's "True West" seen last year at Studio Theatre, is part of Julia May Jonas's cycle reconceiving

SEE SHAKESPEARE ON 15



WALLS TRIMBLE

If you go

EVERYTHING THAT NEVER HAPPENED

Baltimore Center Stage, 700 N. Calvert St., Baltimore. 410-332-0033. centerstage.org.

Dates: Through March 9.

Prices: \$15-\$79.

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Folger Shakespeare Library, 201 East Capitol St. SE. 202-544-7077. folger.edu.

Dates: March 4-April 6.

Prices: \$20-\$84.

TOP: From left, Oneika Phillips, Sabrina Lynne Sawyer and Burgess Byrd in "A Room in the Castle," which is traveling from Cincinnati Shakespeare Company to the Folger Theatre. **LEFT:** "Everything That Never Happened" writer Sarah Mantell.

SHAKESPEARE FROM 14

macho American classics. Barbara Cassidy's "Mrs. Loman," recently mounted in New York, extends the narrative of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman." Opening soon on Broadway is Kimberly Belflower's "John Proctor Is the Villain," a play (premiered at Studio in 2022) that calls out the sexism in Miller's "The Crucible." In a culture that has recently reckoned with elevating long-sidelined voices and perspectives, the theatrical old boys network is fair game.

Other art forms have also gotten in on the action, including by centering characters to whom Shakespeare gave limited scope: The 2019 movie "Ophelia" adapted Lisa Klein's revisionist young-adult novel. (The landmark reframing of William S.'s also-ran figures remains Tom Stoppard's 1960s "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.")

"I think we're due for a lot of canonical correction, and we can do it pointedly, and we can do it joyfully, and we can do it with humor," says Mantell, whose other works include "Fight Call," a play about a theater company's years of rehearsing the death scenes of female Shakespeare characters.

Canonical correction for the antisemitic "Merchant" seemed particularly urgent to Mantell, who is Jewish. They perceived "a play living just underneath the surface of Shakespeare's story" that spoke of "assimilation and



BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE

passing, and what we leave behind for love." That more enlightened play, Mantell resolved, would allow Shylock and Jessica to "speak in Jewish voices" and "give them back their history and their humor. Their heartbreak."

But to do justice to the project — which reached a milestone with "Everything That Never Happened's" world premiere in Pasadena, California, in 2018 — Mantell had to spend significant time reading, and thinking about, "Merchant."

"That really sucked," they say.

"A Room in the Castle" comes from a place of more warmth. The prolific and widely produced Gunderson is perhaps best known for penning plays about historical female scientists. But she is a self-described Shakespeare superfan who has tangled with the Swan of Avon in works like "The Book of Will," about the 1623 First Folio, and "The Taming," a political farce that nods to "The Taming of the Shrew." Gunderson says more Stratford-fueled pieces are in the works — maybe many more. "I have this

running challenge to myself to meet each Shakespeare play with some interpretation," she says.

When it came to tapping into "Hamlet," Gunderson says, "my instinct has always been to save Ophelia — at least to understand her, if I can't find a way to save her." "A Room in the Castle" grew from that urge, turning Hamlet's ex-girlfriend into a gutsy songwriter — "I sort of imagine her as a young Taylor Swift" — who bonds and conspires with a force-of-maternal-nature Gertrude and handmaiden Anna as the prince

of Elsinore goes off the rails. "The play is really about that coming together of people who did not expect to be on the same team because the patriarchy kept them apart," Gunderson says. She believes the work is also a timely exploration of "the cost of male vengeance and violence."

Both Gunderson and Mantell emphasize that their plays are understandable to audiences who have forgotten or avoided "Hamlet" and "Merchant." And both say that for theatergoers who know these classics well, there are satisfying Easter eggs.

The two plays previously aired in the Folger's Reading Room Festival, an annual celebration of new work and conversations that bounce off Shakespeare.

"Lauren and Sarah represent people who are really taking the things that we're most familiar with in Shakespeare and activating them in contemporary thought," said Karen Ann Daniels, the Folger Theatre's artistic director.

Shakespeare, Gunderson points out, "is strong enough to withstand interrogation and reimagining." She sees her Bard-saluting plays as a "big handshake of playwrights across time."

For Mantell, the gesture is more like a judo throw. "Merchant," they say, "was the piece of the canon that I could overturn" so that people might stop and think, "Hey, you know, something might be up with this! Maybe the best storytelling is not White, male and British to its bones."



BRYAN DERBALLA

ABOVE: "A Room in the Castle" playwright Lauren M. Gunderson. LEFT: Cast and crew members of "Everything That Never Happened": top row, Charlique C. Rolle, Nic Picou, Jessica Kubzansky, Erika Soto and Allison Wick; bottom row, Sarah Mantell and Leo Marks.

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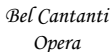



BY **MATTHEW CAPODICASA**
DIRECTED BY
TIFFANY NICHOLE GREENE

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SHOW NAME	DATES & TIMES	DESCRIPTION	DETAILS	PRICE	ADDITIONAL
THEATRE					
 ESCAPE FROM THE ASYLUM: by Patricia Milton	MUST END FEB. 23 - Thu 7:30, Fri 8, Sat 2:30 & 8, Sun 2:30	"A NEAT & CLEVER PUZZLE...a fresh and enjoyable take on the "whodunit" genre" - DCTheatreArts	The Undercroft Theatre 900 Mass Ave, NW 202-900-8788 stageguild.org	\$50-60 + Senior, Student, Grp Disc	\$10 off full-price with code CLUE
 FUENTEOVEJUNA by Lope de Vega	Thru March 2 Thurs - Fri at 2 pm Sun at 2 pm	Led by women, the villagers of Fuentovejuna rebel against the brutal rule of a corrupt and arrogant commander and seize power.	GALA Theatre 3333 14th St NW 202-234-7174 galatheatre.org	\$25 - \$50	In Spanish with English surtitles
 Lady Thistle-down's Poisoned Quill Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre	March 7 - June 1	Lord Henry, Duke of Cavendish, returns from war to a dinner party filled with hopeful young ladies. But when Lord Fairfax is murdered, scandal erupts! As Lady Thistle-down's Poisoned Quill reveals secrets, suspects multiply. Can anyone escape the whispers?	Check website for locations at restaurants, wineries, breweries & other venues in NoVA. www.StageCoachTC.com	\$57 - 110	571-477-9444
 Shear Madness The Kennedy Center Theater Lab	Regular Schedule: Tuesday-Friday at 8 Saturday at 5 & 8 Sunday at 3 & 7	It's a Comedy! It's a Mystery! It's Shear Madness! Catch it at the Kennedy Center. "Downright Hilarious" Huffington Post	The Kennedy Center Theater Lab Student Rush Tickets Available Tickets: 202-467-4600 Groups: 202-416-8400 www.shearmadness.com	Tickets Available at the Box Office	Great Group Rates for 15 or More
MUSIC - CONCERTS					
 CELEBRATE MARDI GRAS prjc.org	Sun FEB 23 1:30 - 4:00 pm info: prjc.org	Raise your parasol, Second Line, dance to the lively NOLA sounds of Orleans Express. Have a free slice of King Cake	Rosensteel Hall, 9707 Rosensteel Ave, Silver Spring prjc.org	\$25 / Mbrs \$20 / students free	tix at prjc.org free parking snacks/bev's dance floor
 New Orleans Songbook A Jazz at Lincoln Center PRESENTS Production	Saturday, March 1 7 p.m.	Just in time for Fat Tuesday, Jazz at Lincoln Center brings the soul of New Orleans and the spirit of Mardi Gras to an amazing evening celebrating the composers and inspired songs of the Crescent City—the epicenter of jazz. Featuring singers Luther S. Allison, Milton Suggs and Quiana Lynell.	The Alden at the McLean Community Center 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean, Virginia 22101 Box Office: 703-790-9223, TTY: 711 aldentheatre.org	\$30/\$25 students & seniors	Free onsite parking
 United States Marine Band "Remembering Iwo Jima"	Sunday, Feb. 23 at 2 p.m.	Join the Marine Band in honoring the 80th anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima with selections that pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of those brave service members. Also, the winner of the 2024 Marine Band Concerto Competition solos with the Band.	Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center 4915 E Campus Dr, Alexandria, VA 22311 Full Details: www.marineband.marines.mil	FREE, No Tickets Required	Free parking available at venue
OPERA					
 Johann Strauss, Jr. The Waltz King!	Saturdays, March 1 and March 8, at 7:30 p.m. Sundays, March 2 and March 9, at 3:00 p.m.	Bel Cantanti Opera singers and Four Seasons Dancers celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of composer Johann Strauss, Jr. in a gala performance.	Bender JCC 6125 Montrose Road Rockville, MD www.belcantanti.com	\$40	Tickets online and at the door
 Mozart's LA CLAMENZA DI TITO Maestro Antony Walker	Sunday, March 1, 6pm	Although rarely performed today, it is thought to be one of Mozart's masterpieces - admired for its serene beauty and restraint. World-renowned soprano Tamara Wilson makes her role debut as 'Vitellia.'	Lisner Auditorium 730 21st Street NW Washington, DC www.concertopera.org	Starting at \$44	Save with a pick 2 subscription!
 POPPEA By Claudio Monteverdi	March 14 - 29, 2025 www.inseries.org	An opera of love, power, sex, and betrayal inspired by Bharatanatyam dance. Music of South India, poetry, and dance blend with baroque orchestra.	Dupont Underground & St Marks Capitol Hill Washington, DC	\$35 - \$72	Box Office 202 204-7763
CABARET					
 Cassette Chronicles Cabaret	Feb 14-16, 22 & 23 at 7:00pm	An '80s-inspired variety show packed with music, games, trivia, and nonstop nostalgia!	StageCoach Theatre, 20937 Ashburn Rd, Ashburn, VA 20147 www.StageCoachTC.com	\$30	571-477-9444



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The Monkey ★★★☆☆



PHOTOS BY NEON

Monkey see, monkey do, monkey kill

Twin brothers just can't get rid of a deadly relic in Osgood Perkins's splattery horror-comedy

BY TY BURR

Osgood Perkins has become one of the leading lights of the Gen Z horror renaissance, and I guess he comes by it honestly: He did play an adolescent version of Norman Bates, the character his father Anthony Perkins made famous, in 1983's "Psycho II." Those bloodlines, if you will, have shown up in Perkins's work as a writer-director, starting with "The Blackcoat's Daughter" in 2015 and leading up through last year's critical and commercial hit "Longlegs," a fever dream of nagging dread that featured a nightmarish Nicolas Cage and more

than a little filmmaking self-seriousness.

Thankfully — and your opinion may vary on this — Perkins has recovered his sense of humor for "The Monkey," a splattery horror comedy that balances yucks with yuks. It's a gonzo gross-out tale based on a Stephen King short story and starring Theo James ("The White Lotus," "Sanditon") in a double role as twin brothers Hal and Billy Shelburn. They've inherited a toy organ grinder's monkey from their airline pilot father (Adam Scott of "Severance"), who appears in a brief opening scene that nicely establishes the movie's gut-busting air of mischief.



"The Monkey," based on a Stephen King short story, follows twin brothers who inherit a toy organ grinder's monkey from their father. Theo James, left, stars as both brothers, who find the toy is both deadly and hard to shake.

Once Dad is out of the picture, young Hal and Billy (Christian Convery) do their best to support their disillusioned single mother (Tatiana Maslany of TV's "Orphan Black"), even though the boys couldn't be more different, with Hal a sensitive sort and Billy a bully. This is one of those King stories where everyone is an awful human being except the put-upon hero, which means they deserve what's coming to them.

SEE THE MONKEY ON 19

Cleaner ★★★☆☆

Daisy Ridley thriller is 'Die Hard' with a squeegee

Formulaic action movie still keeps things fresh with moral quandaries

BY TY BURR

"Cleaner" is a "Die Hard" knockoff with just enough fresh elements to make it watchable on a slow streaming night. Chief among those elements are Daisy Ridley in the classic John McClane role — nice to see high-rise terrorists outfoxed by an average Jane for a change — and some effective head games as to where the audience should place its sympathies. It's meat-and-potatoes stuff (well, we're in London, so bangers and mash), but you could do worse and probably have.

Ridley, who played Rey in the last Star Wars trilogy, is all gumption and capability as Joanna "Joey" Locke, an ex-British Army soldier turned window cleaner at the skyscraper headquarters of Agnius Energy, a supposedly eco-friendly corporation that is anything but. The formulaic script by Matthew Orton, Simon Uttley and Paul Andrew Williams takes a while to even establish that much, as we're treated to a glimpse of Joey's abusive upbringing and her stressed-out concern for autistic older brother Michael (Matthew Tuck), whose hacking skills have gotten him kicked out of multiple care facilities. Hmm, I wonder if they'll come in handy later in the movie?

Michael's latest ouster means he has to accompany Joey to work on the same evening that a glittering Agnius gala is invaded by eco-activists determined to air the company's very dirty laundry. The group's leader, Marcus, is played by Clive Owen with more than a smidgen of Alan Rickman's Eurotrash hauteur in "Die Hard" but also with an agenda that crosses a viewer's wires. Marcus isn't above taking hostages to prove his point, but he's strictly anti-murder, and the two brother CEOs of Agnius, Gerald and Geoffrey Milton (Lee Boardman and Rufus Jones), are porcine environmental criminals with blood



PHOTOS BY QUIVER DISTRIBUTION

on their own hands. So, who's the bad guy here?

Without spoiling too much, others in Marcus's crew feel a different approach is in order, and "Cleaner" eventually reveals the genre's contractually obligated psycho mastermind (Taz Skylar) before proceeding to crank up the suspense. As well as the suspension, since Joey is stuck outside the building on a cleaning stage dangling by a single cable for the first half of the movie. Director Martin Campbell ("Casino Royale"), a busy British journeyman, keeps it all moving and works up a nice, weary walkie-talkie alliance between Joey and detective Claire Hume (Ruth Gemmell), the two bonding over the wreckage of their personal lives as much as attending to the situation at hand.

Outside of a few late-inning fight scenes, Ridley earns her action-movie spurs without a lot of actual action, but she's resolute



ABOVE: Daisy Ridley stars in "Cleaner" as an ex-British Army soldier turned window cleaner. LEFT: Matthew Tuck plays her hacker brother.

of spirit and firm of jaw, and it's easy to cheer Joey on as she jumps the preprogrammed hurdles of this subgenre. And if nothing else, "Cleaner" is interestingly conflicted about where its sympathies lie. Watching a video of the chief villain proclaiming that "we're watching the Earth die beneath our very feet while we do nothing about it," Michael — this movie's version of the wise fool — turns to his sister in confusion. "I don't understand," he says. "It's the truth." John McClane had it easy by comparison.

Ty Burr is the author of the movie recommendation newsletter Ty Burr's Watch List at tyburrrswatchlist.com.

R. At area theaters. Contains violence, language throughout and brief drug use. 97 minutes.

Ratings guide Masterpiece ★★★★★ Very good ★★★★☆ Okay ★★★☆☆ Poor ★☆☆☆☆

THE MONKEY FROM 17

The difference here is that Perkins thinks that's funny. And maybe it is.

Cue the monkey, discovered in a box Dad has left among his things: It's a supremely creepy wind-up creature that, once wound, causes a fatal and ungodly messy accident somewhere in the windee's vicinity. There's no predicting exactly who will die — as young Hal finds to his distress, the monkey doesn't take requests. It also proves impossible to dispose of, not that the brothers don't give it a good go.

Twenty-five years later in the modern day, Hal (James) is a shell-shocked loner who avoids human relationships, terrified the monkey will come back and work its dark magic. That means he's abandoned his teenage son, Petey (Colin O'Brien), to the boy's mother (Laura Mennell) and her preening second husband (a cameo by Elijah Wood, who seems to have stopped by with nothing better to do). Father and embittered son do have one final week together before the boy is adopted by his stepdad, during which the toy comes back, and all hell breaks loose.

So, yes, it's a little like the classic story "The Monkey's Paw," except here you get the entire



NEON

Tatiana Maslany plays Hal and Billy's disillusioned single mother in "The Monkey." Once the boys' monkey toy is wound up, you can expect a bloody accident — but there's no telling just who will die.

monkey. James does a good job as both the adult Hal and, eventually, his twin brother — although I spent the entire movie convinced I was looking at James Franco, my bad — and there's a nice gallery of

character actors who parade through before getting butchered in novel ways, among them Danica Dreyer as a babysitter with an unfortunate taste for Benihana-style steak houses, Corin Clark as

a woman diving into the wrong swimming pool, Tess Degenstein as a real estate agent so annoying you pray for the movie to get on with it, and Perkins himself as the boy's Uncle Chip, whose demise I

will not share other than to note that he ends up looking like 200 pounds of spaghetti Bolognese in a sleeping bag.

The macabre cynicism of "The Monkey" works with its gnawing sense of horror but sometimes against it. The laughs are there, especially in the well-timed gusto with which Perkins unleashes the movie's gore, and the monkey itself is an eerie creation imaginatively and unsettlingly filmed. If you're looking for upbeat bulletins about the human condition, you've come to the wrong movie, but the callousness can still get wearing, and the director's haphazard way with narrative coherence (what are those cheerleaders doing there? who's the dude in the Army uniform?) betrays his lack of interest in anything but the money shots. It's a fun movie to see with a rip-roaring midnight crowd; watched on its own, it's a little depressing. You can only shock the monkey so many times before the shock wears off.

Ty Burr is the author of the movie recommendation newsletter Ty Burr's Watch List at tyburrswatchlist.com.

R. At area theaters. Contains strong bloody violence throughout, language throughout, sexual content/nudity and drug use. 98 minutes.



SONY PICTURES

Paddington (voiced by Ben Whishaw) and his human entourage in "Paddington in Peru," the third movie in the franchise.

Josh Ruben's rom-com slasher "Heart Eyes" features a serial murderer in a distinctive mask. The killer is known to surface each Feb. 14 to slice and dice happy couples.



CHRISTOPHER MOSS/SCREEN GEMS/SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP

ALSO PLAYING

Star ratings are from Post reviews; go to washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/movies for the full-length reviews. For showtimes and directories, see the Movie Directory.

★★★★ ANORA
Mikey Madison isn't just another

pretty woman in Sean Baker's latest. (R, 139 minutes.)

★★★★ THE APPRENTICE
Sebastian Stan and Jeremy Strong star as the young Donald Trump and his soulless mentor, Roy Cohn. (R, 120 minutes.)

★★★★ THE BRUTALIST
Adrien Brody and Guy Pearce star in Brady Corbet's epic tale of

American building and belonging. (R, 215 minutes, including a 15-minute intermission. In English, Hungarian, Hebrew, Yiddish and Italian with English subtitles.)

★★★ CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD
Anthony Mackie and Harrison Ford star in an underwhelming addition to the MCU canon. (PG-13, 118 minutes.)

★★★★ A COMPLETE UNKNOWN
Timothée Chalamet as a young Bob Dylan is excellent, but it's Edward Norton as Pete Seeger who really steals the show. (R, 140 minutes.)

★★★★ CONCLAVE
Ralph Fiennes and a gallery of scene-stealers make for 12 angry cardinals. (PG, 120 minutes.)

★★★★ DOG MAN
Dav Pilkey's superhero-satirizing graphic novel series gets a kinetic adaptation. (PG, 89 minutes.)

★★★★ EMILIA PÉREZ
Jacques Audiard's audacious film has three of the year's best performances. (R, 132 minutes. In English and Spanish with English subtitles.)

SEE MOVIES ON 23

Movies

New movies and shows to stream

BY OLIVIA McCORMACK

A Thousand Blows

From “Peaky Blinders” creator Steven Knight, this series set in 1880s London was inspired by the true story of two Jamaican immigrants battling for survival in the city’s bare-knuckle boxing scene.

Where to watch: Hulu

1923

Winter brings new challenges to Cara (Helen Mirren) and Jacob (Harrison Ford) in Season 2 of this “Yellowstone” prequel series set in the American West during the early 20th century.

Where to watch: Saturday on Paramount Plus

The Americas

Tom Hanks narrates a 10-part docuseries exploring the wildlife of North and South America, scored by composer Hans Zimmer.

Where to watch: Saturday on Peacock

Grosse Pointe Garden Society

This drama follows four members (Aja Naomi King, Ben Rappaport, Melissa Fumero and AnnaSophia Robb) of a suburban gardening club as they attempt to make their community a more beautiful place ... and cover up a murder.

Where to watch: Saturday on Peacock

Suits L.A.

In this Los Angeles-based spin-off series, Stephen Amell stars as a former prosecutor with a law firm that specializes in criminal and entertainment law.

Where to watch: Saturday on Peacock

Running Point

Mindy Kaling’s new comedy series stars Kate Hudson as a reformed party girl who must prove her business prowess when she’s unexpectedly put in charge of her family’s pro basketball team. Series regulars include Max Greenfield, Brenda Song and Chet Hanks.

Where to watch: Thursday on Netflix

Toxic Town

Based on one of the United Kingdom’s biggest environmental scandals, the Corby toxic waste case, this miniseries follows three mothers who fight to hold those in power accountable.

Where to watch: Thursday on Netflix



JACK DYKINGA/NATUREPL.COM/BBC STUDIOS

Cardon and biznaga/barrel cactus grows by the Sea of Cortez in Mexico, seen in an episode of the docuseries “The Americas.”



TRAE PATTON/PARAMOUNT PLUS

Harrison Ford and Helen Mirren in “1923,” a “Yellowstone” prequel series set in the American West in the early 20th century.



STEVE SWISHER/NBC

From left, Melissa Fumero, Ben Rappaport, Aja Naomi King and AnnaSophia Robb in the drama “Grosse Pointe Garden Society.”



ROBERT VIGLASKY/DISNEY

Malachi Kirby in “A Thousand Blows,” a series set in 1880s London.



BEN BLACKALL/NETFLIX

Jodie Whittaker, left, and Aimee Lou Wood in “Toxic Town,” a miniseries based on the Corby toxic waste scandal.



KATRINA MARCINOWSKI/NETFLIX

Kate Hudson in “Running Point,” a Mindy Kaling comedy series.

Common Sense Media What parents need to know

The Unbreakable Boy (PG)

Age 11+
Faith-based drama centers disability and alcohol abuse.

This faith-based film tells the true story of the LeRette family — particularly father Scott (Zachary Levi) and his neurodiverse son, Austin (Jacob Laval), who has a congenital bone disorder that makes him prone to injuries. The story chronicles the family's triumphs and struggles, from the financial strain of medical expenses to Scott's battle with alcohol abuse. Several scenes depict upsetting situations and violence: Austin, in a medication-induced rage, tries to choke his brother and physically confront his parents; Scott crashes his car while driving under the influence; a schoolyard fight breaks out; and one character responds to bad news by breaking dishes. Language includes the r-word slur and "a--hole." Romantic content is mild, with kisses and references to premarital pregnancy. Christian themes figure prominently, and there are many scenes of prayer and pastoral guidance. (109 minutes)
Available in theaters.

Win or Lose (TV-PG)

STREAMING
Age 8+
Sporty Pixar series includes bullying and some romance.

Each episode of this Pixar animated series, about a middle school softball team and the people who make it work, focuses on a different character. Tween Laurie (voiced by Rosanna Jean Foss) is desperate to get a hit in the championship — but with her dad (Will Forte) coaching and a sentient ball of sweat hassling her at every turn, it's not easy. Umpire and teacher Frank (Josh Thomson) is dabbling in the dating world after a bad breakup. Episodes vary content-wise, but they're generally mild and family-friendly. Language includes "losers," "butts" and insults like "doofus." Characters have crushes, date and kiss. There's some body humor: A character throws up in a comic manner, and others burp. Expect to see light bullying of kids and adults. (Eight episodes)
Available on Disney Plus.

Chiwetel Ejiofor and Renée Zellweger in "Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy," the fourth film of the franchise adapted from Helen Fielding's novels.



DANIEL MCFADDEN/LIONSGATE

Zachary Levi, right, headlines the cast of "The Unbreakable Boy," a faith-based drama.



PIXAR

"Win or Lose," an eight-episode Pixar animated series about a middle school softball team and the people who make it work, features the voice of Will Forte as Coach Dan.



JAY MAIDMENT/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy (R)


STREAMING
Age 15+
Heartfelt fourth outing includes language and sex references.

Bridget Jones (Renée Zellweger) is in her early 50s and a widow in the fourth film of the popular rom-com franchise, adapted from Helen Fielding's novels. Her husband's death is mentioned frequently, and she still sees him in visions. Expect strong language throughout, including "f---," "s---" and "b---," with "God" and "Jesus" used as exclamations. Characters kiss passionately, undress to their underwear and lie in bed under sheets, implying that they've had sex. There are also many sexual references. People consume beer, cocktails and champagne, and Bridget drinks directly from a bottle of wine to the point of mild intoxication. Jokes include passing references to drugs. While Bridget's previous love interests have all been White men, Black actor Chiwetel Ejiofor plays a potential suitor in this more diverse installment. (124 minutes)
Available on Peacock.

Old Guy (R)

Age 15+
Bloody, boozy action flick misses the mark.

Although this action-comedy treads on well-worn territory — an "old guy" is being replaced by an up-and-comer at work — it's got a new angle: Their job is organized crime. So expect lots of murders — mostly close-proximity shootings with blood spray, but nothing ultra-gory. There's also a stabbing (that's heard more than seen), a perilous chase and the implication of torture. As is typical in a buddy movie, the protagonists are reluctantly teamed opposites who wind up learning from each other. In this case, young Wihlborg (Cooper Hoffman) is aghast at the grizzled Danny Dolinski's heavy drinking, pill popping and smoking. Dolinski (Christoph Waltz) is shown several times waking up in bed with multiple women, with empty wine bottles scattered around the room. Language includes "dick" and "f---." (93 minutes)
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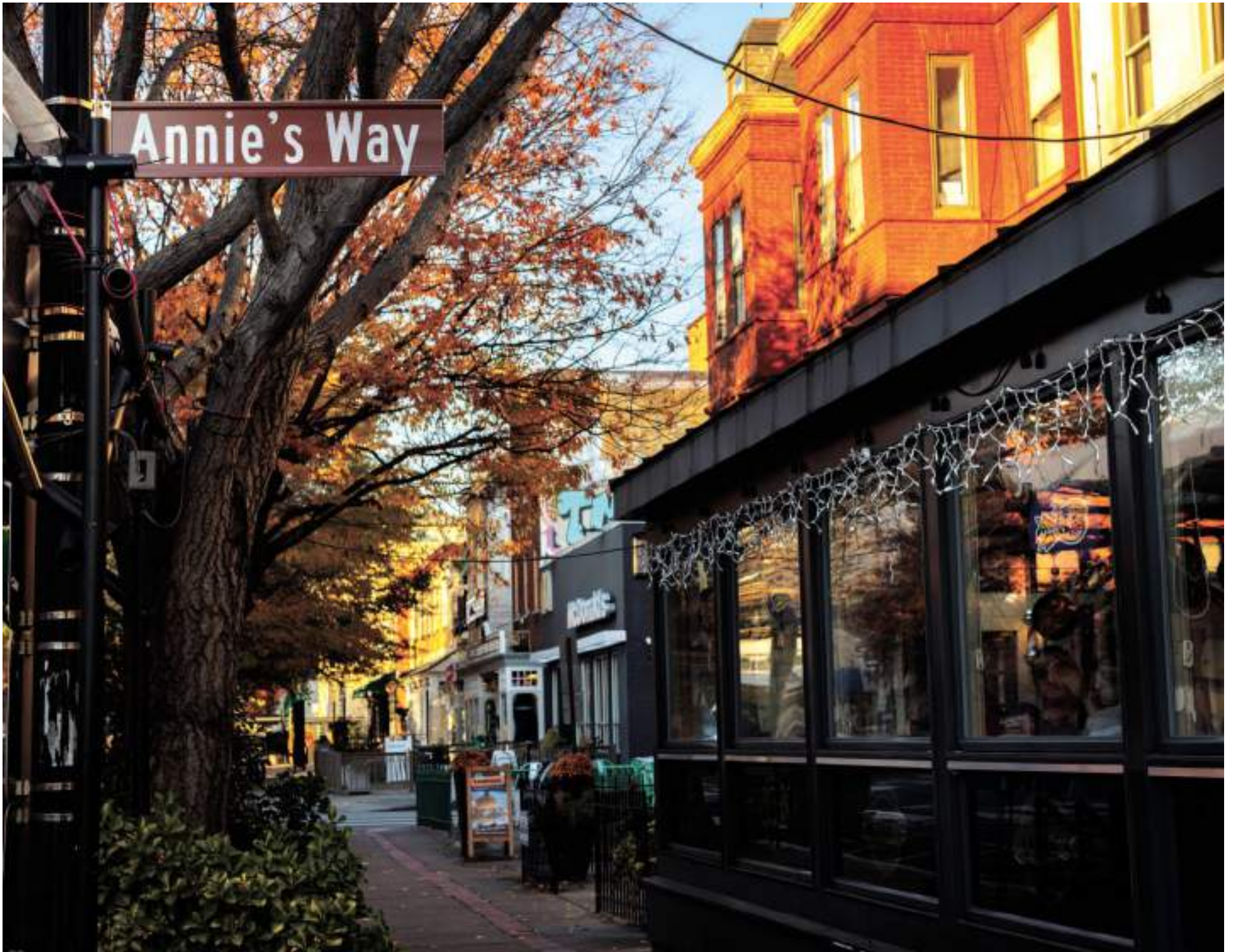
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SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

Cyclists prepare for the "Anything Goes" race at the 2023 Garage Racing National Championships.

Garage Racing National Championships

Between delivery drivers parked in the bike line and cars blowing through stop signs, cycling in the District can be challenging enough. Now picture yourself racing down the ramps of a closed parking garage at breakneck speed, negotiating tight turns and avoiding concrete pillars in the middle of a pack. Does that sound scary? Exhilarating? A bit of both? After a break in 2024, the Garage Racing National Championships return to an underground parking structure in National Landing, with a lively afternoon of competitions for novices, pros and kids ages 10 to 14, as well as a category for hardcore fixed-gear cyclists. The day is capped with the "Anything Goes" race, which brings a creative field dressed in wacky costumes riding anything from penny farthings to festively decorated unicycles. Spectators can try bike-themed activities and purchase food and drinks from pop-up vendors. And if you'd like to hop on your bike, registration is open through 5 p.m. Friday.

When: Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Spectators can enter at 10:30 a.m.

Where: 201 12th St. South, Arlington. nationallanding.org/racing.

Tickets: Free for spectators; \$12-\$25 for cyclists.

Savor Bethesda

It's Bethesda's turn in the parade of local restaurant weeks — this one actually stretches for 11 days — with more than 40 businesses offering lunch specials for \$10 or \$20 and dinners for \$10, \$20 or \$35. Highlights include multicourse meals at Ukrainian standout Ruta, three-course set menus at seafood destination the Salt Line and elevated vegetarian fare at Planta.

When: Through March 2.

Where: See bethesda.org for a list of participants and sample menus.

Prices: \$10-\$35.

'We Gather at the Edge: Contemporary Quilts by Black Women Artists'

See a selection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's newest acquisitions when the Renwick Gallery launches "We Gather at the Edge: Contemporary Quilts by Black Women Artists," an exhibit featuring quilts from the collection of Carolyn Mazloomi. This artist began her career as an aerospace engineer before becoming a force in the quilting world, founding the Women of Color Quilters Network in 1985. The exhibit pays tribute to her efforts and depicts the evolution of Black textile traditions, using works acquired by the Smithsonian in 2023.

When: Through June 22.

Where: Renwick Gallery, Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street NW. americanart.si.edu.

Admission: Free.

Winter Cask Classic

Cask-conditioned ales — the style of flavorful, naturally carbonated beer served in traditional British pubs — can be difficult to find on this side of the pond. The sixth Winter Cask Classic, hosted by Denizens Brewing, brings cask beers from 13 local breweries and meaderies to the Riverdale Park taproom. Tickets include unlimited samples of rare offerings from the Brewer's Art, Port City, Right Proper and Franklin's, as well as a quintet from Denizens. For hockey fans, there's a "friendly" shootout competition in the brewhouse.

When: Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m.

Where: Denizens Brewing, 4550 Van Buren St., Riverdale Park. denizensbrewingco.com.

Tickets: \$40. Free admission for designated drivers and those under 21.

Flurry Fest

The groundhog predicted six more weeks of winter, but regardless of this weekend's forecast, the Yards is planning a family-friendly party dedicated to frosty temperatures. Flurry Fest celebrates the season's ice and snow by creating a winter wonderland featuring activities for all ages, like bubble hockey and a "snow throw" game. Kids can accessorize with glittery temporary tattoos, snag a hot cocoa, and check out various craft stations and photo ops. You can also cheer on brave Polar Plungers at Yards Park, who will be jumping in a pool of ice-cold water to benefit D.C.'s chapter of the Special Olympics.

When: Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m.

Where: The Sundeck at the Yards, 305 Water St. SE. theyardsdc.com.

Admission: Free.



EATON WORKSHOP

Music lovers dig through the crates at the DC Record Fair.

DC Record Fair

After almost a year off, D.C.'s biggest record fair returns with more than 30 vinyl dealers from across the East Coast and a brand-new location: the iconic 9:30 Club. Browse thousands of records, from rare collectors' items to \$1 cutout bins, while listening to DJs, including Brendan Canty of Fugazi and the Messthetics and party-rocker Stereofaith, and sipping discounted mimosas. (Think of it as brunch for the musically inclined.)

When: Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: 9:30 Club, 815 V St. NW. 930.com.

Tickets: \$5 before noon, \$2 after.

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THE WASHINGTON POST • FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Plan Ahead

Noteworthy events over the next few weeks

March 2 Cheesetique Raclette Fest's Après-Ski Party

Del Ray cheese shop and restaurant Cheesetique is hosting its annual Raclette Fest, a gooey ode to the Swiss Alps that finds the eatery scraping melted cheese onto pork sausage, potatoes, pretzel bites — basically anything on the menu. Raclette Fest ends with an Après-Ski Party on March 2, where tickets cover an unlimited raclette feast set to a playlist by DJ Farrah Flosscett. Show up looking like you're fresh off a chairlift and you could win the "best dressed" ski-chic contest. Besides gorging on cheese, you can play ski lodge games and warm up with Alpine drinks (not included in the ticket price). 4 to 7 p.m. Cheesetique, 2411 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. cheesetique.com. \$45.

March 5 Akua Allrich

Washington Performing Arts' community engagement project Mars Arts D.C. is behind a series of free monthly concerts at Union Market district's indie music venue Songbyrd Music House, kicking off with a performance by singer Akua Allrich. This D.C. native is a prominent figure in the city's jazz scene, and at Songbyrd, she'll be accompanied by a live band as she pays tributes to musical legends like Nina Simone and Miriam Makeba. 8 p.m. Songbyrd Music House, 540 Penn St. NE. washingtonperformingarts.org. Free; online registration encouraged.

March 12 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The author of award-winning literary fiction like "Americanah" and "Half of a Yellow Sun," Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie became a cultural touchstone for her Tedx Talk-turned-essay "We Should All Be Feminists," which made its way into a Beyoncé song and onto pricey Dior T-shirts. Her newest book, "Dream Count," is a decade in the making. Fans can learn more when Adichie discusses this novel about mothers and daughters during a conversation at Sixth & I with Glory Edim, podcaster and founder of a literary community called Well-Read Black Girl. 7 p.m. Sixth & I, 600 I St. NW. sixthandi.org. \$40 for an in-person ticket and a signed book with bookplate purchased in advance; \$45 for day-of sales of an in-person ticket and a signed book with bookplate. \$12 for a virtual ticket, or \$40 for a virtual ticket and book with signed bookplate.

March 14-29 'Poppea'

Theater company IN Series concludes its Monteverdi trilogy with an innovative production of the composer's final opera,



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Chokha's "Rawat Gokul Das of Devgarh and Tilkayat Dauji II Worship Shri Nathji" (1823, opaque watercolor, tin and gold on paper) is part of "Delighting Krishna: Paintings of the Child-God."

incorporating the South Indian tradition of Bharatanatyam dance. Choreographer Hari Krishnan is collaborating with IN Series for "Poppea," which also features new dance music by sitar player Amrita Kaur Dang and mridangam percussionist Rajna Swaminathan to infuse Monteverdi's score with the music of South India. Opening night coincides with the Indian festival of Holi, and patrons are encouraged to wear white to this show in order to be bathed in colorful lights. "Poppea" begins its run at the Dupont Underground, then decamps to neighboring Baltimore for three nights at the Baltimore Theatre Project before returning to D.C.'s St. Mark's church on Capitol Hill. March 14 and 15 at 7:30 p.m. and March 16 at 2:30 p.m. at Dupont Underground, 19 Dupont Circle NW. March 28 at 7:30 p.m. and March 29 at 2:30 p.m. at St. Mark's Capitol Hill, 301 A St. SE. inseries.org. \$35-\$72.

March 15 'Delighting Krishna'

Monumental Indian artworks called pichwais are the focus of a new exhibit headed to the National Museum of Asian Art. The name comes from the Hindi word for "behind," and these vibrant, gilded paintings on cotton cloth are used as backdrops behind three-dimensional displays featuring icons of the child-god Krishna. For the first time in 50 years, visitors can see 14 pichwais from the museum's collection on view together as part of "Delighting Krishna: Paintings of the Child-God." The exhibit also folds in court paintings and mixed-media works that illustrate both the playful personality of Krishna and the artistic and spiritual traditions of the Hindu Pushtimarg community. Through Aug. 24. National Museum of Asian Art, 1050 Independence Ave. SW. asia.si.edu. Free.

— Adele Chapin



Del Ray restaurant Cheestique hosts an annual raclette festival that features the famous melted Alpine cheese poured over sausages, potatoes, pretzel bites, baguettes and anything else on the menu.

CHEESTIQUE

Q: Tom — what's the right etiquette on tipping after bad service in a restaurant? Is it EVER acceptable to tip less than 15 percent, even if the service is horrible?

A: I think cases can be made for tipping less than the traditional norm of 20 percent, but I think they should be accompanied by a chat with a manager about the slips. Otherwise, servers are just going to think you're cheap or unaware. You also don't want to hurt staff who may have been helpful: say, a welcoming host or efficient busser, colleagues who might share in tips that are pooled. Also keep in mind, some problems might be out of a server's control. Making a supervisor aware of a problem — hopefully as issues arise rather than after the fact — is apt to improve the lot for future diners.

Q: Hi, Tom, with the Kennedy Center takeover by Trump, thousands of us are canceling our memberships. Do restaurants nearby realize their customers will not return for the next four years?

A: Thanks to your early submission, I was able to talk to Ris Lacoste, owner of the American bistro **Ris** in the West End. She told me she's concerned. "We do a great preheater business, and any disruption in the flow of community service and theatergoers will affect us," says the veteran Washington chef. "And it seems that might happen with the recent political activity at the KC. We are in the wait-and-see game, as we are with the nearby State Department [and] regional federal workforce. In general, I do hear comments hither and thither that the efforts of the new administration will be good for our business?? As a small-business owner, I can only put my best foot forward at all times to keep business flowing and keep as many people happy as humanly possible. We can only hope."

Q: My wife's birthday is coming up, and she loves a good prime rib. So far, the only place in D.C. that we've been able to find that serves prime rib is the Prime Rib. The food is always good there, but sometimes it's a bit much. Are there any good alternatives in the D.C. metro area for a prime rib dinner?

A: What do you mean by "a bit much"? You don't like servers in black, a sleek dining room and the live music? For something more on the casual side, several Great American Restaurants in Northern Virginia offer prime rib dinners. They include **Jackson's Mighty Fine** in Reston (Friday and Saturday nights) and **Artie's**



REY LOPEZ/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Caviar on coconut sorbet at Rose's Luxury, a whimsical sibling restaurant to Little Pearl that's suitable for a birthday celebration.

in Fairfax (Thursday through Saturday).

Q: Hi, Tom. My wife and I will soon be celebrating a big anniversary and have looked in the Front Royal area for lodging and food. I suggested the Ashby Inn, but my wife was drawn to Berkeley Springs. We have, of course, booked a place at Berkeley Springs. (We've been married a long time. I know the secret to marital success: Always do what the wife wants to do.) Is there a place you recommend in Berkeley Springs? Ashby Inn isn't too far away, but I feel as though the die has been cast and

that we won't be traveling outside Berkeley Springs for the weekend. Thanks!

A: Good call on skipping the once-admired Ashby Inn in Paris, Virginia. I had a promising brunch followed by a dud of a dinner there last year. Very inconsistent. The place in Berkeley Springs, famous for its mineral baths, that gets the most (positive) attention is **Lot 12 Public House**. I have yet to try it out myself, however. The menu is three courses, with multiple choices per course, for \$79.

Q: My daughter is about to turn 29. We love good food and are

looking for a place for a celebratory dinner. We want something nice and memorable and are thinking of Little Pearl. My daughter has been before, so we are hoping for a good alternative. We are open in terms of cuisine; as for price, we want to be around the cost of Little Pearl or less. Many thanks for all your advice over the years.

A: If you want to stay in the family, **Rose's Luxury**, Little Pearl's whimsical sibling, is nearby on the Hill. The five-course spread starts with delicious challah and caraway-honey butter presented as ribbons and can end with a fresh fruit plate reimagined as a rainbow of shaved ice. Fun from soup to nuts, in other words.

Q: I'd love some more restaurant recommendations for the Laurel area, especially ones with vegetarian options. I enjoyed your suggestion of My Kabul. Thank you!

A: Are you familiar with **Amber Spice**? Much as I like the Goan shrimp curry and sizzling lamb kebabs on the list, I'm perfectly content feasting solely on vegetables. Highlights include forest-green spinach kofta, the dusky gold aloo gobi and

shocking red paneer chili — edible art worthy of frames.

Q: Hello, Tom, my girlfriend and I will be going to Wilmington, Lewes and Rehoboth Beach in a few months. She did the hotels search, and I'm doing the food search. Any must-haves? She's vegetarian, while I eat pretty much anything. Thanks in advance!

A: **Drift** in Rehoboth Beach is a must-book for dinner — try to sit in back, where it's not so noisy — and I always make time for lunch at **Matt's Fish Camp** in Lewes.

Q: Hi, Tom, any recommendations for restaurants to celebrate a George Washington University graduation? Looking for vegetarian and gluten-friendly. We've done Rasika and Zaytinya but would like something different. Something a bit more upscale. For a party of six people. **A:** What about the luxe **Imperfecto** in the West End? It's close to the university, and it offers both private and communal dining experiences.

● Tom Sietsema hosts a weekly Q&A on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. at live.washingtonpost.com.

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Heaven Forbid serves cranked-up catharsis



CHRIS SUSPECT

BY CHRIS KELLY

Heaven Forbid is known for its All Hat No Cattle nights for all kinds of country fans.

When Heaven Forbid first put down stakes at the VFW Post 350 — “Hell’s Bottom” to regulars — bandleader Baby Bry Bry assumed the D.C. band would be working on its chops for a “gray-haired ponytail” crowd, proving to an audience of people who didn’t think they liked country music that they actually did. The reality was somewhat different.

“There was this old guy, and he was like, ‘Oh,

another punk band turned country band. I feel like there’s a story about that in the Old Testament somewhere,” Bry Bry recalls. “It’s well-trodden territory.”

Baby Bry Bry and the rest of Heaven Forbid — “Tennessee Dave” Epley, Tommy “The Chillbilly” Sherrod, Xaq “Science Boy” Rothman, “Lazy Adam” Stern and Noah Bein — have spent the past few years learning about the turf and their place in it. The group first got together just before the pandemic, after which its members de-

SEE HEAVEN FORBID ON 7

D.C. quartet iFiasco! floats between jazz and ‘not-jazz’

BY MARK JENKINS

What kind of music does D.C. instrumental quartet iFiasco! play? Guitarist Nelson Dougherty and saxophonist Andrew Frankhouse cordially disagree. The latter chooses the term “not-jazz.”

“What I like about calling it not-jazz is that it’s a way of creating an association with jazz, and some of the ethos of jazz,” explains Frankhouse, “without putting some of those expectations on it.”

“To me, it’s a way of saying, ‘There’s something jazz here, but it’s different.’”

“I always considered us jazz,” Dougherty responds. “He has a conflicting view on what jazz is. He’s like, ‘If this is jazz, then everything is jazz.’”

Sitting in Dougherty’s modest basement office at George Washington University, where the guitarist teaches part time, both musicians agree that there are non-jazz elements in the group’s sound. “In the move from the first two albums to what we’re doing now, I think we’ve fully embraced the rock-and-roll tendencies of the band,” says Frankhouse.

iFiasco! began in 2016, at first as a quintet to play the music of the late drummer-composer Paul Motian. (“Fiasco,” minus the exclamation marks, is the title of a Motian tune.) The group now comprises Frankhouse, Dougherty and drummer Keith Butler Jr., all between the ages of 35 and 40, and 29-year-old bassist Stephen Arnold. Each is a professionally trained musician; Butler and Frankhouse earned master’s degrees.

The quartet began recording in 2019 and released its fourth album, “Remember Your Flowers,” in October. The record has a live-in-the-studio sound. “We intentionally recorded in a bigger space, where we could all be together and everything could be loud,” the saxophonist says.

The group’s albums are made with minimal post-recording alteration, Frankhouse notes. “Everything that we’ve done in the studio we can execute in the live setting, which I think is exciting.”

Exactly where to play live can be tricky. The band’s eclecticism “is awesome from a musical perspective but makes it hard to find avenues and outlets” for the music, the saxophonist says. “It’s too loud for the jazz clubs; it’s too weird for some of the rock clubs.”

Next week, the quartet will perform at Rhizome, a Takoma bungalow where musicians play in the living room, which has no stage. Dougherty calls the

SEE iFIASCO! ON 7

iFIASCO! FROM 6

venue “really the perfect place for us.”

“I almost feel like an obligation to be a little more avant-garde than I would be at other places,” he says. “Which is great. It pushes me to explore that side of me.”

“It’s different from playing at a club, where we’re up here and you’re down there,” Frankhouse adds. “I love Rhizome for that. That we’re all in it together.”

Dougherty, Frankhouse and Arnold all use multiple effects pedals, whose sonic ornamentation the guitarist says has shaped his compositions. “I write toward those things now. Duke Ellington wrote toward Johnny Hodges, because he liked the way his saxophone sounded. I like this particular glitch delay pedal. How can I incorporate it into my song? I’ll make a space for that to happen.”

Frankhouse was initially skeptical of connecting his saxophone to effects devices designed for electric guitars. “It definitely took some convincing on Nelson’s part,” he says. But he’s come to appreciate the possibilities.

“The way that he can play a giant chord and fill the space, I can use a reverb or delay or some kind of pitch manipulation to sort of do the same thing. Create the same kind of clouds of sound.”

Such techniques fuse the indi-



JULIAN ORTIZ

vidual musicians’ contributions in a way that Dougherty finds remarkable. “We’ll make some sort of big group sound, and I won’t actually know what I’ve

done or what Andrew’s done. He’ll have played something that could be my guitar.”

“It’s really interesting. It’s like I don’t actually understand where I

end and he starts.”

Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Rhizome, 6950 Maple St. NW. rhizomedc.org. \$15-\$25.

iFiasco! began recording in 2019 and released its fourth album, “Remember Your Flowers,” in October.

HEAVEN FORBID FROM 6

camped to the porch of their pedal-steel player for a couple of years. Since the world reopened to live music, the group has brought its All Hat No Cattle night to venues around D.C., turning an insult about rhinestone cowboys into a badge of honor.

These days, All Hat No Cattle features a few sets for the band, which plays both originals and, in the country-western tradition, covers of classics by songwriters gone by. For Baby Bry Bry, transitioning from 20-minute punk sets that felt like marathons to nights full of music changed his relationship to the experience.

“Part of the joy of what we were doing was more about creating an atmosphere different than the traditional performance where everyone finishes smoking their cigarette, they come in, they stand politely in front of the stage, they observe and absorb the music, and then they go outside until the next band starts,” he explains. “We want to be part of the atmosphere, more than the focal point.”

In that way, All Hat No Cattle has become a place for newcomers to D.C.’s music scene as well as long-time residents, locals wearing new boots and Texpats digging cowboy hats out of their closets.

“Whether you grew up on a ranch or in a city, you can connect to the universal emotion,” he says. “The old adage is [country music] is two chords and the truth. To me, it’s the truth turned up to 11.”

That cranked-up catharsis is perfect for Baby Bry Bry, who has amped up simple songs to their

melodramatic extremes, whether crooning as the front man of Baby Bry Bry and the Apologists or flexing his falsetto in synth-pop duo Slow Love. Country’s anti-authoritarian, antiestablishment roots are familiar for a musician who grew up in punk bands, and a necessary antidote to the prevail-

ing mood in the early days of the second Trump administration.

“Our city feels like we’re facing an invading force, in a way, and more than ever, we’re going to be leaning on the strength of solidarity and the power of people,” he says. “Whether it’s a hardcore show where kids can let off steam

or a country show where we’ve got people dancing, hanging out, singing along ... we’re got to find our places and our people.”

Saturday at 8 p.m. at Songbyrd, 540 Penn St. NE. songbyrdcc.com. \$10-\$15.

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‘Monumental’ art given minimal space

Sculptures by D.C.-area artists deserve more breathing room

BY KRISTON CAPPS

Get up close with Kenneth Hilker’s “Bookends” (2024). At first glance, the sculpture is standoffish: a great ramshackle contraption, with limblike appendages fastened together from wooden boards that project out in haphazard arcs. Near in, though, this kraken construction reveals its logic. Precisely placed metal hinges and rhythmic gaps between the planks read like a puzzle. Yet stand back and the orderly details give way to chaos. “Bookends” makes frozen fire out of solid wood.

At its longest, “Bookends” measures 24 feet. A sculpture this sprawling needs a stage. It could hold its own in any gallery at the American University Museum, but the piece is just one of 20 large sculptures on view — none of which have enough room to breathe.

“Monumental Washington” brings together works in wood, steel, aluminum, marble and fabric: some of it carved, much of it cast and all of it huge. The show is an invitational by the nonprofit

SEE MONUMENTAL ON 9



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Dates: Through May 18.

Prices: Free.

TOP: The works in “Monumental Washington” include, from left, Davide Prete’s “Icarus” (2023), forged steel and stainless steel; Nicholas Femia’s “Searching” (2024), steel; and Bobby Donovan’s “Dagmersellen” (2024), wood, steel, cement, tar, polystyrene and enamel. **LEFT:** Kenneth Hilker’s “Bookends” (2024), repurposed wood and metal, left, and Noël Kassewitz’s “O’er the Ramparts We Watched, Waiting” (2024), polypropylene sandbags, wood and cast resin.

MONUMENTAL FROM 8

Washington Sculptors Group, which has promoted local 3D artists for more than 40 years. While some of the work is quite strong, the show lacks presence: “Monumental Washington” occupies a space so packed with work that even powerful bronzes come off as cramped.

The show takes place in a courtyard off the main level, part of the museum’s sculpture garden. The walled-off plaza is easy to miss; it’s a dead end in a building whose nautilus-shell shape creates a number of spaces that are difficult for showing art. No doubt the courtyard is large enough to showcase large-scale sculpture. Just not this much of it.

Consider Alex Mayer’s “Double L” (1985). The steel piece comprises two L-shaped beams, which intersect each other at their longest end. The components are oriented at odds with each other: One lies flat on the ground while the other stands at an angle. The piece is a drawing in space, a minimalist gesture. It’s the kind of sculpture that relies on the space around it to help convey its simplicity — to reveal its imperfect resolution of geometric tensions. But there’s no way to look at “Double L” alone. Too many other works crowd into the frame.

Not all the works suffer from the presentation. Michael Wolf’s “Deconstructed” (2024) is a screen that comprises fractured pieces of a home (fence, tree, window, gable) at a personable, intimate scale. It draws viewers in as close as they can get. “O’er the Ramparts We Watched, Waiting” (2024), a piece by Noël Kassewitz



PHOTO BY GREG STALEY/COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS/WASHINGTON SCULPTORS GROUP/AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

ABOVE: A view of “Monumental Washington,” including Michael Wolf’s “Deconstructed” (2024), cedar wood and branch. BELOW: At left, Kristina Penhoet’s “More Likely Than Not Equal” (2024), crocheted ribbon yarn made from recycled textiles, next to Luc Fiedler’s “Gravity Threshold” (2017), steel and cast bronze.



— an artist known for her climate-oriented works — sees a raised fist emerging from a pile of sandbags in a gesture of climate resilience. The composition is reminiscent of Michelangelo Pistoletto’s “Venus of the Rags” (1967), but the human scale works fine in close quarters.

“Katzen Pegaea” (2024-2025) by Barbara Liotta makes the most of the space. Her sculptural installation hugs one of the corners of the courtyard. For the piece, the artist suspended chunks of marble, granite and quartz using rope line to form rows of rocks that float in space. This sculpture was made as a kind of spatial line drawing with this site in mind, and it shows. “Katzen Pegaea” is one of the few pieces that afford the viewer the opportunity to stand back and take them in on their own terms.

As an invitational, this show wasn’t organized by a curator, per se; the goal was to showcase the Washington Sculptors Group, not any specific artist or genre. That lines up with the approach favored by American University Museum director and curator Jack Rasmussen, who regularly mounts half a dozen simultaneous exhibitions at any given time, each one packed to the gills. Argu-

ably, it’s a democratic way to do programming, and no question, the American University Museum shows more work by local artists than other institutions.

But volume isn’t the only factor for a museum to consider — and at the American University Museum, quality suffers from quantity.

Space isn’t a luxury to be afforded to sculpture when possible. The same way that a restaurant’s vibe affects how its food lands, a gallery’s decisions will change how visitors see the work. At any museum, sculpture gardens are usually overlooked by both curators and audiences, since it’s not easy to update them to keep up with changing ideas about how to showcase artworks. But even a modest concrete plaza like the courtyard of the Katzen will do.

“Monumental Washington” wants to make the case that the city is full of artists doing big things. That’s true, of course, and it’s admirable that one of the city’s museums is so dedicated to making sure that every artist gets the spotlight. But less is more, and a truly monumental show might feature two or three sculptures at most. A museum needs to serve the viewer, not just the participating artists — and in this case, it’s doing neither.

MUSEUMS

The following special exhibitions are on view at area museums. For a complete list of all permanent, indefinite and long-term exhibitions, please consult individual museum websites. Museums marked with an * are free. Note: The National Geographic Museum and the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building are temporarily closed for renovations.

***AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AT THE KATZEN ARTS CENTER** "A Sight to Behold," through March 30. A collection of 19th- and early 20th-century American landscape paintings.

Five exhibitions are on view through May 18: "Bruce and Jean Conner in Mexico, 1961-62," "Monumental Washington," "Otho Branson: Paintings," "#SerbiaInRealLife" and "Fred Folsom: Women Smoking and Last Call." 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW. american.edu/cas/museum

***ANACOSTIA COMMUNITY MUSEUM** "A Bold and Beautiful Vision: A Century of Black Arts Education in Washington, DC, 1900-2000," through March 2. Artifacts and original artworks highlight this exhibition honoring African American artist-educators. 1901 Fort Pl. SE. anacostia.si.edu

CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM "JewCE: The Jewish Comics Experience," through March 23. This exhibition highlights comic book superheroes who came from the minds of Jewish creators, writers and artists, as well as contemporary graphic novels that explore Jewish themes. The museum features two ongoing exhibitions about Jewish history, from 1790 to today, and how to build a better future in the National Capital Region: "What Is Jewish Washington?" and "Connect. Reflect. Act." 575 Third St. NW. capitaljewishmuseum.org

***DUMBARTON OAKS** "Perú: 200 Years," through March. This exhibition marks two centuries of independence in the South American nation by highlighting objects from ancient Peruvian civilizations. "Striking Designs: Communicating Through Coins," through May 31. An exploration of how the Roman and Byzantine Empire used money to spread ideology. "The White House," through June. This installation by Colombian artist Santiago Montoya features 12 houses of varying sizes — 11 made of coal and one made of white chocolate. 1703 32nd St. NW. doaks.org

***FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY** "How to Be a Power Player: Tudor Edition," through July 31. More than 60 objects from the Folger collection exemplify social climbing in Tudor England. 201 East Capitol St. SE

***GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AND TEXTILE MUSEUM** "Art Uncovered: Visionary Textile Scholars and Their Archives," through April 5. A global selection of letters, photos and more from the Arthur D. Jenkins Library's archives. "A Tale of Two Houses," through May 17. An exploration of two houses central to D.C. history: the Woodhull House in Foggy Bottom and George Hewitt Myers's Kalamazoo residence. "Intrinsic Beauty: Celebrating the Art of Textiles," Saturday through June 14. The museum celebrates its 100-year anniversary with a showcase of its collection's masterworks. 701 21st St. NW. museum.gwu.edu

***GLENSTONE** "Cady Noland," through Sunday. This sequence of three galleries represents the elusive American sculptor's first U.S. museum survey. 12100 Glen Rd., Potomac. glenstone.org

HILLWOOD ESTATE, MUSEUM AND GARDEN "Setting Sail: The Story of Sea Cloud," through June 15. Photographs, models, paintings and more tell the story of the sailing yacht built by Marjorie Merriweather Post and husband E.F. Hutton in the early 20th century. 4155 Linnean Ave. NW. hillwoodmuseum.org

***HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN** "Osgemeos: Endless Story," through Aug. 3. This full-floor presentation tracks the collaboration and artistic trajectory of Brazilian identical twins Gustavo and Otavio Pandolfo. "Basquiat x Banksy," through Oct. 26. The exhibition highlighting two paintings, one by



RON AMSTUTZ

"Cady Noland" at Glenstone offers a comprehensive view of Noland's sculpture. The sequence of three galleries represents the elusive American artist's first U.S. museum survey.

Jean-Michel Basquiat and one by Banksy, marks the first time either artist's work has been presented at the museum. "Revolutions: Art From the Hirshhorn Collection, 1860-1960," through Jan. 3, 2027. This collection presents 208 artworks made during a period defined by evolutions in science, philosophy and mechanization. Seventh Street and Independence Avenue SW. hirshhorn.si.edu

INTERNATIONAL SPY MUSEUM "Bond in Motion," through September. A celebration of the James Bond film franchise featuring props and scale models alongside cars, motorcycles and more 007 vehicles. 700 L'Enfant Plaza SW. spymuseum.org

***LIBRARY OF CONGRESS** "Collecting Memories: Treasures From the Library of Congress," through December. The David M. Rubenstein Treasures Gallery's first exhibition examines the ways in which cultures preserve memory. Thomas Jefferson Building, 10 First St. SE. loc.gov

***MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE ART GALLERY** "Maximal Miniatures," through May 23. A showcase of 13 contemporary Iranian artists reimagining Persian miniature painting. 1763 N St. NW. mei.edu/art-gallery

MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE "The Megiddo Mosaic: Foundations of Faith," through July 6. This interactive exhibit showcases an ancient mosaic floor discovered by archaeologists in 2005. 400 Fourth St. SW. museumofthebible.org

***NATIONAL ARCHIVES MUSEUM** "Power & Light: Russell Lee's Coal Survey," through Dec. 7. A display of more than 200 images of coal communities from American documentary photographer Russell Lee. 701 Constitution Ave. NW. museum.archives.gov

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM "Frank Lloyd Wright's Southwestern Pennsylvania," through March 17. This exhibition shines a light on projects the architect designed for the region from the 1930s through the 1950s. "Capital Brutalism," through June 30. An exploration of the Metro system and seven D.C. buildings designed in the polarizing brutalist style. "A South Forty: Contemporary Architecture and Design in the American South," through winter 2026. An overview of design in the South zeroes in on architectural trends that have defined the region since 1990. "Brick City," through August 2026. U.K.-based artist Warren Elmore uses Lego pieces to re-create destinations from all seven continents, including New Orleans during Mardi Gras and medieval Japanese castles. "Mini Memories: Souvenir Buildings From the David Weingarten Collection," ongoing. A showcase of 400 miniature building souvenirs from nearly 70 countries. "House & Home," ongoing. A collection of

photographs, models, films and objects that examine American homes both familiar and unconventional.

"Building Stories," ongoing. This immersive exhibition dives into the world of architecture, engineering, construction and design as depicted in children's books. 401 F St. NW. nbnm.org

***NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART** "Spirit & Strength: Modern Art From Haiti," through March 9. Haiti's significance to the African diaspora is put on display in this exhibition featuring 21 recently gifted works. "The '70s Lens: Reimagining Documentary Photography," through April 6. Around 100 works highlight how a period of societal upheaval set the stage for artistic experimentation. Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW. nga.gov

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE** "In Slavery's Wake," through June 8. This immersive exhibition uses hundreds of objects, images and multimedia elements to explore the impacts of colonialism and slavery, as well as the legacies of Black freedom makers.

"Reclaiming My Time," through January 2026. An exhibition highlighting work by contemporary Black designers about issues of cultural heritage, bodies at rest, labor and leisure.

"Reckoning: Protest. Defiance. Resilience," ongoing. The exhibition focuses on the Black Lives Matter movement and art that depicts resistance and protest. 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. nmaahc.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART**

"John Akomfrah: Five Murmurations," through Aug. 24. The Ghanaian-born, London-based artist and filmmaker addresses the covid-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and the worldwide protests in support of Black Lives Matter in this visual essay of our times.

"Benin Bronzes: Ambassadors of the Oba," through Dec. 31, 2026. Nine bronze artifacts taken by the British during the Benin Punitive Expedition of 1897 are on display as part of a long-term loan from the National Commission for Museum and Monuments in Nigeria.

"Sanctuary: Mekdes," ongoing. Through seven sculptures, Ethiopian American artist Tsedaye Makonnen confronts the dehumanization of Black women, femme people and their communities. 950 Independence Ave. SW. africa.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY** "Forensic Science on Trial," through June. An exhibition breaking down how forensic science has been used in more than 150 years of trials.

"Present! A Latino History of the United States." The Molina Family Latino Gallery is the first gallery space of the new National Museum of the American Latino; it tells U.S. history from the perspective of members of

the diverse Latino community and covers themes such as immigration, identity and legacy. Constitution Avenue NW, between 12th and 14th streets. americanhistory.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN**

"Sublime Light: Tapestry Art of DY Begay," through July 13. The first retrospective of the Navajo fiber artist's career features 48 tapestries spanning three decades of work. "Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains," through Jan. 20, 2026. Historical hides, muslins and ledger books from the Great Plains are presented alongside 50 contemporary works commissioned by the museum.

"Water's Edge: The Art of Truman Lowe," through January 2027. Featuring 50 sculptures, drawings, and paintings, this is the first major retrospective of the Ho-Chunk artist. Fourth Street and Independence Avenue SW. americanindian.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART** "The Print Generation," through April 27. This exhibition highlights artists who broke Japanese printmaking traditions in the early decades of the 20th century. "Striking Objects: Contemporary Japanese Metalwork," through Jan. 11. Works from the collection of Shirley Z. Johnson highlight the ways in which modern Japanese metalworking is used in traditional methods.

"Shifting Boundaries: Perspectives on American Landscapes," through July 26, 2026. A variety of experts were recruited to develop themes, curate artworks and write labels for this exhibition that casts paintings of New England landscapes in a new light. "Ruffled Feathers: Creating Whistler's Peacock Room," through Jan. 31, 2027. This exhibition, situated next to artist James McNeill Whistler's Peacock Room, uses paintings and other art to explore the room's history. 1050 Independence Ave. SW. asia.si.edu

***NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY** "Lights Out: Recovering Our Night Sky," through December. Photographs, objects, models and interactive elements are used to explore the effects of light pollution. "Dazzling Diversity," through Dec. 16. Early natural history books from the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives put scientific knowledge of the insect world on display. "Cellphone: Unseen Connections," through 2026. This exhibition, about the way phones connect us to the natural world, features multimedia installations, a sprawling graphic novel and more than 750 objects. 10th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. naturalhistory.si.edu

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS "Samantha Box: Confluences," through March 23. This display highlights

the Bronx-based photographer's black-and-white work exploring race, gender, class, and sexuality.

"In Focus: Artists at Work," through April 20. Video documentaries explore the creative processes of eight contemporary artists. 1250 New York Ave. NW. nmwa.org

***NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY** "Brilliant Exiles: American Women in Paris, 1900-1939," through Sunday. An exhibition highlighting the feats of 60 American women who traversed the Atlantic in the early 20th century in pursuit of creative freedom.

"This Morning, This Evening, So Soon: James Baldwin and the Voices of Queer Resistance," through April 20. Curated by Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Hilton Als, this collection explores the interconnected lives of Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Bayard Rustin and other queer civil rights activists. "Picturing the Presidents: Daguerreotypes and Ambrotypes from the National Portrait Gallery's Collection," through June 8. This exhibition features photographs of 11 U.S. presidents.

"Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Always to Return," through July 6. The artist's work is presented in D.C. for the first time in more than 30 years, with a focus on his groundbreaking portraiture.

"Recent Acquisitions," through Oct. 26. This display showcases 21 additions to the museum's collection, all representing female subjects or made by women.

Subjects include singer Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, writer Octavia Butler and actress Greta Garbo.

"Star Power: Photographs From Hollywood's Golden Age by George Hurrell," through Jan. 4, 2026. This exhibition highlights the work of Hurrell, a Hollywood photographer whose portraits captured the likes of Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy and Joan Crawford. Eighth and F streets NW. npg.si.edu

***NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM** "Voting by Mail: Civil War to Covid-19," through Sunday. This election-year exhibition features objects spanning three centuries that have been used to help U.S. citizens vote by mail. 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE. postalmuseum.si.edu

PHILLIPS COLLECTION "Timeless Mucha: The Magic of Line," Saturday through May 18. More than 100 works from Czech painter and decorative artist Alphonse Mucha track his creative evolution. 1600 21st St. NW. phillipscollection.org

***RENWICK GALLERY** "Contemporary Craft at the Renwick Gallery," ongoing. More than 100 works composed of fiber, ceramics, glass, metal, wood and other materials showcase handmade art of the 21st century.

"Janet Echelman's 1.8 Renwick," ongoing. The American sculptor's fiber and lighting installation projects shadow drawings in colors that move from wall to wall. Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street NW. americanart.si.edu

***RUBELL MUSEUM** "American Vignettes: Symbols, Society and Satire," through fall. A trio of themes encapsulate nearly 100 works from contemporary artists who were born in the United States or call the country home. 65 I St. SW. rubellmuseum.org/dc

***SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM** "Pictures of Belonging: Miki Hayakawa, Hisako Hibi and Miné Okubo," through Aug. 17. An examination of the art from three trailblazing American women of Japanese descent.

"The Shape of Power: Stories of Race and American Sculpture," through Sept. 14. A collection of 82 works created between 1792 and 2023 examines how sculpture and race in America have intersected. "Sightlines: Chinatown and Beyond," through Nov. 30. This gallery overlooking D.C.'s Chinatown neighborhood highlights Asian Americans' cultural impact on the nation's capital.

"Artist to Artist," through Aug. 2, 2026. This rotating exhibition highlights eight artist pairings, each of which features two figures whose trajectories intersected at a key moment.

"Isaac Julien: Lessons of the Hour — Frederick Douglass," through 2026. A joint purchase by the Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, this five-screen video installation uses period reenactments to create a portrait of the activist, writer, orator and philosopher Frederick Douglass. G and Eighth streets NW. americanart.si.edu



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Eat your way through a historic slice of the District

10 of the best restaurants in Dupont Circle include inventive Mexican and 'atypical' Thai

BY WARREN ROJAS

Talk about an embarrassment of riches.

Dupont Circle hosts blocks and blocks of award-winning restaurants and chefs, many of whom are classically trained but also inclined to put their own delicious stamp on D.C.'s culinary landscape. And with menus as diverse as the United Nations — feast on Sichuan, Tuscan and Korean cuisines as well as unconventional gourmet pizzas, all within walking distance — there's no reason to fret when hunger pangs strike.

Follow these dining recommendations from Washington Post food critic Tom Sietsema, Post food writer Tim Carman and

your intrepid local dining reporter to fully enjoy this historic slice of Washington.

Anju

1805 18th St. NW. anjurestaurant.com.

Partaking in executive chef Angel Barreto's daring cuisine transports Sietsema to a festive dinner party in Seoul, he writes in his 2024 fall dining guide. "The menu is half contemporary, half traditional, an attempt to show off the range of Korea," Sietsema raves, marveling at tongue-teasing banchan (including "little dishes of acorn jelly," "candied anchovies crisped with pecans" and papaya-laced kimchi), striking starters ("boiled, roasted corn on the cob, slathered with garlic-ginger aioli

and served on honey barbecue sauce") and robust mains ("fried rice chockablock with rib-eye, Spam, an egg on top and some crunch from fried ramen noodles"). And while there are opportunities to feast like visiting dignitaries — Barreto was tapped to cook for visiting South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's 2023 state luncheon — Sietsema recommends indulging in "at least one homey dish" inspired by co-founder Danny Lee's mother, Ye-soon Lee. The traditional offerings include spicy braised chicken thighs, stewed pork belly stoked by aged kimchi, and beefy bibimbap. (Entrées \$25 to \$42.)

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The pozole at Amparo Fondita, an eatery that marries "sophistication with companionable charm."

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Obelisk2029 P St. NW. obeliskdc.com.

Ready to be coddled by a “gracious host who cooks better than you do”? Then Sietsema suggests pulling up a seat at this recent inductee into his D.C. restaurant hall of fame. “Everything from the kitchen of chef/owner Esther Lee is a model of good taste,” he writes in the 2024 fall dining guide, praising offerings ranging from the bread basket to a “divine” prune-plum dessert. Recent highlights include alluring anti-pasti (“shrimp swaddled in lardo,” “nubby eggplant croquettes that go down like an idyllic Italian picnic”) and other must-tries (a Tuscan bread soup bathed in tomatoes, olive oil and basil; lamp chops bolstered by melting pearl onions and artichoke salad). “Pasta with some bite might be tossed with whatever mushrooms are prime,” he says of the seasonally inspired menu. Care to add people watching to the mix? Request table No. 8 — prime real estate “whose big window frames passersby in Dupont Circle.” (*\$125-per-person, five-course tasting menu.*)

Amparo Fondita2002 P St. NW. amparofondita.com.

This inventive Mexican newcomer made a splash in the area “by marrying sophistication with companionable charm,” Sietsema writes in his 2024 spring dining guide, praising chef-owner Christian Irabién for leading the charge. Irabién’s arsenal includes ceviche broth that “stings, pleasantly so,” with serrano pepper heat; “bodacious” pork pozole punctuated by hominy and avocado; and “awesome tortillas” made in-house from colorful Oaxacan corn. “You’ll want some tacos here, too,” Sietsema says of foldable favorites (three per order) filled with grilled skirt steak, pineapple-sweetened pork belly, roasted potatoes smothered in black beans, Baja-style catch of the day offerings crowned with purple cabbage and more. “I thought the prize was a fat finger of flounder cooked on the plancha and garnished with shredded purple cabbage and mayonnaise shot through with fruity guajillo chiles until I tried the lamb braised in chiles, garlic, onion and Oaxacan chocolate,” Sietsema writes of the surprises that await adventurous diners. (*Entrées \$32 to \$47.*)



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

ABOVE: Caesar and Macha 'Roni pizzas at Boogy and Peel, a self-styled pizza lab that goes beyond conventional combos. **RIGHT:** The dining room at La Tomate, a mainstay that's nearly 40 years old.

Annie's Paramount Steak House1609 17th St. NW. anniesparamountdc.com.

The James Beard Foundation named this landmark eatery an American classic in 2019. Locals have cherished it for decades. “Annie’s has been a beacon for the rainbow coalition decades before there was a Pride flag,” Sietsema writes in his 2023 fall dining guide, adding that the 76-year-old sanctuary “plays the role of a small-town diner in a world capital.” He touts selling points that go beyond its place in history, including “stiff drinks that meet the rim of their big glasses,” “housemade pies served in mongenerous slices,” and the “fat” baked potatoes and snazzy coleslaw that have accompanied countless dinners here. Sietsema vouches for the signature sirloin tips; chicken parmesan — which summons “cheesy, saucy goodness splayed across a field of penne pasta”; ham- and pepper-flecked omelets framed with fresh fruit, whole wheat toast and

onion-laced potatoes; and the coconut cream pie for dessert. (*Entrées \$20 to \$46.*)

Chang Chang1200 19th St. NW. changchangdc.com.

Cult chef Peter Chang’s long-awaited debut within the District instantly “became the top spot” for Sichuan cooking, per Sietsema. “Dishes you’ve tried in other Chinese places taste like truer, elevated versions here,” he writes in his 2023 spring dining guide. Chang’s slow march from the surrounding suburbs to Northwest was worth it, Sietsema says, for provocative creations like kung pao chicken kicked up a notch by a free-range bird, boldly spiced green beans tossed with pickled cabbage, and a labor-intensive duck dish. “Patience is rewarded by a platter of sliced, smoked, five-spiced duck, plus a ginger-spiked broth and a phyllo-swaddled pie stuffed with forbidden rice and shredded duck confit,” he writes of the gustatory showstopper. Sietsema hails a “tongue-



MAANSI SRIVASTAVA/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

numbing tofu skin salad” and hot mustard-spiked yellowtail crudo as other thrill rides but notes that surprises abound. “There’s no getting bored with the ever-evolving menu.” (*Entrées \$22 to \$80.*)

Sura2016 P St. NW. suradcrestaurant.com.

“Don’t come looking for fish cakes or tom yum soup,” Sietsema writes of this “atypical” Thai restaurant in his 2022 fall dining guide. The groundbreakers here

are brothers Billy Thammasathiti (food) and Andy Thammasathiti (drinks), who are shaking up their culinary heritage within the same four walls where their grandmother once dished out more traditional fare. Modern flourishes include marinated beef skewers seasoned with “fish sauce, palm sugar and salt and sprinkled with what Billy calls ‘rice spice’ — roasted sticky rice, lemongrass, lime leaves” before grilling; fried pork belly zapped with a chile-garlic sauce “that



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

rages from hot to tangy and back”; and snacks that arouse the senses. An innocuous-sounding order of chips and dip comes to life once garlic-scented sesame rice crackers meet seasoned pork and roasted peanuts “souped up” with coconut milk. “Munch, munch, gone,” he writes. (*Entrées \$17 to \$25.*)

The Palm1225 19th St. NW. thepalm.com.

A power dining destination since the Nixon administration, D.C.’s Palm remains steeped in tradition. Staff members, some of whom have been around since the 1980s, are “treated as family.” Chicago meat-packers produce its signature New York strip, and the creamed spinach that’s graced the table of countless bull sessions has been a house specialty for nearly a century, general manager Michael Melore tells Sietsema. “The old-timer revels in fine points,” Sietsema writes, hailing the “nice chew” of a 14-ounce New York strip flanked by a “head of melting garlic,” the appearance of a pretzel roll in the

complimentary bread basket and the convenience of a three-course lunch deal (\$32). Not in the mood for red meat? Seek out salt and pepper ahi tuna “splayed on minty pearl couscous,” Sietsema advises. “The Palm definitely takes any work out of a meal — save, of course, for the work you do eavesdropping on the lawyers and lobbyists who populate the place.” (*Entrées \$34 to \$155.*)

La Tomate1701 Connecticut Ave. NW. latomatebistro.com.

Breaking bread at owner Natalina Koropoulos’s nearly 40-year-old restaurant shouldn’t be taken for granted. “La Tomate is one of those places where you can pretty much walk in and get a seat — and a meal that can lead to a habit,” Sietsema writes of the homey mainstay. Dishes that offer comfort here include sautéed calamari “sparked” with black olives and caper berries, cacio e pepe souped up with free-range brown eggs and pickled truffles, and branzino layered over green beans and peas. “Dinner finds me



SCOTT SUCHMAN/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



DEB LINDSEY/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Vegetarian fried dumplings at Anju; steamed mussels and fries at Ellington Park Bistro; and owner and bar manager Andy Thammasathiti mixes a daiquiri at Sura.

Boogy and Peel1 Dupont Circle NW. boogyandpeel.com.

Conformity is not on the menu at chef Rachael Jennings’s self-styled pizza lab. “Boogy and Peel is not the place to go if you’re seeking a Hawaiian pizza or one of those now-ubiquitous slabs of Detroit pie,” Carman writes of an irreverent pie slinger with hot takes on everything from deli sandwiches to Big Macs. One such homage “looks like it’s been dragged through the sandwich stations at Mickey D’s,” he says of a pizza crowned with ground beef, melted American cheese, sliced onions, housemade dilly pickle chips and drizzles of tangy special sauce. Other devilishly good deviants include a Reuben-esque tapestry of pastrami, sauerkraut, Swiss, pickled mustard seeds and caraway powder, as well as a next-level pepperoni party. “The Macha ‘Roni comes buried under enough meaty cups to satisfy any pepperoni lover, but the pizza hits Defcon 4 with a secondary blast wave of salsa macha,” Carman says of the tantalizing Mexican chile paste championed by sous chef Saul Zelaya. (*Entrées \$12 to \$22.*)

slicing into thin but juicy lamb chops, whispering of oregano and arranged like a teepee ringed with eggplant, zucchini and bell peppers,” Sietsema writes of the heartier fare he favors after the nightly aperitivo service. And don’t sleep on dreamy panna cotta “whipped up with Greek yogurt and topped with strawberry sauce.” (*Entrées \$27 to \$38.*)

Ellington Park Bistro2033 M St. NW. ellingtonparkbistro.com.

Veteran chef Frank Morales is so good at his job, he drove Sietsema and some other dinner guests wild with a side of fries. “They’re meant to be paired with a bowl of tender steamed mussels, but their mere fragrance finds everyone’s fingers diving for the hot bouquet,” Sietsema writes of a feeding frenzy that culminated in the

seductive spuds sopping up a sea of coconut milk, pastis and mussel liquor. Other Gallic treasures include absinthe-spiked escargots nestled atop pepper-spiked gougères; tarte flambé “slathered with fromage blanc and truffle butter and scattered with curls of smoked ham and sweet Vidalia onion”; flounder stuffed with zesty mousseline (“soft as meeringue and lit with harissa”); and cordon bleu sporting a shell of crispy, duck-fat-washed skin, a Swiss-chard-wrapped core of melted Gruyère and ham, and a base of tender lentils, carrots and lardons. Looking to get your hands dirty? Dig into a house smashburger that “ought to be dropped off with gloves.” The “saucy feast packed in a pretzel bun” features Wagyu beef, French pickles, Gruyère, garlic aioli and more. (*Entrées \$22 to \$68.*)



MIKKI SCHAFFNER

Shaking up the Shakespeare canon

To bring the Bard into this century, playwrights reimagine supporting characters in 'Hamlet' and 'The Merchant of Venice'

BY CELIA WREN

To say that playwright Sarah Mantell is no fan of "The Merchant of Venice" would be several thousand ducats' worth of understatement.

"It's a really deeply antisemitic play. It's a really sexist play. It's a really racist, anti-Black play," the New York City-based writer says. A memorable glimpse of the work at the Yale School of Drama left Mantell "extremely disturbed and upset" and with a self-imposed mandate: "Shakespeare didn't know what he was doing, and I need to fix it for him."

That fix is currently running at Baltimore Center Stage. "Everything That Never Happened" retells "Merchant" from the perspective of several less-prominent characters: Jessica, the daughter of the Jewish moneylender Shylock; Lorenzo, the Christian man she falls in love with; and the servant Gobbo, who in Mantell's telling is much more than Shakespeare's malaprop-

prone comic device. When Shylock makes an appearance, it's as a tender, anxious, often baffled father. (The prince of Morocco, whose dark skin color is disparaged in "Merchant," does not appear.)

Mantell's is not the only current play foregrounding the Bard's supporting characters. Opening next month at the Folger Theatre is Lauren M. Gunderson's "A Room in the Castle," which reimagines "Hamlet" from the viewpoints of Ophelia and Gertrude, plus a newly conceived servant figure, Anna. The world-premiere staging is co-produced with Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, which debuted the piece last month.

The works by Mantell, who is nonbinary, and Gunderson arrive amid a burst of plays that refashion, rebuke or riff on the male-written canon. "Problems Between Sisters," a response to Sam Shepard's "True West" seen last year at Studio Theatre, is part of Julia May Jonas's cycle reconceiving

SEE SHAKESPEARE ON 15



WALLS TRIMBLE

If you go

EVERYTHING THAT NEVER HAPPENED

Baltimore Center Stage, 700 N. Calvert St., Baltimore. 410-332-0033. centerstage.org.

Dates: Through March 9.

Prices: \$15-\$79.

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Folger Shakespeare Library, 201 East Capitol St. SE. 202-544-7077. folger.edu.

Dates: March 4-April 6.

Prices: \$20-\$84.

TOP: From left, Oneika Phillips, Sabrina Lynne Sawyer and Burgess Byrd in "A Room in the Castle," which is traveling from Cincinnati Shakespeare Company to the Folger Theatre. **LEFT:** "Everything That Never Happened" writer Sarah Mantell.

SHAKESPEARE FROM 14

macho American classics. Barbara Cassidy's "Mrs. Loman," recently mounted in New York, extends the narrative of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman." Opening soon on Broadway is Kimberly Belflower's "John Proctor Is the Villain," a play (premiered at Studio in 2022) that calls out the sexism in Miller's "The Crucible." In a culture that has recently reckoned with elevating long-sidelined voices and perspectives, the theatrical old boys network is fair game.

Other art forms have also gotten in on the action, including by centering characters to whom Shakespeare gave limited scope: The 2019 movie "Ophelia" adapted Lisa Klein's revisionist young-adult novel. (The landmark reframing of William S.'s also-ran figures remains Tom Stoppard's 1960s "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.")

"I think we're due for a lot of canonical correction, and we can do it pointedly, and we can do it joyfully, and we can do it with humor," says Mantell, whose other works include "Fight Call," a play about a theater company's years of rehearsing the death scenes of female Shakespeare characters.

Canonical correction for the antisemitic "Merchant" seemed particularly urgent to Mantell, who is Jewish. They perceived "a play living just underneath the surface of Shakespeare's story" that spoke of "assimilation and



BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE

passing, and what we leave behind for love." That more enlightened play, Mantell resolved, would allow Shylock and Jessica to "speak in Jewish voices" and "give them back their history and their humor. Their heartbreak."

But to do justice to the project — which reached a milestone with "Everything That Never Happened's" world premiere in Pasadena, California, in 2018 — Mantell had to spend significant time reading, and thinking about, "Merchant."

"That really sucked," they say.

"A Room in the Castle" comes from a place of more warmth. The prolific and widely produced Gunderson is perhaps best known for penning plays about historical female scientists. But she is a self-described Shakespeare superfan who has tangled with the Swan of Avon in works like "The Book of Will," about the 1623 First Folio, and "The Taming," a political farce that nods to "The Taming of the Shrew." Gunderson says more Stratford-fueled pieces are in the works — maybe many more. "I have this

running challenge to myself to meet each Shakespeare play with some interpretation," she says.

When it came to tapping into "Hamlet," Gunderson says, "my instinct has always been to save Ophelia — at least to understand her, if I can't find a way to save her." "A Room in the Castle" grew from that urge, turning Hamlet's ex-girlfriend into a gutsy songwriter — "I sort of imagine her as a young Taylor Swift" — who bonds and conspires with a force-of-maternal-nature Gertrude and handmaiden Anna as the prince



BRYAN DERBALLA

ABOVE: "A Room in the Castle" playwright Lauren M. Gunderson. LEFT: Cast and crew members of "Everything That Never Happened": top row, Charlique C. Rolle, Nic Picou, Jessica Kubzansky, Erika Soto and Allison Wick; bottom row, Sarah Mantell and Leo Marks.

of Elsinore goes off the rails. "The play is really about that coming together of people who did not expect to be on the same team because the patriarchy kept them apart," Gunderson says. She believes the work is also a timely exploration of "the cost of male vengeance and violence."

Both Gunderson and Mantell emphasize that their plays are understandable to audiences who have forgotten or avoided "Hamlet" and "Merchant." And both say that for theatergoers who know these classics well, there are satisfying Easter eggs.

The two plays previously aired in the Folger's Reading Room Festival, an annual celebration of new work and conversations that bounce off Shakespeare.

"Lauren and Sarah represent people who are really taking the things that we're most familiar with in Shakespeare and activating them in contemporary thought," said Karen Ann Daniels, the Folger Theatre's artistic director.

Shakespeare, Gunderson points out, "is strong enough to withstand interrogation and reimagining." She sees her Bard-saluting plays as a "big handshake of playwrights across time."

For Mantell, the gesture is more like a judo throw. "Merchant," they say, "was the piece of the canon that I could overturn" so that people might stop and think, "Hey, you know, something might be up with this! Maybe the best storytelling is not White, male and British to its bones."

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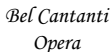



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 ESCAPE FROM THE ASYLUM: by Patricia Milton	MUST END FEB. 23 - Thu 7:30, Fri 8, Sat 2:30 & 8, Sun 2:30	"A NEAT & CLEVER PUZZLE...a fresh and enjoyable take on the "whodunit" genre" - DCTheatreArts	The Undercroft Theatre 900 Mass Ave, NW 202-900-8788 stageguild.org	\$50-60 + Senior, Student, Grp Disc	\$10 off full-price with code CLUE
 FUENTEOVEJUNA by Lope de Vega	Thru March 2 Thurs - Fri at 2 pm Sun at 2 pm	Led by women, the villagers of Fuenteovejuna rebel against the brutal rule of a corrupt and arrogant commander and seize power.	GALA Theatre 3333 14th St NW 202-234-7174 galatheatre.org	\$25 - \$50	In Spanish with English surtitles
 Lady Thistle-down's Poisoned Quill Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre	March 7 - June 1	Lord Henry, Duke of Cavendish, returns from war to a dinner party filled with hopeful young ladies. But when Lord Fairfax is murdered, scandal erupts! As Lady Thistle-down's Poisoned Quill reveals secrets, suspects multiply. Can anyone escape the whispers?	Check website for locations at restaurants, wineries, breweries & other venues in NoVA. www.StageCoachTC.com	\$57 - 110	571-477-9444
 Shear Madness The Kennedy Center Theater Lab	Regular Schedule: Tuesday-Friday at 8 Saturday at 5 & 8 Sunday at 3 & 7	It's a Comedy! It's a Mystery! It's Shear Madness! Catch it at the Kennedy Center. "Downright Hilarious" Huffington Post	The Kennedy Center Theater Lab Student Rush Tickets Available Tickets: 202-467-4600 Groups: 202-416-8400 www.shearmadness.com	Tickets Available at the Box Office	Great Group Rates for 15 or More
MUSIC - CONCERTS					
 CELEBRATE MARDI GRAS prjc.org	Sun FEB 23 1:30 - 4:00 pm info: prjc.org	Raise your parasol, Second Line, dance to the lively NOLA sounds of Orleans Express. Have a free slice of King Cake	Rosensteel Hall, 9707 Rosensteel Ave, Silver Spring prjc.org	\$25 / Mbrs \$20 / students free	tix at prjc.org free parking snacks/bev's dance floor
 New Orleans Songbook A Jazz at Lincoln Center PRESENTS Production	Saturday, March 1 7 p.m.	Just in time for Fat Tuesday, Jazz at Lincoln Center brings the soul of New Orleans and the spirit of Mardi Gras to an amazing evening celebrating the composers and inspired songs of the Crescent City—the epicenter of jazz. Featuring singers Luther S. Allison, Milton Suggs and Quiana Lynell.	The Alden at the McLean Community Center 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean, Virginia 22101 Box Office: 703-790-9223, TTY: 711 aldentheatre.org	\$30/\$25 students & seniors	Free onsite parking
 United States Marine Band "Remembering Iwo Jima"	Sunday, Feb. 23 at 2 p.m.	Join the Marine Band in honoring the 80th anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima with selections that pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of those brave service members. Also, the winner of the 2024 Marine Band Concerto Competition solos with the Band.	Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center 4915 E Campus Dr, Alexandria, VA 22311 Full Details: www.marineband.marines.mil	FREE, No Tickets Required	Free parking available at venue
OPERA					
 Johann Strauss, Jr. The Waltz King!	Saturdays, March 1 and March 8, at 7:30 p.m. Sundays, March 2 and March 9, at 3:00 p.m.	Bel Cantanti Opera singers and Four Seasons Dancers celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of composer Johann Strauss, Jr. in a gala performance.	Bender JCC 6125 Montrose Road Rockville, MD www.belcantanti.com	\$40	Tickets online and at the door
 Mozart's LA CLAMENZA DI TITO Maestro Antony Walker	Sunday, March 1, 6pm	Although rarely performed today, it is thought to be one of Mozart's masterpieces - admired for its serene beauty and restraint. World-renowned soprano Tamara Wilson makes her role debut as 'Vitellia.'	Lisner Auditorium 730 21st Street NW Washington, DC www.concertopera.org	Starting at \$44	Save with a pick 2 subscription!
 POPPEA By Claudio Monteverdi	March 14 - 29, 2025 www.inseries.org	An opera of love, power, sex, and betrayal inspired by Bharatanatyam dance. Music of South India, poetry, and dance blend with baroque orchestra.	Dupont Underground & St Marks Capitol Hill Washington, DC	\$35 - \$72	Box Office 202 204-7763
CABARET					
 Cassette Chronicles Cabaret	Feb 14-16, 22 & 23 at 7:00pm	An '80s-inspired variety show packed with music, games, trivia, and nonstop nostalgia!	StageCoach Theatre, 20937 Ashburn Rd, Ashburn, VA 20147 www.StageCoachTC.com	\$30	571-477-9444



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The Monkey ★★★☆☆



PHOTOS BY NEON

Monkey see, monkey do, monkey kill

Twin brothers just can't get rid of a deadly relic in Osgood Perkins's splattery horror-comedy

BY TY BURR

Osgood Perkins has become one of the leading lights of the Gen Z horror renaissance, and I guess he comes by it honestly: He did play an adolescent version of Norman Bates, the character his father Anthony Perkins made famous, in 1983's "Psycho II." Those bloodlines, if you will, have shown up in Perkins's work as a writer-director, starting with "The Blackcoat's Daughter" in 2015 and leading up through last year's critical and commercial hit "Longlegs," a fever dream of nagging dread that featured a nightmarish Nicolas Cage and more

than a little filmmaking self-seriousness.

Thankfully — and your opinion may vary on this — Perkins has recovered his sense of humor for "The Monkey," a splattery horror comedy that balances yucks with yuks. It's a gonzo gross-out tale based on a Stephen King short story and starring Theo James ("The White Lotus," "Sanditon") in a double role as twin brothers Hal and Billy Shelburn. They've inherited a toy organ grinder's monkey from their airline pilot father (Adam Scott of "Severance"), who appears in a brief opening scene that nicely establishes the movie's gut-busting air of mischief.



"The Monkey," based on a Stephen King short story, follows twin brothers who inherit a toy organ grinder's monkey from their father. Theo James, left, stars as both brothers, who find the toy is both deadly and hard to shake.

Once Dad is out of the picture, young Hal and Billy (Christian Convery) do their best to support their disillusioned single mother (Tatiana Maslany of TV's "Orphan Black"), even though the boys couldn't be more different, with Hal a sensitive sort and Billy a bully. This is one of those King stories where everyone is an awful human being except the put-upon hero, which means they deserve what's coming to them.

SEE THE MONKEY ON 19

Cleaner ★★★☆☆

Daisy Ridley thriller is ‘Die Hard’ with a squeegee

Formulaic action movie still keeps things fresh with moral quandaries

BY TY BURR

“Cleaner” is a “Die Hard” knockoff with just enough fresh elements to make it watchable on a slow streaming night. Chief among those elements are Daisy Ridley in the classic John McClane role — nice to see high-rise terrorists outfoxed by an average Jane for a change — and some effective head games as to where the audience should place its sympathies. It’s meat-and-potatoes stuff (well, we’re in London, so bangers and mash), but you could do worse and probably have.

Ridley, who played Rey in the last Star Wars trilogy, is all gumption and capability as Joanna “Joey” Locke, an ex-British Army soldier turned window cleaner at the skyscraper headquarters of Agnius Energy, a supposedly eco-friendly corporation that is anything but. The formulaic script by Matthew Orton, Simon Uttley and Paul Andrew Williams takes a while to even establish that much, as we’re treated to a glimpse of Joey’s abusive upbringing and her stressed-out concern for autistic older brother Michael (Matthew Tuck), whose hacking skills have gotten him kicked out of multiple care facilities. Hmm, I wonder if they’ll come in handy later in the movie?

Michael’s latest ouster means he has to accompany Joey to work on the same evening that a glittering Agnius gala is invaded by eco-activists determined to air the company’s very dirty laundry. The group’s leader, Marcus, is played by Clive Owen with more than a smidgen of Alan Rickman’s Eurotrash hauteur in “Die Hard” but also with an agenda that crosses a viewer’s wires. Marcus isn’t above taking hostages to prove his point, but he’s strictly anti-murder, and the two brother CEOs of Agnius, Gerald and Geoffrey Milton (Lee Boardman and Rufus Jones), are porcine environmental criminals with blood



PHOTOS BY QUIVER DISTRIBUTION

on their own hands. So, who’s the bad guy here?

Without spoiling too much, others in Marcus’s crew feel a different approach is in order, and “Cleaner” eventually reveals the genre’s contractually obligated psycho mastermind (Taz Skylar) before proceeding to crank up the suspense. As well as the suspension, since Joey is stuck outside the building on a cleaning stage dangling by a single cable for the first half of the movie. Director Martin Campbell (“Casino Royale”), a busy British journeyman, keeps it all moving and works up a nice, weary walkie-talkie alliance between Joey and detective Claire Hume (Ruth Gemmell), the two bonding over the wreckage of their personal lives as much as attending to the situation at hand.

Outside of a few late-inning fight scenes, Ridley earns her action-movie spurs without a lot of actual action, but she’s resolute



ABOVE: Daisy Ridley stars in “Cleaner” as an ex-British Army soldier turned window cleaner. **LEFT:** Matthew Tuck plays her hacker brother.

of spirit and firm of jaw, and it’s easy to cheer Joey on as she jumps the preprogrammed hurdles of this subgenre. And if nothing else, “Cleaner” is interestingly conflicted about where its sympathies lie. Watching a video of the chief villain proclaiming that “we’re watching the Earth die beneath our very feet while we do nothing about it,” Michael — this movie’s version of the wise fool — turns to his sister in confusion. “I don’t understand,” he says. “It’s the truth.” John McClane had it easy by comparison.

Ty Burr is the author of the movie recommendation newsletter Ty Burr’s Watch List at tyburrswatchlist.com.

R. At area theaters. Contains violence, language throughout and brief drug use. 97 minutes.

Ratings guide Masterpiece ★★★★★ Very good ★★★★☆ Okay ★★★☆☆ Poor ★☆☆☆☆

THE MONKEY FROM 17

The difference here is that Perkins thinks that's funny. And maybe it is.

Cue the monkey, discovered in a box Dad has left among his things: It's a supremely creepy wind-up creature that, once wound, causes a fatal and ungodly messy accident somewhere in the windee's vicinity. There's no predicting exactly who will die — as young Hal finds to his distress, the monkey doesn't take requests. It also proves impossible to dispose of, not that the brothers don't give it a good go.

Twenty-five years later in the modern day, Hal (James) is a shell-shocked loner who avoids human relationships, terrified the monkey will come back and work its dark magic. That means he's abandoned his teenage son, Petey (Colin O'Brien), to the boy's mother (Laura Mennell) and her preening second husband (a cameo by Elijah Wood, who seems to have stopped by with nothing better to do). Father and embittered son do have one final week together before the boy is adopted by his stepdad, during which the toy comes back, and all hell breaks loose.

So, yes, it's a little like the classic story "The Monkey's Paw," except here you get the entire



NEON

Tatiana Maslany plays Hal and Billy's disillusioned single mother in "The Monkey." Once the boys' monkey toy is wound up, you can expect a bloody accident — but there's no telling just who will die.

monkey. James does a good job as both the adult Hal and, eventually, his twin brother — although I spent the entire movie convinced I was looking at James Franco, my bad — and there's a nice gallery of

character actors who parade through before getting butchered in novel ways, among them Danica Dreyer as a babysitter with an unfortunate taste for Benihana-style steak houses, Corin Clark as

a woman diving into the wrong swimming pool, Tess Degenstein as a real estate agent so annoying you pray for the movie to get on with it, and Perkins himself as the boy's Uncle Chip, whose demise I

will not share other than to note that he ends up looking like 200 pounds of spaghetti Bolognese in a sleeping bag.

The macabre cynicism of "The Monkey" works with its gnawing sense of horror but sometimes against it. The laughs are there, especially in the well-timed gusto with which Perkins unleashes the movie's gore, and the monkey itself is an eerie creation imaginatively and unsettlingly filmed. If you're looking for upbeat bulletins about the human condition, you've come to the wrong movie, but the callousness can still get wearing, and the director's haphazard way with narrative coherence (what are those cheerleaders doing there? who's the dude in the Army uniform?) betrays his lack of interest in anything but the money shots. It's a fun movie to see with a rip-roaring midnight crowd; watched on its own, it's a little depressing. You can only shock the monkey so many times before the shock wears off.

Ty Burr is the author of the movie recommendation newsletter Ty Burr's Watch List at tyburrswatchlist.com.

R. At area theaters. Contains strong bloody violence throughout, language throughout, sexual content/nudity and drug use. 98 minutes.



SONY PICTURES

Paddington (voiced by Ben Whishaw) and his human entourage in "Paddington in Peru," the third movie in the franchise.

Josh Ruben's rom-com slasher "Heart Eyes" features a serial murderer in a distinctive mask. The killer is known to surface each Feb. 14 to slice and dice happy couples.



CHRISTOPHER MOSS/SCREEN GEMS/SPYGLASS MEDIA GROUP

ALSO PLAYING

Star ratings are from Post reviews; go to washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/movies for the full-length reviews. For showtimes and directories, see the Movie Directory.

★★★★ ANORA
Mikey Madison isn't just another

pretty woman in Sean Baker's latest. (R, 139 minutes.)

★★★★ THE APPRENTICE
Sebastian Stan and Jeremy Strong star as the young Donald Trump and his soulless mentor, Roy Cohn. (R, 120 minutes.)

★★★★ THE BRUTALIST
Adrien Brody and Guy Pearce star in Brady Corbet's epic tale of

American building and belonging. (R, 215 minutes, including a 15-minute intermission. In English, Hungarian, Hebrew, Yiddish and Italian with English subtitles.)

★★★ CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD
Anthony Mackie and Harrison Ford star in an underwhelming addition to the MCU canon. (PG-13, 118 minutes.)

★★★★ A COMPLETE UNKNOWN
Timothée Chalamet as a young Bob Dylan is excellent, but it's Edward Norton as Pete Seeger who really steals the show. (R, 140 minutes.)

★★★★ CONCLAVE
Ralph Fiennes and a gallery of scene-stealers make for 12 angry cardinals. (PG, 120 minutes.)

★★★★ DOG MAN
Dav Pilkey's superhero-satirizing graphic novel series gets a kinetic adaptation. (PG, 89 minutes.)

★★★★ EMILIA PÉREZ
Jacques Audiard's audacious film has three of the year's best performances. (R, 132 minutes. In English and Spanish with English subtitles.)

SEE MOVIES ON 23

New movies and shows to stream

BY OLIVIA McCORMACK

A Thousand Blows

From “Peaky Blinders” creator Steven Knight, this series set in 1880s London was inspired by the true story of two Jamaican immigrants battling for survival in the city’s bare-knuckle boxing scene.

Where to watch: Hulu

1923

Winter brings new challenges to Cara (Helen Mirren) and Jacob (Harrison Ford) in Season 2 of this “Yellowstone” prequel series set in the American West during the early 20th century.

Where to watch: Saturday on Paramount Plus

The Americas

Tom Hanks narrates a 10-part docuseries exploring the wildlife of North and South America, scored by composer Hans Zimmer.

Where to watch: Saturday on Peacock

Grosse Pointe Garden Society

This drama follows four members (Aja Naomi King, Ben Rappaport, Melissa Fumero and AnnaSophia Robb) of a suburban gardening club as they attempt to make their community a more beautiful place ... and cover up a murder.

Where to watch: Saturday on Peacock

Suits L.A.

In this Los Angeles-based spin-off series, Stephen Amell stars as a former prosecutor with a law firm that specializes in criminal and entertainment law.

Where to watch: Saturday on Peacock

Running Point

Mindy Kaling’s new comedy series stars Kate Hudson as a reformed party girl who must prove her business prowess when she’s unexpectedly put in charge of her family’s pro basketball team. Series regulars include Max Greenfield, Brenda Song and Chet Hanks.

Where to watch: Thursday on Netflix

Toxic Town

Based on one of the United Kingdom’s biggest environmental scandals, the Corby toxic waste case, this miniseries follows three mothers who fight to hold those in power accountable.

Where to watch: Thursday on Netflix



JACK DYKINGA/NATUREPL.COM/BBC STUDIOS

Cardon and biznaga/barrel cactus grows by the Sea of Cortez in Mexico, seen in an episode of the docuseries “The Americas.”



TRAE PATTON/PARAMOUNT PLUS

Harrison Ford and Helen Mirren in “1923,” a “Yellowstone” prequel series set in the American West in the early 20th century.



STEVE SWISHER/NBC

From left, Melissa Fumero, Ben Rappaport, Aja Naomi King and AnnaSophia Robb in the drama “Grosse Pointe Garden Society.”



ROBERT VIGLASKY/DISNEY

Malachi Kirby in “A Thousand Blows,” a series set in 1880s London.



BEN BLACKALL/NETFLIX

Jodie Whittaker, left, and Aimee Lou Wood in “Toxic Town,” a miniseries based on the Corby toxic waste scandal.



KATRINA MARCINOWSKI/NETFLIX

Kate Hudson in “Running Point,” a Mindy Kaling comedy series.

Common Sense Media What parents need to know

The Unbreakable Boy (PG)

Age 11+
Faith-based drama centers disability and alcohol abuse.

This faith-based film tells the true story of the LeRette family — particularly father Scott (Zachary Levi) and his neurodiverse son, Austin (Jacob Laval), who has a congenital bone disorder that makes him prone to injuries. The story chronicles the family's triumphs and struggles, from the financial strain of medical expenses to Scott's battle with alcohol abuse. Several scenes depict upsetting situations and violence: Austin, in a medication-induced rage, tries to choke his brother and physically confront his parents; Scott crashes his car while driving under the influence; a schoolyard fight breaks out; and one character responds to bad news by breaking dishes. Language includes the r-word slur and "a--hole." Romantic content is mild, with kisses and references to premarital pregnancy. Christian themes figure prominently, and there are many scenes of prayer and pastoral guidance. (109 minutes)
Available in theaters.

Win or Lose (TV-PG)

STREAMING
Age 8+
Sporty Pixar series includes bullying and some romance.

Each episode of this Pixar animated series, about a middle school softball team and the people who make it work, focuses on a different character. Tween Laurie (voiced by Rosanna Jean Foss) is desperate to get a hit in the championship — but with her dad (Will Forte) coaching and a sentient ball of sweat hassling her at every turn, it's not easy. Umpire and teacher Frank (Josh Thomson) is dabbling in the dating world after a bad breakup. Episodes vary content-wise, but they're generally mild and family-friendly. Language includes "losers," "butts" and insults like "doofus." Characters have crushes, date and kiss. There's some body humor: A character throws up in a comic manner, and others burp. Expect to see light bullying of kids and adults. (Eight episodes)
Available on Disney Plus.

Chiwetel Ejiofor and Renée Zellweger in "Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy," the fourth film of the franchise adapted from Helen Fielding's novels.



DANIEL MCFADDEN/LIONSGATE

Zachary Levi, right, headlines the cast of "The Unbreakable Boy," a faith-based drama.



PIXAR

"Win or Lose," an eight-episode Pixar animated series about a middle school softball team and the people who make it work, features the voice of Will Forte as Coach Dan.



JAY MAIDMENT/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy (R)


STREAMING
Age 15+
Heartfelt fourth outing includes language and sex references.

Bridget Jones (Renée Zellweger) is in her early 50s and a widow in the fourth film of the popular rom-com franchise, adapted from Helen Fielding's novels. Her husband's death is mentioned frequently, and she still sees him in visions. Expect strong language throughout, including "f---," "s---" and "b---," with "God" and "Jesus" used as exclamations. Characters kiss passionately, undress to their underwear and lie in bed under sheets, implying that they've had sex. There are also many sexual references. People consume beer, cocktails and champagne, and Bridget drinks directly from a bottle of wine to the point of mild intoxication. Jokes include passing references to drugs. While Bridget's previous love interests have all been White men, Black actor Chiwetel Ejiofor plays a potential suitor in this more diverse installment. (124 minutes)
Available on Peacock.

Old Guy (R)

Age 15+
Bloody, boozy action flick misses the mark.

Although this action-comedy treads on well-worn territory — an "old guy" is being replaced by an up-and-comer at work — it's got a new angle: Their job is organized crime. So expect lots of murders — mostly close-proximity shootings with blood spray, but nothing ultra-gory. There's also a stabbing (that's heard more than seen), a perilous chase and the implication of torture. As is typical in a buddy movie, the protagonists are reluctantly teamed opposites who wind up learning from each other. In this case, young Wihlborg (Cooper Hoffman) is aghast at the grizzled Danny Dolinski's heavy drinking, pill popping and smoking. Dolinski (Christoph Waltz) is shown several times waking up in bed with multiple women, with empty wine bottles scattered around the room. Language includes "dick" and "f---." (93 minutes)
Available in theaters.

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