



77°/68°
Thunderstorms

FREE SPEECH THREATENED

Countries around the world are cracking down on expression — from Myanmar to the United States. See more on Page 4.



Southwest Journalist

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN ■ DOW JONES NEWS FUND CENTER FOR EDITING EXCELLENCE ■ SWJOURNALIST.COM ■ FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 2021



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE
Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., the GOP's lead negotiator on a counteroffer to President Joe Biden's infrastructure plan, speaks at a news conference.

Biden, GOP seek deal on tax code

JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

President Joe Biden is trying to break a logjam with Republicans on how to pay for infrastructure improvements, proposing a 15% minimum tax on corporations and the possibility of revenues from increased IRS enforcement as a possible compromise.

The offer was made Wednesday to Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia as part of the bipartisan negotiations and did not reflect a change in Biden's vision for funding infrastructure.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden examined all the tax overhauls from his campaign and administration to look for potential common ground with Republicans and found that imposing a minimum corporate tax seemed like an option.

"He looked to see what could be a path forward with his Republican colleagues on this specific negotiation," Psaki told reporters Thursday. "This is a component of what he's proposed for a pay-for that he's lifting up as a question as to whether they could agree to that."

Biden has proposed increasing the corporate tax rate to 28% from 21% to help fund his plans for roads, bridges, electric vehicles and broadband internet, which remains one of his preferred approaches. But the rate hike is a nonstarter with Republicans because it would undo the 2017 tax cuts signed into law by former President Donald Trump.

By floating an alternative, Biden was trying to give Republicans a way to back infrastructure without violating their own red line of keeping corporate tax rates at their current level. The Washington Post first reported the offer.

On Thursday, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said he spoke with Capito after the session and is "still hoping" to reach a deal with the administration. McConnell prefers the GOP approach of a scaled-down package, paid for by

■ DEAL, Page 2

NO RELIEF

New state bills could raise energy prices for everyday Texans

ERIN DOUGLAS
AND MITCHELL FERMAN
Texas Tribune

The first day, Melissa Hutchins and her husband burned furniture to keep warm. Friends of theirs burned their children's toys. A neighbor's roof caved in.

When the Hutchinses lost water because the pipes froze, they went to a hotel.

Three nights and four maxed-out credit cards later, they returned to their Arlington condominium when power was restored to Texans after one of the deadliest — and costliest — disasters in state history.

"Texas is not prepared for weather like that," Hutchins said. "We're not equipped for that at all down here."

State lawmakers responded to February's deadly power outages during a winter storm with a few key changes to the state's power grid that experts said will begin to address some issues exposed by the storm — such as requiring power companies to upgrade plants to withstand more extreme weather and creating a statewide

emergency alert system.

But lawmakers did not provide direct relief for everyday Texans for whom the outages were an emotionally and financially taxing crisis because of the outages.

The storm caused the deaths of as many as 700 people, according to a BuzzFeed analysis. Insurance costs for property damage alone are about \$18 billion, Reuters reported, citing Karen Clark & Co., a Boston consulting firm. The total economic damage to the state may be \$86 billion to \$129 billion, according to The Perryman Group, a Texas economic firm.

Lawmakers approved a bill that will likely increase most Texans' electricity bills by at least a few dollars each month for possibly the next two decades to bail out the state's utility and electricity companies. Patricia Zavala, senior policy analyst at Jolt, a Latino progressive advocacy group in Texas, said even a small increase in living costs can put Texans who are "teetering on the edge" into financial jeopardy.

Doug Lewin, an Austin-based en-

ergy and climate consultant, said that while the Legislature took positive steps in requiring power companies to prepare for future storms, nothing was done to provide direct assistance to people harmed by the power crisis or to help Texans reduce electricity use to take pressure off the grid during extreme weather.

He and others said the changes this session are not the sweeping reforms necessary to avoid another power grid catastrophe.

"There was really no focus at all to address ... the millions of Texans struggling to pay their electric bills," Lewin said during a press conference with Texas environmental advocates. "There's two sides of the equation: supply and demand. The Legislature has stayed almost entirely focused on supply and almost completely neglected the demand side."

Lawmakers made the case in the final minutes of the legislative session that overhauling the board that oversees the power grid will provide the structural change necessary to prevent another grid-related disaster.

"I always get questions, 'What have y'all done to fix the disaster that we saw in February?'" state Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham, said before the Senate passed Senate Bill 2, which changes the makeup of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas' board of directors. "It starts with leadership, and it starts with the structure [of people who] make the hard calls."

Still, both Republican and Democratic lawmakers acknowledged that they did not do enough this session to aid the people — like the Hutchinses and their neighbors — who struggled financially after the winter storm caused medical emergencies, damaged property, spoiled food and sent many Texans' utility bills soaring.

Hutchins estimates that the hotel, food, repairs to their condo, and lost work cost them \$5,000. Her husband, a manager at a food and beverage manufacturer, made an early withdrawal on his retirement account so they could repair broken plumbing to restore their water and fix their dish-

■ EVERYDAY, Page 2

WORLD PRIDE



ARIEL SCHALIT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thousands of people marched through Jerusalem on Thursday in the annual Pride parade, celebrating LGBTQ rights in the conservative city amid heavy police security. Pride events in Jerusalem, which is home to a large ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, tend to be less raucous than those in more liberal Tel Aviv. A radical ultra-Orthodox Jew stabbed a 16-year-old girl to death at a Pride event in 2015, an attack that was condemned across the political spectrum. Only a few dozen people turned out to protest the parade this year, and were largely drowned out by the blaring music.

Texas jobless rate shrinks by half a year after historic losses

ANNA NOVAK,
MITCHELL FERMAN AND
MANDI CAI
Texas Tribune

The unemployment rate in Texas was 6.7% in April, which is down from the record high of 12.9% in April 2020.

The decrease comes as Gov. Greg Abbott in May said in May that Texas will opt out of federal jobless assistance to encourage people to go back to work. Jobless Texans will lose access to all additional federal pandemic unemployment aid — including a \$300-per-week supplemental benefit — on June 26.

Hundreds of thousands of Texans were receiving federal pandemic assistance as of the week ending May 1. For many, one month isn't enough time to apply for and find a job. But economists are optimistic that increased coronavirus vaccinations will help stabilize and improve the state's economic recovery.

Throughout the pandemic, the state's outdated and understaffed

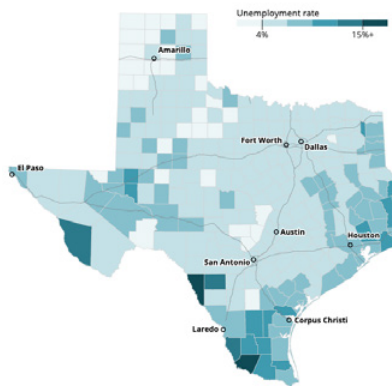
unemployment insurance office left countless Texans struggling to receive unemployment benefits as they navigated the Texas Workforce Commission's confusing processes.

Business shutdowns and limits battered Texas companies, which can now largely operate at full capacity. But businesses must choose whether customers are required to wear masks.

During the legislative session, Texas lawmakers approved a \$248 billion two-year state budget for 2022-23 that is headed to the governor's desk. The plan takes into account federal funding for coronavirus relief. Earlier in May, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar increased the projection for state funds available for the 2022-23 budget by \$3 billion — to a total of \$116 billion — eliminating the budget deficit from the pandemic.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DECREASED IN APRIL

Texas' unemployment rate in April was 6.7%, a decrease from the 6.9%



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY COUNTY, APRIL 2021
Note: Unemployment rates for each county are not seasonally adjusted.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Texas Workforce Commission

March jobless rate, according to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report released May 21. The state gained around 1 million jobs in the last year after shedding over 1.4 million jobs due to the pandemic, according to TWC. In April 2021, 13,000 jobs were added in Texas.

Although jobs have been added, many are still facing obstacles reentering the workforce. On June 26, hundreds of thousands of Texans will lose the assistance they received through two federal unemployment aid programs after Abbott opted the state out of federal aid.

UNEMPLOYMENT BY COUNTY

The impact of the coronavirus recession varies widely across Texas. The latest data showing how the unemployment rate varies in Texas counties is from April.

Joblessness is the worst in South Texas, where many people work in oil fields, but the region is slowly recovering. Several counties, including Starr, Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy, re-

corded lower unemployment rates in April than in March. Unemployment in Austin's Travis County is at 4.5%, the lowest rate among Texas' most populous urban counties. And some rural counties throughout the state have unemployment rates below 4%.

SALES TAX REVENUE RISES IN MAY

In May, Texas collected \$3.4 billion in sales tax revenue, up 30.1% from what the state collected in May 2020. The revenue came mostly from purchases made in April. The total revenue for March, April and May was up 17.3% compared with the same period in 2020.

Spending at restaurants exceeded pre-pandemic levels, and sales at retailers like clothing stores and electronics and appliance stores rebounded from last spring, according to the comptroller. Oil and gas receipts were still down.

BY THE NUMBERS

6.7%

Texas unemployment rate, April 2021

12.9%

Texas unemployment rate, April 2020

\$3.4 billion

Sales tax revenue collected in May

30.1%

Sales tax revenue increase since May 2020

\$248 billion

Amount of Texas budget

SOURCE: Text

Biden, GOP seek tax deal

■ DEAL from Page 1

tapping unspent COVID-19 relief funds, rather than taxes.

"Let's reach an agreement on infrastructure that's smaller but still significant, and fully paid for," McConnell said in Paducah, Kentucky.

The president is essentially staking out the principle that profitable corporations should pay income taxes. Many companies can avoid taxes or

minimize their bills through a series of credits, deductions and other ways of structuring their income and expenses.

The president has insisted that the middle class should not bear the cost of greater infrastructure spending. Yet a chasm exists in negotiations because Republicans say corporate tax increases will hinder economic growth.

The idea of imposing a minimum corporate tax is not new for Biden, who proposed the policy during the presidential campaign last year, and that could turn off some Republicans. The center-right Tax Foundation estimated that a minimum tax would subtract 0.21% from long-run U.S. gross domestic product.

"He's been pushing it since the primaries over a year ago," said George Callas, managing director of government affairs for the law firm Steptoe and a former tax counsel to House Republicans. Callas said the minimum tax would mostly hit firms such as electric utilities and telecoms that make substantial capital investments as well as companies that rely on paying their employees with stock.

At the same time, both Democrats and Republicans have eyed revenues that could come from stepped-up IRS enforcement of unpaid taxes. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has suggested it could amount to some \$1 trillion, but others say the estimate is far lower.

Biden is seeking roughly \$1 trillion in infrastructure spending, down from an initial pitch of \$2.3 trillion. Republicans, so far, have countered with only \$257 billion in additional spending on infrastructure as part of a \$928 billion package. The GOP's new spending on infrastructure would be a fraction of what the president says is necessary to compete globally and boost economic growth.

Talks over Biden's top legislative priority have been moving slowly, a daunting undertaking given the massive infrastructure investment, and time for a deal is running out. The administration has set a Monday deadline to see clear direction and signs of progress.

Biden and Capito are set to meet again today.



McConnell

PAUL WISEMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell last week for a fifth straight week to a new pandemic low, the latest evidence that the U.S. job market is regaining its health as the economy reopens further.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims dropped to 385,000, down 20,000 from the week before. The number of weekly applications for unemployment aid, which generally reflects the pace of layoffs, has fallen steadily all year, though it remains high by historical standards.

The decline in applications reflects a swift rebound in economic growth and the job market's steady recovery from the coronavirus recession. More Americans are venturing out to shop, travel, dine out and congregate at entertainment venues. That renewed spending has led companies to seek new workers.

Employers have added 1.8 million jobs this year — an average of more than 450,000 a month — and the government's May jobs report that will be released today is expected to show that they added an additional 656,000 last month, according to a survey of econ-



ROGELIO V. SOLIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rob Bondurant, a supervisor at packaging company Great Southern Industries, loads a machine in the Jackson, Miss., facility May 28. Charita McCarroll, human resources manager at the company, said a steady paycheck and benefits like health care are not enough of an incentive for some people to pass up COVID-19 benefits.

omists by the data firm FactSet. The economy remains down 8.2 million jobs from February 2020, just before the virus tore through the economy.

AnnElizabeth Konkell, economist at the Indeed Hiring Lab, noted that the number of people collecting traditional state unemployment benefits rose by 169,000 in the week of May 22 to nearly 3.8 million.

"Reviving a labor market after a deadly pandemic is complicated," she said. "Not all indicators move at the same speed or take the same recovery path. Hopefully, the COVID-19 cases continue to decline as the number of fully vaccinated individuals rises. Fully returning to pre-COVID normal is essential to a full labor market recovery."

In the meantime, U.S. employers are

posting a record number of available jobs. Many of them have complained that they can't find enough workers to meet rising customer demand.

Job growth slowed sharply in April compared with March, a pullback widely attributed to a labor shortage in some industries, especially restaurants and others in the hospitality sector.

At least 25 states have responded by announcing plans to cut some emergency federal aid to the unemployed — including a \$300-a-week federal benefit — as early as next week. Critics argue that the extra federal unemployment aid, on top of regular state jobless benefits, discourages some people from seeking work.

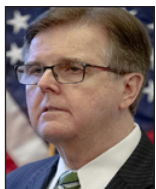
Weekly applications for unemployment aid, which topped 900,000 in early January, have fallen steadily all year. Before COVID-19 all but paralyzed the economy in March 2020, claims were regularly coming in below 230,000 a week.

In the week that ended May 15, 15.4 million people were receiving some form of jobless aid, including special federal aid programs for the unemployed during the pandemic. That was down from 15.8 million the previous week. That figure has steadily declined from about 20 million in December.



"Put me on the side of consumers who suffered through this storm."

GREG ABBOTT
Texas governor



"We have to help the people of Texas and their electric bills."

DAN PATRICK
Lieutenant governor



"I always get questions, 'What have y'all done to fix the disaster that we saw in February?'"

LOIS KOLKHORST
State senator

New state bills could raise costs

■ EVERYDAY from Page 1

washer — all of this, she said, after a year in which her husband was sick with COVID-19 and missed a month of work.

"It was just crazy," Hutchins said. "It's one thing after another. Like water, we can't live without water. We have to have electricity."

Lawmakers said the measure they passed to give utilities and electricity companies access to billions of dollars in bonds and loans will prevent a larger financial crisis in the state in the aftermath of the storm. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has called for additional legislation that would provide direct financial relief to consumers.

"The next time, for this lieutenant governor, that we're going to spend billions of dollars concerning the storm, it's going to be to help the people of Texas and the ratepayers, or I won't call that bill up," Patrick said. "We have to help the people of Texas and their electric bills."

Gov. Greg Abbott is expected to call lawmakers back for a special session later this year to revive certain bills that died during the regular session. Abbott said he would likely support a proposal to aid consumers, but he hasn't announced whether he would add the issue to lawmakers' plates in a special session.

"Put me on the side of consumers who suffered through this storm," Abbott said.

LITTLE RELIEF FOR EVERYDAY TEXANS

Senate Bills 2 and 3, the two major power grid bills that lawmakers passed Sunday and sent to Abbott, focus on ERCOT's board and weatherizing the power plants that serve the electrical grid.

Senate Bill 2 reduces the number of ERCOT board members from 16 to 11 and requires that instead of what lawmakers called "industry insiders" appointing the board, Abbott, Patrick and House Speaker Dade Phelan will appoint a committee to make ERCOT board selections.

Senate Bill 3 requires power companies and some natural gas companies to make upgrades so their facilities can withstand extreme weather. The bill also requires regulators to create an emergency alert system, similar to an Amber alert, for power outages and inclement weather.

The Senate did not approve a \$2 billion plan, approved by the House, to help companies pay for weatherization. Therefore, companies alone will pay the costs to retroactively equip their power plants to withstand extreme weather.

The state likely won't require companies to make weatherization upgrades until 2022 at the earliest.

Another package of bills sent to the governor would increase rates on Texans' power bills for likely the next two decades to cover at least \$7 billion of gas utilities' electric cooperatives' and electric companies' debt from the storm.

Many companies, particularly rural electric co-

operatives, were financially wrecked after the winter storm due to state electricity regulators' decision to set power prices at the maximum rate of \$9,000 per megawatt-hour and keep them there for an additional 32 hours after power began to return. Natural gas fuel prices also spiked during the storm; some gas utility companies said their customers' bills would increase several times the normal amount if the companies had to finance their storm-related debt without state help.

If Abbott signs the bills into law, the legislation will prevent customers from having to pay huge bills from the storm by allowing companies to seek billions of dollars in state-approved bonds backed by the new charges on customers' bills. The state's plan will help the companies get cheaper, longer-term loans.

Some electric companies also owe massive debts to ERCOT; under House Bill 4492, ERCOT will receive \$800 million from the state's Economic Stabilization Fund, known as the rainy day fund, to pay off those debts — an effort to prevent most retail electric providers from passing huge bills on to their customers and to reimburse power generation companies.

Aaron Gonzales, 27, a graduate student at the University of Texas and a volunteer for Jolt Action, said the rising cost of living has delayed his plans to purchase a home. "It's a straw that gets put on the camel's back, and we have to ask ourselves, how many before it breaks?" he said. "A lot of people in my family were laid off this year or on reduced wages. At a time when we don't have jobs or money, you're asking us to pay even more."

11 students head to editing internships after 10-day training

Eleven college students and recent college graduates are headed to editing internships after completing eight days of intensive preparation at the University of Texas at Austin — virtually.

The interns are among a group of undergraduate and graduate students placed in internships in copy editing, business reporting and digital journalism. The program is operated by the Dow Jones News Fund and, for the first time this year, the Texas Press Association.

The Associated Press allowed students to use the wire services for content and instructional material and School Newspapers Online hosted the Southwest Journalist website.

Newspaper professionals, visiting faculty and UT journalism faculty moderated the sessions in this 23rd residency program at UT-Austin.

In the latter half of the pre-internship training, participants produced three issues of a model daily newspaper, the Southwest Journalist, as well as a companion online and social media product, svjournalist.com.

The UT-News Fund interns serve internships of 10 to 12 weeks. Grants from the News Fund and contributions from participating news organizations cover the participants' training. This year, for the second time, the training was held virtually, using more

than eight hours of classroom instruction and production per day via Zoom and Google Hangouts. The internships themselves will also be virtual.

Beth Butler and Bradley Wilson served as co-directors of the workshop with assistance from Kathleen McElroy, director of the UT School of Journalism, and Angela Martinez, administrative associate.

Faculty also included Mark Grabowski, associate professor at Adelphi University and Griff Singer, retired senior lecturer at the University of Texas School of Journalism and former director of the Center for Editing Excellence.

The 2021 participants, their schools and their internship assignments are as follows:

- **Lauryn Azu**, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Chicago Tribune
- **Caleigh Bartash**, University of Maryland, Stars & Stripes
- **Lilly Chandler**, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, Hill Country News
- **Emily G. Eddins**, Texas A&M University, Tyler County Booster
- **JJ Kim**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, San Francisco Chronicle
- **Megan Menchaca**, University of Texas at Austin, Houston Chronicle
- **Kaylee Pippins**, Tarleton State University, Azle News
- **Gabriella Ruiz**, Texas A&M-Corpus



- Christi, Pleasanton Express
 - **Abigail Russ**, University of Maryland, Patch.com
 - **Jason Sanchez**, Cal State-Fullerton, Los Angeles Times
 - **Jennifer Zhan**, Northwestern University, San Francisco Chronicle
- Guest speakers included:
- **Erin Ailworth**, Midwest reporter, The Wall Street Journal, erin.ailworth@wsj.com
 - **Shirley Carswell**, executive director,

- Dow Jones News Fund, shirley.carswell@dowjones.com
- **Ken Cooke**, publisher, Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post
- **Rod Hicks**, director of ethics and diversity, Society of Professional Journalists
- **Mike Hodges**, executive director, Texas Press Association
- **Corrie MacLaggan**, statewide managing editor for the public radio stations of The Texas Newsroom

- **Kathleen McElroy**, director, University of Texas School of Journalism and G.B. Dealey Regents Professor in Journalism
- **Yvonne Mintz**, editor and publisher, The Facts (Clute, Texas)
- **Krissah Thompson**, managing editor of diversity and inclusion, The Washington Post
- **Paul Weber**, Austin-based reporter, Associated Press.



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BRIEFS

Attorney F. Lee Bailey
dead at 87

WALTHAM, Mass. — F. Lee Bailey, the celebrity attorney who defended O.J. Simpson, Patricia Hearst and the alleged Boston Strangler, but whose legal career halted after disbarment in two states, has died. He was 87.

The death was confirmed Thursday by Peter Horstmann, who worked with Bailey as an associate in the same law office for seven years.

In a legal career that lasted more than four decades, Bailey, was seen as arrogant, egocentric and contemptuous of authority. But he was also acknowledged as bold, brilliant, meticulous and tireless in the defense of his clients.

Bailey was a member of the legal “dream team” that successfully defended Simpson, the former star NFL running back and actor. He was acquitted on charges that he killed his wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ron Goldman, in 1995.

Some of Bailey’s other high-profile clients included Dr. Samuel Sheppard — accused of killing his wife — and Capt. Ernest Medina, charged in connection with the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War.

Louisiana cops shoot
3rd person in 3 days

VINTON, La. — Louisiana State Police say a city police officer shot and wounded a Texas woman who had pulled a gun on him.

The shooting early Wednesday was the third in three days by police around Louisiana. The other two were fatal.

Annette Odegar, 54, of Orange, Texas, was taken to a hospital after the shooting in Vinton, about 11.5 miles northeast of Orange, state police said in a news release Wednesday evening.

The release said the Vinton Police Department officer had been sent to investigate an argument between two motorists parked on the shoulder of the Interstate 10 westbound entrance ramp from Louisiana Highway 108.

Odegar got out of her car and pointed a gun at the officer, according to the statement by Trooper First Class Derek Senegal.

“During the confrontation, the officer discharged his weapon, striking Odegar,” Senegal wrote.

State police, as is standard in shootings by local officers, are investigating the shooting. Vinton police are investigating the motorists’ dispute.

3 children die playing
with hand grenade

QUETTA, Pakistan — Three children were killed Thursday in southwestern Pakistan when a hand grenade they were playing with went off, police said. Two other children were wounded in the explosion.

Police said it was not known who had left the grenade in an open area in a residential neighborhood in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province.

Balochistan has been the scene of a long-running insurgency by secessionist groups that often target security forces with bombs to push for independence from the central government in Islamabad.

The Pakistani Taliban and the Islamic State group also have a presence in the province.

Final options set for
Cleveland team’s new name

CLEVELAND — Like expecting parents, the Cleveland Indians are trying to settle on a name.

The team said Thursday it has a final list from an initial pool of nearly 1,200 entries. It is vetting the possible team names for legal purposes after months of research and discussions with fans.

In December, the Indians said they were changing their name for the first time since 1915. The decision came during a national movement, including strong push from Native Americans, to replace prejudicial racist names and symbols. Owner Paul Dolan said months ago the new name will not have any Native American themes or connotations.

The name change will complete a rebranding by the Indians, who removed their contentious Chief Wahoo logo from their game jerseys and caps several years ago. The team, however, continues to sell merchandise featuring the grinning, cartoonish mascot.

Utah governor asks citizens
to pray for drought to end

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah’s governor asked residents Thursday to pray for rain this weekend to relieve the state from drought.

Gov. Spencer Cox released a statement calling on Utah residents to pray for “divine intervention” as an excessive heat warning has been issued for areas around the state this weekend.

“I’ve already asked all Utahns to conserve water by avoiding long showers, fixing leaky faucets, and planting water-wise landscapes,” Cox said. “But I fear those efforts alone won’t be enough to protect us. We need more rain and we need it now.”

Cox, a Republican, has issued two drought-related emergency orders in the last three months. He declared a state of emergency March 17 due to the ongoing drought and issued another executive order May 3 requiring water conservation practices at state facilities.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Postmaster under investigation

BY ERIC TUCKER AND
ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department is investigating Postmaster General Louis DeJoy over political fundraising activity at his former business, his spokesman confirmed Thursday.

In recent weeks federal authorities have subpoenaed DeJoy and interviewed current and former employees of DeJoy and his business, The Washington Post reported.

Mark Corallo, a DeJoy spokesman, confirmed an investigation in a statement to The Associated Press.

“Mr. DeJoy has learned that the Department of Justice is investigating campaign contributions made by employees who worked for him when he was in the private sector. He has always been scrupulous in his adherence to the campaign contribution laws and has never knowingly violated them,”

Corallo said.

The agency declined to comment on news of the investigation.

DeJoy, a former logistics executive, has been mired in controversy since taking over the Postal Service last summer and putting in place policy changes that delayed mail before the 2020 election, when there was a crush of mail-in ballots.

Last year, DeJoy faced additional scrutiny after The Post reported that five people who worked for his former company, New Breed Logistics, said they were urged by aides of DeJoy or by DeJoy himself to write checks and



USPS Postmaster General Louis DeJoy

attend political fundraisers at DeJoy’s North Carolina mansion. Two former employees told the newspaper that DeJoy would later give bigger bonuses to reimburse

them for the contributions.

Under federal law, it is not illegal to encourage employees to contribute to candidates. It is illegal to reimburse them as a way of avoiding federal campaign contribution limits.

DeJoy, who has not been charged with a crime, denied during questioning before a congressional committee last year that he repaid executives for contributing to President Donald

MENTAL HEALTH



Naomi Osaka, of Japan, returns to Maria Sakkari, of Greece, during the quarterfinals of the Miami Open tennis tournament. Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam champion, said Monday she was withdrawing from the French Open for mental health issues.

Osaka gets sponsors’ support
Brands praise her mental health advocacy

BY MAE ANDERSON
AND ANNE D’INNOCENZIO
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A few years ago, a star athlete dropping out of a major tennis tournament over mental health issues might have been seen as a sign of weakness.

Today, at least for Naomi Osaka’s corporate sponsors, it is being hailed as refreshingly honest.

That would explain why so many have stuck by Osaka after the four-time Grand Slam champion announced Monday that she was withdrawing from the French Open because she didn’t want to appear for the requisite news conferences that caused her “huge waves of anxiety.”

Osaka, who also acknowledged suffering “long bouts of depression,” received criticism by some who say the media events are just “part of the job.” But Nike, Sweetgreen and other sponsors put out statements in support of the 23-year-old star after she revealed her struggles.

Allen Adamson, co-founder of marketing consultancy Metaforce, said that Osaka’s disclosure has made her a more authentic spokesperson — and more valuable to corporate sponsors.

“Every athlete gets a sports sponsorship because they win games or perform well,” he said. “But the best ones become true brand ambassadors when they have a broader persona. The best brand ambassadors are real people. (Osaka) is talking about an issue that is relevant to many people. Mental health is a bigger issue than winning or losing tennis.”

Reilly Opelka, a 23-year-old American tennis player seeded 32nd at the French Open who plays his third-

**DON'T GIVE UP.
YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**
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round match Friday, told The Associated Press he’s glad Osaka is taking time to get better.

“She’s one of the best players in the world — she’s very influential,” Opelka said. “The sport needs her. She’s an icon. It’s bad for the sport to have one of the main attractions not around.”

Forbes listed Osaka as the world’s highest-paid woman athlete, earning \$37 million in 2020 from sponsors such as Tag Heuer, AirBnB, and Louis Vuitton as well as Mastercard and Nike.

Nike has stood by sports stars after other controversies, including Tiger Woods after his 2009 sex scandal and former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick after he knelt during games to protest police brutality. But it recently dropped Brazilian soccer star Neymar after he refused to cooperate with an internal investigation into sexual assault allegations from a Nike staffer.

Osaka joins a growing list of top-tier athletes speaking out about mental health. Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, NBA players Kevin Love and DeMar DeRozan, and the WNBA’s A’ja Wilson have all spoken publicly about their bouts with depression, sharing both the successes and setbacks.

The episode also could serve as a tipping point for the professional tennis tours — and leagues in other sports — to safeguard athletes’ mental health as well as their physical health,

said Windy Dees, professor of sport administration at the University of Miami.

“It’s absolutely a growth opportunity for the (Women’s Tennis Association) and all leagues. There’s a lot of work to be done,” Dees said.

Marketing consultant Adamson said Osaka’s decision to come forward could encourage more athletes to divulge their own mental health battles. He noted that if Osaka had revealed her bouts with depression 10 years ago, her corporate sponsors likely would have stayed on the sidelines because the issue had been taboo. But, he noted, the pandemic has raised awareness around mental illness.

From August 2020 to February, the percentage of adults with recent symptoms of anxiety or a depressive disorder increased from 36.4% to 41.5%, based on a survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Census Bureau.

The survey also found the percentage of those reporting that they didn’t get the help they needed increased from 9.2% to 11.7%. Increases were largest among adults 18–29 years old and those with less than a high school education.

Ken Duckworth, chief medical officer for the National Alliance On Mental Illness, said Osaka’s decision to go public is a positive development for all people who feel isolated.

“We are moving from mental health and mental illness as a ‘they’ thing to a ‘we’ thing,” he said. “These are ordinary common human problems. And I firmly believe that isolation and shame directly contributes to people not getting help. I look at a great athlete, an exceptional athlete, as one potential role model.”

Trump’s election campaign..

Campaign finance disclosures show that between 2000 and 2014, when New Breed was sold, more than 100 employees donated a total of more than \$610,000 to Republican candidates supported by DeJoy and his family. He and his family also contributed more than \$1 million to Republican politicians.

Corallo said DeJoy will cooperate with the investigation.

“Mr. DeJoy fully cooperated with and answered the questions posed by Congress regarding these matters. The same is true of the Postal Service Inspector General’s inquiry which after a thorough investigation gave Mr. DeJoy a clean bill of health on his disclosure and divestment issues. He expects nothing less in this latest matter and he intends to work with the DOJ toward swiftly resolving it,” Corallo said.

Uyghur exiles
report torture
in west China

BY AYSE WIETIN
Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Three Uyghurs who fled from China to Turkey have described forced abortions and torture by Chinese authorities in China’s far western Xinjiang region.

The three, who will be witnesses before a people’s tribunal, include a woman who said she was forced into an abortion at 6 1/2 months pregnant, a former doctor who spoke of draconian birth control policies and a former detainee who alleged he was “tortured day and night” by Chinese soldiers while imprisoned.

While the tribunal’s judgment is not binding on any government, organizers hope the process of publicly laying out evidence will compel action to deal with growing concerns about alleged abuses in Xinjiang against the Uyghurs, a largely Muslim ethnic group.

One witness, Bumeryem Rozi, a mother of four, said authorities in Xinjiang rounded her up along with other pregnant women to abort her fifth child in 2007. She said she complied because she feared that otherwise authorities would have endangered her family.

“I was 6 1/2 months pregnant . . . They put me and eight other pregnant women in cars and took us to the hospital,” Rozi, 55, told the Associated Press from her home in Istanbul.

“They first gave me a pill and said to take it. So I did. I didn’t know what it was,” she continued. “Half an hour later, they put a needle in my belly. And sometime after that I lost my child.”

Semsinur Gafur, a former obstetrician-gynecologist who worked in a Xinjiang hospital in the 1990s, said she and other female clinicians used to go from house to house with a mobile ultrasound machine to check if anyone was pregnant.

“If a household had more births than allowed, they would raze the home.”

A third exile, Mahmut Tevekkul, said he was imprisoned and tortured in 2010 by Chinese authorities.

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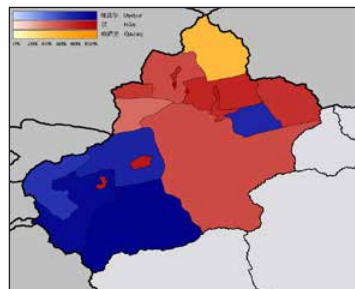
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CHINA



Blue represents regions in Xinjiang, China with a majority of Uyghurs.

■ Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group originating from and culturally affiliated with Central and East Asia.

Volunteers drop out 50 days before Tokyo Olympics

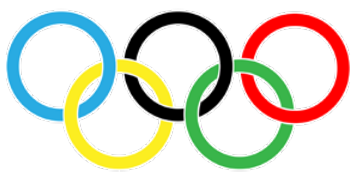
BY STEPHEN WADE AND
KANTARO KOMIYA
Associated Press

TOKYO — The countdown clock for the Tokyo Olympics hit 50 days Thursday, and the day brought another problem for the delayed games.

About 10,000 unpaid volunteers for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics have told organizers they will not participate when the games open July 23.

Organizers said some dropped out due to worries about COVID-19. Few volunteers are expected to be vaccinated since most will have no contact with athletes or other key personnel.

Only about 2-3% of Japan’s general population has been fully vaccinated. Conversely, the International Olympic Committee expects at least 80% of



athletes and residents of the Olympic Village to be fully vaccinated.

“We have not confirmed the individual reasons,” organizers said in a statement. “In addition to concerns about the coronavirus infection, some dropped out because they found it would be difficult to actually work after checking their work shift, or due to changes in their own environment.”

Organizers said the loss would not affect the operations of the postponed Olympics.

Unpaid volunteers are a key work-

force in running the Olympics and save organizers millions of dollars in salaries. Volunteers typically get a uniform and meals on the days they work. Their daily commuting costs are also covered.

To celebrate the 50-day mark, organizers unveiled the podiums, costumes and music that will be used during the medal ceremonies.

Tokyo is officially spending \$15.4 billion to organize the Olympics, but several government audits say it’s much more. All but \$6.7 billion is public money. The IOC’s contribution is about \$1.5 billion.

Japan has attributed just over 13,000 deaths to COVID-19, far lower than most comparable countries, but higher than many Asian neighbors.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 2-3%
Japan vaccinated
- 80%
Olympic Village Vaccinated
- \$15.4 billion
spent
- \$6.7 billion
is public money
- \$1.5 billion
is IOC’s contribution
- 13,000
Japan COVID-19 deaths

SOURCE: Associated Press

FREE SPEECH

Myanmar sentences 2 reporters

More than 90 journalists arrested since military coup

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BANGKOK — A military court in Myanmar has sentenced two journalists to two years in prison for their reporting, a move decried by rights groups as the latest assault on press freedom since the country's coup.

Aung Kyaw, 31, a reporter for the Democratic Voice of Burma, and Zaw Zaw, 38, a freelance reporter for the online news agency Mizzima, were convicted Wednesday by the court in Myeik, a city in southern Myanmar.

The two had been charged under a recently revised provision in the penal code with spreading misinformation that could incite unrest, a charge that critics say criminalizes free speech.

The convictions are the latest moves against journalists since the military overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in a February coup. According to Myanmar's Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, about 90 journalists were arrested since the takeover, with more than half still in detention, and 33 still in hiding.

The coup sparked massive civilian protests against military rule that have been met with a crackdown that has left hundreds dead.

The Democratic Voice of Burma and Mizzima are among five local media outlets that were banned in March from broadcasting or publishing after their licenses were canceled. Like many other banned media outlets, both have continued operating.

The Democratic Voice of Burma said Aung Kyaw was arrested March



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Anti-coup protesters gesture during a march in Yangon, Myanmar on March 26. A military court in Myanmar sentenced two journalists to two years in prison on June 2 for their reporting, a move decried by human rights groups and free speech advocates.

1 for reporting about anti-junta demonstrations in Myeik. It said Aung Kyaw defended himself in court after authorities threatened his lawyer.

A statement from Mizzima said Zaw Zaw was detained about two months ago at his home while covering events for them in Myeik and Dawei, also in southern Myanmar.

The news agency said it “categorically opposes the two-year prison

sentence handed to Zaw Zaw and calls for the immediate release of all journalists unjustly detained by the ruling junta, including Zaw Zaw and another four detained Mizzima journalists.”

The military’s move to go after journalists from respected media outlets is “all about strangling any independent narratives about what’s happening in Myanmar,” said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for the New York-

based group Human Rights Watch.

“The junta is systematically arresting and imprisoning journalists whenever they can, vaulting Myanmar into the position of being one of the newest, most dangerous countries to report from in the region,” Robertson said.

He called the charges against the journalists “politically motivated and bogus.”

Vet’s mic cut at Memorial Day speech

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HUDSON, Ohio — Organizers of a Memorial Day ceremony turned off the microphone when a former U.S. Army officer began talking about how freed Black slaves had honored fallen soldiers after the Civil War.

Retired Army Lt. Col. Barnard Kemter said he included the story in his speech because he wanted to share Memorial Day's origins.

The organizers of the ceremony in Hudson, Ohio, said that part of the speech was not relevant to the program's theme of honoring the city's veterans.

Cindy Suchan, chair of the Memorial Day parade committee and president of the Hudson American Legion Auxiliary, said either she or Jim Garrison, adjutant of the American Legion Post 464, turned down the audio, the Akron Beacon Journal reported.

Before the ceremony, Suchan said she reviewed the speech and asked Kemter to remove certain portions. Kemter said he didn't see the changes in time to rewrite the speech and talked with a Hudson public official who told him not to alter it.

“This is not the same country I fought for,” said Kemter, who spent 30 years in the Army and served in the Persian Gulf War.

The decision to turn off the audio disrespected Kemter and all veterans, Hudson's mayor and City Council said in a statement.

“Veterans have done everything we have asked of them during their service to this country, and this tarnished what should have been a celebration of their service,” the statement said.

Dallas HS valedictorian rebukes Texas abortion ‘heartbeat bill’

BY TERRY WALLACE
Associated Press

DALLAS — A Dallas high school valedictorian scrapped a speech approved by her school administrators and delivered an abortion rights call in its place.

Paxton Smith, the 2021 valedictorian at Lake Highlands High School, submitted an address on the effect of the media on young minds to school officials.

But when she spoke at Sunday's graduation ceremony, she talked of what she called “a war on the rights” of her body and those of other girls and women by the “heartbeat bill” signed into law by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott.

“I cannot give up this platform to promote complacency and peace when there is a war on my body and a war on my rights. A war on the rights of your mothers, a war on the rights of your sisters, a war on the rights of your daughters. We cannot stay silent,” she told the crowd.

School officials did not turn off her microphone and she was allowed to complete the unapproved version.

The new law outlaws, without exception, any abortion after a first heartbeat can be detected. That could come as early as six weeks after conception when many women could be unaware that they are pregnant.

The law, which would take effect in September, also would allow anyone to sue a Texas abortion provider or anyone who helped someone get an abortion for as much as \$10,000. Federal courts have mostly blocked states from enforcing similar measures.

“I am terrified that if my contraceptives fail, I am terrified that if I am raped, then my hopes and aspirations and dreams and efforts for my future will no longer matter. I hope that you can feel how gut-wrenching that is, I hope that you can feel how dehumanizing it is, to have the autonomy over your own body taken from you,” she said.

Smith, who plans to study the music business at the University of Texas at Austin, said this week she had already submitted her original speech to school officials and was trying to finish an end-of-year project in the school's music room when she decided to scrap that speech.

“I couldn't keep my mind on the project. My mind kept wandering to the ‘heartbeat bill’ and what it meant. So, I started making some notes,” she told The Associated Press.



JUAN FIGUEROA / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paxton Smith, Lake Highlands High School valedictorian, scrapped a speech approved by her school administrators and delivered an abortion rights call in its place.

Smith said she expected to have her microphone cut off or to have her diploma withheld (it wasn't but she was told later it was considered). And she was stunned by the response to her message.

“I thought it would die right there,” she said. But she saw tears in her audience midway through the speech. In the days since the video of her address posted on social media and retweeted broadly has drawn social media kudos including one from former Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton: “This took guts. Thank you for not staying silent, Paxton.”

A statement from the Richardson Independent School District, which controls Lake Highlands, was less enthusiastic. It said student speech protocols would be reviewed before next year's graduation ceremonies.

Upcoming Texas Abortion Restrictions

Gov. Greg Abbott signed the “heartbeat bill” into law during the legislative session. ■ Abortions will be banned after the first detected heartbeat, which could be as early as six weeks. ■ **The law makes no exceptions for rape or incest.** ■ Restrictions will take effect in September, but federal courts have typically blocked states from enforcing similar measures

Biden pledges to stop spying on news organizations

BY ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

One of the Biden Justice Department's first big moves was to alert reporters at three major news organizations that their phone records were seized as part of leak investigations under the Trump administration, with President Joe Biden promising to abandon the practice of spying on journalists.

But while Biden's stated commitment has won support from press freedom groups, whether the promise can be kept remains unclear, especially because Democratic and Republican administrations alike have relied on reporters' phone records to suss out leaks of classified information. Biden's commitment was all the more striking given his pledge to uphold the tradition of an independent Justice Department.

“In this case, it seems bad policy to institute an absolute ban on logical investigative actions geared to finding out who violated the law, particularly in instances where the journalists



MARY ALTAFFER / ASSOCIATED PRESS

A police officer stands outside The New York Times building on June 28.

themselves whose records may be at issue are not the subject or target of criminal investigation,” said David Laufman, a former Justice Department official who led the section that oversaw investigations into leaks.

The Justice Department in recent weeks disclosed that federal investigators had secretly obtained call records of journalists at The Washington Post, The New York Times and CNN in an effort to identify sources who had provided national security information published in the early months of the

Trump administration.

Past administrations also have struggled to balance the media's First Amendment newsgathering rights against government interests in safeguarding national security secrets. Inside the Justice Department, officials have revised internal guidelines to afford media organizations better protection without removing from their arsenal the prerogative to subpoena reporters' records.

Biden appears to be looking to change that.

He told a reporter last month that seizing journalists' records was “simply wrong” and that the practice would be halted under his watch. After the most recent revelation — that four New York Times reporters had their records secretly seized last year — White House press secretary Jen Psaki reaffirmed the commitment to freedom of the press. But she also said discussions with the Justice Department were still underway and that new policy was ready to be announced.

Michael Weinstein, a former Justice

Department prosecutor and criminal defense lawyer in New Jersey, said he understood Biden's comments as clarifying his disdain for the practice without closing the possibility that it could ever be used.

“I don't think he's saying you can never do it,” he said. “I think he's saying the standards have to be higher.”

The Justice Department says it has concluded notifying the media organizations whose phone records were accessed. The latest revelation came Wednesday when The Times said it had learned that investigators last year secretly obtained records for four reporters during a nearly four-month period in 2017.

The department said the reporters are neither subjects nor targets of the investigation but did not reveal which leak was under investigation.

The four reporters shared a byline on an April 2017 story that detailed the FBI's decision-making in the final stages of the Hillary Clinton email investigation. The latest revelation came Wednesday.

BRIEFS

Russian police release dissident held for 2 days

MOSCOW — Russian police on Thursday released a well-known opposition politician from custody after holding him for two days.

Dmitry Gudkov was detained at his country house on Tuesday in connection with an investigation into money allegedly owed to the city for office space rental. Gudkov's attorney, Mikhail Biryukov, said it was not clear whether his release meant the investigation was still active, according to Russian news reports.

His detention comes as authorities continue to crack down on dissidents ahead of September's parliamentary election, in which Gudkov aspired to run. He was a parliament member from 2011 to 2016.

On Wednesday, a court sent prominent opposition figure Andrei Pivovarov to jail for two months pending a probe into his actions as head of the Open Russia group, which authorities have declared an undesirable organization. Pivovarov had announced the group was disbanding several days before his arrest.

WHO: Vaccinating kids ‘not a high priority’

GENEVA — The World Health Organization's top vaccines expert said Thursday that immunizing children against COVID-19 is not a high priority from a WHO perspective, given the extremely limited global supply of doses.

During a social media session, Dr. Kate O'Brien said children should not be a focus of COVID-19 immunization programs even as increasing numbers of rich countries authorize their coronavirus shots for teenagers and children.

Canada, the U.S. and the European Union have all given the green light to some COVID-19 vaccines for children aged 12 to 15 as they approach their vaccination targets for adults.

O'Brien said it might be appropriate to immunize children against the coronavirus “in due course, when the supply increases much more substantially.”

She added that it wasn't necessary to vaccinate children before sending them back to school, as long as the adults in contact with them were immunized.

Princess Diana’s wedding dress displayed in London

LONDON — The dress Princess Diana wore at her 1981 wedding to Prince Charles went on public display Thursday at the late princess's former home in London.

The taffeta-ruffled white dress designed by David and Elizabeth Emanuel, with a 25-foot sequin-encrusted train, helped seal the fairytale image of the wedding of Lady Diana Spencer and the heir to the British throne.

Diana died in a car crash at 36.

Prince William and Prince Harry have loaned their mother's wedding dress for the exhibition “Royal Style in the Making.” The exhibit also features sketches, photographs and gowns designed for three generations of royal women, including Princess Margaret and the Queen Mother. It runs until Jan. 2, 2022.

Pakistan acquits Christians facing death for blasphemy

ISLAMABAD — A Pakistani appeals court Thursday acquitted a Christian couple sentenced to death on blasphemy charges for allegedly insulting Islam's Prophet Muhammad, their defense lawyer said.

Shagufta Kausar and her husband, Shafqat Emmanuel, from the country's eastern Punjab province were arrested in 2013 and tried on suspicion of sending a blasphemous text message to a local cleric in Punjab.

On Thursday, the Lahore High Court overturned the death sentence and ordered the couple released. They had been on death row in two separate prisons, and would be freed after all the paperwork was done, said their lawyer, Saiful Malook.

“I fought a legal battle for this innocent couple for years,” Malook told The Associated Press. “I am happy that justice has been done to this poor wife and her husband.”

Domestic and international rights groups say blasphemy allegations have often been used to intimidate religious minorities in Pakistan and settle personal scores.

Some Namibian tribal chiefs accept German payments

WINDHOEK, Namibia — A group of traditional chiefs in Namibia have accepted an offer of compensation by Germany and a recognition that the colonial-era massacre of tens of thousands of their people in the early 20th century was genocide.

Germany pledged last week to give \$1.3 billion over a 30-year period for projects to help communities of people descended from those killed between 1904 and 1908, when Germany ruled the southern African country. Germany asked the victims for forgiveness, in a statement by the foreign minister.

The chiefs accepted the offer but said it could still be improved through further negotiations.

Other traditional chiefs have rejected the offer, and say they want around \$590 billion paid over 40 years, and pension funds for affected communities.

They say that about 65,000 of the Herero were killed, as were at least 10,000 Nama people.

ASSOCIATED PRESS