

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

RE V1 V2 V3 V4

 **Partly sunny 64/45** • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 61/44 **B18** *Democracy Dies in Darkness* THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2025 • **\$4**

Sticker shock as ACA prices skyrocket

Debate over extending covid-era subsidies at heart of shutdown fight

BY PAIGE WINFIELD CUNNINGHAM

Millions of Americans are already seeing their health insurance costs soar for 2026 as Congress remains deadlocked over extending covid-era subsidies for premiums.

The bitter fight sparked a government shutdown at the start of October. Democrats refuse to vote on government-funding legislation unless it extends the subsidies, while Republicans insist on separate negotiations after reopening the government. Now lawmakers face greater pressure to act as Americans who buy insurance through the Affordable Care Act are seeing, or about to see, the consequences of enhanced subsidies expiring at the end of the year.

Healthcare.gov — the federal website used by 28 states — is expected to post plan offerings early next week ahead of the start of open enrollment in November. But window shopping has already begun in most of the 22 states that run their own marketplaces, offering a preview of the sticker shock to come.

Premiums nationwide are set to rise by 18 percent on average, according to an analysis of preliminary rate filings by the nonpartisan health policy group KFF. That, combined with the loss of extra subsidies, have left Americans with the worst year-over-year price hikes in the 12 years since the marketplaces launched.

Nationally, the average marketplace consumer will pay \$1,904 in annual premiums next year, up from \$888 in 2025, according to KFF.

SEE HEALTH CARE ON A14

Ukraine hit hard after collapse of summit



SERGEY KOZLOV/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Rescuers search a kindergarten Wednesday in Kharkiv, Ukraine, that was hit by a drone, killing one person. At least seven people were killed across the nation as the Kremlin renewed its attacks after plans for a Trump-Putin meeting were abandoned. The U.S. responded with sanctions against Russian oil companies. **Story, A8**

With Venezuela, Trump is beating drums of war

BY KAREN DEYOUNG, WARREN P. STROBEL, SUSANNAH GEORGE AND ANA VANESSA HERRERO

By his own count, President Donald Trump has “settled” eight wars, from the Gaza Strip to Southeast Asia, during his nine months in office. But in a place much closer to home, he now seems determined to start one.

With dozens of warships and planes, and thousands of U.S.

As troops and hardware surge into area, some see a goal of ousting Maduro

troops newly deployed to the Caribbean Sea, Trump has declared an “armed conflict” with drug trafficking groups he has designated international terrorists.

U.S. air attacks have blown up

at least seven boats that Trump has charged were carrying drugs to the United States in international waters from Venezuela, in the process killing dozens of alleged traffickers.

He has also signed a “finding,” or authorization document, for CIA covert operations in Venezuela, and charged its president, Nicolás Maduro, with being illegitimately elected and heading a narcotics cartel.

“I authorized it for two reasons,” Trump said last week.

Venezuela, he said, was the “worst abuser” of “open border” policies under the Biden administration, emptying its “prisons, mental institutions, insane asylums” of migrants to the United States. “The other thing is drugs. . . . We have a lot of drugs coming in from Venezuela.”

Asked if he had authorized the CIA to “take out” Maduro, Trump

SEE VENEZUELA ON A12

Another strike: The U.S. killed two on alleged drug boat in Pacific. **A12**

Andrew, after relinquishing dukedom, is still a royal pain

Some call for his ‘prince’ title to be stripped amid anger over alleged abuse

BY KARLA ADAM

LONDON — Days after Prince Andrew agreed to stop using his Duke of York title, Buckingham Palace finds itself trapped, yet again, in a scandal that refuses to abate — or abdicate.

Amid renewed outrage over sexual abuse allegations stemming from his personal ties to the deceased American sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, Andrew, a younger brother of King Charles III,

announced he would no longer use the title. But while critics welcomed the decision, it has failed to dispel the “Andrew problem.” If anything, the storm has intensified.

The uproar was set off by the publication of a memoir “Nobody’s Girl” by Virginia Giuffre, one of Epstein’s accusers, which includes a harrowing account of her allegedly being trafficked as a teenager, including to the disgraced prince. Giuffre wrote that she was forced to have sex with Andrew on three occasions, and his name appears 89 times in the text. She died by suicide earlier this year, shortly after the book was finished.

Now, Britain is debating

SEE UNITED KINGDOM ON A11



JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Britain’s Prince Andrew, seen in 2024, faces renewed outrage over sexual abuse allegations tied to deceased financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Trump’s ballroom project likely to proceed unchecked

‘Our hands are tied’ by White House exemption, preservation leader says

BY DAN DIAMOND, PAUL SCHWARTZMAN AND JONATHAN EDWARDS

President Donald Trump’s plan to build a White House ballroom has underscored an oft-overlooked aspect of presidential power: No one could stop the president from tearing down much of the East Wing this week.

The next stage of the project is also likely to proceed with few restraints: The key panel slated to review the president’s construction plans is now stocked with Trump allies ready to approve them.

Photos of construction teams knocking down portions of the East Wing, first revealed by The Washington Post on Monday, have rattled city residents, historians and politicians, many of whom contended that Trump was wrongly tearing apart “The People’s House” to build his long-desired ballroom.

“It’s not his house. It’s your house. And he’s destroying it,” Hillary Clinton, who battled Trump for the presidency in 2016, wrote on social media.

Others contend that Trump’s shifting projections and promis-

es — such as pledging in July that the ballroom wouldn’t “interfere” with the White House, and increasing his estimate of cost and how many people will fit in the building — illustrate the need for more transparency. Conservative commentator Byron York said Trump “needs to tell the public now what he is doing with the East Wing of the White House. And then tell the public why he didn’t tell them before he started doing it.”

Rebecca Miller, executive director of the D.C. Preservation League, a nonprofit that advocates for protecting historic sites in Washington, said dozens of concerned citizens from the city and around the country have called and emailed her to express outrage.

Miller said she has had to explain that the White House, because of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is exempt from the required reviews that other federal agencies must undergo when seeking to alter government property.

“Our hands are tied,” Miller said, adding that normally government officials discuss major projects with preservationists — but not this time. “It’s very frustrating that there’s nothing that the organization can do from a legal or advocacy perspective.”

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a nonprofit

SEE BALLROOM ON A6

Desire for loyalist prosecutors threatens the case against Comey

BY JEREMY ROEBUCK

For months, the Trump administration’s unorthodox strategy to install and retain loyalists in key prosecutorial positions while bypassing Senate approval has roiled courts, drawn legal challenges and earned condemnation from federal judges.

Now, it threatens to imperil one of the cases the president cares about most.

Lawyers for former FBI director James B. Comey on Monday

Dismissal request says U.S. attorney in charge was illegally appointed

asked a judge to dismiss the case against him, arguing that President Donald Trump’s handpicked prosecutor, Lindsey Halligan, was illegally appointed.

Their request bears similarities to other recent challenges

that have sought to disqualify Trump’s U.S. attorney appointees in New Jersey, Nevada, New Mexico and Los Angeles. Already, federal courts have ruled that two of them are serving unlawfully.

The legal questions surrounding the administration’s tactics remain far from settled. And the particularities of Halligan’s appointment and Comey’s prosecution differ enough from the other challenges to complicate any effort to predict how they might

affect the case against the former FBI director.

Significantly, no judge has so far concluded that dismissing an indictment is appropriate, even if the U.S. attorney’s appointment is declared void.

“It is not enough to merely assert the U.S. Attorney is not validly appointed,” U.S. District Judge David G. Campbell wrote in an opinion last month disqualifying Trump’s acting U.S. attorney in Nevada. “Defendants must

SEE COMEY ON A5

IN THE NEWS

U-Va., White House reach deal The Justice Department paused investigations into the university, as President Donald Trump seeks to remake higher education. **B13**

Outspoken progressive voice Arthur Waskow, an activist rabbi who bridged faith and politics, was 92. **B16**

THE NATION **Right-wing** outlets make up most of a “new media” press corps at the Pentagon. **A2** **States warn** that millions could lose their SNAP benefits if the shutdown continues. **A3**

THE WORLD **Drones** are testing Europe’s readiness for both Russian attacks and disinformation. **A9** **JD Vance** said Israel is an ally as ceasefire criticism swirls around the prime minister. **A10**

THE ECONOMY **Before using** Chat-GPT’s new web browser, make sure you know what info it’s tracking — and storing. **A13** **Meta** is cutting roughly 600 positions in its AI unit, a move that an executive said is designed to quicken decision-making. **A14**

STYLE **Britney Spears’s** ex-husband Kevin Federline alleges in his book that the pop singer endangered their sons. **B1**

SPORTS **The Commanders,** already mired in a two-game losing streak, will be without Jayden Daniels at Kansas City. **B7**

THE REGION **Samuel B. Moki,** the controversial pick to lead Prince George’s County’s environmental agency, was confirmed. **B13**

LOCAL LIVING **Welcome** to the killer plant club: Inside the passionate fellowship of carnivorous plant enthusiasts.

BUSINESS NEWS.....A13
COMICS.....B4
OBITUARIES.....B16
OPINION PAGES.....A15
TELEVISION.....B6
WORLD NEWS.....A8

CONTENT © 2025
The Washington Post
Year 148, No. 54378

