

# The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

SU V1 V2 V3 V4

Mostly sunny 53/39 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 62/49 B20 Democracy Dies in Darkness TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026 • \$4



THOMAS SIMONETTI/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Canoeists travel down the “dark canyon” portion of the Rio Grande in Big Bend Ranch State Park this month in Terlingua, Texas.

## Border wall expansion raises alarms on all sides

Massive and rapid buildup draws big pushback that crosses party lines and borderlines

BY ARELIS R. HERNÁNDEZ, JAKE SPRING, JOHN MUYSKENS AND THOMAS SIMONETTI IN TERLINGUA, TEXAS

The Trump administration is building hundreds of miles of border wall through iconic national parks, public lands and ecologically sensitive wilderness, empowered by provisions in the One Big Beautiful Bill that provided \$46.5 billion in funding and a 2005 law that waived dozens of environmental rules for border security projects.

The “Smart Wall” project calls for a wall in parts of rugged Texas desert that are experiencing historically low border crossings and a second wall

### Trump’s \$46.5B ‘Smart Wall’ plan

Hundreds of miles of new border barrier will be built through public and protected lands.



Replacement projects and some short segments omitted. Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection, data accessed March 19. JOHN MUYSKENS/THE WASHINGTON POST

across parts of California, Arizona and New Mexico that already have barriers from the first Trump administration, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection documents recently posted online.

The aggressive pace — three new miles of wall a week — has alarmed advocates and national parks staff who say the construction will destroy pristine country, threaten endangered species, and cut off access to sacred Indigenous and archaeological sites. And it has sparked an unusual degree of bipartisan pushback, with sheriffs, conservative county judges, environmentalists and Texas state lawmakers lobbying Trump officials to change course.

SEE BORDER ON A10

## Negotiations offer path to end war with Iran

TRUMP: U.S. WILL POSTPONE SOME STRIKES

High-level talks will continue throughout this week

BY MICHAEL BIRNBAUM

President Donald Trump said Monday the United States is negotiating with Iran to end the three-week-old war, declaring that the two sides had two days of “very good and productive conversations” that will continue throughout this week.

It was the president’s first acknowledgment of high-level talks between the two sides since the United States and Israel began bombarding Iran on Feb. 28, hammering the country’s military and leadership, and leading to a global energy shortage that has brought widespread economic pain.

The announcement of talks offered a pathway for the Trump

administration to find a way to open the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has closed by threatening strikes on shipping traffic. Tehran’s attacks on ships have paralyzed the 30 percent of global crude oil that goes through the waterway, giving Iran significant leverage.

“We have had very, very strong talks. We’ll see where they lead. We have major points of agreement,” Trump told reporters on Monday. “They went, I would say, perfectly. I would say that if they carry through with that, it’ll end that problem, that conflict.”

Conversations will continue by phone Monday, Trump said.

Iran and the United States have been negotiating a “COMPLETE” deal, he said. SEE IRAN ON A15

## Senate confirms Mullin to be secretary of DHS

Okla. senator replaces Noem at an agency facing challenges, controversies

BY MARIA SACCHETTI AND THEODORIC MEYER

The Senate voted to confirm Sen. Markwayne Mullin as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security late Monday, installing the Oklahoma Republican at the embattled national security agency amid global instability and frustration over immigration enforcement.

The Senate voted 54 to 45 to confirm Mullin days after a Senate hearing in which he portrayed himself as an experienced

lawmaker ready to restore DHS’s credibility after a surge in immigration enforcement escalated in January when federal officers shot and killed two U.S. citizens, Renée Good and Alex Pretti, in Minneapolis.

Mullin, who voted for himself in the narrowly divided Senate, was seen chatting, smiling and embracing colleagues on the Senate floor during the vote. The chamber filled with applause when the result was announced.

The senator is poised to take over the agency created after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as the U.S. is at war in Iran and travelers are enduring hours-long waits in airport security lines because of a partial DHS budget shutdown that began Feb. 14. The Senate confirmed Mullin, SEE MULLIN ON A6

## Supreme Court appears set to curtail mail-in balloting

BY JUSTIN JOUVENAL

The Supreme Court on Monday appeared likely to embrace a conservative challenge to tallying mail-in ballots that arrive after Election Day, a move that could upend election procedures in states across the country as voters prepare to cast ballots in the mid-term elections.

A majority of justices seemed ready to side with arguments by

Republicans and Libertarians who told the court that federal election law preempts Mississippi from counting ballots that arrive up to five days after polls close as long as they are postmarked by Election Day.

Most states require mail-in ballots to arrive by Election Day, but Mississippi is one of 14 states that allow grace periods of days or weeks. A ruling against Mississippi

SEE WATSON ON A2

## Preservationists seek to halt Kennedy Center renovation

BY KELSEY ABLES

A group of eight associations representing preservationists and architects asked a federal district court to halt the Trump administration’s renovation of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, which was announced suddenly last month, sparking fears that the storied building could face radical changes or even demolition.

In the lawsuit, filed Monday morning, the coalition requests that the court require the administration to comply with historic preservation laws and obtain permission from Congress to undertake the renovation, which is expected to close the arts venue for about two years. The group is seeking a preliminary injunction that would immediately stop any destruction of the structure or

SEE KENNEDY CENTER ON A9

## Audio reveals tense moments surrounding crash

‘I messed up,’ an air traffic controller said following the collision, which killed two pilots and hospitalized dozens at New York’s LaGuardia Airport

BY IMOGEN PIPER, PRAVEENA SOMASUNDARAM AND LEO SANDS



SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

National Transportation Safety Board personnel inspect the wreckage of an Air Canada Express jet that collided with a ground vehicle on the runway on Sunday at LaGuardia Airport in Queens.

An air traffic controller pleaded with the driver of an emergency vehicle to stop in the seconds before the deadly crash on the runway of New York’s LaGuardia Airport on Sunday and said afterward that he had been focused on an unrelated crisis and “messed up,” a review of air traffic control communications shows.

The Air Canada Express passenger jet crashed into a firefighting vehicle as it landed, killing the plane’s two pilots and injuring dozens, the first fatal incident at the airport in more than three decades.

The plane struck an emergency vehicle on the runway that was responding to an issue with a separate aircraft, Kathryn Garcia, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, said at a news conference early Monday.

Forty-one people were taken to the hospital, some with serious injuries, she said. Thirty-two people have since been released from hospital, Garcia added.

Airport officials identified the two people killed as the jet’s pilot

SEE LAGUARDIA ON A4

## IN THE NEWS

**ICE deploys to airports** Officers arrived at several domestic airports Monday to assist with federal staffing shortages caused by the ongoing partial government shutdown. A2

**Yes, Virginia, in an upset** The 10th-seeded Cavaliers pull the shocker of the NCAA women’s tournament, beating Iowa in OT. B7

**THE NATION** **Behind closed doors,** Republicans fear this swing-state Democrat seeking reelection. A3 **The president** declared victory over crime in Memphis while on a visit to the city. A7

**THE WORLD** **At least one winner** has emerged from the Iran war: U.S. natural gas exporters. A14 **Ambulances set ablaze** at a London synagogue is antisemitic, Britain’s PM said. A14

**THE ECONOMY** **Cautious relief** swept through financial markets amid talks of war in Iran winding down. A20

**CLIMATE** **The Trump administration** struck a deal to pay \$1 billion to halt the building of two East Coast wind farms. A16

**STYLE** **The Gridiron dinner,** the annual gathering that brings serious political journalists together for an evening of sketch parodies performed to the melodies of Leonard Bernstein and Sonny Bono, provided a night to escape the battles of the political arena. B1

**THE REGION** **The District takes** a cut of child support payments. A new bill before the D.C. Council could change that. B13 **The man accused** of providing the gun used in last week’s deadly shooting at Old Dominion University was denied bond. B13

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