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Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026 • \$4

Virginia Democrats aren't done with fight

Emergency appeal made to Supreme Court in hope of saving redrawn maps

BY GREGORY S. SCHNEIDER AND TEO ARMUS

Virginia Democrats filed an emergency appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday in a last-ditch attempt to save redrawn congressional maps that could send four extra Democrats to the U.S. House, arguing that the state's high court improperly overturned a redistricting referendum last week.

But some top Democrats express little hope that the appeal will affect this November's congressional midterms and are pivoting to waging campaigns in the state's existing districts.

In an interview, state Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax) said "the practical realities of our election calendar" will prevent candidates from running in new maps even if conservative justices on the U.S. Supreme Court were open to helping Virginia Democrats.

Tuesday was the deadline set by state elections officials for putting the ballot mechanisms in place. Surovell noted that Virginia's elections software is antiquated and overdue for replacement.

Instead, Democrats are making the case that it's time to work with the cards they have in hand.

"Since we can't control anything other than mobilizing and organizing, then let's mobilize and organize and turn our anger into fuel for that," Rep. Jennifer McClellan (D-Virginia) said.

The Supreme Court of Virginia last week overturned the state referendum by which a slim majority of voters in April approved

SEE VIRGINIA ON A6

"There's over a million Hispanics in Central Florida who deserve to have representation in Washington, because it leads to actual changes on the ground."

Samuel Vilchez Santiago, a Venezuelan American running for a state House seat that overlaps with the 9th District



THOMAS SIMONETTI/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

'Our voice shouldn't get diluted'

BY TEO ARMUS AND CLARA ENCE MORSE

KISSIMMEE, FLA. — The Saturday night crowd at a Mother's Day celebration in this lakefront city's lively downtown, decorated with Puerto Rican flags and blasting bomba music, offered a microcosm of the booming congressional district in which it sits and is being torn apart.

Two families sipping sangria were part of a decades-ago wave of Puerto Ricans hailing from colder Northern cities such as New York. Nearby at a snack table was one couple who had moved here from

GOP redistricting splinters a Latino community in Central Florida, angering both sides of aisle

Omar Jose Saldaña, who goes by Ohmie, cuts the hair of 5-year-old Jahliel Madina at a barbershop in Kissimmee, Florida, home to a growing community of Puerto Ricans and South Americans.

"the island," as it is simply known, in search of steadier incomes and lower electricity bills. The group of friends singing Karol G on karaoke mics, meanwhile, had left Venezuela and Colombia more recently to rebuild their lives in the United States.

"This is Central Florida in a nutshell. It's one big community, with people from all over," said Jerry Millán, who tended a bar during the party. "Our voice shouldn't get diluted."

Virtually everyone around him has been represented in Washington for the past decade by Rep. Darren Soto (D), the

SEE FLORIDA ON A4

A turf battle over AI control

'KNIFE FIGHT' SPLITS ADMINISTRATION

Spy agencies vie for more sway than Commerce

BY CAT ZAKRZEWSKI, ELLEN NAKASHIMA AND NITASHA TIKU

As President Donald Trump prepares to travel to a summit in China, his administration is sharply split over a plan to give U.S. intelligence agencies a bigger role in evaluating AI models, according to two people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a proposal that is not yet public.

Trump could soon sign an executive order addressing AI security. But the administration's response to new advanced AI models remains in flux and a topic of extensive debate, according to multiple people with knowledge of the conversations.

The debate within the administration pits Commerce Department officials against national security aides in a battle, which one person described as a "knife fight," to determine which part of the government will have sway over technology that Silicon Valley leaders say can transform the economy.

The debate has taken on greater urgency as Trump prepares for his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping and as U.S. companies brace for Chinese competitors to release models with capabilities similar to Anthropic's Mythos and other advanced artificial intelligence models.

SEE AI ON A2

Trump seeks to suspend gas tax amid soaring prices

BY ISAAC ARNSDORF

President Donald Trump said he will suspend the federal gas tax for an unspecified period as the Iran war continues to push pump prices higher and weigh on his popularity. The measure would require congressional approval.

"It's a small percentage, but it's, you know, it's still money," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday. "As soon as this is over with Iran, as soon as it's over, you're going to see gasoline and oil drop like a rock."

Federal taxes amount to 18.3 cents per gallon of gasoline and 24.3 cents per gallon of diesel.

The suggestion reflects Trump's limited options to address surging gas prices as negotiations to end the war remain stuck with no immediate way to reopen key shipping lanes.

Higher prices have contributed to Trump's declining approval ratings ahead of November's midterm elections. The national average hit \$4.452 last week, the highest since 2022, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Almost two-thirds of Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of the economy, the

SEE GAS TAX ON A15

Dying efforts: Trump says Iran ceasefire is on 'life support.' A12



JORGE GUERRERO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Isolated love

Passengers of the hantavirus-stricken cruise ship MV Hondius gesture from a military bus at a port in Tenerife in Spain's Canary Islands on their way to flights back to their home countries.

New Target CEO tries to bring back its retail magic

BY TODD C. FRANKEL

Target CEO Michael Fiddelke was just a month into the job when he stood onstage in March hoping to win people over with his plan to revive the troubled retail giant.

But he wasn't an outsider with a bold vision for fixing the problems.

Fiddelke, 50, had worked at Target for two decades before ascending to the role of ultimate responsibility. He'd been part of top management when Target lost its brand magic — when sales slumped and the stock price fell 30 percent over five years, even as competitors soared.

His pitch during the annual earnings presentation, held at

the company's headquarters in Minneapolis, was that he understood Target. He'd started out at the big-box retailer as a summer intern in 2003, while wrapping up his MBA. He knew "when Target is at its best, what that's looked like." He acknowledged that shoppers had grown disappointed and that it would take

SEE TARGET ON A15

As U.S. weapons stocks dwindle, allies take note

Europeans worry about the Iran war's impact on program to arm Ukraine

BY NOAH ROBERTSON AND ELLEN FRANCIS

U.S. allies in Europe are increasingly concerned about a signature Trump administration program to arm Ukraine, as the Iran war depletes American stocks and some countries question how the Pentagon is spending the funds, according to 10 diplomats, officials and congressional aides.

A key issue is the lengthy delays in American weapons sales caused by the war in Iran, where the U.S. military has rapidly burned through its stores of precision weaponry during the joint campaign with Israel.

The Trump administration has not diverted equipment pledged to Ukraine since launching the attack on Iran, officials said. But European officials are growing concerned that U.S. weapons shortages, which are already impacting their own orders, could also lead to delays for Ukraine.

Europeans nations, Ukraine's chief backers, purchase U.S. arms for Kyiv under an initiative called the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List (PURL), which was brokered by NATO last summer.

The deal was intended to ensure the flow of weaponry that only the Pentagon could provide — such as air defense interceptors to shield Ukrainian cities from Russian strikes.

It also offered a political win to President Donald Trump, who has pledged not to spend U.S. taxpayer money on Ukraine.

But in recent months, some European capitals have grown more skeptical about the program, with some even hesitant to pledge new funds, the people said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private concerns.

"Europeans are hesitating because there's growing mistrust and lack of certainty on what will happen with money" as the Iran war drags on, one European official said. "There have been contributions [to PURL] but not too many."

The Ukrainian president's office did not respond to a request for comment.

The Trump administration for the past year has also pressured European capitals to buy U.S. weapons for their own defenses as NATO countries rush to increase military spending. But faced with diminished Pentagon stockpiles, allies from Europe to East Asia now expect to wait years to receive equipment they already purchased, the people said.

The concerns about weapons deliveries have mounted as a rift deepens between Washington

SEE UKRAINE ON A13

IN THE NEWS

Seeking further reflection A Washington-area nonprofit asked a federal court to halt President Donald Trump's efforts to resurface the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. B12

Conspiracy theories abound Many Americans think the assassination attempts against Trump were fake, a survey found. A3

THE NATION Americans aboard a ship stricken by a hantavirus outbreak arrived in Nebraska. A2 The Supreme Court extended access to a commonly used abortion pill by mail. A3

THE WORLD The E.U.'s foreign ministers agreed to impose sanctions on Israeli settlers over violence against Palestinians after Hungary's new government lifted the country's veto. A11

THE ECONOMY Kevin Warsh, Trump's pick to run the Fed, would be met with an immediate challenge fighting high prices, if he is confirmed. A14 Older and younger Americans are sharply split on whether now is a good time to find a job, a new poll shows. A16

STYLE Some parents see their darkest fears in the tragedy surrounding the deaths of legendary director Rob Reiner and his wife, Michele. B1

SPORTS The expansion Fire rekindles Portland's WNBA passions. B7

THE REGION The artists behind the satirical Trump statues on the Mall created a video game to protest the Iran war. B12 The man charged in the White House correspondents' dinner attack pleaded not guilty during a court appearance. B12

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