



VIRGINIA

Democrat tax pitches undercut Spanberger affordability pledge

Republicans question plans for gyms, dog care

By SETH McLAUGHLIN
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Virginia Republicans are questioning whether their Democratic counterparts have a case of political amnesia after rolling out a long list of proposed tax increases that threaten to undercut Gov. Abigail Spanberger's affordability message.

Democratic lawmakers in Richmond have proposed raising revenue through higher taxes

on millionaires and investment income, as well as new levies on retail delivery services in Northern Virginia, gym memberships, guns and even dog care.

"Folks are suffering out there, whether it is energy bills, whether it is grocery bills, everything is going up, and to put new taxes on them, I think, is just the wrong way to approach affordability," House Minority Leader Terry Kilgore recently told reporters.

Delegate Hillary Pugh Kent, a fellow Republican, said the disconnect is obvious. "What they say and what we actually see in terms of legislation do not correlate," she said.

President Trump has weighed in, saying many people will leave Virginia, though he incorrectly claimed Ms. Spanberger had already signed a series of new tax bills.

» see VIRGINIA | A4



ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN HER WORDS: Gov. Abigail Spanberger campaigned last year on making life more affordable for Virginians.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

Antifa activist charged with threats to ICE

Social media messages urge followers to 'stop' officers

By STEPHEN DINAN
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Justice Department announced charges Thursday against a self-described "antifa" agitator in Minnesota, accusing him of encouraging the killings of federal officers carrying out President Trump's deportation surge.

Kyle Wagner called for "armed and ready" resistance to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in social media posts to Facebook and Instagram.

Prosecutors said he crossed the line into spurring violence when, in an expletive-laden message, he urged followers to get "guns" and "stop these" people.

He also stands accused of doxing, or collecting and releasing personal information on opponents to encourage their harassment.

In one of his messages that prosecutors highlighted, he said, "We want to know who they are. We will identify every single one of them and we will prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law. If it has to be done at the barrel of a gun, then let us have a little [expletive] fun."

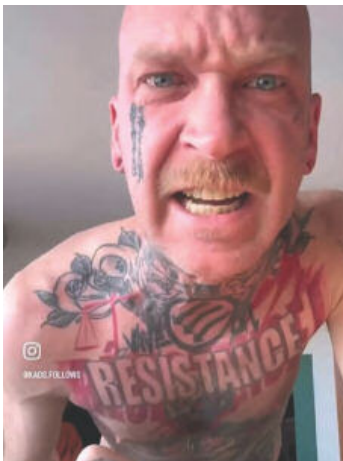
Mr. Wagner, who posted on Instagram as kaos.follows, cuts a distinctive figure with a bald head and extensive tattoos, including a bold red RESISTANCE tattoo across his chest and dark tattoos on his cheek.

"I'm antifa," he says as he begins some of his videos, showing off a neck tattoo featuring the "three arrows" design popular among antifa adherents.

He was charged in federal court in Michigan, where authorities say his doxing victim lives.

Mr. Wagner was arrested Thursday morning in Minnesota, where he had his first court appearance in the afternoon. He was assigned a public defender.

The Homeland Security Department reported a sharp increase in assaults and threats against personnel as it moves to



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ARRESTED: Kyle Wagner, 37, called for "armed and ready" resistance to immigration enforcement in Minnesota.

CONGRESS

Republicans nix 10-point 'fantasyland' demands

By LINDSEY MCPHERSON
AND STEPHEN DINAN
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Republicans on Thursday resoundingly rejected Democrats' new proposals to reel in ICE, saying the 10-point list of reforms, including barring arrests near schools and courts and giving localities a veto over operations, was the stuff of "fantasyland."

Democratic leaders have said they will not pass any new spending bill for the Homeland Security Department unless it takes major steps to shackle President Trump's mass deportation effort. Congress faces a Feb. 13 deadline to approve a new funding deal for the department.

Democrats' plan, released late Wednesday, wouldn't abolish U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, but it would

» see ARREST | A4

» see ICE | A4

NFL

APPOINTMENT VIEWING

NFL keeps Super Bowl relevant across the generations

By LIAM GRIFFIN
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Nothing else in American sports, broadcasting, advertising or pop culture is like it: More than 120 million viewers are expected to tune in Sunday night for the 60th Super Bowl featuring the New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks.

The American monoculture has all but faded as appointment television viewing joins cigarette commercials and the Sears catalog as relics of the 20th century. Yet even as consumers spend more time on social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, the Super Bowl perseveres.

Almost half of American televisions will be tuned to NBC and its affiliate streaming services as Patriots quarterback Drake Maye tries to bring an NFL-record seventh Lombardi Trophy back to New England.

The Patriots, led by first-year coach Mike Vrabel, experienced a rapid turnaround after an off-season roster overhaul. New England's front office spent \$193 million on free agents after a 4-13 finish in 2024.

It worked.

With Vrabel and a new core of players, including receiver Stefon Diggs and pass rusher Milton Williams, the Patriots returned to championship form. Critics cited a soft regular-season schedule; New England faced the weakest crop of opponents in the NFL, according to the end-of-year standings. The Patriots still secured wins in their three



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

WARMING UP: Patriots quarterback Drake Maye hopes to bring an NFL-record seventh Lombardi Trophy back to New England. More than 120 million viewers are expected to tune in to the Super Bowl.



RENAISSANCE: Quarterback Sam Darnold will lead the Seattle Seahawks to a rematch of the 2015 Super Bowl, which the Patriots won, though a lot has changed in 11 years on and off the gridiron.

postseason matchups, allowing just 8.3 points per game.

The Seahawks, in the midst of their own resurgence, present a

more difficult opposition.

Second-year coach Mike McDonald leads a group that earned the top seed in the NFC after

a dominant regular season. Seattle's +191 point differential was by far the highest in the league behind a stout defense and an explosive offense.

Veteran quarterback Sam Darnold continued his career renaissance after a strong showing with the Minnesota Vikings last season. The former first-round pick developed a lethal connection with wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who led the NFL with 1,793 receiving yards. Meanwhile, Seattle's defense allowed a league-best 17.1 points per game en route to the NFC title.

The championship game is a rematch of the 2015 Super Bowl, which the Patriots won after securing a last-second interception at the goal line.

Still, a lot has changed in 11 years on and off the gridiron.

» see NFL | A8

MIDDLE EAST

U.S.-Iran talks aim to buy time, not peace

By JACOB WIRTSCHAFTER
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

ISTANBUL | Iran's rejection of Turkey as a venue for nuclear talks with the United States this week exposed a hard truth about Middle East diplomacy: No one in the region is expecting a breakthrough.

What Gulf states want is time.

Tehran insisted that negotiations be moved from Turkey to Oman and restricted to uranium enrichment alone. Turkey had

Venue shifts to Oman with no expectation of breakthrough

offered to host broader regional discussions. The dispute was resolved Wednesday when both sides confirmed that talks would begin Friday in Muscat, Oman's capital, but only after a quiet diplomatic push by Arab and Gulf leaders urging Washington not to walk away.

Multiple Arab and Muslim

governments pressed the Trump administration to accept Iran's request. They warned that canceling the talks could accelerate escalation and destabilize already fragile Gulf security, said U.S. and regional officials cited by Reuters, Axios and Gulf media.

Interviews with diplomats and analysts across three Gulf

capitals suggest regional powers are not betting on a resolution. They are trying to prevent miscalculation long enough for containment strategies to hold.

"From a strict risk-analysis perspective, these talks are viewed as volatility management rather than risk reduction," said Mostafa Ahmed, a researcher at Al Habtoor Research in Dubai who specializes in Gulf security frameworks. "True risk reduction

» see IRAN | A5

CANADA

Alberta separatists meet with U.S. team

Official slams talks as 'treason'

By JEFF MORDOCK
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Trump administration has been holding covert meetings with a fringe group seeking to separate the oil-rich province of Alberta from the rest of Canada, adding a layer of intrigue to the increasingly tense relationship between Washington and Ottawa.

State Department officials have met three times since April with leaders of the Alberta Prosperity Project, which advocates for secession from Canada.

The Alberta Prosperity

Project backs an independence referendum in Alberta. The referendum, which has yet to be called, would make Canada's fourth-largest province an independent nation. A group allied with the project, Stay Free Alberta, is trying to gather the 177,000 signatures necessary for a referendum. If successful, the vote could be scheduled from late 2026 to May 2027.

Alberta Prosperity Project CEO Mitch Sylvestre told The Washington Times that the meetings with U.S. officials have

» see CANADA | A5

POLITICS

Mamdani on hot seat after revoking orders on antisemitism. A4

NATION

Better gut health can help quell anxiety and depression. A6

WORLD

Vibe for Winter Games could not be more varied for co-hosts. A9

SPORTS

Veteran wide receiver's fire fueled Patriots run to the Super Bowl. B10

VOLUME 44, NUMBER 27

