



# Here's Tigers' plan at OC for Gator Bowl, beyond

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## Columbia council aims to update meeting policies

**Charles Dunlap**  
Columbia Daily Tribune  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Processes for Columbia City Council meetings may soon have updates, though the timing will depend on when

council adopts the changes. The council took its first steps Monday night, Dec. 15 to review city staff reports on potential updates. Some policy changes could take place within the next month or two, while others need continuing discussions, mostly about

how public comments will operate. After a council request in October, city management fellows Lacey Salazar and Peyton Oliver started looking at how Springfield, Missouri, conducts  
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## Voting Rights Act case could shift statehouse seats

**Jonathan Shorman**  
Stateline

Republicans could gain nearly 200 state legislative seats across the South if the U.S. Supreme Court guts a key provision of the federal Voting Rights Act, a new analysis finds. The bulk of the gains would be concentrated in 10 GOP-controlled state legislatures in Southern states, according to the analysis, produced by Fair Fight Action, a Georgia-based progressive voting rights group, in partnership with Black Voters Matter Fund, which advocates on behalf of Black voters. The analysis, featured in a report released by the groups on Monday, Dec. 15, underscores the alarm among progressives over the potential consequences of the Supreme Court's looming decision in a case known as Louisiana v. Callais. While the case centers on the constitutionality of Louisiana's congressional map, the effects of the decision could extend into statehouses across the country. The Supreme Court's conservative majority appears likely to severely weaken Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, a landmark 1965 civil rights law that bans racial discrimination in voting access. Section 2 restricts racial gerrymandering, and until now has limited the power of lawmakers to draw districts that dilute the voting power of racial minority voters.

The Supreme Court's conservative majority appears likely to severely weaken Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, a landmark 1965 civil rights law that bans racial discrimination in voting access. Section 2 restricts racial gerrymandering, and until now has limited the power of lawmakers to draw districts that dilute the voting power of racial minority voters. A sweeping decision by the court could give state lawmakers a freer hand to draw congressional and state legislative districts that dilute the power of minority voters — as well as districts for local governments, such as county commissions, city councils and school boards. The justices held oral arguments in October; a decision could come at any time. At the state legislative level, a court ruling that strikes down Section 2 could lead to Democrats losing about 191 seats, according to the analysis, which examined how state legislative districts could be redrawn if Section 2 is no longer in place. Most of those seats are currently held by Black lawmakers in districts where minority voters make up a majority of residents. "What that is doing is providing a fatal blow to Black representation in the South," Fair Fight Action CEO Lauren Groh-Wargo said in an interview. The total number of state legislative districts in 10 Southern states where Black or Hispanic voters comprise a majority could fall from 342 to 202. Those states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. Some Republican states argue that courts have interpreted Section 2's protections too broadly and in the process wrongly restrained the ability of lawmakers to draw favorable maps. Alabama and 13 other GOP states said in a brief filed with the Supreme Court earlier this year that Section 2 has been turned into "the proverbial golden hammer, wielded by plaintiffs and courts in a never-ending search for a nail." If the Supreme Court weakens the Voting Rights Act, it's unclear whether



An oil extraction site sits in the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador. In August, California lawmakers unanimously passed a resolution to have the state investigate its role in oil imports from the Amazon, urging an end to the practice.

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## States take up conservation goals terminated by Trump

Many see ecological boosts as they press ahead with 30x30 goals

**Carey L. Biron**  
THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION

WASHINGTON – With a snappy title and a laudable goal, “30 by 30” was a landmark plan hatched to help save at least 30% of the planet’s land and oceans by 2030. Alongside this multinational push, the United States had its own trailblazing version of 30x30, and Americans came to see conservation as an effective – and fairly straightforward – way of helping win wider climate pledges. Four years down the line and that yen to restore and conserve nature lives on, despite President Donald Trump axing the U.S. 30x30 initiative – only now it is down to states to lead U.S. efforts to save wildlife, forests and waters. “Even if 30x30 has been erased by a Trump executive order, there’s progress in the states,” said Drew McConville of the Center for American Progress, a policy institute that backs the 30x30 goals. “Is the momentum dead, or has it just shifted?” The global pledge was officially born in 2022, aiming to curb biodiversity loss worldwide by protecting more natural areas such as parks, seas, forests and wildernesses. Signed by 196 nations at a global summit, the plan came to life a year after the United States had launched its



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LARS HAGBERG/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

own 30x30 drive. But on Day One of retaking office, Trump ditched the 30x30 goals, denying federal funds to projects across the country – such as efforts in Vermont to retain the state’s leafy reputation. Despite being one of the most forested states in the United States, Vermont had been losing trees at a worrying pace, with more than 300,000 acres projected gone by mid-century. Under the new focus brought by 30x30, efforts to reverse that decline

had received a boost. “I was expecting with federal support there would be money and support for planning and local implementation, and even the purchase of property,” Vermont State Sen. Rebecca White told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. “That has changed.” So now state officials in Vermont and beyond are looking to take up the slack, building on the support that  
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