

WASHINGTON

KENNEDY CENTER BATTLE INTENSIFIES



JONATHAN ERNST, REUTERS

Workers replace parts of a temporary fence Thursday at the Kennedy Center in Washington.

Trump ordered to give notice before steps to demolish building

KATHARINE JACKSON AND MIKE SCARCELLA
Reuters

WASHINGTON — A federal judge ordered President Donald Trump’s administration Thursday to provide at least 30 days’ notice before taking steps to demolish the Kennedy Center, the landmark performing arts venue that became a flash point in his efforts to reshape the U.S. capital.

U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper issued the order after lawyers for a Democratic congressman who is suing to keep the venue open and Trump’s name off its facade submitted new evidence citing the Republican president’s comments Wednesday referring to demolishing the landmark.

“I think that the Trump administration should certainly have recognition. Because frankly, if we don’t do that, it’s going to close. It’ll end up being ripped down,” Trump told reporters in North Carolina, referring to putting his name on the facility established by Congress and opened in 1971 as a memorial to slain President John Kennedy.

Matt Flocia, the Kennedy Center’s

Trump-backed executive director, said in a court filing earlier Thursday that the building was temporarily closed to assess safety risks in areas “exhibiting severe structural deterioration.”

Democratic U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty, who sued Trump last year over his Kennedy Center plans, responded in a filing in federal court in Washington that the closure “is a recipe for defendants extending their shutdown forever and closing the Kennedy Center for the next two years — the very thing this court said they could not do without its permission.”

Beatty’s lawyers also cited a photo circulating on social media that depicted the president aboard Air Force One looking at a poster they said appeared to be titled “Kennedy Center DEMOLISHED.” The photo was not independently verified by Reuters.

Trump’s campaign to remake the center is part of his broader efforts to leave his cultural and aesthetic mark on the U.S. capital. His other projects include a large new ballroom to replace the White House’s East Wing, which he ordered demolished; a troubled renovation of the

Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and a planned “triumphal arch” near Arlington National Cemetery.

Cooper turned down Beatty’s request for an emergency hearing on her lawsuit after the Kennedy Center’s board, including Trump and his hand-picked appointees, voted this week to close the venue for up to two years for a \$257 million renovation project.

Beatty, an ex officio member of the Kennedy Center’s board, said the venue is no longer accessible to the public during normal operating hours. New barriers were visible outside the building Wednesday.

Beatty and other critics accused Trump of seeking to place his name on the Kennedy Center out of vanity. The Republican president’s name was placed on the building’s facade until the judge ordered it removed in May, saying only Congress can change the name.

Cooper earlier directed the board to explain by Thursday whether the administration’s plan violates an earlier order he issued limiting its ability to shut its doors.

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Redistricting push may head back to lower courts

State justices have not issued orders on lawsuits after seven-hour hearing

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MADISON — A pair of lawsuits seeking to toss out Wisconsin’s current congressional map and draw new boundaries before the 2028 presidential election appear likely to be sent back to the trial courts after a more than seven-hour hearing Wednesday by the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

The court did not issue an order in either case, though several liberal justices were openly critical of a previous, more conservative court’s 2021 ruling that any new maps take a “least change” approach to the then-existing maps approved by legislative Republicans and signed by then-Republican Gov. Scott Walker in 2011.

Plaintiffs in each case argue the resulting maps violate the Wisconsin Constitution,

noting that six of Wisconsin’s eight congressional seats are held by Republicans despite the state being one of the most narrowly divided states in the country.

“Least change says we are going to bake in whatever the political motivations were of that 2011 Legislature, and we’re going to bake it in for perpetuity,” liberal Chief Justice Jill Karofsky said.

Liberal Justice Chris Taylor, who joined the court last month, giving liberals a 5-2 majority, seemed to agree with the plaintiffs in one case that boundaries that lock in a party’s advantage inflict an unconstitutional harm on voters, whether it’s Democratic voters in a Republican-leaning district or Republican voters in a Democratic-leaning district.

“If a class of voters, if their vote is being diluted or infringed upon, that seems to me to violate these principles of the people being sovereign, because we have, then, elevated the power of politicians above



SAMANTHA MADAR, STATE JOURNAL ARCHIVES

People stand outside of the Wisconsin Supreme Court chamber during oral arguments before the justices in a redistricting case at the state Capitol in Madison on Nov. 21, 2023.

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