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Democracy Dies in Darkness

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024 • \$3

Tech group with new clout eyes next move

Moguls who pushed for TikTok law now aim to set AI policy for Trump

BY ELIZABETH DWOSKIN, DREW HARWELL AND CAT ZAKRZEWSKI

Two years ago, Jacob Helberg, a little-known tech industry adviser, convened a dinner between lawmakers and a small group of Silicon Valley insiders on Washington's Embassy Row. The informal supper club, which would eventually receive funding from billionaire investor Peter Thiel's venture firm, was not distinctive for its wealth or clout — the people involved had plenty of both — but for its members' eagerness to eschew the industry's long-held ideals of boundaryless technology for an alternative vision rooted in American nationalism and an anti-China might.

Today, that group has turned into one of the most powerful lobbying forces for the technology industry in Washington, helping draft and promote one of the country's only pieces of tech legislation in decades: a law signed by President Biden calling for the forced sale or ban of TikTok, the video app owned by the China-based company ByteDance and used by some 170 million in the United States.

Fresh off that win, the group's leader, Helberg, is aiming to expand its mission. With associates, he is prepping an executive order geared for a possible future Trump presidency that would dismantle the Biden administration's rules on artificial intelligence, according to people familiar with its dealings who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private discussions. Instead, they will push government to pour money into AI grants and contracts that could benefit many in the group.

They aim to undercut China's status as a U.S. trading partner and are designing legislation that would shift the AI supply chain, SEE TECH ON A16



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Officers patrol the UCLA campus. Rep. James Comer (Ky.) speaks about clearing a pro-Palestinian encampment at George Washington University in D.C. on Wednesday. Pro-Palestinian students protest at Fordham University in New York. Law enforcement officers confront demonstrators at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

A clash of campus forces

Republicans threaten to use federal power to compel D.C. to clear GWU encampment

BY EMILY DAVIES AND ELLIE SILVERMAN

House Republicans have summoned D.C.'s mayor and police chief to testify before a congressional committee about their decision not to clear a pro-Palestinian encampment at George Washington University — the latest in a wide-reaching GOP effort to use the nationwide demonstrations to paint the country as embroiled in chaos under President Biden.

Federal lawmakers, speaking from GWU's encampment on Wednesday, said they will use the hearing to compel

more aggressive police action at the demonstration unfolding five blocks from the White House.

The response from the District, which involved rejecting pleas from GWU to sweep out the encampment, has stood in sharp contrast to the scenes on other campuses across the country. Police departments in recent days have responded to requests from school officials to clear protests, at times dressing in riot gear and deploying chemical irritants to disperse demonstrators. The law enforcement crackdown has led to arrests of more than

SEE ENCAMPMENT ON A7

After tear gas and police in riot gear, colleges grapple with fallout of crackdowns

BY DANIELLE PAQUETTE, HANNAH NATANSON, JOANNA SLATER AND EMILY WAX-THIBODEAUX

Colleges and universities reckoned Wednesday with the aftermath of major shows of police force across the country that cleared some protest encampments and emptied a Manhattan classroom building in a turning point following two weeks of contagious pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

Even after a fragile calm resettled over campuses that have seen the bulk of the chaos, footage of officers in riot gear extracting students from Colum-

bia University's Hamilton Hall — the most searing images from 24 hours of tense confrontations between law enforcement and protesters — sparked debates nationwide as Americans struggled to make sense of it all.

In a nation that prides itself on free expression — but where people report feeling less safe, even in places where crime is dropping — some administrators, criticized by all sides, have sought police help when negotiations with students, in their view, failed. With final exams

SEE CAMPUSES ON A7

Media hurdles: Some students are wary of reporters. C1

Blinken presses Hamas on cease-fire

HOPES OF STAVING OFF RAFAH ATTACK

He visits Israeli officials, tours supply chain for aid

BY STEVE HENDRIX AND MISSY RYAN

JERUSALEM — Visiting Israel on Wednesday at a moment described by U.S. officials as the last chance to head off a surge of fighting, Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Hamas to accept a cease-fire proposal and pushed the Israelis to do more for Gazan civilians.

Looming over the visit were questions about whether the Biden administration can persuade the Israeli government to support an eventual Palestinian state, essential to winning Arab backing for a sweeping postwar plan that U.S. officials see as key to stabilizing the Middle East.

Blinken met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top leaders as Israel appeared poised to move on Hamas's final enclave in southern Gaza and mediators awaited the Palestinian militant group's response to Israel's latest offer to stop the fighting in exchange for the release of hostages.

"We are determined to get a cease-fire that brings the hostages home and to get it now, and the only reason that wouldn't be achieved is because of Hamas," Blinken said before meeting Israeli President Isaac Herzog in Tel Aviv. "There is a proposal on the table, and as we've said, no delays, no excuses. The time is now."

The Biden administration sees the hostage talks, which have collapsed repeatedly in recent months, as probably the only remaining hope of securing a cease-fire before Israel fulfills its pledge to resume full-scale warfare with an attack on the southern Gazan

SEE ISRAEL ON A11

Secret detentions: Israel's high court hears case on Gazans. A11

Tears, despair at a Florida abortion clinic ahead of new law

A scramble to beat the clock as six-week ban takes effect; some patients already turned away

BY CAROLINE KITCHENER IN BROWARD COUNTY, FLA.

When she walked into the abortion clinic Tuesday morning, Kristen thought she'd made it just in time.

The 22-year-old mother of two had learned just a few hours earlier that a new six-week abortion ban would go into effect in Florida on Wednesday. So she canceled all her plans and found someone to drive her, in hopes of ending her pregnancy before the deadline.

She was one day too late. "We did an ultrasound, and you're over the state limit," said Eileen Diamond, the director of Benjamin Surgical Services International, gently explaining to Kristen that the test showed she was eight weeks pregnant.

While the clinic could still provide abortions for women more than six weeks into their pregnancies until midnight, Diamond said, another Florida law requires all abortion patients to have an ultrasound at least 24 hours before their procedure. That meant the earliest Kristen

SEE CLINIC ON A6



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Akayla McBean, Chaun Williams, Carla Ullith and Yvonne S. of Benjamin Surgical Services International look through case files Tuesday as they prepare to close the clinic for the day.

Mostly shrugs from House GOP in bid to oust Johnson

Greene plans to force a vote, but many in party are fed up with infighting

BY MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR AND JOSH DAWSEY

House Republicans were largely dismissive of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene's (R-Ga.) announcement Wednesday that she would force them to vote on ousting Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) next week, with many predicting her move would fail.

Greene's escalation has further divided the deeply fractured Republican conference, with lawmakers eager to move past their internal rancor and focus on retaining their slender House majority in November.

Greene's move has also frustrated top advisers to former president Donald Trump, and one person said Trump has repeatedly described the Republican infighting as "embarrassing."

"He wishes it would just go away," this person said. His advisers believe the situa-

tion puts Trump in the difficult bind of choosing between allies he likes and is furthermore unnecessary in the middle of an election year where they want to be talking about immigration, inflation, campus protests and other issues they view as more favorable.

"We are trying to snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory by making the story Republican infighting," the person said, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss Trump's thinking.

Trump has endorsed Johnson's handling of the speakership, but it's unclear if the presumptive GOP presidential nominee will proactively intervene to halt Greene from introducing her "motion to vacate" because she has been a consistently loyal ally. A fired-up Greene claimed Wednesday she was bringing her motion to help Trump, arguing Johnson has fully funded the Justice Department that she charges wants to put Trump in jail "for life."

"I fight for [Trump's agenda] every day, and that's why I'm fighting my colleagues now," Greene

SEE SPEAKER ON A4

On a mission: Johnson is pressing donors to open up their wallets. A4

IN THE NEWS

Patchwork approach An estimated 9 million lead pipelines still supply water to homes in the U.S., as the nation struggles to replace them a decade after the Flint crisis. A3

Data center growth The increasing number of facilities in Northern Virginia and across the country is sparking a backlash. B1

THE NATION Pasteurization kills a highly pathogenic strain of bird flu in dairy products, testing found. A2
Democrats see a proposed change to federal marijuana policy as a key political strategy. A5

THE WORLD Labor marches in France that were held in observance of May Day revealed participants' anger over the war in Gaza and the upcoming Summer Olympics in Paris. A10

THE ECONOMY Trader Joe's has gained a reputation for opposing labor efforts as a Chicago location of the grocery store chain tallies ballots in a unionization vote. A14
Amid low but stingy inflation, the Federal Reserve declined to lower interest rates. A15

THE REGION A Maryland judge, citing disturbing social media activity, declined to end probation for a teen in a murder case. B1
In Virginia, state Sen. Ghazala F. Hashmi (Chesterfield) will join a crowded Democratic field running for lieutenant governor. B1

STYLE Laura Loomer, a highly aggressive supporter of Donald Trump, is an outlier, but she's confident she can find a seat at the table. C1

LOCAL LIVING Birds are probably your neighbors. Learn how you can protect their nests.

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The Washington Post
Year 147, No. 53839

