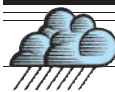


# The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

SU V1 V2 V3 V4



Shower, breezy 72/49 • Tomorrow: Sunny 60/45 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2024 • \$3

## At trial, Trump fights on two fronts

Ex-tabloid CEO testifies about pact; judge mulls gag order penalties

BY SHAYNA JACOBS, TOM JACKMAN, DEVLIN BARRETT AND HANNAH KNOWLES

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign was repeatedly aided by the National Enquirer, which squelched potentially damaging stories about him and pumped out articles pummeling his rivals, the former boss of the supermarket tabloid testified Tuesday during the ex-president's trial on charges of falsifying business records.

Trump, the first former U.S. president to face a criminal trial, spent his day in the Manhattan courtroom fighting two pitched battles — one against the testimony of former tabloid executive David Pecker, his longtime friend, and another against the increasingly likely prospect that he will be punished by the trial judge for allegedly violating a gag order.

On both fronts, prosecutors seemed to inflict significant damage. At one point, New York Supreme Court Justice Juan Merchan warned Trump lawyer Todd Blanche that he was "losing all credibility." At another, Trump grimaced and shook his head as Pecker described how he helped kill an allegation — ultimately found to be false — that Trump had a child with a maid at his building.

The busy court day was punctuated by prosecutors detailing the full factual and legal foundation of their case against Trump, one built around a misdemeanor state charge of trying to illegally

SEE TRUMP ON A8

## Congress passes bill that could ban TikTok

After years of false starts, measure speeds to Biden as part of foreign aid deal

BY CRISTIANO LIMA-STRONG

Congress late Tuesday passed legislation to ban or force a sale of TikTok, delivering a historic rebuke of the video-sharing platform's Chinese ownership after years of failed attempts to tackle the app's alleged national security risks.

The Senate approved the measure 79 to 18 as part of a sprawling package offering aid to Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan, sending the proposal to President Biden's desk — with the House having passed it Saturday. Biden issued a statement minutes after the Senate vote saying he plans to sign the bill into law on Wednesday.

Once signed, the provision will give TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, roughly nine months to sell the wildly popular app or face a national ban, a deadline the president could extend by 90 days.

SEE TIKTOK ON A9



MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

## California is swamped by solar

The state struggles to offload excess electricity as springtime prices go negative

BY SHANNON OSAKA

In sunny California, solar panels are everywhere. They sit in dry, desert landscapes in the Central Valley and are scattered over rooftops in Los Angeles's urban center. By last count, the state had nearly 47 gigawatts of solar power installed — enough to power 13.9 million homes and provide over a quarter of the Golden State's electricity.

But now, the state and its grid operator are grappling with a strange reality: There is so much solar on the grid that, on sunny spring days when there's not as much demand, electricity prices go negative. Gigawatts of solar are "curtailed" — essentially, thrown away.

In response, California has cut back incentives for rooftop solar and slowed the pace of installing panels.

But the diminishing economic returns may slow the development of solar in a state that has tried to move to renewable energy. And as other states build more and more solar plants of their own, they may soon face the same problems.

"These are not insurmountable challenges," said Michelle Davis, head of global solar at the energy research and consulting firm Wood Mackenzie Power and Renewables. "But they are challenges that a lot of grid operators have never had to deal with."

Solar power has many wonderful properties — once built, it costs almost nothing to run; it produces no air pollution and generates energy without burning fossil fuels. But it also has one major, obvious drawback: The sun doesn't shine all the time.

Over 15 years ago, researchers at the National Renewable Energy Labora-

tory were in the midst of modeling a future with widespread solar power when they noticed something strange. With lots of solar power on a given electricity grid, the net load — or the demand for electricity minus the renewable energy — would take on a "U" shape. Sky-high demand in the morning would be replaced by almost zero demand in the middle of the day, when solar power could generate virtually all electricity people needed. Then as the sun set, demand surged up again.

California's grid operator, known as CAISO, later dubbed this effect the "duck curve." (If you squint, you can imagine the curve as the belly of a duck.) It's most prominent in the spring months, when solar panels get plenty of sunshine but there is less demand for heating and cooling.

In recent years in California, the

SEE SOLAR ON A20

Homes outfitted with solar panels in Santa Clarita, Calif., in September 2023. In 2022, the state wasted 2.4 million megawatt-hours of electricity, 95 percent of which was solar.

## Biden aims for a careful balance as protests spread

President and his allies say it's unclear what impact college demonstrations may have on reelection bid

BY YASMEEN ABUTALEB, TYLER PAGER, MATT VISER AND MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR

The continued fervor of college protests against the Israel-Gaza war as it drags into its seventh month highlights the political challenges President Biden still faces from his unconditional support of Israel as he aims to strike a careful balance between condemning antisemitism on college campuses and supporting students' right to protest.

Students at several campuses across the country have formed encampments and barricades to pressure their universities to divest from any ties to Israel and back a permanent cease-fire. But some Biden allies and Democratic strategists noted that the highly charged protests, which have resulted in hundreds of arrests, have largely taken place at elite colleges, and said it remains unclear whether opposition to U.S. support of Israel, especially among younger Democrats, will signifi-

SEE PROTESTS ON A6

College campuses: Schools boost police response to protests. A6



ROBB HILL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

American University students stage a protest Tuesday demanding the university divest from Israel, days after a student body passed a resolution calling for the school's administration to do so. Story, B1

## Nassar victims settle claims

JUSTICE TO PAY OUT \$138.7 MILLION

FBI failed to stop abuse by gymnastics doctor

BY WILL HOBSON

The Justice Department announced Tuesday it has agreed to pay nearly \$139 million to victims of former Team USA gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, settling legal claims brought over the department's failure to investigate allegations that could have brought the convicted child molester to justice sooner and prevented dozens of assaults.

One of the largest of its kind in Justice Department history, the settlement brings to a close the last major legal case in an ugly chapter of Olympic sports in this country. Nassar's prolific abuses occurred over a span of decades at international events including the Olympics, as well as at Michigan State University, where Nassar worked, and local gymnastics centers in Michigan and around the country.

Once well respected in elite gymnastics circles for his association with Team USA, Nassar committed hundreds of alleged assaults over the years, often under the guise of medical treatment. Members of multiple U.S. Olympic gymnastics teams have alleged abuse by Nassar, including Simone Biles, Aly Raisman and McKayla Maroney.

Nassar, 60, is serving an effective life sentence for federal convictions relating to possession of child pornography, as well as state

SEE NASSAR ON A11

## Rule lets workers switch to rival firms

FTC bars noncompete clauses in contracts and voids current agreements

BY JULIAN MARK

The Federal Trade Commission on Tuesday banned noncompete agreements for most U.S. workers, a move that will affect an estimated 30 million employees bound by contracts that restrict workers from switching employers within their industry.

The agency voted 3-2 to issue the rule, with commissioners in the majority saying they saw a mountain of evidence that noncompete agreements suppress wages, stifle entrepreneurship and gum up labor markets. The new rule makes it illegal for employers to include the agreements in employment contracts and requires companies with active noncompete agreements to inform workers that they are void.

"The FTC's final rule to ban noncompetes will ensure Americans have the freedom to pursue a new job, start a new business, or

SEE FTC ON A4

## IN THE NEWS

**Emergency abortions** The Supreme Court will hear arguments over whether hospitals can be required to provide the procedure under a nearly 40-year-old federal law. A10

**Capitals drop Game 2** The Rangers scored twice on the power play in a 4-3 win that left Washington in a 2-0 series hole. D1

**THE NATION**  
**The White House** called on pension funds to adopt stronger labor standards. A9  
**In Tennessee**, legislators passed a bill allowing employees to carry handguns in schools. A16

**THE WORLD**  
**Canada**, long big on immigration, is instituting limits amid a housing crisis. A13  
**A dentist** found what appears to be an ancient human jawbone in his parents' tile floor. A14

**THE ECONOMY**  
**Experts offer tips** on how to tailor feedback to workers of different generations. A18  
**Tesla profits** plunged 55 percent in the first quarter, the electric-vehicle maker reported on a call in which it also made a flurry of bold commitments. A19

**THE REGION**  
**Richmond Mayor** Levar M. Stoney, a Democrat, is giving up his campaign for Virginia governor and will run for lieutenant governor. B1  
**The city of Baltimore** argued a judge should not cap potential liability payments by the Dalí's owner and operator. B1

**STYLE**  
**Can Pornhub's** new owner, Solomon Friedman, turn the popular website's image from revealed to ethical? C1

**FOOD**  
**Becky Selengut** wants to disarm chefs into opening their minds on "misunderstood" vegetables. E1

BUSINESS NEWS.....A18  
COMICS.....C6  
OBITUARIES.....B4  
OPINION PAGES.....A21  
TELEVISION.....C4  
WORLD NEWS.....A12

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