

# The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024

## Shoring up soft spots as Nov. 5 closes in

### Harris, Trump target their own weaknesses

By Tal Kopan  
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Toward the end of a radio town hall in Detroit focused on Black voters, Vice President Kamala Harris was asked a question about the rollout of her “opportunity agenda for Black men.”

“What would you say to the people that would consider the timing of this proposal as political timing?” local rapper Chivez “Icewear Vezzo” Smith asked during the town hall Tuesday hosted by Charlamagne tha God, noting that some Black men feel they are only noticed during election cycles.

Harris responded by detailing how her commitment to such policies goes back for years, but the exchange highlighted why she was there in the first place. Democrats fear that former president Donald Trump is eating into Harris’s support among voters of color, particularly men. Once a reliable source of votes for Democrats, their potential drift away from the party, even in small numbers, could prove a tipping point in an election that appears to be a dead heat.

With the vote less than three weeks away, both Harris and Trump have spent the week holding events and interviews focused on perceived electoral weaknesses. Harris conducted a series of interviews and media appearances with predominantly Black audiences and on

CAMPAIGNS, Page A7

## Election officials in Ga. confident that this time will be different

By Jim Puzanghera  
GLOBE STAFF

MACON, Ga. — A few dozen ballot-marking machines stood in the lobby of the Macon-Bibb County Board of Elections, ready to be dispatched to early voting sites. In a back room, a handful of workers tested more of the county’s approximately 400 touchscreen machines along with ballot tabulators, printers, and other technology. A lone woman strolled in to ask a voting question.

It was a normal, quiet afternoon recently in the run-up to Election Day. And that helped give Thomas Gillon, the appointed elections supervisor in this county about 90 miles south of Atlanta, cautious optimism that things will go much more smoothly on Nov. 5 than they did four years ago. Because nothing about the 2020 election here or anywhere in Georgia was normal and quiet.

A pandemic that led to a flood of absentee ballots; new voting machines that poll workers and voters had to figure out how to operate for the first time; a highly contentious race decided by a razor-thin 11,779-vote margin statewide.

“Any one of those would have been easy to deal with. Two would have been OK,” Gillon said. “But no, give us all three.”

Four years later, the first two complications are in the past. The third one, however, remains perilously in play.

Polls show a neck-and-neck race in Georgia

GEORGIA, Page A6



MANDEL NGAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

## A PRESIDENTIAL FAREWELL TO ETHEL KENNEDY

Joe Biden, Barack Obama, and Bill Clinton were among the mourners Wednesday in Washington, D.C., at a service for the Kennedy family matriarch, who died last week at 96.

Kennedy was remembered not only for her role in the clan’s political fortunes, but also for her activism for human rights. About 100 members of the Kennedy family were on hand at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. **B1.**



CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

## Business groups out fund-raised on MCAS question

### Teachers unions spending far more in bid to kill requirement for a diploma

By Jon Chesto  
GLOBE STAFF

The local business community has united again over a ballot question, this time over the future of the MCAS exam. But will that unity be enough to stop Question 2?

As Election Day approaches, business leaders risk a repeat of the 2022 vote on the so-called millionaires tax.

Then, as now, they argued that a ballot question backed by the powerful Massachusetts Teachers Association would hurt the state’s economic competitiveness. While that debate centered on taxes for the wealthy, the upcoming vote on Question 2, businesspeople say, risks undermining what is arguably the state’s biggest selling point to many companies and em-

ployees: the quality of its public schools.

In the fight two years ago, teachers unions easily outspent business interests and won by a narrow margin on Election Day. This time, the spending gap is even bigger: The MTA, as Question 2’s sole bankroller, has spent \$7.7 million in staff time and money, including for ads and outside contractors, as of Oct. 1, to

► **Top Democrats split on MCAS question. B1.**

make the case to voters that passing the MCAS exam should no longer be a requirement for a high school diploma. Meanwhile, the business-backed opponents to Question 2 have spent just \$1.2 million to maintain the current mandate.

That’s a far cry from the \$15 million raised to fight the millionaires tax, and also the \$7 million to \$10 million opponents had hoped to raise to mount a credible campaign against Question 2 this year. The

MCAS, Page A4

## Reaching a turning point in N.H.

### Crush of leaf peepers has officials thinking about changes

By Amanda Gokee  
GLOBE STAFF

CONCORD, N.H. — Crowds. Garbage. Congestion. A delayed rescue.

Throng of fall foliage visitors went to New Hampshire over the long holiday weekend, overwhelming some local businesses and leaving a swirl of trash and traffic in their wake. Now, state officials are weighing changes to state park regulations as they search for ways to manage the crush of leaf peepers in certain popular areas.

Greg Keeler, a spokesperson for New Hampshire State Parks, said that while Franconia Notch State Park is a destination for outdoor enthusiasts and fall tourists

in general, social media has fueled particular interest in Artist’s Bluff, a short 1.5-mile hike that leads to a rocky outcropping with sweeping views.

“It’s just that this one particular place gets all that attention for this one picture,” Keeler said. At New Hampshire’s other state parks, “it was a normal, a very busy normal fall holiday weekend with no sort of issues.”

“We are considering some options for the future, to make it a better experience and protect the environment,” he said, noting that those efforts could include outreach and marketing.

Jace Wirth, the general manager at Franconia Notch State Park and Cannon Mountain, said the level of visi-

FOLIAGE, Page A5



SHUVA PAUL

With a short hike, Artist’s Bluff in Franconia Notch State Park delivers the views, and it’s not exactly a secret, thanks to social media. The crowd was big on Oct. 5 and things were worse for the holiday weekend.

## A piece in puzzle of long COVID

By Adam Piore  
GLOBE STAFF

Scientists and doctors have suspected for years that one cause of the mysterious condition known as long COVID may be reservoirs of the virus that remain hidden in the bodies of its victims long after their acute infections have passed.

Earlier this month, a research team led by Boston-area scientists unveiled a study suggesting this is true for almost half of those suffering from the condition.

“It’s unlikely that persistent virus is the cause of all long COVID symptoms,” said Dr. David Walt, co-director of the Mass General Brigham Center for COVID Innovation and the study’s senior author. “What is more probable is that it’s one of the causes.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates almost 7 percent, or close to 18 million Americans, suffer from long COVID, a chronic condition often marked by a series of debilitating symptoms that can include extreme exhaus-

LONG COVID, Page A5

### Up shot

Thursday: Not as cool.  
High 53-58. Low 43-48.

Friday: Rising some more.  
High 58-63. Low 42-47.

Sunrise: 7:00 Sunset: 5:58

Weather and Comics, D5-6.  
Obituaries, C9.

VOL. 306, NO. 109

Suggested retail price  
\$4.00



The Green Line train that derailed in Cambridge this month was traveling 36 m.p.h. in a 10 m.p.h. zone, federal investigators said. **B1.**

President Volodymyr Zelensky outlined a “victory plan” on the war to lawmakers in Ukraine. **A3.**