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Sunday

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FINAL

## DIVIDED DEMOCRATS SET TO HEAD TO THE POLLS



Lucy Schaly/Post-Gazette  
Mayor Ed Gainey is trying to hold on to his job for another four years.

### Historic challenges and looming threats confront city

By Hallie Lauer and Mike Wereschagin  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A budget on the brink.  
A crisis in affordable housing.  
A Democratic Party fighting over how to win back voters — and using Pittsburgh as a battleground.  
As the raucous, hard-fought campaign between Mayor Ed Gainey and Allegheny County Controller Corey O'Connor barrels toward its end Tuesday, the city faces an inflection point unlike any it has seen in decades.  
The race has been rocked by the

### MAYORAL Election 2025

#### BALLOT QUESTIONS

As mayoral primary nears end, city residents also will have a chance to vote on three ballot measures. **Page C-5**

explosive leak of a group chat among Mr. Gainey's supporters that some say pushed the legal limits on coordination between the candidate

and deep-pocketed outside supporters, and by allegations that Mr. O'Connor's campaign is fueled by some of the city's wealthiest and most powerful special interests — including Republicans — who want Mr. Gainey gone.

A pair of Republicans — former city police officer Tony Moreno and businessman Thomas West — are facing off in their own primary, but in a city where Democrats outnumber GOP voters five to one, it's the winner of the contest between Mr. Gainey and Mr. O'Connor who will

SEE **MAYOR**, PAGE A-5



Lucy Schaly/Post-Gazette  
County Controller Corey O'Connor is mounting a tough challenge.

## PG SPECIAL REPORT: CLASH IN THE COALFIELDS



Jimmy Phillips is among thousands who fought for years in a frustrating legal process to get benefits for black lung, a painful disease that hits one in every five underground workers in central Appalachia. "I just like getting my settlements so I have enough to bury me," he said.

# THE FINAL BATTLE

Coal miners wage long legal fights for benefits to pay bills — and to stay alive

Story by Anavi Prakash, Victoria Malis, Tianyi Wang and Jessie Nguyen • Medill Investigative Lab  
Photos by Justin Guido • Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Strapped to a ventilator and too weak to talk, George Stevenson curled up in his hospital bed two years ago and scribbled a note to his wife that remains etched in her memory. "Don't let them beat you out of my black lung," he wrote.

Diagnosed a year earlier with the painful disease, the longtime miner who had toiled in the underground mines of West Virginia reminded his wife that the benefits promised to sick miners were critical to the support of their family.  
Just days later, he died at 74.

For the last year of his life, he had been fighting for the help that miners are provided under federal law, but even as the disease ravaged his lungs, he never got a dime.  
"It's crushing," said Cathy

SEE **COAL**, PAGE A-6

## Severe weather kills at least 27

3 states report deaths, including 18 in Kentucky

By Dylan Lovan  
Associated Press

LONDON, Ky. — At least 27 people have been killed by storm systems that swept across part of the U.S. Midwest and South, with Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear announcing Saturday that 18 of the deaths came in his state and 10 others were hospitalized in critical condition.

A devastating tornado in Kentucky damaged homes, tossed vehicles and left many people homeless. Seventeen of the deaths were in Laurel County, located in the state's southeast, including Fire Department Maj. Roger Leslie Leatherman, a 39-year veteran who was fatally injured while responding to the weather. The other fatality was in Pulaski County.

Parts of two dozen state roads were closed, and some could take days to reopen, Mr. Beshear said. He also said most of the victims were in their 60s and 70s and the death toll could still rise.

"It's hard to see," the governor said after touring the impacted areas. "Homes that there isn't a single wall left standing. Some homes that have all four walls yet lost the person inside. You can not only see the destruction but feel it."

State Emergency Management Director Eric Gibson said hundreds of homes were damaged.

Kayla Patterson, her husband and their five children huddled in a tub in their basement in London, the county seat, as the tornado raged around them.

"You could literally hear just things ripping in the distance, glass shattering everywhere, just roaring like a freight train," she recalled Saturday. "It was terrible."

The family eventually emerged to the sounds of sirens and panicked neighbors.

SEE **WEATHER**, PAGE A-8

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