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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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Big Law's retreat lays onus on small firms

Legal practices pressed to their limits as they challenge Trump in court

BY SHAYNA JACOBS, CLARA ENCE MORSE AND MARK BERMAN

NEW YORK — The largest law firms in the United States have been far less likely to challenge President Donald Trump's policies than they were during his first term, and smaller firms are carrying much more of the burden of high-stakes legal challenges, according to an analysis by The Washington Post.

Large firms represented plaintiffs in 15 percent of cases challenging Trump executive orders between the start of his term in January and mid-September, compared with roughly 75 percent of cases during a comparable period in Trump's first term, The Post found. The analysis examined civil complaints and court records from legal research website CourtListener mentioning Trump and the term "executive order" for each time period.

The shift by large firms has put a significant extra burden on small- and medium-sized firms. They have taken on more of the workload in the nearly 400 lawsuits filed between January and mid-September, according to The Post's analysis. Trump signed more than 200 executive orders in that time period, well above the count from the first eight months of his first term. Some of his executive orders this spring targeted major law firms.

The Post's analysis was largely based on reviews of court records and interviews with attorneys who have litigation experience challenging government actions. The disputes examined in the

SEE LAW FIRMS ON A12

Caribbean braces for devastation from Hurricane Melissa



OCTAVIO JONES/REUTERS

Fishermen move a boat to higher ground in Port Royal, Jamaica, on Sunday as Hurricane Melissa churns toward the island of about 2.8 million. The Category 4 storm is expected to strengthen and make landfall late Monday with catastrophic flooding and landslides, and is on track to strike other islands later this week. **Story, A14**

Trump's view of Japan differs from today's reality

BY MICHELLE YE HEE LEE

TOKYO — The Japan that first caught President Donald Trump's attention in the 1980s was a country of glitzy excess and big dreams, a place so flush with cash that businessmen dropped \$14,000 tips at hostess bars and golf memberships cost upward of \$3 million.

Sales of high-end models of Ferrari and Mercedes-Benz cars soared. Land values were so high

President's trade policies reflect country's go-go economy of the 1980s

that the Imperial Palace grounds in the center of Tokyo, measuring just over 1 square mile, were worth more than all the real estate in California.

In the 1980s, when the 30-

something real estate developer built a golden tower in New York on Fifth Avenue bearing his name, Japanese companies snapped up prime property in the United States — including Rockefeller Center near Fifth Avenue.

Japan was also a global leader in innovation: It had invented the Sony Walkman, VCRs and Nintendo games. It seemed like Japan owned the future.

A renowned Harvard professor had even published a book called

"Japan as Number One," so certain did it appear that Japan would leapfrog the United States to become the world's biggest economy.

This Japan appears to be the animating principle behind the tariff regime that Trump, now on his second presidential term, is using to reshape the global economy and stop, as he said, wealthy economies from "ripping off" the United States, experts say.

"First they take all our money

SEE JAPAN ON A5

Trade deal with China in reach

STAGE SET FOR TRUMP-XI MEETING

Beijing will hold off on restricting key minerals

BY CAT ZAKRZEWSKI AND KATRINA NORTROP

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA — Negotiators have reached a framework of a trade deal to avert additional 100 percent tariffs that President Donald Trump had threatened to impose on imports from China, setting the stage for the U.S. president's highly anticipated meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Thursday.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in interviews Sunday that constructive meetings with his Chinese counterparts led to the deal, with the delegation from Beijing agreeing to defer restrictions on rare earth minerals that were poised to harm the U.S. economy. The announcement marked a significant de-escalation of a whiplashing trade war between the world's two largest economies, which heated up when Trump threatened to ratchet up tariffs earlier this month in response to China's restrictions on the minerals, which are essential components in most electronics.

"President Trump gave me a great deal of negotiating leverage with the threat of the 100 percent tariffs, and I believe we've reached a very substantial framework that will avoid that and allow us to discuss many other things with the Chinese," Bessent said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

SEE CHINA ON A6

Asia trip: Trump projects peacemaker image at summit. **A4**

Planned migrant detention center roils a rural Nebraska town

Residents, former inmates frustrated by state's contract to convert Work Ethic Camp into ICE facility

BY CAROLINE O'DONOVAN

MCCOOK, NEB. — For nearly 25 years, prisoners like Mitch Stone moved furniture, mowed lawns and renovated buildings at no cost to residents of this small city in western Nebraska.

Stone, 50, spent two years at a local Work Ethic Camp, where he maintained a county fairground for \$3.78 a day while serving time after a DUI conviction. "The camp helped me out a lot," said Stone, who is now a full-time employee at the same facility where he worked as an inmate.

By the end of this week, Nebraska's governor, Jim Pillen (R), says the state will turn the camp into the "Cornhusker Clink" — a Great Plains version of Florida's Alligator Alcatraz where the state plans to house up to 300 undocumented immigrants awaiting deportation.

The closure has McCook officials and local nonprofits that depended on the prison labor scrambling to find a new workforce. (Camp wages were paid by the state.)

Nebraska will net about \$14 million from the deal with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, according to the governor's office. But that money will not go to the town's coffers, city officials say, and local residents worry they will lose business from people who came to town to visit incarcerated family members.



CAROLINE O'DONOVAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

"The camp helped me out a lot," said Mitch Stone, who spent two years at the Work Ethic Camp in McCook, Nebraska, where he maintained a fairground while serving time after a DUI conviction.

"We didn't ask for this," said Nate Schneider, McCook's city manager.

In court filings and interviews, McCook residents said they took pride in their relationship with the Work Ethic Camp, which

they saw as mutually beneficial. The inmates set up tables at the Salvation Army, renovated the weight room at the YMCA and managed an "out-of-control apple orchard," according to a lawsuit filed by local residents seek-

ing to stop the takeover of the facility.

In the process, inmates learned new skills and gained a level of independence that the prison system doesn't typically

SEE PRISON ON A7

U.S. Anglican bishop is 2nd top leader facing wrongdoing allegations

Complaints say men with troubling pasts allowed to work, worship in diocese

BY IAN SHAPIRA

During a sunlit service in May, the interim head pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in suburban Chicago stepped up to the lectern. Standing beside a massive portrait of Jesus, he broached a painful subject to his Anglican parishioners: the years-long disciplinary investigation of their bishop, Stewart Ruch III. Though the pastor skirted the details, the main accusation was widely known — that Ruch endangered parishioners by allowing men with histories of violence and sexual misconduct into his diocese.

Now, pastor Matt Woodley told congregants at the church in Wheaton, Illinois, the inquiry would culminate in a July ecclesiastical trial against Ruch. But the court-like proceeding, which took place privately over Zoom, saw two prosecutors quit. Testimony concluded in mid-October, and the seven-member panel of judges — a mix of bishops, priests and parishioners — is expected to

publish a verdict by December. If found guilty, the 58-year-old bishop overseeing 18 churches in six states within the Anglican Church in North America could be defrocked.

"One of our growing pains has been the realization that we don't have a good way to resolve questions and concerns related to a bishop's leadership," Woodley told congregants at the church, which is known as Rez.

Ruch, who has been a bishop for 12 years, is one of two top leaders in the continent's Anglican denomination confronting allegations of wrongdoing. The other is its senior-most official, Archbishop Stephen Wood. A married father of four sons, Wood, 62, has been accused by a former employee of trying to kiss her last year inside his church office in South Carolina, according to a new church presentation, which The Washington Post obtained ahead of its submission last week. The accusations, which also include plagiarizing sermons and demeaning colleagues, could prompt an ecclesiastical trial against Wood and his removal from ministry, according to the denomination's laws.

The allegations against both men have turned a spotlight on a denomination founded 16 years

SEE ANGLICAN ON A10

IN THE NEWS

Trump's ballroom The new structure will be almost as large as the rest of the White House complex. **A6** The demolished home of the first lady's office was a source of quiet power. **B1**

Citizenship test The federal government rolled out a longer, harder exam for aspiring Americans. Can you pass it? **A8**

THE NATION **Elon Musk** broadened a fight with the Trump administration that poses business risks. **A4** **A podcast appearance** by Mel Gibson helped inspire Florida's cancer research focus. **A13**

THE WORLD **Hamas's 2023 attack** and the war in Gaza have brought ugliness to a restaurant in Berlin. **A15** **Paramilitary forces** entered the Sudanese army's last stronghold in Darfur. **A16**

THE ECONOMY **Larry Sanger**, who helped launch Wikipedia in 2001, is now leading a conservative charge against it. **A17**

STYLE **A fan's** panning of a D.C. show by rising pop star Sombri kicked off an intragenerational feud on TikTok. **B1**

SPORTS **The Capitals** fired assistant coach Mitch Love after the NHL suspended him for the season after an investigation. **C1**

THE REGION **Learn about** the two women seeking to make history in Virginia's race for governor and their policy positions. **C9**

Runners tested their endurance in the 50th Marine Corps Marathon in Arlington and Washington. **C9**

HEALTH & SCIENCE **For thousands** of years, Indigenous people stewarded their forests with fire. The practice has returned to California. **D1**

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