

# The Washington Post

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 Mostly cloudy, windy 58/48 • Tomorrow: Rain 56/52 B22 *Democracy Dies in Darkness* TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2025 • \$4

## Democrats begin effort to redraw Va.'s map

State's special session opens amid nationwide redistricting battle

BY GREGORY S. SCHNEIDER, ERIN COX AND PATRICK MARLEY

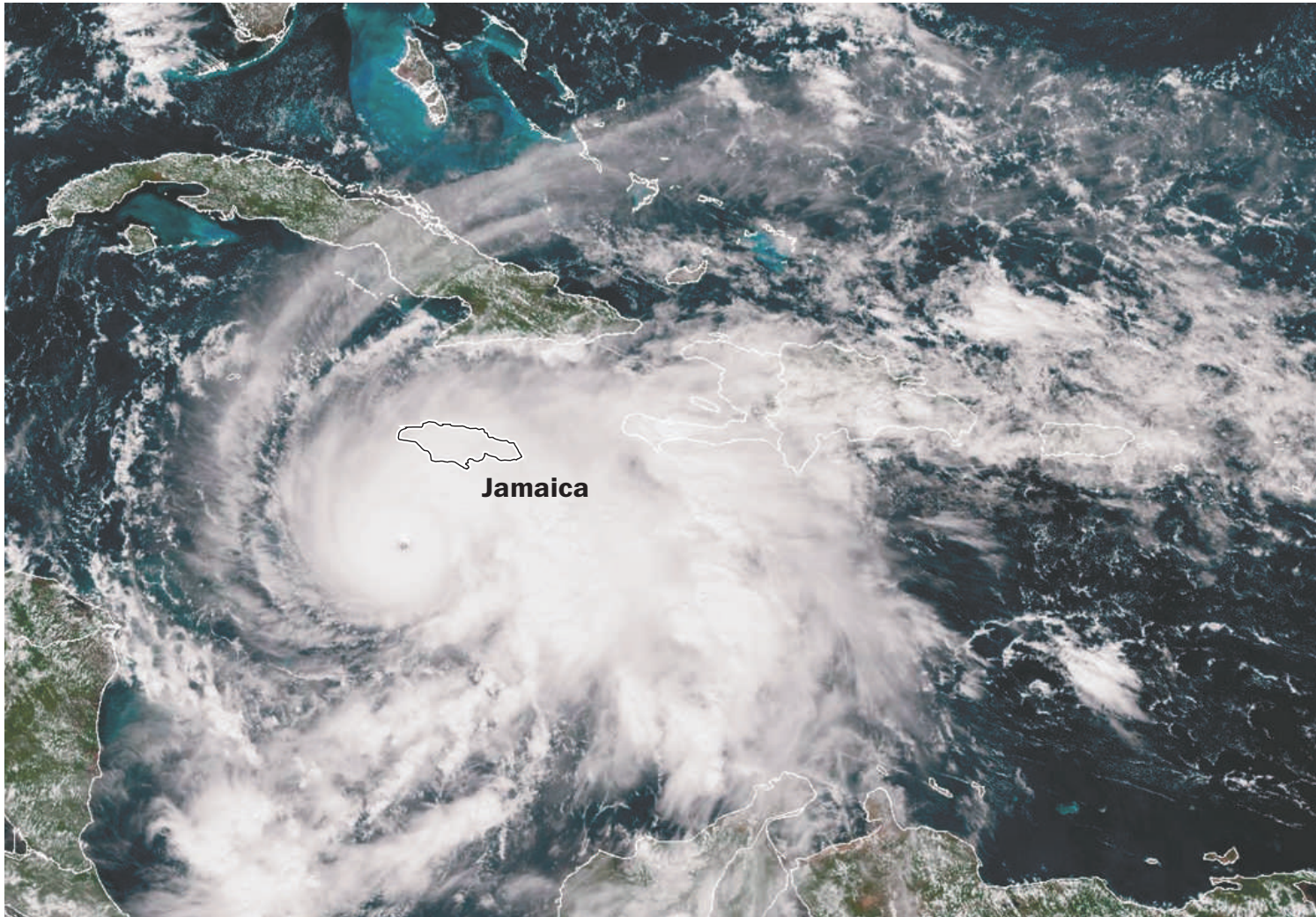
RICHMOND — Democratic lawmakers launched an extraordinary special session of the Virginia General Assembly on Monday to consider a constitutional amendment to redraw the state's congressional districts, leaving Republicans howling with protest but unable to stop — or, in some cases, understand — what was happening.

Leaders said the move is a blue-state counterpunch to President Donald Trump's push to create more Republican districts in red states before next year's midterm elections to help the GOP hold onto its slim U.S. House majority.

Virginia's special session could take all week, with Democrats inventing a strategy on the fly for what could be a months-long sprint to enact new maps ahead of the 2026 elections. Another legislative session and a statewide referendum would have to land in their favor — and inevitable Republican legal challenges would have to fail — to change the existing districts.

Democrats continued to be tight-lipped about the details of their plan. "We're going to respond to the Trump administration, and more details will be

SEE VIRGINIA ON A7



THE WASHINGTON POST

Hurricane Melissa, which on Monday afternoon had sustained winds near 175 mph, was expected to make landfall in Jamaica late Monday or early Tuesday. Prime Minister Andrew Holness said the island nation was preparing for widespread destruction.

## Jamaica braces for a monster storm, and prays

BY BRADY DENNIS, BEN NOLL AND RUBY MELLEN

As a monstrous Hurricane Melissa bore down on Jamaica, Prime Minister Andrew Holness said Monday that he had made time for one thing in addition to intense preparations.

"I have been on my knees in prayer," he said at a news conference ahead of the storm's arrival,

Island nation anticipates major damage from Category 5 Melissa

adding that he had heard from other leaders around the globe. "It would appear the entire world is praying for Jamaica."

As of Monday afternoon, the

National Hurricane Center warned that the core of Melissa, which has been crawling along at 3 mph, was set to move near or over Jamaica late Monday and Tuesday. So strong were its winds that a NOAA aircraft gathering data inside the storm had to abandon its mission early "after experiencing severe turbulence in the southwestern eyewall," the hurricane center wrote in a Monday update.

Holness offered a sober assessment about the suffering Melissa is expected to inflict on the island nation with a population of more than 2.7 million.

He said the storm, which by Monday afternoon had sustained winds near 175 mph, is likely to tear off roofs, flood roads, compromise bridges, wreak havoc on the electric grid, destroy cropland and damage

SEE MELISSA ON A22

## Largest federal union calls for 'clean' bill to end shutdown

BY AMY B WANG

The nation's largest union of federal workers is calling on lawmakers to pass a stopgap funding measure to end the government shutdown, calling it an "avoidable crisis" as the impasse approaches the one-month mark.

The American Federation of Government Employees, which represents more than 800,000 federal and D.C. government workers, said in a statement Monday that the shutdown is punishing the people who keep the country running.

"Both political parties have

made their point, and still there is no clear end in sight," AFGE National President Everett Kelley said in the statement. "Today I'm making mine: it's time to pass a clean continuing resolution and end this shutdown today. No half measures, and no gamesmanship. Put every single federal

worker back on the job with full back pay — today."

The federal government shut down Oct. 1 after the Senate did not pass a House-approved measure to extend funding at current levels for seven weeks. Democrats and Republicans have been deadlocked over extending

health care subsidies that otherwise will expire at the end of the year, with neither side budging. Republicans have suggested they are open to debate on the issue — but only after the government reopens.

The shutdown has put at least

SEE SHUTDOWN ON A19

Russia's Skyfall cruise missile, as it is known in the U.S., has been under development for several years and has had a number of failed tests. Experts have said it is more a provocation than a major advance in military technology. Putin unveiled six "invincible" nuclear missiles in March 2018, including Burevestnik.

Commenting on Trump's statement, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would not be dissuaded from its weapons tests.

"Despite our openness to establish

SEE RUSSIA ON A2

## Iowans ask whether the land is making them ill

Young cancer patients are making the Corn Belt state a bellwether of a generational reckoning

BY ARIANA EUNJUNG CHA, DAN KEATING, AND LUIS MELGAR

WINTERSSET, IOWA — Mackenzie Dryden's happiest childhood memories are of running barefoot through the sunlit corn fields of her hometown. But when she was diagnosed with cancer 2½ years ago at 18 years old, a disturbing thought began to take hold.

Could something in the land she loved have made her sick?

Dryden went to social media for answers, and stumbled upon a deeper mystery: Within just two years, four other recent graduates from her high school — home to only 500 students — had also been diagnosed with advanced cancers.

"It's kind of insane this is happening," the college senior said in an interview.

Dryden's questioning taps into an unsettling shift in cancer

SEE IOWA ON A8



JAHl CHIKWENDU/THE WASHINGTON POST

Emily Hoffman, 42, prepares for bed next to her total parenteral nutrition system, which delivers liquid nutrition around-the-clock. She was diagnosed with cervical cancer at age 30.

## Defiance of mandatory veiling grows in Iran

More women flouting hijab requirement as police ease up on arrests

BY YEGANEH TORBATI

On a recent evening in the north of Iran's capital, Tehran, a young woman with long hair fashioned into a high ponytail hopped onto a motorcycle behind a male companion. Not far away, two other young women smoked cigarettes together on a sidewalk, one with her hair cascading down her back, the other wearing a loose T-shirt with elbow-length sleeves, according to videos sent to The Washington Post.

These urban scenes — seemingly mundane in much of the world but striking in Iran — illustrate how common it has become for Iranian women to flout the law, in place for over

four decades, requiring they cover their hair and dress modestly in public.

More than three years after mass protests sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish Iranian woman who had been detained by police over her dress, open defiance of compulsory hijab is widespread not just in the teeming metropolis of Tehran but also in smaller cities like Rasht and more conservative areas such as Kermanshah, Hamedan and Dezful, according to interviews, videos and local news coverage.

The hijab — a word that could refer to a woman's head covering but also more broadly to modest dress — has become a pillar of Iran's ideology since the Islamic republic was founded in 1979, and government officials face pressure from powerful conservative forces to maintain it. So laws mandating the covering of women's bodies remain firmly on the

SEE IRAN ON A15

### IN THE NEWS

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**Stillbirths** The deaths are more common than previously reported and often happen without warning, researchers found. A10

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**Trump suggested** he could extend his Asia trip to meet with North Korea's leader. A11

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**Germany wants** to grow its military, but its young people are divided on serving. A17

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**John Dickerson**, the co-anchor of "CBS Evening News," said he will leave the network by the end of the year. A19

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**SPORTS** In Week 8, several of the NFL's backup quarterbacks showed exactly why they're backup quarterbacks. B7

**THE REGION** Residents of D.C.'s Ward 5 are outraged as a long-promised mixed-use development takes an industrial turn. B13  
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