

# The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## In verdicts, a possible Big Tech reckoning

Meta and YouTube must pay millions on claims of addiction, endangerment

BY IAN DUNCAN

A Los Angeles jury delivered a rare verdict against Silicon Valley giants Wednesday — the second finding in two days — boosting hopes of safety advocates that courts will deliver a long-sought reckoning over social media's harms to children.

The jury found social Meta, the operator of Facebook and Instagram, and video platform YouTube negligent and awarded \$6 million in damages to a young woman who alleged she had become hooked on the companies' services as a child. The verdict came at the end of a month-long trial that featured testimony by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and the morning after a jury in New Mexico ordered Meta to pay \$375 million in penalties for endangering children.

The twin verdicts are signs of cracks in legal protections that for decades made tech companies seem almost impervious, as lawyers accuse the platforms of putting addictive or otherwise harmful features into their products. There are thousands more cases waiting to be heard, with young internet users, parents, school districts and state attorneys general all seeking compensation and changes to how social media services operate. All told, companies are facing potentially transformative damage awards.

With years of scrutiny but little action, some advocates say the results signal the coming of a

SEE META ON A14



HEIDI LEVINE/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A bat mitzvah portrait of a 12-year-old is seen Monday in an apartment that was damaged in a weekend missile strike on Dimona. Another civilian neighborhood in Arad was also hit Saturday night. More than 115 people were injured, authorities said, including 11 seriously.

## Cracks exposed in Israel's vaunted air defenses

Some Iranian missiles find their targets, raising doubts over interceptors

BY SAMMY WESTFALL, HEIDI LEVINE AND LIOR SOROKA

DIMONA, ISRAEL — When the air raid sirens blare and many residents of southern Israel seek shelter in basements, David Azran, 54, instead takes to his porch to

watch Israel's air defense system blast out a volley of interceptor missiles — dizzying ribbons of light streaking across the sky.

"I am not an ordinary guy," he said, standing barefoot on the dirt with an assault rifle slung over his shoulder.

But faith in Israel's state-of-the-art air defenses has been shaken. In incidents about three hours apart on Saturday night, Iranian missiles directly hit two civilian neighborhoods in Arad and Dimona, blowing out the windows of Azran's home and many of his neighbors'. More than

115 people were injured, authorities said, including 11 seriously.

Israel's military has not explained what went wrong. The strikes have raised questions about whether Israel may be running short of interceptors and revived concerns that the military may need to conserve expensive interceptors to defend vital targets over a sustained period. Dimona, which is home to a sensitive nuclear facility, presumably ranks among those vital targets.

The speaker of Iran's parliament, employing a bit of hyperbole, said Israel's failure to intercept

missiles in highly protected Dimona represented a turning point. "Israel's skies are defenseless," the speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said in a post on X.

Concern that Iran was amassing a missile stockpile capable of overwhelming Israeli defenses was a major factor in the push to renew strikes against Iran, senior Israeli security officials said.

Iran's missile stockpile was significantly depleted during the 12-day war in June, officials said, reduced from an estimated 3,000

SEE IRAN ON A10

## Democrats continue to reel in victories in special elections

BY DAN MERICA AND MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR

Democrat Emily Gregory knew her upset victory on Tuesday night in Florida was a big deal when her third-grader told her, "Mom, you really surprised me."

Gregory, a first-time candidate and fitness business owner, defeated Jon Maples, a Republican endorsed by President Donald Trump and aligned with his policies. The two were going head-to-head in a special election for a district that includes the president's Palm Beach home, Mar-a-Lago. The Democrat's win was an upset: Despite Palm Beach County leaning left, this district was a

red enclave, with Republicans holding a significant voter-registration advantage and the Republican who vacated the seat last year winning it by 19 percentage points in 2024.

The Democratic win is part of a broader trend of the party overperforming in elections since Trump assumed his second term. In several races, including gubernatorial contests in Virginia and New Jersey as well as downballot races in such red states as Texas and Arkansas, Democrats have either won Republican-held seats or outperformed their previous numbers. In Florida, Gregory's victory — along with that of

SEE DEMOCRATS ON A2

## Trump showed classified map in 2022, memo says

BY JEREMY ROEBUCK AND MAEGAN VAZQUEZ

President Donald Trump showed a classified map he retained from his first term in office to passengers on a 2022 private plane flight and retained another record so sensitive that only six high-ranking government officials had access to it, according to a prosecution memo released to Congress this week.

File offers a snapshot of an early moment in Jack Smith's investigation

The Justice Department shared those findings, detailed in a January 2023 briefing document written by then-special counsel Jack Smith's team, with

lawmakers as they conduct a review of Smith's now-abandoned efforts to prosecute Trump.

The memo, which was obtained by The Washington Post, was penned as investigators moved toward indicting Trump on charges of illegally retaining sensitive government material after he left the White House. It offers a snapshot of an early moment in Smith's investigation and adds new shading to the public

understanding of Smith's probes, even as a final report on his findings remains under court seal.

The memo, for instance, reveals that Smith's team gathered at least some evidence to suggest that Trump had retained classified material pertinent to his personal business interests and that prosecutors were investigating whether his decision to hold on to those records was motivated by

SEE SMITH ON A5

## A hot debate: the Tamale Act can tip scales for home cooks

BY KARIN BRULLIARD

DENVER — Marina Zardate owned a restaurant and handful of other businesses in Mexico, before threats from violent gangs forced her to seek refuge in the United States a dozen years ago. Today, she ekes out a living off a single steamer pot, which she uses to make expertly seasoned tamales that she sells by the dozen to friends and relatives.

Zardate dreams of again serving her tamales in an eatery, though she would settle even for advertising them on fliers and Facebook. But she is afraid: Colo-

rado prohibits the sale of homemade perishable foods, and violators face hundreds of dollars in fines.

That law is being considered for a second time by Colorado lawmakers, who last year rejected changes to regulations around the sale of "cottage foods" — products made in uninspected home kitchens, which are limited to breads, honey, spices and other shelf-stable items. Concerns about the public health risks of allowing foods that must be kept cold or hot — meat-filled tamales, but also fruit juices and

SEE COLORADO ON A18



TOM BRENNER/AP

## Maximum cherry

People gather Wednesday along the Tidal Basin to observe the sunrise among the cherry blossom trees. The National Park Service predicts that peak bloom could arrive today.

## IN THE NEWS

**Online piracy** The Supreme Court ruled that internet service providers are generally not responsible for the illegal distribution and downloading of music on their services. A5

**Virginia redistricting** Democratic Gov. Abigail Spanberger's image as a moderate has been tainted by the partisan brawl over maps. B13

**THE NATION** An activist who ordered mail ballots in the names of others is convicted of voter fraud. A3  
**The White House** held off on a CDC pick as the search for a permanent chief continues. A3

**THE WORLD** Russia launched waves of drone attacks at Ukrainian cities as the U.S. focuses on Iran. A8  
**Iraq accused** the U.S. of killing seven soldiers in an attack on a clinic at a military base. A12

**THE ECONOMY** A movement to ban data centers is gaining steam in the U.S., with new legislation seeking to prohibit new facilities until Congress passes regulations on AI. A13  
**Parents** who took out federal loans for their children's college are facing big changes. A14

**STYLE** Are boomers the real iPad babies? Why Grandma and Grandpa can't stop scrolling. B1

**SPORTS** It's Opening Day for the Nationals and most of MLB, and hope still springs eternal for a young team deep in the throes of a rebuild. B7

**THE REGION** Federal removal of popular bike lanes near the National Mall has been delayed after cyclists filed suit. B13

**LOCAL LIVING** What happens to a relationship when one partner uses a chatbot for everything and the other is an AI-skeptic?

BUSINESS NEWS.....A13  
COMICS.....B4  
OBITUARIES.....B16  
OPINION PAGES.....A15  
TELEVISION.....B6  
WORLD NEWS.....A8

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