

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

RE V1 V2 V3 V4



Breezy 68/61 • Tomorrow: Very warm 83/67 C16

Democracy Dies in Darkness

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026 • \$4

Concerns over mix of religion and war

Hegseth breaks norms, worries critics as he invokes faith in wartime

BY MICHELLE BOORSTEIN

U.S. military leaders have long understood the power and perils of invoking faith — especially in wartime.

Facing the Germans in World War II, Gen. George Patton ordered a chaplain to write an interfaith prayer for troops to say on the battlefield.

It took just a week in September 2001 for Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld to change the name of the campaign against terrorism from Operation Infinite Justice to Operation Enduring Freedom — a switch meant to clarify that the U.S. was not in a religious war.

And as chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the late 2000s, with troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, Navy Admiral Mike Mullen kept Mass off his public schedule, aiming to keep the particulars of his Catholic faith private.

But those longtime norms are being upended by the proselytizing Christian campaign of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, say multiple former high-ranking military officials and experts on religion and law. Rather than boosting cohesion through a more universal spiritual uplift, they say, the new approach violates the Constitution and undermines the bonds of mutual respect between

SEE MILITARY ON A9

Damage done: Airstrikes severely strain Iran's missile program. A11

Infamous Jan. 6 rioter is running for office in Fla.

Board of Commissioners candidate is known for taking Pelosi's lectern

BY PATRICK MARLEY

PARRISH, FLA. — Adam Johnson poured Scotch into a coffee mug, logged on to Zoom and steeled himself for his plea hearing. He concentrated on looking contrite.

Johnson was among the most infamous of the Donald Trump supporters who had roamed the halls of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. He'd found House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's lectern and was carrying it into the Rotunda when he waved to a news photographer and flashed an impish grin. He'd gone viral, becoming an instant meme in a Trump knit hat.

Two days later, the police arrested him, and within a year he cut a deal and pleaded guilty to trespassing. "Your honor, I understand that my actions are regretful," he told the judge who heard his case. Although he knew he'd broken the law, he silently stewed, believing he was a victim of government retribution and convinced that violent actors were the ones who deserved punishment.

"Saying I'm guilty," he said during four hours of recent inter-

SEE LECTERN ON A5

Peace and Palm



ALESSANDRA TARANTINO/AP

Priests attend a Palm Sunday Mass presided over by Pope Leo XIV in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. With the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran entering its second month and Russia's ongoing campaign in Ukraine, Leo dedicated his Palm Sunday homily to his insistence that God is the "king of peace" who rejects violence.

A legal fight this lawyer was born to make

Wang, the daughter of immigrants, will argue against a Trump order on birthright citizenship

BY DAVID NAKAMURA

American Civil Liberties Union Legal Director Cecilia Wang has filed lawsuits challenging racial profiling, illegal arrests and mandatory detention for undocumented immigrants. But when she appears before the Supreme Court on Wednesday, she will be arguing against the Trump administration over a question that is fundamental not only to the nation but also to her own family.

Who deserves to be an American? Wang, 55, was born in Oregon, three years after her parents emigrated legally from Taiwan as graduate students, making her a

U.S. citizen by birth even though they were not naturalized at the time. She credits changes in federal immigration law in the 1960s that eliminated national origin quotas on Chinese immigrants for providing her family a path to succeed.

That path has animated her work over two decades at the ACLU, where she oversees a legal staff of more than 200, and this week it will help inform her arguments against President Donald Trump's executive order to end birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants and foreign visitors — including international students, like her parents. Opponents of the

president's order say it could deny citizenship to an estimated 250,000 newborns per year.

"This is an extraordinary claim the president is making that is at odds with what everyone has understood about American citizenship," Wang said in a brief phone interview from San Francisco, where she is based, to focus attention on the importance of the case. "Our team is defending an American tradition."

Now, it will be up to the nine justices to decide a matter that for 128 years has stood as a bedrock principle of immigration law — that those born on U.S. soil are citizens, no matter the status of their parents.

The Trump administration, backed by conservative lawyers and immigration hard-liners, says that view is grounded in a misinterpretation of the Constitution's 14th Amendment, which guarantees that those born here and subject to U.S. "jurisdiction" are citizens.

In the government's Supreme Court brief, U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer argued that Congress in 1866 did not intend for the amendment to cover the children of immigrants who are not lawfully, and permanently, present in the country. Rather, he wrote, it was strictly aimed to protect freed enslaved persons

SEE BIRTHRIGHT ON A2

In New York, trash cleanup becomes a social movement

A growing number of volunteer groups are picking up garbage for fun

BY TIM CRAIG

NEW YORK — Darkness was falling, but they could still make out the objects of their obsession: the degrading cardboard, musty plastic bags and waterlogged foam cups; Coke cans, beer bottles and coconut waters that showcased a diversity of local beverage tastes; and a broken umbrella that poked above the surface of a thick stew of food waste that even the rats left behind.

It was a weekday evening in March, and Rachael Cain and a dozen friends had gathered in the Queens neighborhood of Blissville. They were drinking beer at an Irish pub when the sky started to dim, so the volunteer cleanup group Pick Up Pigeons put down their pints and got to work dig-

ging, raking, picking and pulling scraps of trash.

Vehicles on the Queens Midtown Expressway sped overhead on a creaky elevated roadway. Down where the Pigeons toiled, two-foot piles of garbage cluttered blocks lined with storage-unit facilities, budget hotels, abandoned RVs and parking lots sealed with rusted razor wire.

"This actually looks like it's already becoming soil," Cain, 39, said, smiling as she raked up a pile of slop. "I don't care what anyone else says, but this is delightful and why wouldn't you want to do this?"

Cain, the founder of Pick Up Pigeons, is part of a growing network of New York City activists who clean up garbage for fun. The groups, whose numbers have swelled in recent years, now form an essential backstop for city officials' efforts to try to keep this city of more than 8 million residents clean and presentable.

As they pick up litter in a city

SEE NEW YORK ON A8



PETE KIEHART/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Flying high at Blossom Kite Festival

A blue-sky day in Washington with a nice breeze made for optimal conditions as participants in this year's Blossom Kite Festival filled the air with colorful crafts on Saturday. **Story, C7**

IN THE NEWS

Truly madness Connecticut overcomes a 19-point deficit to beat top-seeded Duke with a last-gasp three-pointer, joining Michigan to round out the Final Four. C1

'Gargantuan' hail Melon-size hailstones may be more common than we realize, according to atmospheric scientists. A16

THE NATION
Donald Trump was prepared to back Sen. John Cornyn in a key Republican primary in Texas, but after supporters of Ken Paxton protested, the president has backed off. A7

THE WORLD
In his Mass on Palm Sunday, Pope Leo XIV rejects claims that God justifies war. A12
Hopes that a stranded whale can return to the Atlantic from the Baltic Sea are fading. A12

THE ECONOMY
One year after the president announced the highest U.S. tariffs in nearly a century at a White House event, the number of factory jobs has decreased and inflation is up. But the chronic trade deficit has declined for 10 months straight. A13

STYLE
FX's 'Love Story' was a slog — and a much-needed reframing of the Kennedy myth, Monica Hesse writes. B1

SPORTS
The Nationals take two of three from the Cubs to open the season, led by a journeyman who can't make an out. C1

THE REGION
The bald eagles at the National Arboretum, Mr. President and Lotus, have at least one eaglet on the way. C7

HEALTH & SCIENCE
13 surprising ways that the class of weight-loss and diabetes drugs known as GLP-1s may benefit the body. D1

BUSINESS NEWS.....A13
COMICS.....B4
OBITUARIES.....C10
OPINION PAGES.....A14
TELEVISION.....B6
WORLD NEWS.....A11

CONTENT © 2026
The Washington Post
Year 149, No. 54536

