

The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026 • \$4

For some, this party is overly partisan

Protests, cancellations mar White House's plans for America 250 tour

BY LAURA MECKLER

Education Secretary Linda McMahon bills her "History Rocks!" tour, where she leads students in cheering for America, as a nonpartisan celebration of the nation's 250th birthday. But across the country, the program's ties to a bevy of conservative organizations has fostered an unusual level of opposition.

At least four stops have been canceled — including one in Massachusetts, another in Alabama and two in McMahon's home state of Connecticut — after parents, students and teachers objected to the visits. Stops in Wisconsin, New Jersey and Illinois have been met with protests.

There is no evidence that the events themselves are pushing a political message. But the America 250 Civics Education Coalition that sponsors the tour has produced ideological material and is composed of conservative and religious groups such as Turning Point USA, Moms for Liberty and the Heritage Foundation. It is led by the America First Policy Institute, a pro-Trump advocacy group. Liberal groups were not included, nor were several prominent nonpartisan civics groups such as Civx Now, an ideologically diverse coalition of more than 450 organizations.

"I just found it hypocritical," Red Zellner, a senior at Murphy High School in Mobile, Alabama, said in an interview. "They tried to say their tour was apolitical while being very publicly supported by strongly political groups."

After learning that McMahon was coming to Murphy High, Zellner contacted a local liberal group

SEE HISTORY ON A2

Trump shows off renderings and defends ballroom plan

BY DAN DIAMOND AND JONATHAN EDWARDS

Speaking to reporters Sunday night aboard Air Force One, President Donald Trump began with an update about hostilities in Iran but soon pivoted to a different priority: his planned \$400 million White House ballroom.

For five minutes, the president displayed new renderings, handed to him by Bill Pulte, a top administration housing official, as he again made the case for his controversial addition to the White House grounds.

"I'm so busy that I don't have time to do this ... I'm fighting wars and other things," Trump told reporters. "But this is very important, because this is going to be with us for a long time, and it's going to be, I think it will be the greatest ballroom anywhere in the world."

The new renderings revealed some changes to the ballroom's design, including removal of stairs on its south side that some observers had criticized as extraneous.

Trump also briefly alluded to the military's role in the project, which the president has said he

SEE BALLROOM ON A18

A desperate call



MAJID SAEEDI/GETTY IMAGES

A resident weeps while talking on the phone near a residential building that was hit in an airstrike on Monday morning in the west of Tehran. The U.S. and Israel have continued their joint attack on Iran that began Feb. 28, and Iran has retaliated with strikes across the Persian Gulf region despite suffering heavy damages.

HUD assists Trump in crackdown on immigration

President blames undocumented people for housing shortages

BY RACHEL SIEGEL

Auditing data on thousands of people. Sharing information with the Department of Homeland Security. Trying to kick undocumented immigrants out of their homes — along with the citizens they live with.

Under President Donald Trump, Washington's top housing agency is increasingly prioritizing immigration enforcement.

The Trump administration has long blamed immigrants for the nation's housing problems, saying undocumented people are taking housing and subsidies away from U.S. citizens. But that rhetoric is rapidly turning into action, as political appointees at the Department of Housing and Urban Development exercise their power to decide who can access stable, affordable housing — and who cannot.

By law, undocumented immigrants cannot receive direct federal housing benefits such as rental assistance. But undocumented people have been able to live with family members who are eligible for benefits. The Trump administration wants to

block these "mixed-status" households from housing programs altogether, arguing such moves will make housing cheaper and more available to U.S. citizens, and limit who receives federal assistance.

In recent months, HUD told the nation's public housing authorities to check thousands of people who get housing aid through a federal service that verifies immigration status and make sure their paperwork is on file, a process that has been bogged down by data errors. HUD also unveiled a proposal that would keep undocumented immigrants and the people they live with from receiving housing benefits even if the rest of the

household includes citizens or children. If enacted, the new rule would also require local housing authorities to notify DHS if they learn about an undocumented person living in federally subsidized housing.

The result: People who are eligible for rental assistance may have to decide whether to separate from undocumented family members, or entire families may lose their aid altogether. Estimates from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials show that for every person ineligible for aid who is removed from the voucher program, about three people who are eligible would lose assistance.

SEE HOUSING ON A5

Israelis' mission: Kill top Iranians

U.S. CEDES KEY TASK IN WAR TO ITS ALLY

New AI helps hit targets with deadly efficiency

BY GREG MILLER

TEL AVIV — As U.S. and Israeli military commanders met to map out war with Iran, they deliberated over how to divide responsibility for an array of targets, including missile batteries, military bases and nuclear sites.

It was clear from the outset, however, that one grim mission would belong to Israel: hunting and killing Iran's leaders.

Israel has pursued this assignment with ruthless efficiency, killing Iran's supreme leader in the opening salvo of the war and more than 250 other "senior Iranian officials" since, according to a count maintained by the Israeli military. The latest blow came Thursday when Israel said it had killed the naval commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The decapitation campaign relies on an assassination apparatus that Israel spent decades building but transformed over the past several years to achieve new levels of lethal proficiency, according to senior Israeli military and intelligence officials.

The officials cited a proliferation of sources and surveillance capabilities inside Iran — regime insiders recruited to spy for Israel as well as cyber-penetrations of thousands of targets including street cameras, payment platforms and internet choke points that Iran installed to impose communications blackouts on its citizens. These and other streams of data are being scoured by what Israeli officials described as a new, classified artificial intelligence platform programmed to extract clues to leaders' lives and movements.

Israel's targeted killing tactics — bombs planted months before being detonated, drones capable

SEE ISRAEL ON A9

Mixed messages: Iran contradicts Trump's claim of talks. Story, A10



ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY IMAGES

Blossoms patrol

Members of the National Guard walk around the Tidal Basin on Monday. The area is a major stop for tourists, who flock to see Washington's world-famous cherry blossoms this time of year.

White supremacists are cited by Trump officials

Administration revives their words in bid to end birthright citizenship

BY JUSTIN JOUVENAL

Alexander Porter Morse, a Confederate officer during the Civil War and a Louisiana attorney, argued for legalized segregation in the landmark 1896 Supreme Court case that established the "separate but equal" doctrine and buttressed Jim Crow laws.

He is again playing a key role in a monumental case to be argued before the justices Wednesday: The Trump administration has tapped Morse as an authority in its push to upend long-settled law that virtually everyone born in the United States is a citizen.

Over a century ago, Morse was among a trio of thinkers who spearheaded a failed effort —

steeped in anti-Black and anti-Chinese racism — to erase birthright citizenship. The Trump administration is reviving their arguments to make its case today, some legal scholars say.

The administration is citing arguments "built on a racist foundation," Justin Sadowsky, an attorney for the Chinese American Legal Defense Alliance (CALDA), wrote in a friend-of-the-court brief.

Lucy Salyer, a University of New Hampshire history professor who has written on Morse and others, said she was struck that the Trump administration had chosen to elevate those figures and their ideas: "If you know the history and the broader context of what they were trying to achieve, it does ring alarm bells."

The case, which could redefine who is considered an American, centers on the Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment, which grants citizenship to "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States."

SEE BIRTHRIGHT ON A18

IN THE NEWS

TSA speed up Wait times for security lines at major U.S. airports appear to be decreasing as agents begin to get paid, a relief to travelers who have endured hours-long delays. A3

Sit the throne A golden toilet statue on the Mall pays faux tribute to President Donald Trump's White House renovations. B1

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The Army is reviewing why an Apache helicopter hovered near Kid Rock's home. A6

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A soccer tournament dubbed the World Cup for immigrant and refugee girls takes place in Portland, Oregon. B7

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