

# The New York Times

### THE WEATHER

Today, fog early, warmer, partly cloudy, high 74. Tonight, rain, cloudy, low 52. Tomorrow, cooler, cloudy, rain tapering to a shower, high 60. Weather map is on Page 20.

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Prices in Canada may be higher \$6.00

## How One Case Gave the Rich A Power Boost

### 1976 Ruling Set 'Right to Spend' on Politics

By DANNY HAKIM

For a brief moment in American history, the rich didn't control politics. Back in 1974, in the wake of the Watergate scandal, Congress passed new campaign finance restrictions that would have largely eliminated the ability of wealthy people to buy elections. In addition to donor disclosure rules and contribution limits, the legislation

#### BILLIONAIRE BOOM Financing Campaigns

capped so-called independent expenditures on behalf of political candidates at \$1,000 a year. There were even curbs on what rich people could spend to get themselves elected.

David Koch, a wealthy industrialist, was enraged. "I have the right to spend whatever I choose to promote what I believe," he later wrote, adding that the law "makes my blood boil."

Flash forward to the 2024 presidential campaign. Six of the nation's wealthiest billionaires spent more than \$100 million apiece to help get another billionaire, Donald J. Trump, elected president. Independent expenditures by wealthy outsiders for the first time in history exceeded what the candidates' own campaign committees spent, a New York Times analysis showed. Mr. Koch's brother Charles was among 300 billionaires and their families who accounted for 19 percent of all contributions in federal elections, either directly or through affiliated groups.

So what happened? A Supreme Court decision that most Americans have probably never heard of. Fifty years ago, in a case called Buckley v. Valeo, the court upheld many aspects of the post-Watergate campaign finance law, clearing the way for public financing of presidential elections and empowering the new Federal Election Commission.

But it eviscerated other parts of the law, leaving the rich with their own set of rules. The court ruled

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SARAH PABST FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The unfinished Chinese telescope at the Cesco observatory in San Juan Province, Argentina, sits in the foothills of the Andes.

## U.S.-China Rivalry Reaches South American Skies

By EMMA BUBOLA and EDWARD WONG

SAN JUAN, Argentina — In the foothills of the Argentine Andes, the enormous Chinese radio telescope sits in one of the world's premier stargazing locations, surrounded by vast, undulating mountain ranges and beneath skies untouched by light pollution. It is also on the opposite side of the planet from Beijing, offering China a window on the half of the heavens it would not otherwise see.

But the Chinese telescope at the site, the Cesco observatory in San Juan Province, picks up no signals. After the U.S. government repeatedly pressed them on the issue, the Argentine authorities stopped the project's completion. Lacking key parts, the telescope now sits disassembled, its gigantic antenna pointing blindly at the sky.

As the United States increasingly views Beijing as a rival in space, the stars above

## Wary of Beijing's Intentions, Washington Seeks to Halt Astronomy Projects

South America have become flash points in a geopolitical struggle, with top American officials trying to halt astronomy projects in the Andean deserts out of fear China could use them for military purposes.

The Trump administration says it is enforcing an updated Monroe Doctrine, in part to counter China's growing footprint in the Western Hemisphere. China is a key trading partner for many countries in Latin America, and it is trying to build scientific and security ties. Its relations in the region could come up in official talks this week in Beijing between President Trump and Xi

Jinping, China's leader.

Last year, Argentina's neighbor Chile stopped a Chinese astronomical observatory project in the Atacama Desert after strong urging from the U.S. ambassador. And in the case of the Cesco observatory's Chinese radio telescope project — which would be the largest of its kind in South America — authorities have held some key, final parts for it at customs for about nine months.

According to a document from the Argentine government's cabinet chief, procedural violations in renewing the deal with China prevented the project from going forward. The government declined to comment on whether the U.S. diplomacy played a role in the decision.

But American officials, some of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomacy, said the U.S. gov-

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## TWO RULINGS GIVE G.O.P. SOME HOPE ABOUT MIDTERMS

### 10 DAYS, 10 MORE SEATS

#### Decisions on Voting Law and Virginia's Districts Reshape Outlook

By SHANE GOLDMACHER and TIM BALK

Just two weeks ago, Democrats felt increasingly emboldened about taking control of the House in November after seeming to fight the redistricting wars to a draw.

But two court rulings — one by the Supreme Court and another by Virginia's top court — and an aggressive new push by red states to carve up congressional maps have delivered the Republican Party its biggest burst of momentum in many months.

Put bluntly, Republicans have roughly 10 more House seats that favor them than they did just 10 days ago, and Democrats are suddenly grappling with a new landscape.

"This is now clearly closer than it was just a week and a half ago," Representative Brendan Boyle, a Pennsylvania Democrat, said of his party's chances to retake the House.

Democrats are still widely seen as favored to win the House this fall. Republicans face a daunting political climate, saddled with President Trump's sagging approval ratings, high gas prices and an unpopular war with Iran. In special elections and last year's races for governor, Democratic enthusiasm has swamped Republican turnout.

"I was anticipating about a 15-to-20-seat pickup before the last week and a half," Mr. Boyle said. "Now I would be anticipating a 10-to-15-seat pickup."

That would be more than enough to wrest the majority from Republicans, who are clinging to a current edge of 217 to 212 seats. And history is not on Republicans' side: The party in power almost always loses seats in midterm elections.

But after the latest map changes, winning the House majority will require Democrats to

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHELLE LITVIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## The New Lives of Older Buildings

An Indiana schoolhouse that became a home is just one example of a reinvention. Special Section.

## Reviving U.S. Waterways by Removing Failing Dams

By CARA BUCKLEY

Even though the two dams spanning the river in Bedford, Pa., were old, troublesome and functionally useless, locals just couldn't quit them.

The dams were built for swimming and fishing, but so much silt had built up that the river was mere inches deep. They trapped debris, worsened flooding and thwarted migratory fish. They were also falling apart, drawing

warnings from the Environmental Protection Agency that they would have to be replaced, repaired or removed, at local taxpayer expense.

Yet the people of Bedford had grown attached to the dams, which dated back 50 years. Some also believed, wrongly, that the barriers housed important utility wires or cables. "Somebody always came forward and gave a concrete reason those dams could not possibly be removed," said Kenny Fetterman, who sits on the

Bedford Borough Council.

He was determined to find a fix, and spearheaded an effort that led to the dams' removal last summer. "Now the river is so much cleaner," said Mr. Fetterman, who as far as he knows is not related to Senator John Fetterman, Democrat of Pennsylvania. "The quality of water has improved drastically. There's freshwater clams in there."

It was part of what might be called the undamming of America.

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## A No-Bid Contract to Turn a Reflecting Pool Blue

By DAVID A. FAHRENTHOLD and LUKE BROADWATER

WASHINGTON — For a century, the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool has captured Washington's history, a vast mirror for moments great and small.

Then, this spring, President Trump said he decided to paint it blue, and steered a government contract to somebody he said had worked on his swimming pools.

In the process, he made the pool into a reflection of Washington's present.

To give out that \$6.9 million no-bid contract, Mr. Trump's administration invoked an exemption meant for urgent situations, The New York Times found. The exemption was supposed to be used only to prevent "serious injury, financial or other, to the government." Administration officials made no public claim that such injury was likely; rather, officials said, Mr. Trump wanted it changed for the country's birthday party on July 4.

"This project is now being completed at 'Trump speed' to ensure the iconic landmark is totally restored ahead of the 250th celebrations," said Taylor Rogers, a White House spokeswoman, in a statement to The Times.

The pool is the latest in a string of cases where Mr. Trump's gov-



ALLISON ROBERT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. The Trump administration has run roughshod over the review process for changes.

ernment invoked special powers to shut down required competition, and then handed contracts directly to the president's preferred vendors.

The renovation plans exemplify how Mr. Trump views much of the

nation's capital as his imperial realm — to decorate, or even destroy, as he sees fit. In doing so, he and his administration have run roughshod over a decades-old review process for changes in Wash-

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#### INTERNATIONAL 4-13

### A 'Splintering' Electorate

Insurgent parties in Britain like Reform U.K. have surged at the polls. But the system wasn't built for multiparty democracy. News Analysis. PAGE 4

### Punch, the Lonely Monkey

The macaque, now 9 months old, has been attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors to a small Japanese zoo. He ignores the attention. PAGE 4

### For Putin, Little to Celebrate

A truncated Victory Day parade added to a sense that Moscow and other cities in Russia can no longer be insulated from the war in Ukraine. PAGE 8



#### NATIONAL 14-26

### The Wisdom of Our Mothers

Readers shared some of their favorite motherly adages (such as "Many hands make light work"). PAGE 14

#### METROPOLITAN

### Having a Ball on the Field

Julian Hall and Adri Mehmeti are New York City soccer stars, as well as two teenagers living the dream. PAGE 1

### New York's Power Players

The Muslim Democratic Club has gained influence, and some of its founders are the mayor's aides. PAGE 1

#### SUNDAY STYLES

### No Green Thumb Necessary

On social media, a new approach to gardening is taking hold, based on the idea that it should be as easy as letting the seeds fall where they may. PAGE 4



#### ARTS & LEISURE

### Losing 'The Late Show'

When Stephen Colbert's program says good night for the final time, audiences will be giving up a lot more than just a television show. PAGE 8

#### SUNDAY OPINION

### Anna Louie Sussman

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#### SUNDAY BUSINESS

### Family Rift at Corporate Giant

An inheritance dispute over a former chairman's estate has prompted a criminal complaint over how the family behind LG, the South Korean conglomerate, divides its assets. PAGE 4

### Titan Seeks to Rewrite Legacy

Bill McGlashan served time for trying to buy his son's way into college during the Varsity Blues scandal. He is hoping that his new venture, Oath, will do far more than restore his name. PAGE 1

