

# The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## Election deniers could be governors

Republicans who backed false 2020 claims may win swing-state nominations

BY DAN MERICA, PATRICK MARLEY AND CLARA ENCE MORSE

Political figures who took leading roles in trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election appear on track to win the Republican Party's nomination for governor in several of the country's biggest battleground states, including Arizona, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Their prominence shows how President Donald Trump's baseless claims that the election was stolen have become an article of faith within the Republican Party, more than five years after he lost to Joe Biden. And it means victories in this year's midterm elections would give Trump supporters who were central to his efforts to overturn the election key oversight roles in the 2028 presidential election, for which states hold main authority.

The GOP fields for governor include activists who took vocal, and sometimes official, actions in support of Trump's efforts to claim victory in 2020, a sheriff who recently seized ballots in California, and members of Congress who voted to reverse the 2020 results and backed a lawsuit seeking to do the same.

Only a few of the candidates explicitly raise doubts about the validity of the 2020 election on

SEE ELECTION ON A6

## Anti-woke Ramaswamy confronts racism in GOP

Grabs Ohio gubernatorial nomination, takes aim at bigotry at town hall

BY HANNAH KNOWLES

CINCINNATI — Vivek Ramaswamy didn't mention the racist taunts that follow him online or the GOP primary opponent who said he's not a real American. But the Ohio gubernatorial candidate who clinched his party's nomination last week alluded to bigotry on the right in his opening message to a town hall full of young Republicans.

Ramaswamy, a Hindu son of Indian immigrants, warned the crowd against adopting the same "victim" mentality that he said had afflicted the left. "The number one factor that determines whether you achieve your goals in life ... is actually you," he said at the May 1 event.

"It's not the Jews," Ramaswamy added. "It's not the White people. It's not the patriarchy. It's not the Black people. It's not the foreigners."

It was a striking message from a candidate who has long cast racism as an obsession of Democrats and has more recently confronted it on the right. After building his political career denouncing "wokeness" on the left, at one point dismissing "the myth of white supremacy" during his

SEE RAMASWAMY ON A9

## A hazardous welcome



ARTURO RODRIGUEZ/AP

Passengers from the hantavirus-stricken MV Hondius are sprayed with disinfectant Sunday after disembarking at Tenerife airport in part of Spain's Canary Islands. About two dozen Americans were on the ship.

## Dream of post-oil economy in the Gulf is in peril

BY EVAN HALPER AND RACHEL CHASON

The war in Iran has become a profound stress-test for the long-term economic futures of wealthy Gulf monarchies that have built reputations as global financial centers and, increasingly, tourism hubs and tech powerhouses.

Even if the United States and Iran are able to soon strike a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz — the contested, narrow waterway that is a chokepoint for one-fifth of

### U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran threatens region's long-term plans

the world's oil and gas — economists warn the conflict will have profound effects on the region's plans.

"The official narrative in these countries is that this economic crisis will be like covid, and climb-

ing out of it will be quick," said Frederic Schneider, a senior fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs. "But there are structural breaks that cannot be easily undone. Both the oil and non-oil sectors are getting hit equally hard and are facing damage that is potentially long term."

The same structural security weaknesses and challenging geography that have darkened the outlook for the region's fossil fuel economy now threaten its emerging sectors. The prospect that Iran

can shut down the Strait of Hormuz on a whim could shake the confidence of foreign investors and unravel the reputation of wealthy Gulf states as safe harbors for business.

Economies in Asia are already enduring serious fuel shortages, factory shutdowns and soaring prices for fertilizer as a result of the shutdown of the strait. It is

SEE IRAN ON A11

'Unacceptable': Trump unhappy with Iran's peace plan answer. A11



MICHAEL NOBLE JR./FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## Mother and son's day

Wesley Ramsey IV and his mother, Rev. Carla Hunter Ramsey, pose for a portrait after they both graduated on Saturday during Howard University's 158th commencement. Story, C7

## Dangerously low levels spark a crisis on the Colorado River

Experts say stopgap plan to stabilize nation's largest reservoir is not enough

BY SARAH KAPLAN

The situation on the Colorado River has rarely been more dire than in this moment. The snowpacks that feed the river are the smallest on record. The reservoirs that hold the majority of its water are nearing historic lows.

Neither a stopgap proposal aimed at stabilizing the nation's largest reservoir, nor a late-season snowstorm are sufficient to avert a looming water crisis, experts say. But with Western states at an impasse in negotiations over the river's future, recent short-term wins may at least temporarily hold off cuts to people's water supply in the lower part of

the basin. "We had to do something to ensure that the river system didn't completely crash," Tom Buschatzke, director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources, said in an interview Wednesday.

Arizona, California and Nevada in recent days offered a short-term water-saving proposal. The plan would create new incentives for conservation and pay some water users to give up their annual allotment, which officials from the three Lower Basin states say will save 3.2 million acre-feet of water through 2028. Those measures will hopefully be enough to help maintain safe water levels in Lake Mead, which powers the Hoover Dam and provides water to roughly 20 million people.

That breakthrough comes as the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which manages the dams that

SEE COLORADO ON A16

## Lawyers for the global elite aren't buying Trump's gold card visa program

BY MERYL KORNFIELD

Immigration attorney Michael Wildes has represented first lady Melania Trump and her parents, who are naturalized citizens. He has secured visas for Miss Universe titleholders when President Donald Trump ran the pageant organization. He has done legal

work for the Kushner family.

But when he has received calls from potential clients interested in a gold card visa that Trump has touted for wealthy foreigners, he has told them there is little he can do because the program is legally dubious.

"It would be unethical of me to retain them," Wildes said.

Immigration lawyers who have represented wealthy individuals are warning their clients against paying the \$15,000 fee to apply for the \$1 million or \$2 million visa that Trump has advertised, citing the lack of a congressionally established visa, ongoing litigation against the visa program and uncertainty about the tax implica-

tions for their clients. Seven immigration attorneys who work with the sort of wealthy clientele that the gold card program is meant to attract told The Washington Post that they have either steered clients clear of applying for the gold card or declined to assist foreigners who have already applied, recommending in-

stead that wealthy people consider established, legal methods of coming to the United States.

At the Invest In the USA conference last week in Washington — attended by immigration attorneys who represent foreign investors — the gold card visa barely came up at all, according to Aaron

SEE GOLD CARD ON A4

## IN THE NEWS

A different fan experience Blue laws that ban most shopping on Sundays in one New Jersey county could dampen the fervor of those attending World Cup games this summer. A3

Wizards hit the lottery The No. 1 pick in what is considered one of the deepest NBA drafts in recent history belongs to Washington. C1

**THE NATION**  
The Trump administration announced a proposed rule that would create a type of insurance coverage that widens employers' ability to offer standalone fertility benefits. A8

**THE WORLD**  
Passengers on a cruise ship hit with a deadly hantavirus outbreak began disembarking in Spain's Canary Islands in a carefully coordinated process expected to take two days. A12

**THE ECONOMY**  
Safety net programs that address unemployment, food insecurity and more can be suicide prevention tools, research shows. A13  
Millions of taxpayers could be eligible for refunds from the IRS for late fees charged during the covid pandemic. A13

**STYLE**  
When the landlord is an ambassador, it can lead to a particularly D.C.-esque problem for the tenants. B1

**SPORTS**  
The Mystics kept pace and made a statement despite an overtime loss to the New York Liberty in their home opener. C1

**THE REGION**  
The Maryland Senate president faces a tough primary after defying Democratic Party leaders on redistricting. C8

**HEALTH & SCIENCE**  
Doctors wanted to remove a Pennsylvania woman's uterus, but the real cause of her problems lay elsewhere. D1

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