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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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With broad law, Italy bans foreign surrogacy

Critics warn that West's most restrictive such rule targets same-sex couples

BY ANTHONY FAIOLA AND STEFANO PITRELLI

ROME — Italy on Wednesday passed the West's most restrictive law against international surrogacy, threatening would-be parents who use birth mothers abroad with jail time and severe fines in a move that critics say will chiefly target same-sex couples.

Domestic surrogacy was already banned in Italy, as it is in some other countries, but the amended Italian law goes further, classifying surrogacy as a rare universal crime that transcends borders, like terrorism or genocide.

The measure marks the strongest salvo yet in Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's bid to put a conservative stamp on Italian society, and it elevates surrogacy as a hot-button issue in the West's raging culture wars.

The law, passed last year by the lower house and effectively ensured by the Senate vote Wednesday, also criminalizes work by Italian citizens employed as doctors, nurses and technicians in foreign fertility clinics that facilitate surrogacies.

That and other aspects of the amended law may be hard to enforce. Even backers of the legislation concede that heterosexual couples may face few questions when returning to Italy with an infant, or when registering their child's birth certificate with local

SEE SURROGACY ON A13

Changes for Md. mental hospital after Post report

BY KATIE METTLER

Maryland's top health official told employees in a letter Wednesday that she is implementing reforms to address "critical deficiencies" at the state's maximum-security psychiatric hospital, a move that comes in the wake of a Washington Post investigation into chronic understaffing and violence at the facility.

The letter from Health Secretary Laura Herrera Scott said that the allegations raised by the Post investigation were "of serious concern" to her and the administration of Gov. Wes Moore (D), and that officials were conducting a "top-to-bottom review and investigation into all aspects of policy and procedure" at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center.

The Post detailed how officials had ignored employee complaints about staffing and other issues at the facility for years, and how violence escalated in 2023, Moore's first year in office, when patients brawled, a patient was raped by his roommate and another patient died under suspicious circumstances. The death prompted Maryland State Police to launch an investigation into possible criminal medical neglect that was ultimately closed without anyone being charged.

"The Maryland Department of Health is fully committed to the safety and security of both employees and the patients that we

SEE PERKINS ON A11



ED RAM FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Brigades' ads beckon Ukrainians to join war

Military units create campaigns to directly compete for recruits

BY LIZZIE JOHNSON AND SERHII KOROLCHUK IN KYIV

Maria, a model, poses on a Humvee during a 3rd Assault Brigade photo shoot in Kyiv on Aug. 31.

and dollar-generating YouTube channel, as well as the controversial ideology of its founder.

Unique to Ukraine is the fact that its military's more than 130 brigades are now allowed to directly seek out recruits — avoiding the national draft centers altogether. The 3rd Assault Brigade has taken the approach of appealing to ordinary citizens and showing them the kind of soldier they would be if they volunteered for Ukraine's "top fighting unit."

"This is a modern war that requires us to be more open," media team commander Khrystyna Bondarenko said in the brigade's first interview about its advertising process. "We need to commercialize and sell the idea that it is cool to be in the army."

At the photo shoot, she and two other members of the 20-person creative team perched on canvas director's chairs in front of a computer screen, previewing the day's images. In one shot, a soldier's profile is reflected in the sunglasses of

SEE UKRAINE ON A14

Israel looms large in election

DEMOCRATS HOPED WAR WOULD FADE

Escalations in Lebanon and Gaza in final stretch

BY JOHN HUDSON, YASMEEN ABUTALEB, MOHAMAD EL CHAMAA AND MISSY RYAN

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris hoped the ongoing violence in the Middle East might simmer below the surface in the final weeks of the presidential race, but fresh Israeli military offensives are making that virtually impossible, U.S. officials and campaign aides say.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has set the Gaza Strip ablaze with a renewed bombing campaign and launched a ground invasion into Lebanon alongside aerial strikes in Beirut aimed at annihilating the militant group Hezbollah. He is expected to order an imminent attack on Iran's military facilities in response to its missile strike on Israel this month.

The rapid escalation has tied the Biden administration in knots, resulting in the United States first calling for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon only to reverse that policy nine days later and openly endorse Israel's ground offensive. The whiplash has caused confusion and consternation among Washington's European and Arab allies who are pushing for the United States to restrain its closest ally in the Middle East. But administration officials remain loath to pick a public fight at such a tenuous moment politically.

"They clearly want to avoid any public confrontation with Netanyahu over Lebanon or Gaza that could result in blowback from Israel's supporters before the election,"

SEE ISRAEL ON A13

North Gaza: Israel's moves there mirror a harsh siege plan. A12

ELECTION 2024

Changing state challenges Tester's enduring appeal

With Senate at stake and Montana growing redder, Democrat finds fewer willing to split their ticket

BY LIZ GOODWIN

THREE FORKS, MONT. — Wylie Gustafson has been voting for Sen. Jon Tester, a third-generation Montana farmer, for years, sticking with the Democrat even as Montana turned redder and redder.

But this year, Gustafson, a 63-year-old rancher and musician, will be voting for Tester's Republican challenger, Tim Sheehy, a businessman born out of state — even if he feels a bit bad about it.

"Maybe there's a little bit of guilt involved with not going with Jon this time," he said. "Because I think Jon is a good guy."

Whether other Montanans feel the same way will not only determine Tester's fate, but may decide which party controls the U.S. Senate next year, with profound implications for federal tax policy, judicial nominations and more.

The Senate is split 51-49 in Democrats' favor, and West Virginia's seat is almost certainly going to flip after the retirement of Sen. Joe Manchin III. That

SEE TESTER ON A8



LOUISE JOHNS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Sen. Jon Tester waves from his tractor at the Montana State University homecoming parade on Oct. 5.

Fox interview: Harris says her presidency won't be Biden's. A6

In Nebraska: Dueling measures on abortion are on the ballot. A8

Low-tech push: Musk's super PAC focuses on canvassing, mail. A16

IN THE NEWS

Climate crisis The Supreme Court declined a GOP-led injunction to halt an EPA plan to cut emissions from fossil-fuel-fired power plants as litigation continues in lower courts. A17

Mount Vernon George Washington's estate will mostly be closed for eight months during its first major renovation in 150 years. B1

THE NATION

A Georgia school shooting suspect planned the attack in a notebook, investigators said. A2
A Texas man faces execution despite doubts over the science used to convict him. A3

THE WORLD

Two Sudanese men were charged in cyberattacks on a U.S. hospital and big companies. A15
A former Mexican official was sentenced to over 38 years in a U.S. drug-trafficking case. A15

THE ECONOMY

CEOs saw their pay fall in 2023, but they still earned 290 times as much as a typical worker, an analysis found. A18
The Education Department will pause new assignments to the student loan servicer MOHELA after errors in account handling. A18

THE REGION

The D.C. attorney general sought to use a legal settlement to ensure affordable housing at a complex in Shaw. B1
Giant pandas Bao Li and Qing Bao, who have been eating and active, are settling into their new home at the Smithsonian's National Zoo. B1

STYLE

In his new book, "War," Bob Woodward argues that Donald Trump is "far worse than Richard Nixon." C1

LOCAL LIVING

What is it about oddly colored animals — white deer, black squirrels and the like — that captures our imagination?

BUSINESS NEWS.....A16
COMICS.....C7
OBITUARIES.....B4
OPINION PAGES.....A19
TELEVISION.....C6
WORLD NEWS.....A12

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