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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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Bowser proposes purchase of arena

Capitals, Wizards owner would save millions in taxes if D.C. buys venue

BY MICHAEL BRICE-SADDLER AND SAM FORTIER

D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser is proposing the city purchase Capital One Arena from the owner of the Washington Capitals and Wizards for \$87.5 million, a move that is part of her efforts to keep the teams playing in the city while buoying the District's lagging downtown core.

The funding for the purchase would come from \$515 million in city-funded renovations that the D.C. Council approved in April, following an initial agreement between the mayor and Monumental Sports & Entertainment CEO Ted Leonsis that came after he threatened to relocate the Wizards and Capitals to Alexandria.

In statements Monday, Bowser and Leonsis described the planned purchase, which is subject to D.C. Council approval, as a final step before renovations can begin on the arena.

"We're keeping Washington's teams where they belong — here in the sports Capital, and we're doubling down on having a world-class destination and entertainment District in the center of DC," Bowser said in a statement.

Under Bowser's bill, introduced Friday, the city would acquire the arena itself for \$87.5 million, then lease the property back to Monumental in a model known as a sale-leaseback. The amended lease, if approved by the council, would extend through 2050 and include five four-year extension options, allowing Monumental to potentially extend the lease an additional 20 years. D.C. already owns the land under Capital One Arena.

If Monumental continues to own the arena, the company would have to pay hundreds of millions of taxes back to the District on the renovation money it would receive; that would not be the case if the District owns it, according to two officials familiar with the negotiations. Nina Albert, SEE ARENA ON A2



CHANDAN KHANNA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Voters cast ballots at the library in Coral Gables, Florida, on Monday, the first day of early voting in the state. Many voters in seven key states remain on the fence about the presidential race, a Washington Post-Schar School poll shows.

In storm aftermath, Trump flips stance on early voting

BY AMY GARDNER AND JOSH DAWSEY

Former president Donald Trump's years-long effort to restrict mail balloting and early voting has skidded into reverse in North Carolina, with the Republican presidential nominee demanding the kind of easier voting access that he labeled fraudulent when Democrats pushed similar measures during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

Trump's about-face comes after Hurricane Helene left dozens dead and thousands temporarily pushed out of their communities after widespread destruction of homes, roads and water supplies when the storm deluged the western part of the state in late September.

The 25 hardest-hit counties are almost all deeply conserva-

tive, places where Trump must rack up big margins to offset more liberal urban centers, such as Charlotte and Raleigh, that are likely to net voting gains for Vice President Kamala Harris.

Several Trump advisers said his campaign is worried that hundreds of thousands more Trump voters than Harris voters have been affected by the storm in a critical battleground that the former president must win if he is to regain the White House. Trump won North Carolina by just over a percentage point in 2020.

Since the storm hit, the campaign has advocated for changes to voting policy and procedures that mirror the type of pandemic-related accommodations that came under attack from Trump and his allies four years ago.

SEE TRUMP ON A6

Viral smear of Walz features fake ex-student, false claims

BY JON SWAINE, SARAH BLASKEY AND CHRIS DEGHANPOOR

Matthew Metro didn't recognize the face that popped up on his cellphone screen when he clicked a link that a friend texted him last week. But after hitting play on the online video, he was dismayed by what he saw.

"My name is Matthew Metro," said the man in the video, who went on to describe life as a student decades ago at a high school in Minnesota where Democratic vice-presidential nominee Tim Walz was a teacher. Some of the details — including about being at the school when Walz worked there — matched the biography of the real Metro. But the man in the video went further, leveling fabricated allegations against Walz, whom the real Metro said he

never met.

Millions of people have viewed social media posts containing the video since it was published Wednesday on X, formerly Twitter. For some viewers, the use of Metro's name and verifiable biographical details created an aura of credibility around the false allegations. Not so for the real Metro, whom The Washington Post located in Hilo, Hawaii.

"It's obviously not me: The teeth are different, the hair is different, the eyes are different, the nose is different," said Metro, 45, who has not previously spoken publicly. "I don't know where they're getting this from." Metro showed The Post his Hawaii driver's license to confirm his identity.

Metro told The Post that Walz never taught him. He said he SEE VIDEO ON A8

Trump, Harris even in new poll

UNDECIDEDS STILL COULD TILT RESULT

Decisive votes likely to be found in 7 key states

BY SCOTT CLEMENT, EMILY GUSKIN, DAN KEATING AND DAN BALZ

With two weeks of campaigning left before the 2024 election, Vice President Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump are running nearly evenly across the seven battleground states among a critical portion of the electorate whose votes are likely to determine who becomes the next president.

A Washington Post-Schar School poll of more than 5,000 registered voters, conducted in the first half of October, finds 47 percent who say they will definitely or probably support Harris, while 47 percent say they will definitely or probably support Trump. Among likely voters, 49 percent support Harris and 48 percent back Trump.

Trump's support is little changed from the 48 percent he received in a spring survey of six key states using the same methodology, but Harris's standing is six percentage points higher than the 41 percent support registered for President Joe Biden, who was then a candidate.

In addition to swing-state voters overall, the Post-Schar School survey focuses on a sizable group of registered voters who have not been firmly committed to any candidate and whose voting record leaves open whether they will cast ballots this fall. With another part of the electorate locked down for a candidate for many months, this group of "Deciders" could make SEE POLL ON A20

Fundraising: Harris began October with a huge cash advantage. A5

Liz Cheney: Alongside Harris, she appeals to unhappy GOP voters. A7

In Idaho, the law complicates a teen mom's care

Her parents aren't in the picture — but she needed their consent for any medical treatment

BY KARIN BRULLIARD

MCCALL, IDAHO — The patient, 36 weeks pregnant, was having mild but frequent contractions. She had come to the emergency room in this small lakeside town because she was new to the area and had no doctor. In most cases, physician Caitlin Gustafson would have begun a pelvic exam to determine whether labor had started. This time, she called the hospital's lawyers.

Mom-to-be Aleah was only 13 years old. And under a new Idaho law requiring parental consent for nearly all minors' health care, Gustafson could be sued for treating her because the girl had been brought in by her great-aunt.

What followed were more than two frantic hours of trying to contact Aleah's mother, who was living in a car, and her grandmother, who was the teen's legal guardian. The grandmother finally gave verbal consent for the exam — from the Boise-area jail where she was incarcerated on SEE CONSENT ON A9



RACHEL WOOLF FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Thirteen-year-old Aleah holds daughter Oaklie Rayne at her great-aunt's home in Donnelly, Idaho. A state law that took effect this summer gives Aleah final say on care for Oaklie — but not for herself.

The hidden economy of college sports

Analysis of \$125 million in payments to athletes reveals patterns, disparities of murky NIL market

BY ALBERT SAMAHA, EMILY GIAMBALVO, JESSE DOUGHERTY AND ARTUR GALOCHA

It has been three years since the NCAA started allowing college athletes to make money from their personal brands — their names, images and likenesses, or NIL.

In that time, college athletes, previously limited to scholarship money and under-the-table handouts, have earned payments for brand endorsements, charity work, autograph signings and other services big and small. Many have done so while driving exposure and revenue for massive public universities.

But what this NIL economy actually looks like has remained largely hidden, limited to sporadic anecdotes, unreliable estimates from the NIL industry and anonymous summary data compiled by the NCAA.



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Colleges and boosters say that secrecy protects student-athletes. But efforts by The Washington Post to obtain NIL records from public schools reveal a lack of transparency that forces many athletes to navigate an unfamiliar economy in the dark, leaving their interests at the whims of the powers holding the purse strings. SEE NIL ON A10

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Senate candidates are flooding TV screens with advertisements in the final stretch before Maryland's election. B1

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