



Partly sunny 88/66 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 85/65 **B24**

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2025 • \$6

Reactions to activist's slaying a litmus test in the workplace

Employees are getting fired, disciplined after posts deemed offensive

BY TAYLOR TELFORD

Within 24 hours of Charlie Kirk's killing, an assistant dean at a Tennessee college, a communications staffer for an NFL team, a Next Door employee in Milwaukee, and the co-owner of a Cincinnati barbecue restaurant were fired after posting about it. They had all used language or

memes their employers deemed offensive or insensitive about the 31-year-old conservative firebrand. Kirk evoked strong feelings along party lines, and the fatal shooting in Utah on Wednesday unleashed parallel outpourings: On the right, there were mostly mournful expressions and demands for retribution; on the left, there was mostly condemnation of political violence and some suggestions that he had it coming.

"Looks like ol' Charlie spoke his fate into existence," Laura Sosh-Lightsy, assistant dean of students at Middle Tennessee State University, posted Wednesday on

SEE **MEMORIAL** ON **A6**



FILIP SINGER/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

An image of slain conservative activist Charlie Kirk on display Saturday during a vigil in Berlin.

The Sunday Take: Signs of a fragile democracy in killing, aftermath. **A2**

Overseas: "True defender" mourned by a global right he influenced. **A9**

The building of a juggernaut

HOW KIRK'S VISION
REWired POLITICS

Art of discourse, discord
powers media machine

BY CAT ZAKRZEWSKI,
YVONNE WINGETT SANCHEZ
AND DREW HARWELL

Last month, as social media buzzed with news that Taylor Swift was engaged to Travis Kelce, Charlie Kirk advised one of the world's most successful female musicians to leave "the

island of the wokeys" and start having children with the star football player.

"Reject feminism," Kirk urged the billionaire singer, in a video that has garnered 7.5 million views on TikTok. "Submit to your husband, Taylor. You're not in charge."

The video drew accusations of sexism from liberals and Swifties, but it found an enthusiastic audience among Kirk's Gen Z fans. The clip's viral spread illustrated how the 31-year-old activist and provocateur harnessed the attention economy to build a political empire credited with shattering the left's grip on young voters.

A self-described "happy digital warrior," Kirk blitzed young Americans with his conservative message by meeting them on social media, mastering algorithms that reward posts that elicit passionate reactions and conflict. His posts promoted traditional family structures, mocked diversity initiatives and labeled trans identity a "mental delusion." He embraced messages that energized the right in the Trump era, challenging the results of the 2020 election, questioning masking and vaccine guidance during the pandemic and criticizing affirmative action.

SEE **KIRK** ON **A7**

Louisiana cities could see 1,000 from Guard

Pentagon plan envisions
a policing mission for
troops, documents show

BY ALEX HORTON
AND TARA COPP

The Trump administration has drafted a proposal to activate 1,000 Louisiana National Guard troops to serve in a law enforcement mission focused on the state's "urban centers," according to Pentagon planning documents outlining what would be a significant expansion of the military's role in policing American citizens.

Among the documents is an unsigned, undated draft memo from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to Attorney General Pam Bondi and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi L. Noem that describes the "unique advantage" of the Pentagon's proposed approach to law enforcement in Louisiana. This plan, the draft memo says, would allow the military to supplement law

SEE **NATIONAL GUARD** ON **A5**

In D.C.: National Guard is invited to clean up Ward 8 neighborhood. **B18**

Wall Street is galloping as U.S. economy hobbles along

BY AARON GREGG

Unemployment is going up, with worker pessimism at its highest in years. Inflation is creeping higher. The U.S. deficit is climbing. Consumer sentiment is down. And many key issues facing the economy — such as the fate of President Donald Trump's tariffs, and interest rate decisions by the Federal Reserve — are still up in the air.

Despite it all, the U.S. stock market has continued its climb. On Friday, the S&P 500 index closed up more than 12 percent on the year. It sits just shy of a record, having bounced back from the sharp April sell-off when Trump first announced severe tariffs, which were then partially rolled back.

The market's success has progressed even as other economic fundamentals have softened.

SEE **STOCKS** ON **A10**

Midterms: Trump faces same fiscal challenges that hindered Harris. **A3**



L.A. fires burned their block.



PHOTOS BY MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

For three families, the disaster was just beginning.

BY REIS THEBAULT, N. KIRKPATRICK, ALICE LI AND MELINA MARA
IN ALTADENA, CALIF.

The hulking yellow excavator lumbered across charred ground and raised its arm above a blackened heap of metal and ash. It was a machine built for unearthing, but this moment felt more like a burial.

Here lay the remains of 295 W. Las Flores Dr. and the house that for more than a century had amassed milestones and memories. Its brown brick chimney, all that survived the flames, towered over the lot like a tombstone.

On this early spring day, the sun already blazed high and hot. The block was short on shade — trees now scorched and leafless — so the small crowd of onlookers squinted toward the rubble. A crew from the Army Corps of Engineers stood by in white Tyvek suits and hard hats.

Two people kept their distance: Leslie Anderson-

Aitken, who owned the home, and Daron Anderson, her son and tenant, who'd dressed in all black for the occasion. Leslie looked on, her gaze steely. Daron dragged on a cigarette and turned away.

As at any funeral, there are those who are ready to move on and those who are not.

The Eaton Fire tore through the Los Angeles suburb of Altadena, part of an infernal storm that killed 19 people. It became one of the most expensive natural disasters in U.S. history, but the ultimate cost won't be tallied in dollars and cents. That will be calculated on a different ledger: the number of residents who return to this block of West Las Flores and the countless others like it.

The Washington Post has spent months with three families from this Altadena street, the

SEE **ALTADENA** ON **A12**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Smoke crept into Jennie Bridges's Altadena home, one of a few in the area left standing. Danielle "Dani" Valdes and her family put their property on the market. Daron Anderson, center, with his children, at the site of his mother's home, where he was her tenant.

Snapshot emerging in Trump's D.C. sweep

Arrests in past month
skewed toward poorest,
most crime-riddled areas

BY OLIVIA GEORGE,
MEGHAN HOYER,
STEVE THOMPSON
AND EMMA UBER

On President Donald Trump's orders, thousands of local police, federal agents and camouflage-clad troops have fanned out across the nation's capital every night for the past month. The surge sprawled across D.C., from its poorest pockets to its busiest commercial corridors and marbled monuments.

The White House has touted the success of the operation, saying it drove down crime and took illegal guns off the streets. But they've offered little insight into who was being arrested, how, where and for what.

To answer those questions, The Washington Post gathered more than a thousand charging documents from local and federal courts, mapped the incidents and examined how they played out. The documents portray an expanded law enforcement presence that considered no crime too small while hunting for guns and employing tactics that have sparked community opposition in the past.

More than a third of the 1,273 arrests examined by The Post from the first four weeks of Trump's crackdown in D.C. involved federal law enforcement, a figure that doesn't include arrests made by immigration officers.

Those arrests occurred in all eight city wards, but were concentrated in the city's poorest, least White and most crime-riddled

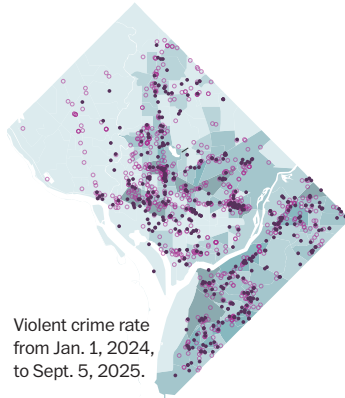
SEE **ARRESTS** ON **A4**

**D.C. arrests from
Aug. 7 to Sept. 4**

● Arrests involving federal officers
○ Other arrests

Violent crime per 1,000 residents

0 5 10 15 20



Violent crime rate
from Jan. 1, 2024,
to Sept. 5, 2025.

Sources: Metropolitan Police Department,
D.C. Superior Court, U.S. District Court for
the District of Columbia

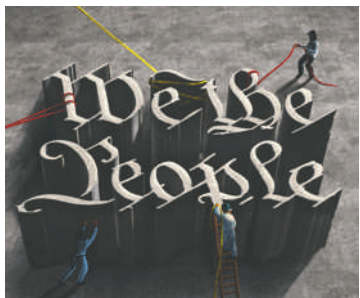
ERIC LAU/THE WASHINGTON POST

SPORTS

It's Fanatics vs. Panini in a raw fight to control the sports card industry. **B1**

BUSINESS

Humanoid robots were a sci-fi dream. Suddenly they're everywhere. **B11**



BOOK WORLD

"We the People" argues the Constitution should be easier to change.

METRO

Teens with rifles hunting a rival gang killed intern in June, police say. **B18**



ARTS & STYLE

Jude Law keeps surprising us. Anything less would be a shock.

TRAVEL

Explore America by taking a ride down one of these 8 scenic routes.

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