

Election may help put end to impasse

Senators hope a strong statement by voters encourages compromise

BY THEODORIC MEYER

Some Democratic and Republican senators are newly optimistic that the government shutdown, which has dragged on for more than a month, might soon come to an end.

They believe Tuesday's elections, among other factors, will encourage senators in both parties to find a way to reopen the government.

"The election's kind of the first report card on Trump," Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-Virginia) said. "I hope it will frankly empower some of my Republican friends to move from talking about things to actually finding their way to get to some compromise."

Democratic victories in the New Jersey and Virginia governor's races could make Republicans question their shutdown strategy, putting fresh pressure on GOP lawmakers to negotiate an end to the shutdown, Warner said. Republicans, meanwhile, argue that Democrats will be more willing to compromise once the election is over, because Democrats are worried they would dis-appoint their voters if they struck a deal to the end the shutdown before Election Day.

Once the election results are in, "maybe that'll free some people up to be able to vote yes" on Republicans' bill to reopen the government, Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-South Dakota) told reporters last week.

SEE SHUTDOWN ON A7

Watching for signals in N.J.'s Latino vote

BY HANNAH KNOWLES AND SABRINA RODRIGUEZ

CLIFTON, N.J. — John Currie was blunt with the Democrats who rallied here over the weekend for their gubernatorial nominee, Mikie Sherrill.

"Passaic County let me down in 2024," the local Democratic Party chair told the room.

The heavily Latino area was once a Democratic stronghold but flipped to Donald Trump last year, part of a broader shift away from Democrats among voters of color. "A lot of our people drank the Kool-Aid," Currie lamented. Now, New Jersey's high-profile governor's race offered a chance to regain their support.

"Have your grocery prices gone down?" Currie asked, reminding the crowd about Trump's promise to lower costs. "No!" the room shouted.

Tuesday's election will test whether Republicans can hold on to Trump-led gains with voters of color — and how well Democrats can capitalize on what polls show is significant dissatisfaction with Trump's second term. While strategists will be examining election returns from Virginia to California on Tuesday, the out-

SEE VOTERS ON A9

Election Day: What's at stake for Trump, Democrats and more? A8



PHOTOS BY RACHEL BUJALSKI/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

For those who lost everything, a fellowship of catastrophe

A conference brings wildfire survivors together to find community and share tips

BY REIS THEBAULT

SONOMA, CALIF. — Amy Bernstein and Grace Park weren't sure what to expect when they walked into the beige-paneled auditorium in California wine country. Other attendees wore lanyards that bore the names of places now seared into history: Santa Rosa, Paradise, Lahaina. A message on the big screen read, "Welcome Los Angeles to the Worst Club of the Best People."

The pair, faith leaders from the L.A. enclave of Pacific Palisades, realized this wasn't a normal conference. The room was full of fire survivors like them, and they were attending what felt more like an initiation. They were among the newest members of this club of

catastrophe.

The summit, an annual affair organized by the nonprofit group After the Fire, brings together survivors, emergency responders and other disaster experts to trade ideas about recovery and to symbolically swear in the latest class of devastated communities. This year, the first-timers were from the Palisades and Altadena, two Los Angeles neighborhoods where January's firestorm destroyed more than 16,000 buildings and killed at least 31 people.

Bernstein and Park were hesitant. Emotions were still raw. But when they arrived, they felt the sort of comfort that comes only from being surrounded by

SEE WILDFIRES ON A11

FROM LEFT: Jennifer Singer-Rupp holds the keys to her home that burned in a 2021 wildfire in Colorado. The Rev. Grace Park and Rabbi Amy Bernstein, and Zaire Calvin, survived January's fires in Los Angeles.

Many ballroom donors have business before administration

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS

Most of the publicly identified donors to President Donald Trump's White House ballroom have high-stakes business before the administration, ranging from billions in government contracts to federal investigations into their companies, according to a report released Monday by a

government watchdog group.

More than half of the companies that donated are facing or have recently faced federal enforcement actions tied to alleged wrongdoing that includes engaging in unfair labor practices, deceiving consumers and harming the environment, according to the report from Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy organiza-

tion. The nonprofit, founded in 1971 by left-leaning political activist Ralph Nader, focuses on corporate money and influence in government. The donors have sprawling interests that touch nearly every aspect of American life, including tariffs, technology, taxation, online privacy and manufacturing.

The analysis focused on the

three dozen corporate and individual donors the Trump administration has disclosed, plus three more that have since been publicly identified. It found the group has received \$279 billion in government contracts over the past five years and spent \$1.6 billion in political contributions and lobbying fees during that time. The list contains heavy-

weights in the tech, financial and defense sectors, including Google, Comcast and Lockheed Martin.

The report adds to concerns voiced in recent weeks by Democratic lawmakers and preservationists who have questioned the deal's financing and Trump's demolition of the East Wing to

SEE BALLROOM ON A5



FREDERIC J. BROWN/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Still the champs

The Dodgers and their fans celebrate back-to-back World Series titles during a parade Monday in Los Angeles. They are the first MLB team in 25 years to win consecutive championships.

A costly, confusing hunt for a nonexistent cure

Family navigates false hope for autism treatments

BY TRISHA THADANI

ROCHESTER HILLS, MICH. — Wrangling three children with autism consumed Dana Paduchowski's days in a chaotic swirl, her weeks dissolving into a blur of routines and meltdowns. When the house finally quieted at night, the mother would stay awake for hours scouring the internet for a magic treatment that didn't exist.

Instead of finding answers, Paduchowski said, she constantly stumbled into expensive "rabbit holes of broken promises."

Over the past few years, Paduchowski estimates, she and her husband have spent at least \$30,000 on unproven alternative treatments for her children: An intravenous therapy to remove heavy metals from her son's body. A clinic with hyperbaric oxygen

chambers. Supplements, new diets and naturopathic doctors. While some helped in small ways, others made no difference. In a few cases, she said, her children became "sick and pale" or regressed.

"I just thought, 'Oh, we're gonna get this test, and then we're gonna get results, and then we're going to fix this one thing and then he's going to talk and break out of his autism shell,'" she said on a recent afternoon standing in her kitchen, as 15-year-old Caleb, her oldest, jumped and flapped his arms to an episode of "Sesame Street" blaring on the TV.

"But none of that has ever happened," she said.

Paduchowski's journey into unproven and sometimes risky treatments highlights how par-

SEE AUTISM ON A12

IN THE NEWS

A once-mighty movement Fifteen years after the tea party upended American politics, the GOP has moved in a sharply different direction under President Donald Trump. A3

Moonlighting Furloughed federal workers turn to gig economy side hustles and passion projects to make ends meet. A16

THE NATION
Far-right activist Laura Loomer is now credentialed to cover the Defense Department. A2
A top drug regulator who joined the Food and Drug Administration in July resigned. A6

THE WORLD
China's support for the junta in neighboring Myanmar is deepening the nation's civil war. A13
U.S. officials are scrambling to find a Christian missionary kidnapped in Niger. A14

THE ECONOMY
The Trump administration is being sued over restrictions placed on a loan forgiveness program for public servants. A17

THE CLIMATE
Scientists hope mushrooms can help provide a nature-based solution for home insulation. A20

STYLE
In his second term as president, Trump has embraced aesthetic choices designed to project grandeur. B1

SPORTS
The Commanders lost star quarterback Jayden Daniels and two other key players to injuries in Sunday night's loss. B7

The twin sons of a former Duke men's basketball star are the perennial power's next great hope. B7

THE REGION
The Trump administration has extended the National Guard mission in D.C. through the end of February. B13

BUSINESS NEWS.....A16
COMICS.....B4
OBITUARIES.....B15
OPINION PAGES.....A18
TELEVISION.....B6
WORLD NEWS.....A13

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