



DIFFERENT WOLVES, DIFFERENT YEAR
This isn't the same team Nuggets put away in '23
SPORTS

SATURDAY & EARLY SUNDAY
May 4-5, 2024

StarTribune

60° 44°
Puddles today precede a perfect Sunday. **B10**

U Regents to consider tuition hike

Amid uncertainty of legislative action on funding request, inflation, wages squeezing budget.

The University of Minnesota is considering raising tuition at each of its five campuses next school year as U leaders try to deal with inflation, requests for higher wages and other factors squeezing their budget.

Tuition rates at the U vary based on the type of program and the location where classes are held. Under a proposal coming before the Board of Regents next week, Minnesota residents taking undergraduate classes on the Twin Cities campus would pay \$15,148 in tuition next school year, a 4.5% increase. Increases on other campuses would range from 1.5% to 4.5%. The tuition rates are out-

lined in a \$5 billion budget proposal that would also increase salaries for some employees and call for budget cuts in some parts of the university. U faculty have called for an increase in their salaries, saying research shows wages are not comparable to some other large research universities. "While it is challenging to

build a budget that achieves strategic goals and advances the University's excellence in the face of rising costs, flat state support, and limited revenue growth, this budget successfully addresses key priorities shared by the President and the Board of Regents," U leaders wrote in See **TUITION** on A8 ▶

4.5% proposed increase for resident undergraduates on the Twin Cities campus, pushing tuition to \$15,148 for the school year.
1.5% - 4.5% proposed increases for other campuses, such as Duluth and Rochester.

By LIZ NAVRATIL
liz.navratil@startribune.com

2009 murder case is revisited

Law firm cites concerns about former medical examiner's reliability.

By ANDY MANNIX and GRETA KAUL • Star Tribune staff

A nonprofit law firm specializing in overturning wrongful convictions is asking a Ramsey County judge to unseal records in the 2009 murder case of an Inver Grove Heights woman, citing "rising concerns of unreliable, misleading, and/or false testimony" in other cases involving the medical examiner who performed the autopsy.

In a court filing, lawyers for the Great Northern Innocence Project say they need the full cache of autopsy records to complete a review of the evidence that led to the conviction of Michael Sontoya, who is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole for the sexual assault and murder of Gabriela Romo.

The doctor who conducted Romo's autopsy and testified in the trial is Michael McGee — the former chief medical examiner in Ramsey County whose "medically unsupported testimony" wrongfully sent another man, Thomas Rhodes, to prison for 25 years, according to an investigation by the Minnesota Attorney General's Office. Since his release last year, Rhodes has filed a lawsuit accusing McGee of fabricating medical conclusions and providing false testimony in the 1996 drowning death of his wife.

See **RECORDS** on A8 ▶

PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM



EARNING THEIR LAURELS

President Joe Biden awards the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, to Opal Lee, top, "the grandmother of Juneteenth," on Friday during a White House ceremony. Former Vice President Al Gore, above right, and actress Michelle Yeoh were among the other 18 honorees. Story, **A5**

Photos by ALEX BRANDON • Associated Press

Votes on abortion nearer in S.D., Mo.

Citizen-driven ballot bids seek to reverse strict bans.

By KATE ZERNIKE
New York Times

Two more states with near-total abortion bans are poised to have citizen-sponsored measures on the ballot this year that would allow voters to reverse those bans by establishing a right to abortion in their state constitutions.

On Friday, a coalition of abortion rights groups in Missouri turned in 380,159 signatures to put the amendment on the ballot, more than double the 172,000 signatures required by law. The Missouri organizers' announcement followed a petition drive in South Dakota that announced on Wednesday that it, too, had turned in many more signatures than required for a ballot amendment there.

Both groups are hoping to build on the momentum of other states where abortion rights supporters have prevailed in seven out of seven ballot measures in the two years since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade. See **ABORTION** on A5 ▶

Texas Dem charged in bribe case

Rep. Cuellar is accused of taking \$600K from firm.

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and SEAN MURPHY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Democratic U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar of Texas and his wife were indicted on conspiracy and bribery charges and arrested Friday in connection with a U.S. Department of Justice probe into the couple's ties to the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan.

From 2014 to 2021, Cuellar, 68, and his wife accepted nearly \$600,000 in bribes from an Azerbaijan-controlled energy company and a bank in Mexico, and in exchange, Cuellar agreed to advance the interests of the country and the bank in the U.S., according to the indictment. Among other things, See **CUELLAR** on A5 ▶

SHARON LUBINSKI 1952 - 2024

U.S. marshal broke barriers, was 'guiding light' at MPD

By STEPHEN MONTEMAYOR • smontemayor@startribune.com

Sharon Lubinski, whose four decades in law enforcement saw her become the first woman to serve as U.S. marshal in Minnesota and first openly gay person to do so, has died at 71.

Lubinski died April 19, according to her obituary and a subsequent announcement from U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who recommended in 2010 that President Barack Obama select her to lead the agency responsible for protecting Minnesota's federal judges and courthouses. The cause of death

was not given, though her obituary noted that family members were by her side.

The Green Bay, Wis., native became among the nation's highest-level female law enforcement officials before retiring in 2016 and left a legacy still felt by those who have filled her shoes.

"Minnesota is a safer place because of Sharon," said Klobuchar this week, adding: "She is an inspiration whose story and actions have encouraged more people from See **LUBINSKI** on A8 ▶



KYNDELL HARKNESS • kyndell.harkness@startribune.com
Sharon Lubinski, shown in 2010, was the first openly gay and first female U.S. marshal for Minnesota.

TOP NEWS

3 arrested in slaying of Sikh separatist: Trudeau accused India of role. **A2**

NATION & WORLD

Tories take a beating: Britain's Conservative Party loses in local elections. **A4**

MINNESOTA

St. Thomas sports arena: University pauses construction as neighbors object. **B1**

SPORTS

Twins win streak at 11: Third-longest run reached in 5-2 win over Red Sox. **C1**

BUSINESS

Filling a void: New outdoors store could open in Vadnais Heights soon. **B3**

VARIETY

Side by side: Music teachers perform together with Minnesota Orchestra. **E1**

HAVE YOU HEARD?

Noem falsely claims meeting Kim Jong Un: Spokesman for S.D. governor calls her book's anecdote a "small error." **A2**

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SEC blasts auditor for Trump business

“Massive fraud” leads to suspension, \$14M penalty.

By DREW HARWELL
Washington Post

The auditor for former President Donald Trump's media company was charged with “massive fraud” Friday by the Securities and Exchange Commission, which accused the firm of being a “sham audit mill” whose failures put investors at risk.

The auditor, BF Borgers, and its owner, Benjamin Borgers, agreed to a permanent suspension from accounting work and to pay \$14 million in civil penalties, federal regulators said.

The SEC said its review of the firm's audits found “deliberate and systemic failures” in more than 1,500 filings from January 2021 through June 2023. That period was before Trump Media & Technology Group went public, suggesting that its filings were not among those investigated as part of the review.

Trump Media, which owns Truth Social, saw its share price slide 5% Friday morning.

Trump Media spokeswoman Shannon Devine said in a statement that the company “looks forward to working with new auditing partners in accordance with today's SEC order.”

BF Borgers did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Trump Media said in an SEC filing last month that Borgers had served as its accounting firm before the company went public in March, auditing Trump Media's financial statements for 2022 and 2023. In March, the Trump Media board also approved Borgers as its auditor for its upcoming 2024 report.

Borgers conducted the audit of Trump Media's 2023 financial statement, which said the company lost more than \$58 million last year and generated about \$4 million in revenue. In that statement, Borgers said it had served as Trump Media's auditor since 2022.

Companies pay auditing firms to review and sign off on their financial statements and regulatory filings, and the SEC requires the firms to abide by professional accounting standards so that investors can rely on them when deciding where to place their money.

But the SEC said its review of Borgers' work found a pattern of “improper professional conduct” from its accountants, who documented work that had not been performed, said they held client meetings that never occurred and submitted audit documents that were actually just lightly tweaked versions taken from other clients.

SEC enforcement division director Gurbir Grewal said in a statement that Borgers was “responsible for one of the largest wholesale failures by gatekeepers in our financial markets.”

Founded 15 years ago in a small office in Lakewood, Colo., Borgers quickly became one of the 10 largest audit firms in the country by number of clients, regulatory filings show.

But the firm has a fraction of the workforce of other auditing firms, with just 10 certified public accountants on staff, according to Public Company Accounting Oversight Board filings. The next-closest firm with more than 100 clients, Cohen & Co., had 308 CPAs, while other firms, such as Ernst & Young and Deloitte & Touche, had more than 10,000.

Among its repeated errors, the Financial Times found in a review of Borgers' filings last month: the spelling of the firm's own name. A second auditing firm that worked with Trump Media's merger partner, Digital World Acquisition, was charged by the SEC last June with “systemic quality control failures” and agreed to pay a \$10 million fine. The firm, Marcum, resigned from working with Digital World last summer.

Fear of tape's impact gripped campaign

Former Trump adviser recounts worry in '16 over “Access Hollywood” tape.

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and PHILIP MARCELO • Associated Press

NEW YORK - Donald Trump's 2016 campaign was seized with worry about the potential political damage from a tape that showed Trump bragging about grabbing women sexually without their permission, longtime Trump adviser Hope Hicks testified Friday at his hush money trial.

Hicks, a former White House official, was compelled to testify by Manhattan prosecutors, who are hoping her remarks bolster their argument that the uproar over the infamous “Access Hollywood” tape hastened Trump's then-lawyer to pay off porn actor Stormy Daniels to bury a negative story that could imperil his 2016 presidential bid.

Once one of Trump's closest confidants, Hicks provided a window into the chaotic fallout over the tape's release just days before a crucial debate with Democrat Hillary Clinton. It was recorded in 2005 but was not seen by the public until Oct. 7, 2016, about a month before Election Day. Hicks described being stunned and huddling with other Trump advisers after learning about the tape's existence from the Washington Post reporter who broke the story. Hicks forwarded the reporter's request to campaign leadership with the recommendation to “deny, deny, deny,” she said.

“I had a good sense to believe this was going to be a massive story and that it was going to dominate the news cycle for the next several days,” Hicks testified. “This was a damaging development.”

She added: “This was just pulling us backwards in a way



JEENAH MOON • Pool photo via Associated Press

Margo Martin, deputy director of communications for former President Donald Trump, far right, and Trump adviser Boris Epshteyn, second from right, listen as Trump addresses members of the media Friday at Manhattan criminal court in New York.

that was going to be hard to overcome.”

Prosecutors called her to the witness stand to strengthen their case alleging Trump worked to prevent damaging stories about his personal life from becoming public as part of a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 presidential election. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg has sought to establish that link not just to secure a conviction but also to persuade the public of the significance of the case, which may be the only one of four Trump prosecutions to reach trial this year.

Hicks told jurors that Trump claimed he did not know anything about his then-attorney Michael Cohen paying \$130,000 to Daniels to prevent her from going public with claims of a sexual encounter with Trump. But, Hicks said, Trump eventually came to believe that burying

Daniels' story was prudent, saying he thought “it would have been bad to have that story come out before the election.”

At other points, Hicks' testimony appeared to help the defense's contention that the former president was trying to protect his reputation and family — not his campaign — by shielding them from embarrassing stories about his personal life. Trump has denied any wrongdoing in the case, which he has slammed as an effort to derail his campaign to reclaim the White House in November.

Under questioning by Trump's attorney, Hicks told jurors that he was worried about the effect of the “Access Hollywood” tape on his family. When the Wall Street Journal published a story revealing ex-Playboy model Karen McDougal's affair allegations right before the election, Hicks said Trump was concerned about

his wife seeing the story and asked Hicks to make sure newspapers weren't delivered to their residence that morning.

But when asked if Trump was also worried about the story's effect on the campaign, Hicks responded that everything they spoke about during that time was viewed through the lens of the campaign. Trump would often ask her, “How is it playing?” as a way of gauging how his appearances, speeches and policies were landing with voters, she said.

Hicks' proximity to Trump over the years has made her a figure of interest to congressional and criminal investigators alike, who have sought her testimony on multiple occasions on topics ranging from Russian election interference to Trump's election loss and the subsequent Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol.

Referring to her former

boss as “Mr. Trump” and later “President Trump” when speaking about their time in the White House, she told the court she last communicated with him in the summer or fall of 2022. While no longer in Trump's inner circle, Hicks spoke about the former president in glowing terms as the prosecutor began questioning her about her background.

Prosecutors have spent the week using detailed testimony about meetings, email exchanges, business transactions and bank accounts to build on the foundation of their case charging Trump with 34 counts of falsifying internal Trump Organization business records. They are setting the stage for pivotal testimony from Cohen, who paid Daniels for her silence before he went to prison for the hush money scheme.

Testimony will resume Monday. The trial could last another month or more.

NATION & WORLD

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Worker accused of fake tips in Jan. 6 riot

A former government employee has been charged with repeatedly submitting fake tips to the FBI reporting that several of his co-workers in the intelligence community were part of a mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Court records unsealed on Friday say that Miguel Eugenio Zapata was arrested in Chantilly, Va., on Thursday on a charge that he made false statements to law enforcement. A charging document says Zapata submitted at least seven anonymous tips to the FBI's website claiming that seven government employees and contractors were involved in the riot at the Capitol. Court records don't identify which government agency employed Zapata.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

State liable for abuse at detention center

A New Hampshire jury has found the state liable for abuse at its youth detention center and has awarded \$38 million to a former resident who says he was beaten and raped as a teen. But the state says its law requires reducing the amount to \$475,000. David Meehan's lawsuit against the state was the first of more than 1,100 to be filed and the first to go to trial. In the ruling on Friday jurors found the state's negligence in hiring, training and supervising employees allowed his abuse. The state is prosecuting 11 former workers, including those who Meehan accused.

CHINA

Rocket leaves for the far side of the moon

China on Friday launched a lunar probe to land on the far side of the moon and return with samples that could provide insights into differences between the less-explored region and the better-known near side. If the mission is successful, it will be the first in history to bring back a sample from the part of the moon that Earth never sees. A relay satellite is needed to maintain communications. Huge numbers of people crowded beaches on the island province of Hainan to view the launch. China has said that it aims to put astronauts on the moon by 2030.

NEWS SERVICES



JASON FOCHTMAN • Houston Chronicle via AP

TEXAS: A woman reacts as she and others are evacuated from their homes on Friday in Conroe, north of Houston. Torrential rain inundated southeastern Texas, forcing schools to cancel classes and closing numerous highways.

FINAL WEEKEND

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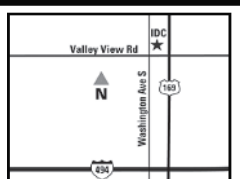
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NATION & WORLD

Migrant kids to get health insurance

100K “Dreamers” likely to get Obamacare next year.

By AMANDA SEITZ
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Roughly 100,000 immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children are expected to enroll in the Affordable Care Act’s health insurance next year under a directive the Biden administration released Friday.

The move took longer than promised to finalize and fell short of Democratic President Joe Biden’s initial proposal to allow those migrants to sign up for Medicaid, the health insurance program that provides nearly free coverage for the nation’s poorest people.

But it will allow thousands of people, known as “Dreamers,” to access tax breaks when they sign up for coverage after the Affordable Care Act’s enrollment opens Nov. 1.

“I’m proud of the contributions of Dreamers to our country and committed to providing Dreamers the support they need to succeed,” Biden said in a statement Friday.

While it may help Biden boost his appeal at a critical time among Latinos, an important voting bloc that he needs to turn out to win the election, the move prompted criticism among conservatives about the president’s border and migrant policies.

The action opens the marketplace to any participant in the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, many of whom are Latino.

Xavier Becerra, the nation’s top health official, said Thursday that many of those migrants have delayed getting care because they have not had coverage.

“They incur higher costs and debts when they do finally receive care,” Becerra told reporters on a call. “Making Dreamers eligible to enroll in coverage will improve their health and well-being and strengthen the health and well-being of our nation and our economy.”

The administration’s action changes the definition of “lawfully present” so DACA participants can legally enroll in the marketplace exchange.

Then-President Barack Obama launched the DACA initiative to shield from deportation immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally by their parents. However, the “Dreamers” were still ineligible for government-subsidized health insurance programs because they did not meet the definition of having a “lawful presence” in the U.S.

At one point, there were as many as 800,000 people enrolled in DACA, though now that figure is roughly 580,000. The administration predicts only 100,000 will actually sign up because some may get coverage through their workplaces or other ways.



Photos by FRANCISCO SECO • Associated Press

A builder works at the new Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary under construction in Lypivka, near Lviv, Ukraine. This Orthodox Easter season, the new church is bringing spiritual comfort to war-weary residents of the village.

Church’s revival stirs hope

Once offering shelter from attack, Ukrainian village rebuilds place of spiritual refuge.

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LYPIVKA, UKRAINE — This Orthodox Easter season, an extraordinary new church is bringing spiritual comfort to war-weary residents of the Ukrainian village of Lypivka. Two years ago, it also provided physical refuge from the horrors outside.

Almost 100 residents sheltered in a basement chapel at the Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary while Russian troops occupied the village in March 2022 as they closed in on Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv, 40 miles to the east.

“The fighting was right here,” the Rev. Hennadii Kharkivskiy said. He pointed to the churchyard, where a memorial stone commemorates six Ukrainian soldiers killed in the battle for Lypivka.

“They were injured and then the Russians came and shot each one, finished them off,” he said.

The two-week Russian occupation left the village shattered and the church itself — a modern replacement for an older structure — damaged while still under construction. It’s one of 129 war-

damaged Ukrainian religious sites recorded by UNESCO, the United Nations’ cultural organization.

“It’s solid concrete,” the priest said. “But it was pierced easily” by Russian shells, which blasted holes in the church and left a wall inside pockmarked with shrapnel scars. At the bottom of the basement staircase, a black scorch mark shows where a grenade was lobbed down.

But within weeks, workers were starting to repair the damage and work to finish the solid building topped by red domes that towers over the village, with its scarred and damaged buildings, blooming fruit trees and fields that the Russians left littered with land mines.

For many of those involved — including a tenacious priest, a wealthy philanthropist, a famous artist and a team of craftspeople — rebuilding this church plays a part in Ukraine’s struggle for culture, identity and its very existence. The building, a striking fusion of the ancient and the modern, reflects a country determined to express its soul even in wartime.

The building’s austere exterior masks a blaze of color

inside. The vibrant red, blue, orange and gold panels decorating walls and ceiling are the work of Anatolii Kryvolap, an artist whose bold, modernist images of saints and angels make this church unique in Ukraine.

The 77-year-old Kryvolap, whose abstract paintings sell for tens of thousands of dollars at auction, said that he wanted to eschew the severe-looking icons he had seen in many Orthodox churches.

“It seems to me that going to church to meet God should be a celebration,” he said.

There has been a church on this site for more than 300 years. An earlier building was destroyed by shelling during World War II. The small wooden church that replaced it was put to more workaday uses in Soviet times, when religion was suppressed.

Kharkivskiy reopened the parish in 1992 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and set about rebuilding the church, spiritually and physically, with funding from Bohdan Batruk, a Ukrainian film producer and distributor.

Work stopped when Russian troops launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Moscow’s

forces reached the fringes of Kyiv before being driven back. Lypivka was liberated by the start of April.

For now, services take place in the smaller basement, where the priest, in white and gold robes, recently conducted a service for a couple of dozen parishioners as the smell of incense wafted through the candlelit room.

He is expecting a large crowd for Easter, which falls on Sunday. Eastern Orthodox Christians usually celebrate Easter later than Catholic and Protestant churches, because they use a different method of calculating the date for the holy day that marks Christ’s resurrection.

As Ukraine marks its third Easter at war, the church is nearing completion. Only a few of Kryvolap’s interior panels remain to be installed. He said the shell holes will be left unrepaired as a reminder to future generations.

“[It’s] so that they will know what kind of ‘brothers’ we have, that these are just fascists,” he said, referring to the Russians.

“We are Orthodox, just like them, but destroying churches is something inhumane.”



At left, a Ukrainian flag waves next to the old, right, and new Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lypivka. Eastern Orthodox priest Hennadii Kharkivskiy, right, leads a service at the chapel basement of the church.



Britain’s Tories take a beating in local elections

By STEPHEN CASTLE
and MARK LANDLER
New York Times

LONDON — Britain’s Conservative Party suffered striking setbacks Friday in local elections that are viewed as a barometer for how the party will perform in a coming general election and a key test for the embattled prime minister, Rishi Sunak.

With most of the results announced by Friday evening, the Conservatives were on course for one of their worst performances in a set of local elections since the 1990s. The party has lost more than 400 seats so far and is now losing to a resurgent Labor Party.

The Conservatives did score one notable victory in a closely watched race for mayor of Tees Valley, also in north-east England, where the Tory incumbent, Ben Houchen, held on, eking out a reduced majority.

Almost everywhere else, however, the picture was bleak for the Conservatives, who have trailed the opposition Labour Party by double digits in national polls for 18 months and face the prospect of a landslide defeat in a general election.

In Blackpool South, a seaside district, Labour won a special election for a parliamentary seat in a huge swing of votes away from the Con-

servatives, who placed a distant second, narrowly in front of Reform U.K., a small right-wing party. The previous Tory member of Parliament, Scott Benton, resigned in March after being embroiled in a lobbying scandal.

Labour’s leader, Keir Starmer, described the outcome in that district as a “seismic win” and the most important result of the day.

“This is the one contest where voters had the chance to send a message to Rishi Sunak’s Conservatives directly,” Starmer said, “and that message is an overwhelming vote for change.”

Sunak conceded that the loss of so many Conservative

council seats was “disappointing” but applauded the victory in Tees Valley. Labor “threw absolutely everything” at that election, he said, but failed.

Still, the setbacks extended into the prime minister’s own backyard: Labor won the mayoral race for York and North Yorkshire, which includes Richmond, the area represented by Sunak in Parliament.

Voters went to the polls in 107 towns and cities in England to elect council members as well as 11 mayors, including in London, where results will be announced Saturday.

With Sunak’s party badly divided and time running out before he must call an election by next January, the results

were being closely scrutinized.

The prime minister’s allies hope that some conspicuous victories — particularly in two regional mayoral races — will reassure Tory lawmakers, stabilize his shaky leadership and end speculation about whether he will lead the party into the general election, expected in the fall.

Houchen’s victory in Tees Valley eased some of the pressure on Sunak. But even that glimmer of good news was double-edged because Houchen had campaigned mainly on his own brand, rather than that of his party, and his majority dropped to around 53% from almost 73% of the vote in 2021.

Google, DOJ push their final appeals

High-stakes case to decide if company is a monopoly.

By MATTHEW BARAKAT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Google’s preeminence as an internet search engine is an illegal monopoly propped up by more than \$20 billion spent each year by the tech giant to lock out competition, Justice Department lawyers argued at the closings of a high-stakes antitrust lawsuit.

Google, on the other hand, maintains that its ubiquity flows from its excellence, and its ability to deliver results customers are looking for.

“It would be an unprecedented decision to punish a company for winning on the merits,” Google’s lawyer, John Schmittlein, said late Friday afternoon in summation of the company’s closing arguments.

Justice Department lawyer Ken Dintzer told the judge that “today must be the day” for him to step in and stop Google’s monopolistic behavior, which he likened to the tactics used by Microsoft two decades ago that prompted a similar battle.

The U.S. government, a coalition of states and Google all made their closing arguments Friday in the 10-week lawsuit to U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta, who must now decide whether Google broke the law in maintaining a monopoly status as a search engine.

Much of the case, the biggest antitrust trial in more than two decades, has revolved around how much Google derives its strength from contracts it has in place with companies like Apple to make Google the default search engine pre-loaded on cellphones and computers.

At trial, evidence showed that Google spends more than \$20 billion a year on such contracts. Justice Department lawyers have said the huge sum is indicative of how important it is for Google to make itself the default search engine and block competitors from getting a foothold.

Google responds that customers could easily click away to other search engines if they wanted, but that consumers invariably prefer Google. Companies like Apple testified at trial that they partner with Google because they consider its search engine to be superior.

Google also argues that the government defines the search engine market too narrowly. While it does hold a dominant position over other general search engines like Bing and Yahoo, Google says it faces much more intense competition when consumers make targeted searches.

The company has also argued that its market strength is tenuous as the internet continually remakes itself. Earlier in the trial, it noted that many experts once considered it irrefutable that Yahoo would always be dominant in search. Today, it said that younger tech consumers sometimes think of Google as “Grandpa Google.”

Government lawyers also argued the tech company should be sanctioned for the “systemic destruction of documents” that they argue was done to purposefully hide evidence of monopolistic intent and practices.

Trial evidence showed that Google lawyers recommended employees ensure that their work chats were not saved because of their potential legal implications.

The government asked Mehta to impose a sanction that allows the judge to infer that all the deleted chats were unfavorable to Google regarding their anticompetitive intent.

Mehta said he was unsure whether he would grant the government’s request but he was sharply critical of their document-retention practices and speculated that there ought to be some kind of sanction.

Cuellars accused of taking bribes

◀ **CUELLAR** from A1

Cuellar agreed to influence legislation favorable to Azerbaijan and deliver a pro-Azerbaijan speech on the floor of the U.S. House, the indictment states.

The Department of Justice said the couple surrendered to authorities on Friday and were arrested. They made an initial appearance before a federal judge in Houston and were each released on \$100,000 bond, the DOJ said.

The longtime congressman released a statement Friday saying he and his wife, Imelda Cuellar, 67, "are innocent of these allegations."

"Everything I have done in Congress has been to serve the people of South Texas," Cuellar said. "Before I took action, I proactively sought legal advice from the House Ethics Committee, who gave me more than one written opinion, along with an additional opinion from a national law firm.

"Furthermore, we requested a meeting with the Washington D.C. prosecutors to explain the facts and they refused to discuss the case with us or hear our side."

Neither Cuellar nor his attorney could be reached for comment on the matter.

In addition to bribery and conspiracy, the couple face fraud charges including wire fraud conspiracy, acting as agents of foreign principals and money laundering. If convicted, they face up to decades in prison and forfeiture of property linked to proceeds from the alleged scheme.

The payments to the couple initially went through a Texas-based shell company owned by Imelda Cuellar and two of the couple's children, the indictment said. That company received payments from the Azerbaijan energy company of \$25,000 per month under a "sham contract," purportedly in exchange for unspecified strategic consulting and advising services.

"In reality, the contract was a sham used to disguise and legitimate the corrupt agreement between Henry Cuellar and the government of Azerbaijan," the indictment states.

Imelda Cuellar sent a falsified invoice to the Azerbaijan energy company's Washington, D.C., office under the agreement, stating her work was complete.

"In fact, Imelda Cuellar had performed little or no legitimate work under the contract," the indictment says.

The indictment alleges an Azerbaijani diplomat referred to Henry Cuellar in text messages as "el Jefe" or "boss," and that a member of Cuellar's staff sent multiple emails to State Department officials pressuring them to renew a U.S. passport for an Azerbaijani diplomat's daughter.

Cuellar was at one time the co-chair of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus.

The FBI searched the congressman's house in the border city of Laredo in 2022. Cuellar's attorney at that time said Cuellar was not the target of that investigation. That search was part of a broader investigation related to Azerbaijan that saw FBI agents serve a raft of subpoenas and conduct interviews in Washington, D.C., and Texas, said a person with direct knowledge of the probe previously. The person was not authorized to discuss it publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Cuellar, one of the last anti-abortion Democrats in Congress, narrowly defeated progressive challenger Jessica Cisneros by fewer than 300 votes in a primary race in 2022.



Associated Press

Cuellar said he and his wife are innocent of the charges.



New York Times and Associated Press photos

MEDAL OF FREEDOM: President Joe Biden, top, presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Phil Donahue during a ceremony Friday at the White House. The other honorees included champion Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky, above right, and Judy Shepard, co-founder of the Matthew Shepard Foundation.

'INCREDIBLE PEOPLE' EARN TOP HONOR

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE • Associated Press

WASHINGTON - President Joe Biden on Friday bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on 19 people, including civil rights icons such as the late Medgar Evers, prominent political leaders such as former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Rep. James Clyburn, and actor Michelle Yeoh.

Biden said the recipients of the nation's highest civilian honor are "incredible people whose relentless curiosity, inventiveness, ingenuity and hope have kept faith in a better tomorrow."

One of them, Clarence B. Jones, said in an interview that he thought a prankster was on the phone when he answered and heard the caller say they were from the White House.

"I said, 'Is this a joke or is this serious?'" Jones recalled. The caller swore they were serious and was calling with the news that Biden wanted to recognize Jones with the medal.

Jones, 93, was honored for his activism during the Civil Rights Movement. He's a lawyer who provided legal counsel to Martin Luther King Jr. and helped write the opening paragraphs of the "I Have a Dream" speech that King delivered at the Lincoln Memorial at the 1963 March on Washington.

The White House said the recipients are "exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavors."

The 10 men and nine women hail from the worlds of politics, sports, entertainment, civil rights and LGBTQ+ advocacy, science and religion. Three medals were awarded posthumously.

Seven politicians were among the recipients: former New York mayor and philanthropist Michael Bloomberg, former Sen. Elizabeth Dole, climate activist and former Vice President Al Gore, Biden's former climate envoy John Kerry, former Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., who died in 2013, Clyburn, the Democratic congressman from South Carolina, and Pelosi, the Democratic congresswoman from California.

Biden in his remarks acknowledged that Clyburn's endorsement in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary helped him score a thundering win in South Carolina, powering him to his party's nomination and ultimately the White House. Bloomberg mounted a short-lived bid for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

"I can say this without fear of contradiction," Biden said. "I would not be standing here as president making these awards were it not for Jim. I mean that sincerely."

In addition to representing North Carolina in the Senate, Dole, a Republican and the widow of former Sen. Bob Dole, also served as transportation secretary and labor secretary and was president of the American Red Cross. She currently leads a foundation supporting military caregivers.

Pelosi is the first and only woman ever elected to the speaker's post, putting her second in the line of

succession to the presidency. Biden referenced her legislative achievements, noted her actions during the Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, and said "history will remember you, Nancy, as the greatest speaker of the House of Representatives."

Evers received posthumous recognition for his work more than six decades ago fighting segregation in Mississippi in the 1960s as the NAACP's first field officer in the state. He was 37 when he was fatally shot in the driveway of his home in June 1963. His daughter, Reena, who was 8 years old when her father was killed, accepted his medal.



Legendary athlete Jim Thorpe won the decathlon and pentathlon in 1912 Olympics.



Civil Rights champion Medgar Evers was fatally shot in 1963 at his Jackson, Miss., home.

Yeoh made history last year by becoming the first Asian woman to win an Academy Award for best actress for her performance in "Everything, Everywhere All at Once."

Jim Thorpe, who died in 1953, was the first Native American to win an Olympic gold medal for the United States.

Judy Shepard co-founded the Matthew Shepard Foundation, named after her son, a gay 21-year-old University of Wyoming student who died in 1998 after he was beaten and tied to a fence.

Jones said he felt "very touched" after he digested what the caller had said.

"I'm 93 years old with some health challenges, but I woke up this morning thanks to the grace of God," he said in a telephone interview Thursday. "I'm looking forward to whatever the White House would like for me to do."

The other medal recipients are:

- Gregory Boyle, a Jesuit Catholic priest who founded and runs Homeboy Industries, a gang-intervention and rehabilitation program.
- Phil Donahue, a journalist and former daytime TV talk-show host.
- Katie Ledecky, the most decorated female swimmer in history.
- Opal Lee, an activist who is best known for pushing to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. Biden did so in 2021.
- Ellen Ochoa, the first Hispanic woman in space and the second female director of NASA's Johnson Space Center.
- Jane Rigby, an astronomer who is chief scientist of the world's most powerful telescope. She grew up in Delaware, Biden's home state.
- Teresa Romero, president of the United Farm Workers and the first Hispanic woman to lead a national union in the U.S. The union has endorsed Biden's re-election bid and backed him in 2020.

In 2022, Biden presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to 17 people, including gymnast Simone Biles, the late Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and gun-control advocate Gabby Giffords.

Biden knows how it feels to receive the medal. As president, Barack Obama presented Biden, his vice president, with the medal a week before their administration ended in 2017.

S.D., Mo. could see abortion on ballot

◀ **ABORTION** from A1

which had established a constitutional right to abortion for nearly five decades.

Groups in about 10 other states have secured spots on the ballot for abortion rights measures or are collecting signatures to do so. Those include Arizona and Nevada, swing states where Democrats are hoping that voters who are newly energized around abortion rights will help President Joe Biden win re-election.

South Dakota and Missouri are reliably Republican states. But their bans are among the strictest in the nation, outlawing abortion except to save the life of a pregnant woman.

Missouri, where post-Roe polls show that a majority of voters want abortion to be legal in all or most cases, appears to offer abortion rights groups the bigger chance of success. But both measures face significant hurdles.

Republicans who control the Missouri legislature are pushing another ballot question that would appear before voters in August and make it harder for future ballot amendments to succeed.

That measure would raise the threshold for victory, requiring not only a majority of voters statewide but a majority of voters in five out of the state's eight congressional districts. Abortion rights supporters fear the requirement would allow a minority in rural areas that tend to oppose abortion rights to vote down the amendment.

Missouri legislators are expected to vote on that measure before their session ends this month. State officials will also have to decide whether the abortion rights measure appears on the primary election ballot in August, when turnout tends to be light, or in the general election in November.

The state's Republican leaders have tried to keep the measure from going before voters for more than a year. Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft attempted to change the language of the ballot measure in ways that could have inflamed fears that it would lead to dangerous and unregulated abortions; supporters of the measure successfully sued to block him.

The amendment in Missouri is similar to ones passed in Ohio and Michigan. It would establish "the right to make and carry out decisions about all matters relating to reproductive health care," including abortion. The Legislature could regulate abortion after the point when, "in the good faith judgment" of the treating health care professional, the fetus could survive outside the uterus without "extraordinary medical measures."

In South Dakota, getting the signatures certified could be a challenge because Republican legislators passed a law in March allowing signers to withdraw their support. Backers of the amendment collected about 55,000 signatures, 20,000 more than needed, but anti-abortion groups are working to collect enough reversals to keep the measure off the ballot.

The amendment effort in South Dakota has been largely driven by one group, Dakotans for Health. Planned Parenthood and other usual allies of abortion rights have declined to support the effort. The groups say that the ballot amendment leaves open the possibility that the legislature could continue to regulate abortion so heavily that the amendment would allow, in the words of the state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, "abortion in name only."

The South Dakota amendment would prohibit the state from regulating "a pregnant woman's abortion decision and its effectuation" during the first trimester, but would allow regulations on the procedure during the second trimester only in ways that are "reasonably related to the physical health of the pregnant woman."

Editorials

Editorials represent the opinions of the Star Tribune Editorial Board, which operates independently and is not involved in setting newsroom policies or in reporting or editing articles in other sections of the newspaper or startribune.com. To learn about the Editorial Board or about how the opinion pages are produced, see startribune.com/opinion.



STEVE GROVE, CEO and Publisher
SCOTT GILLESPIE, Editor, Editorial Pages

Kudos to St. Cloud's longtime mayor

If it were possible to calculate the percentage of St. Cloud residents who have personally met their mayor, and compare it to the percentage of residents of other medium-sized Minnesota cities who have met theirs, it's likely that St. Cloud would come out on top. The same would be true if you could measure the percentage of residents who have been to the mayor's house for dinner. Or who have the mayor's cellphone number.

The people of St. Cloud have enjoyed exceptionally easy access to their top elected official for nearly 20 years, which says less about them than it does about Dave Kleis, their mayor. By his own count, Kleis has held 987 town hall meetings since becoming mayor in 2005, and he figures to break 1,000 sometime this summer. Then in January, he plans to swear in his replacement.

After a string of successful re-election campaigns, Kleis announced last month that he does not plan to seek another term. It's a safe bet that the next mayor will find his example tough to follow.

Dave Kleis has built relationships and served the city well for nearly two decades.

Kleis, the longest-serving mayor in St. Cloud's history, told an editorial writer this week that the key to his governing style is the making and nurturing of relationships. That's an approach he learned when he served as a Republican in the state Senate, from 1995 to 2005. "I had really good friendships with folks on

both sides of the aisle," he said. "It was all about policy, but you built relationships."

"Relationships were part of the key to success, so when I became mayor, it was even more important in an executive role to build relationships," he said. "You really can't govern unless you know people. ... That's why I do all the town-hall meetings. That's why I do the dinners with strangers."

"Dinners with strangers" is just what it sounds like. People who don't already know the mayor can sign up to attend a monthly dinner at his home. He makes chili. If the weather is good, he and his guests eat on the deck. "We have great conversations," Kleis said.

For an example of how such relationships can prove useful, he pointed to the aftermath of stabbings at the Crossroads Center mall in 2016, when a young Somali-American wounded at least 10 people before being killed by an off-duty police officer. "Anywhere in the country, you could take that same situation and it would have created a riot," Kleis said.

"I had the cellphone numbers of all the individuals I needed to talk to. They had my number. I spent hours on the phone that night, talking to folks from the East African community, the NAACP, our community policing folks," he recalled. "That was because of the relationships, that we didn't have a riot and a breakdown. ... You build trust with relationships."

There is a downside, though, to being perpetually available to his constituents: It's been decades since Kleis has had a real break. He has traveled, he says, but because of technology he has never been able to disconnect fully from his job.

"In mid-January, as soon as my official duties are done and the new mayor is settled in and comfortable in that position — and I'll do everything I can to help with a great transition, whoever that may be — I'll be taking a very long vacation," he said, laughing. "Without a cellphone, or at least without a cellphone that's connected to email."

Although he will be leaving the mayor's office, he is not retiring. Kleis, 60, still runs a driver's education business. He has in mind a book that he'd like to write. And though he said he has "no thought" of running for elective office again, he wants to remain involved in serving the public in some way.

"I believe service is lifelong," he said. Good for him.

OTHER VIEWS

Additional opinions published recently

In addition to the articles on these pages, Star Tribune Opinion publishes others online. This week, subjects included:

"How those who've protested can really help Palestinians"

"First, raise funds for organizations actively helping Gazans, like Save the Children, Gisha or International Rescue Committee," writes Nicholas Kristof, a New York Times columnist with extensive experience covering conflicts abroad. "That may seem discouragingly modest but it will help real people in desperate need."

"Second, this may sound zany, but how about raising money to send as many of your student leaders as possible this summer to live in the West Bank and learn from Palestinians there (while engaging with Israelis on the way in or out)? ...

"Those students returning at the end of the summer would have a much deeper understanding of the issues and how to help. It would be life-changing, an education as rich as any you're getting on campus."

"It would also be activism that isn't performative but that can actually help Palestinians live better and safer lives."

"A long look at the college admissions landscape today"

Daniel Currell, a trustee of Gustavus Adolphus College, tracks the admissions process of two students, one who made it to an elite college and one who didn't, as part of a comprehensive analysis.

"Selective college admissions have been a vortex of anxiety and stress for what seems like forever, inducing panic in more top high school seniors each year. But the 2023-2024 admissions season was not just an incremental increase in the frantic posturing and high-pressure guesswork that make this annual ritual seem like academic Hunger Games. This year was different. A number of factors — some widely discussed, some little noticed — combined to push the process into a new realm in which the old rules didn't apply and even the gatekeepers seemed not to know what the new rules were."

"It happened, as these things often do, first gradually and then all at once. ...

"These disparate changes had one crucial thing in common: Almost all of them strengthened the hand of highly selective colleges, allowing them to push applicants into more constricted choices with less information and less leverage."

To read the full articles, go to startribune.com/opinion/commentaries.

Readers Write



KAYLEE GREENLEE BEAL • New York Times

ETHNIC STUDIES CURRICULUM

Your naiveté is showing

James Brewer Stewart's attempt to refute the arguments of Katherine Kersten against Minnesota's new ethnic studies curriculum, to this reader, only confirmed them ("Into American history without fear," Opinion Exchange, May 3). He begins with a self-congratulatory identification of himself as "a well-established American historian," but his inflated rhetoric demonstrates clearly his lack of the needed balance and nuance necessary to address complex social and historical issues. He starts with *ad hominem* and moral self-righteousness, declaring it his "ethical duty" to counter Kersten's "multiple atrocities."

He then defends a curriculum focusing on concepts such as "decolonization," "dispossession" and "resistance," which Kersten had highlighted, by showing how these concepts are illustrated by America's revolution against Britain's settler colonialism. One has to be unusually naive to believe that particular event will be a focus of the ethnic studies curriculum Stewart favors.

If one wants an example of Stewart's lack of balance and recognition of complexity, consider his characterization of the abortion debate. This issue divides America almost in half, is morally complex and has millions of intelligent, impassioned citizens on multiple sides. But this complexity is beyond our "well-established" historian, who says the contested curriculum will help students address "the assault on women's right to bodily independence by right-wing Minnesota politicians."

Stewart encourages us to accept his confident declaration, "There is only good that can result from asking Minnesota students to consider historical questions such as these." "Only good"? That depends on the skill and fairness of the one leading the discussion. I believe our historian shows himself to lack the qualities needed to lead one himself and is unusually naive if he believes "only good" can come from the new ethnic studies curriculum.

DANIEL TAYLOR, Arden Hills

PUBLIC NOTICES

Removal means newspaper death

I am a somewhat regular reader of the Star Tribune, as I pick up a copy at a Casey's in Brookings, S.D., whenever I go over for supper.

In last Saturday's issue, there was an opinion piece by the executive director of the Minnesota School Board Association, Kirk Schneidawind, advocating for no longer requiring schools' legal notices to be printed in newspapers ("Embrace the shift in public notices," Opinion Exchange, April 27).

That's a terrific idea — if your goal is to kill all small-town newspapers.

I have edited our rural weekly, the Arlington Sun, for 20 years now. And the truth is that rural weekly newspapers are the kind of business familiar to a lot of small-town business owners — just barely in the black year after year, and hanging on by a thread.

The legal revenue that comes in is a vital part of that trickle of a revenue stream, and if you take that away, the business model simply collapses.

We are getting closer to that every passing year in the small-town newspaper business, as longtime subscribers finally die off, and their grandchildren do not subscribe. We have had many deeply loyal subscribers for decades on end, and we greatly appreciate their support — but nobody renews after they die.

Still, we hang on, because we can still hang on. We cut our expenses every way we can, and we simply live on what we bring in. To me, it's a matter of service. I feel that a newspaper is an essential part of a small town, and that without a local newspaper, many of the functions we take for granted — such as monitoring the actions of the local city council or school board — would simply vanish.

But to get back to Schneidawind's proposal, if we lose the legal revenue that comes in each week, then we simply won't be able to do this anymore. And that's not just in my town; I would predict that only a handful of rural weekly newspapers would survive anywhere, only those with backers willing to subsidize the annual losses.

Schneidawind, in his opinion piece, says, "We are sad to say that the era of newspapers is declining."

But apparently he is not sad enough about that to refrain from pushing them off the cliff.

FRANK CRISLER, Arlington, S.D.

The writer is editor of the Arlington Sun.

•••

I read the opinion piece by Kavita Kumar with interest ("Thoughts from the Star Tribune's new community engagement director," April 28). Delivery of news is so important to the functioning of a democracy, and we are fortunate in Minnesota to have a resource such as the Star Tribune.

With no valid solutions in mind, the concept of having "news" items just sent or delivered directly to me offers many problems to full-function knowledge and awareness. For most of my life, a newspaper or local television station was the major source of local and national news. International, too. We watched the whole news program or read the whole newspaper. It provided items of interest or new items that we may not have considered. It was not just my preferences; it had a little of everything, and I learned a lot by viewing the articles selected for inclusion by the staff of news professionals.

We did not skip right to our narrow interests;

we were exposed to more of a full picture. Many of our friends and relatives who get specific articles sent to them appear to lack full knowledge of many other topics and current events, or they are very skewed to an ideology and lack important facts. Having a local news station and local newspaper put a full news source together is so important to building citizen's broad knowledge. It is why we shake our heads and wonder how people we know and love can believe such harmful conspiracies in this day and age.

Thank you so much for providing an e-edition of the paper. It allows me to browse the full printed version online every morning. I still pick and choose articles online during the day, but I like to start off with a full picture.

JOE FRASER, Minnetonka

STUDENT PROTESTS

Chaos can beget something better

With all due respect, Mr. President, I take issue with your scolding of student protesters for making chaos ("Biden: 'Dissent must never lead to disorder,'" May 3). I do not condone any incidents of violence or hateful speech that have surfaced in the protests, but I believe we must distinguish between these incidents and the chaos that is necessary for creating something new. Whether it is a work of art, a new butterfly forming in the chrysalis or a new worldview objecting to the violence of war and genocide, any act of creation begins in a shapelessness that we might carelessly dismiss as chaos. It is what the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis called "good trouble."

The problem is that chaos, like complacency or meticulous order, can breed violence and intolerance. To engage chaos constructively requires great discipline and attention to relationships. It is not a free-for-all.

Instead of condemning the chaos of protests, might we learn to make use of chaos creatively and without violence? To accept its invitation to question the way things are and to imagine the way things might be? To discipline ourselves in the midst of chaos and to encounter others in it with an openness to relationships and resolutions as yet unknown? That is where the true and beautiful power of chaos lies and why we would be wise to engage the chaos on our campuses today creatively.

I applaud the universities where regents and students have entered dialogue as a result of the protests. I only wish our national leaders would do the same.

KAREN HERING, St. Paul

YOUR VIEWS?

We welcome your participation in these pages, whether in letters for the "Readers Write" section or commentaries for the "Opinion Exchange" page.

The best way to contribute is through the "Submit a letter or commentary" link on our website, at startribune.com/opinion. You can also submit by email to opinion@startribune.com.

Submissions must be exclusive to us in Minnesota. All must include the writer's real, legal name, address, occupation and phone numbers. Letters and rebuttals become the property of the Star Tribune and may be republished in any format. Letters should be brief, up to 250 words. Articles should be fewer than 700 words. Because of the volume of submissions, we cannot respond to all writers.

Opinion Exchange

Commentaries are selected to present a range of perspectives and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Star Tribune Editorial Board.

DONALD TRUMP'S CIVIL TRIAL

I attended the Trump trial

This is what I witnessed from Peasant Row.

By TRESA SAUER

At first, I just wanted to burn off steam, make a sign, stroll outside the courthouse like a lunatic and go home, but it started feeling pointless. I decided I would attend the trial itself. As a former paralegal, I'd assisted at a few civil trials. I am unafraid of courtrooms and Latin.

When I got to New York, I went downtown to scope out the courthouse scene and asked some cops for advice on how to attend, where the line began, simple logistics. They weren't helpful. In fact, they laughed at me. I actually said, "But I've come all the way from Minnesota to attend the trial." The poo-poo'ing po-po would not deter me.

Until then, scant information was available about how non-press could attend. How many are allowed inside the courtroom? And what of the mysterious overflow room? Then, like a miracle, on April 29 — the day before I chose to attend the trial — the New York Post published a piece by a guy who'd done it.

Only six members of the general public are allowed in the courtroom. The overflow room holds a few more, including additional press. I emailed the article's author; he emailed back to wish me luck and offer some suggestions to improve my chances. I'd need to be in line by 5:30 a.m. I set my alarm for 3:30 a.m., refrained from coffee and food, and hailed a taxi. By 4:45 a.m. I was in line and officially No. 3. I was going to Day 10 of the Trump campaign finance fraud — aka "hush money" — trial in downtown Manhattan. At 8:15, officers sorted press from the public and handed us date-stamped, color-coded entry passes. This was happening.

At 8:30 a.m., they marched us across the street into the courthouse through electronic security. IDs were not checked. Then we were led up to the 15th floor for another round of security, and subsequently lined up against a wall outside the courtroom adjacent to the spot where Trump gives his accordion-hands "witch hunt" press statements.

I had to pee. An officer told me if I was in the restroom when it came time to enter the courtroom, I'd wind up in the dreaded overflow area, watching on CCTV. I decided not to risk it and am glad I didn't. Just seconds later, we were whisked in and seated on the right side, back row. We were sternly warned: No phones, no talking, no gestures or we'd promptly be removed. We were Peasant Row.

At 9:25, two Secret Service agents took seats in the back and the courtroom doors opened. Like a bride, in walked Donald Trump. He's actually more yellow than orange in heavy pancake makeup, his hair a cotton candy swirl. Secret Service flanked the



DAVE SANDERS • New York Times

Former President Donald Trump in the courtroom for his criminal trial at Manhattan Criminal Court on April 26.

former president, and a gaggle of suits, including Eric Trump and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, rounded out his entourage. At 9:30 a.m. sharp, Judge Juan Merchan gavelled in and court was in session.

Throughout the trial, courtroom security was heavy — 10 officers plus Secret Service. They stood spaced, patrolling rows, glowering, sidearms at the ready, watching our hands and notepads, presumably to ensure no juror was being sketched. Not only could I not see many jurors, I can't draw my way out of a paper bag. They looked like ordinary people to me.

Officers worked a position rotation and fought back yawns. Two officers were continuously positioned behind Trump, one facing the bench, the other facing the galley, glaring. It felt personal, but they glared at everyone. One fast move and we'd be toast. Later in the elevator, a member of the press described it as "security theater." Seemed about right.

I'll leave legal analysis to lawyers. Basically, Trump was fined \$9,000 for violating a gag order nine times, and the witnesses laid necessary, but often dry, groundwork for the proceedings to follow. Prosecutors voiced a desire to add more stuff in another Sandoval hearing should Trump take the stand.

Did Trump nod off? It's hard for me to say. The officers blocked my view. But considering Peasant No. 6 actually did fall asleep and I myself felt drowsy at times, having been up since 3:30 a.m., who was I to confirm what those in closer proximity have claimed about Trump's alertness? I took notes so as not to miss a thing, but in part to stay awake.

Speaking of not missing a thing, at one point in the bathroom line, a member of the press I couldn't name but recognized as an "on location" reporter from cable news asked, "Are you guys gonna stay the whole day? My 7-year-old son really wants to come to the trial."

Was I having a hot flash, or was it just outrage over her pomposity in implying that the momentousness of the occasion was lost on rabble like me and that of course I'd be happy to give my seat to a first-grader? I told her, "Lady, I came all the way from Minnesota. I was in line at 4:45 a.m. I'm not going anywhere."

Other than the trial proceedings the best part was the close visual access I had to Trump as he left the courtroom during breaks. Walking down the center aisle, he passed right by me. We were ordered to remain seated when he was on the move,

and I enjoyed the fact that nobody stood for him. This wasn't the Mar-a-Lago dining room. This was a criminal trial and he was the defendant.

One thing I didn't see in the courtroom was Joe Biden or a cabal of Democratic operatives directing witnesses what to say or creating documents to back up incriminating testimony. Michael Cohen went to jail for the same crimes Trump is on trial for here. Joe Biden doesn't make New York state or federal laws. Nor does he indict people; grand juries do. All the barking about this trial being a political witch hunt is actually what is political. Everyone with the gumption or curiosity should make the effort to attend this trial to see for themselves what all the fuss is about. Because it's not nothing. Not a hoax.

One can read the trial transcripts, but nobody does. The media extrapolate and summarize — literally talk all day and night about it — but there's nothing better than hearing it firsthand. Details that explain exactly what happened are not one-liners. Far from it. Hearing the lengths gone to in order to achieve X,Y,Z in painstaking detail is mind-blowing. The public not knowing is what Donald Trump is counting on. If the media is what translates the trial for the public, whatever they report can be discounted as partisan spin. In the courtroom, there was a furious choir of laptop tapping whenever a zinger came off the stand. But it's the tedious details that are the truth and it will be the jury who decides — not the typers and yappers. And the jury is Peasant Row.

Each time Trump left the courtroom down the center aisle, I looked at him with a side eye, my body facing forward. But the final time, at 4:20 p.m., I repositioned my body to look him straight in the eye with my best face of revulsion. We made eye contact. When I didn't look away, he squinted his eyes as if to say, "I can't see you." But he did see me. And I wasn't small and I wasn't meek. I got what I came for: to see an appalling con man with a cultish hold on a large swath of Americans, for myself. I got to see a know-nothing, do-nothing buffoon who's running for office to stay out of jail.

Sitting in that courtroom, I sometimes felt like a member of the jury. But no court can defeat Trump. Only the voters have that power. We are the cavalry.

Tresa Sauer lives in Minneapolis.

LYME DISEASE

It only takes one bite

You've heard about it, of course, but do you take it seriously?

By PAT MCKINZIE LECHAULT

I'm a strong, well-trained former pro athlete. How could an opponent as tiny as a tick defeat me?

Because Lyme disease is real. I've battled it for decades.

The pernicious, insidious disease — hard to identify and treat — destroys one muscle at a time.

Due to shame and fear of losing my job, I hid my illness, never divulging

my controversial diagnosis. But now, with what I know firsthand about its devastating effects, I would be remiss to ignore its existence. (May is National Lyme Disease Awareness Month, when Lyme educators speak out on how to prevent it and other tickborne diseases. I echo the call.)

The tickborne bacterial infection is most frequently found in the northeastern, Midwestern and mid-Atlantic states. Minnesotans are especially vulnerable to this "hidden epidemic." But it is now prevalent worldwide. It has become a

global health problem due to climate change and environmental practices.

Ticks reside across Europe, Asia and Africa. In Switzerland, ticks, once nonexistent in higher altitudes, became so common in the mountains that tick apps were developed for hikers. Deer are often considered the main vectors for black-legged ticks, but chipmunks, mice, squirrels and birds are also primary reservoirs for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.

Lyme, known as the "great imitator," can be misdiagnosed as other illnesses. To further complicate matters, Lyme's many co-infections, such as bartonella, babesia and ehrlichia, are equally difficult to diagnose and treat.

Decades ago, I was diagnosed with chronic Lyme caused by the

tickborne parasite *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is most common in the United States. Other kinds of ticks carry other types of bacteria with other co-infections.

I tried every treatment — supplements, antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and anti-parasite medicines — in attempts to eradicate the bacteria in its' many forms.

After years, I finally located doctors who believed my bizarre symptoms despite of the lack of accurate testing. Lyme remains primarily a clinical diagnosis. Doctors, at risk of losing their medical license, willingly tried treatments that helped.

For years, my immunologist worked to reinforce my immune system. A Lyme-literate doctor in Wisconsin prescribed different long-term antibiotics.

Like science fiction, once in the blood stream, this nasty bacteria can hide out, replicate, and change shapes and forms. It disseminates into other tissues and damages organs, leading to ongoing physical symptoms and debilitating neurological impairments — which in some cases result in death.

If Lyme is identified right away, it can be successfully treated. But not everyone is as lucky as my brother-in-law in Minnesota, whose tick bite left the telltale bulls-eye rash. Immediate antibiotic treatment wiped out his Lyme.

Many celebrities — writers, athletes, musicians like Justin Bieber and Avril Lavigne, and actors like Alec Baldwin and Yolanda Hadid — have shared their Lyme battle to promote awareness.

"[Lyme] is very dangerous because you have a very short window to catch it and then treat it and then even when you treat it, you could still very well be left with effects, which is what happened to me," Shania Twain told CBC news. "It's a debilitating disease and extremely dangerous. You can't play around with it, so you've got to check yourself for ticks."

Unfortunately, ticks can be as

invisible as tiny as grains of sand. I had no signs until it was too late.

At times, my body turns to cement, my head fills with cotton. Electric shock sensations and stabbing pains shoot down my torso. My muscles twitch, my limbs spasm. Excruciating headaches knock me to my knees. My mind muddles.

Like a deer in headlights, I freeze. Neurological Lyme (neuroborreliosis) amplifies pain, light and noise, throwing me into sensory overload. An invisible body snatcher eats cells, turning my brain to spaghetti, my muscles to mush.

The medical community's skepticism only exacerbates patient shame. The best prevention: Don't get bit. But if you do, keep searching for answers.

The immune response to the Lyme bacteria may cause chronic inflammation. Recent studies show long-haul COVID-19 has similar effects on the central nervous system.

Am I cured? Doubtful. But I've learned to make peace with my undependable body.

At times of profound exhaustion, I slip into a twilight zone of semiconsciousness, suspended between life and death in a never-world.

I don't dwell on it. I won't let Lyme define me. I am not my illness. As an athlete, I fight on. I still enjoy the great outdoors, but with greater vigilance.

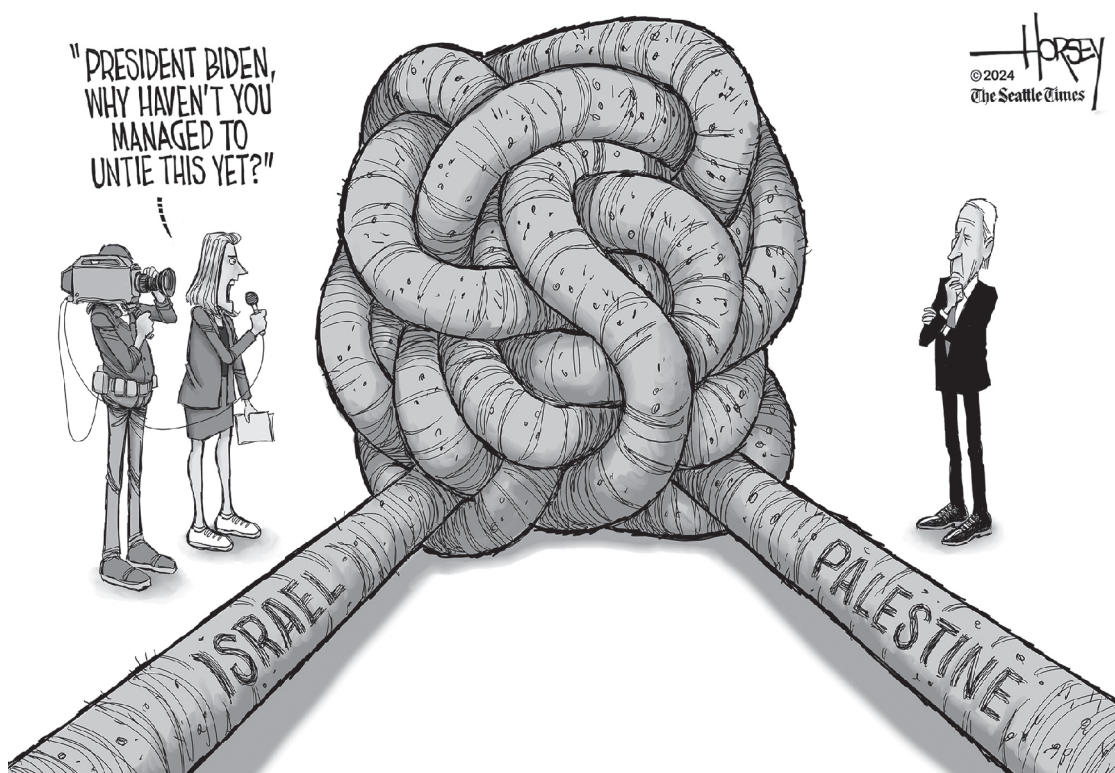
So much skepticism. So much misunderstanding. I am not crazy. This stuff is real.

I will fight on. Others, without financial stability and strong support networks, struggle in despair.

You can help. Stay aware. Someone in your entourage suffers in silence. Someone you love needs a hug.

Pat McKinzie Lechault is a former professional basketball player, international coach and teacher living in Minnetonka and Switzerland. She is the author of the book "Home Sweet Hardwood: A Title IX Trailblazer Breaks Barriers Through Basketball."

DAVID HORSEY TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY



U proposes tuition increase at all its campuses

◀ **TUITION** from A1 documents prepared for next week's board meeting. "It does so by investing in building and maintaining excellence, incorporating a responsible tuition and fee plan, and challenging all units within the University to continuously prioritize and improve efficiency to move resources to areas of highest strategic impact or need."

U regents will accept feedback online and in a public forum May 10. They're expected to take a final vote on the budget in June.

The U has increased tuition multiple times in recent years,

and leaders indicated in budget documents that the rates proposed for next school year are "larger than originally planned and proposed," in part because they haven't received additional state funding.

The U asked state lawmakers for an additional \$45 million to support its "core mission," money that could go toward limiting tuition, promoting research or expanding student services. In legislative hearings, lawmakers from both parties have asked for more details on the U's expenses and plans for

addressing declining enrollment at some locations.

Without that additional funding, the U proposal calls for undergraduate tuition for Minnesota residents attending the Duluth campus to rise 1.5% to \$12,958, and tuition at the Rochester campus to increase 4.5% to \$13,854. Some campuses have higher tuition rates for students who live in other states.

Student government leaders say they understand the U needs to find ways to deal with inflation, but they've also been encouraging administrators to remember that an increase of

a few hundred dollars could affect a student's ability to pay for school or rent.

"We, in student government, are always going to be advocating for the university to keep tuition as low as possible because we understand that can prevent students from being able to access an affordable higher education," said Sara Davis, undergraduate student government president. "We want folks to come here and we want to keep the talent that we have in Minnesota here."

U leaders say they hope changes to financial aid pro-

grams will help offset some of the tuition increases for students most in need. The federal government has in recent years increased the amount of aid some students can receive through Pell Grants. Minnesota is also launching a North Star Promise program that covers tuition for residents who attend a public school in the state, if their families make less than \$80,000 per year.

The U also asked employees for proposals for reducing expenses, saying: "To be successful, operations must become more efficient, and existing resources must be

reprioritized." Some divisions are eliminating positions when employees leave or hiring new employees at lower expense. Some are reducing budgets for supplies, food or travel or hosting fewer events.

"While the total expense reduction amount is significant, it does not represent one or two large initiatives," leaders wrote in budget documents. "Instead, it is a collection of individual actions and decisions spread across almost every unit of the University."

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◀ **LUBINSKI** from A1 all backgrounds to serve."

Lubinski first worked as a deputy for the Dane County Sheriff's Office in south-central Wisconsin before joining the Minneapolis Police Department in 1987. There, she held jobs such as precinct commander, deputy chief of patrol and assistant police chief — and was once a finalist for police chief. As U.S. marshal, Klobuchar said, Lubinski was "instrumental" in the manhunt to capture the man who shot and killed Mendota Heights police officer Scott Patrick during a traffic stop in 2014.

In 1993, Lubinski came out as a lesbian both to her leaders and colleagues at MPD and in subsequent media interviews. She told the Star Tribune at the time her decision was partly informed by the recent murders of gay men in Minneapolis and seeing how police and the gay community struggled to work together.

"If I'm going to be a real person and if I'm ever going to make real change as a cop, I have to do it as a lesbian cop," she told the newspaper. "I can no longer justify keeping this to myself."

Then-Police Chief John Laux told the Star Tribune that, as Lubinski opened up about her life, he watched her nerves and unease recede: "It became clearer to me just how torturous it is for someone to lead a double life," said Laux, who later chaired the selection committee that eventually helped Klobuchar recommend Lubinski for U.S. marshal.

"Everywhere she went she was well regarded by the troops," said Greg Hestness, who worked with Lubinski at the MPD. "When you're in a position where you are setting the tone and challenging stereotypes, to still be respected by the troops is a sign of a lot of leadership."

The role of U.S. marshal can in some districts be approached as a "semiretirement job" or "honorific cap" to a long law enforcement career, said Chief U.S. District Judge Patrick Schiltz. But Schiltz said that was never the case with Lubinski.

"She was the type of person if you would express a concern to her you only had to express it once," said Schiltz, who added that Lubinski set herself apart by meeting individually with each federal judge as she began the job. "You knew she would take it seriously, you knew she would follow up on it and you knew she would get back to you."

U.S. District Judge John Tunheim, chief



Minneapolis police Sgt. Sharon Lubinski on patrol on Jan. 8, 1993. She died April 19 after 40 years in law enforcement.

Star Tribune

After coming out as lesbian at MPD, she was state's first female U.S. marshal

judge during Lubinski's tenure as marshal, described her as "the most effective law enforcement partner with whom I have ever worked."

"She was the definition of outstanding leadership: encouraging, courageous, selfless and a remarkable decisionmaker, greatly respected by judges and deputy marshals alike," Tunheim said. "Not only was she the best female law enforcement leader in America, she was simply one of the best law enforcement leaders in America, period."

Eddie Frizell, the current U.S. marshal,

worked for Lubinski while she was a sergeant at the Minneapolis Police Department. He described her as a "guiding light" in his first days on the job. The two met on Frizell's first 911 response call on a dark, rainy night in north Minneapolis "during a very complicated and violent domestic scene."

"She just looked at me and said, essentially, 'follow me,'" Frizell said. "And that was very reassuring."

Lubinski is survived by her spouse of 38 years, Fran; her brother, Travis, and her sister, Toni. Services will be held May 19 in Edina.

Friends and colleagues remember her Green Bay Packer fandom being the source of good-natured ribbing in the office, and how Lubinski clung to passions that included opera, running, astronomy and birding. Indeed, in lieu of flowers — "and to conserve the birds she loved" — her obituary asked that tributes be made in the form of donations to the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wis.

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Innocence Project asking to unseal records for review of case

◀ **RECORDS** from A1

McGee's Ramsey County case history, dating back four decades, is under review by County Attorney John Choi's office and the Minnesota Attorney General's Office.

"Given Dr. McGee's documented history of providing inaccurate testimony in court, we agree with both the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office that convictions based largely on his testimony deserve scrutiny," Great Northern Innocence Project attorney James Mayer told the Star Tribune this week.

A hearing on the request to unseal the records is scheduled for May 20. Dennis Gerhardtstein, a spokesman for Choi's office, said the office will not oppose the motion, but that decision "does not reflect our position about whether the individual may be entitled to relief."

McGee and his attorneys didn't respond to a request for comment to this and other recent Star Tribune stories on questions about his work.

After four days of testimony in his 2009 trial, a jury convicted Sontoya, then 32, of first-degree murder while committing a sexual assault



Michael McGee, the former chief medical examiner in Ramsey County, conducted Gabriela Romo's autopsy and testified in the trial that led to the conviction of Michael Sontoya.

JEFFREY THOMPSON • MPR

and second-degree murder while committing felony assault in Romo's death.

Sontoya and Romo had known each other since childhood. In September 2008, Sontoya picked up Romo from her parents' house. They had drinks at Fabulous Fern's in St. Paul, then went back to Sontoya's apartment on St. Paul's West Side.

In the morning, Romo was dead. McGee testified she had bled to death as a result of "multiple traumatic injuries due to a sexual assault," including a 14-inch tear inside her body that damaged her liver, diaphragm and spleen. McGee ruled the death a homicide.

Sontoya has maintained his innocence. He told police he found Romo dead after a

night of "totally consensual" sex. Sontoya's defense attorney didn't hire an independent medical expert, and in appeals Sontoya argued he didn't get a fair trial because McGee's opinion went unchallenged.

In 2010, the Minnesota Supreme Court affirmed Sontoya's guilty conviction, calling the evidence "overwhelming." Two justices took



Isabella Sontoya
Michael Sontoya is serving life without parole for the fatal sex assault of Gabriela Romo but maintains his innocence.

issue with McGee's testimony that Romo's death resulted from injuries "due to a sexual assault," saying he improperly testified to legal conclusions that had not been proven by the prosecutors. But the judges concluded the error did not affect the case's outcome and affirmed the guilty verdict.

Questions about McGee's credibility have piled up: At least four people have either been released from prison or resented to a lower penalty after McGee's testimony

was found to be inaccurate or flawed, according to court records.

The Ramsey County Attorney's Office has contracted with the Prosecutors' Center for Excellence to review all Ramsey County cases dating back to the 1980s where McGee's testimony was central to a conviction. At this stage, 71 cases are in review. Gerhardtstein said the office is not commenting on whether any particular case is part of their review.

Choi's office launched the review, more comprehensive than prior reviews of McGee's work, after a federal judge questioned McGee's testimony in the case of Alfonso Rodriguez, the man sentenced to death in North Dakota for kidnapping, sexually assaulting and killing college student Dru Sjodin.

The judge said Rodriguez had clearly kidnapped and murdered Sjodin, but said McGee's testimony that she had been sexually assaulted — a factor prosecutors used to ask for the death penalty — was not rooted in science. The judge vacated the death sentence for Rodriguez.

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