

# The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## Abortion rights on the ballot in Kansas

If approved, amendment to state constitution could set stage for a ban

BY ANNIE GOWEN

OVERLAND PARK, KAN. — At a recent gathering of abortion rights canvassers in a strip-mall office in this Kansas City suburb, a hand-lettered sign on the wall summed up the confusion over the state's looming ballot question in two lines — a “no” vote equals support of abortion rights, “yes” means against abortion rights.

Kansas is heading to the polls Aug. 2 to decide whether the state's constitution protects the right to abortion — the first such constitutional amendment to be determined since the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, ending federal protection, on June 24. More than a dozen Republican states have already moved by other means to ban or further restrict abortion in the wake of the decision that reversed *Roe*.

The ballot measure, if approved, would effectively overturn a 2019 decision by the state's Supreme Court enshrining abortion rights in its constitution. The measure could pave the way for the legislature to pass a ban on abortion at a time when Kansas has become a destination for

SEE KANSAS ON A4

## Schools face 'high-wire act' when kids say they're trans

BY DONNA ST. GEORGE

Alexander Baetsen came out at school to an English teacher. The revelation was made in a short letter on a piece of lined notebook paper, handed to the teacher as the eighth-grader left class one day. The teen explained that while they were assigned female at birth, they identified as transgender and gender fluid.

Baetsen remembers the teacher's reaction: “Just come to me at the beginning of class and let me know what name and pronouns you want to go by for that day.” It was better than Baetsen expected — not only acceptance but someone who was able to “wrap their head around my situation.”

Still, it was six more months before the teenager told their parents. “You fear the worst,” said Baetsen, now 20.

Surprising many families nationally, public schools often don't inform parents when students socially transition. They see confidentiality as a priority — operating under gender-identity guidelines that put student privacy and safety above family consent or knowledge.

School leaders say there are

SEE SCHOOLS ON A8



Pope Francis wears a headdress presented to him by Indigenous leaders during a meeting in Maskwacis, Alberta, where he apologized to thousands of survivors of child abuse committed over decades at residential schools in Canada. The school system forcibly removed Indigenous children from their parents and tried to assimilate them into Euro-Christian society — often brutally.

PATRICK T. HOLLOWAY/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

## Pope delivers historic apology

IN CANADA, AN ACT OF RECONCILIATION

Condemns abuse of Indigenous at schools

BY CHICO HARLAN AND AMANDA COLETTA

MASKWACIS, ALBERTA — Pope Francis on Monday began a long-sought act of reconciliation in Canada, decrying the country's “catastrophic” residential school system for Indigenous children and asking forgiveness for the “evil committed by so many Christians.”

“I am deeply sorry — sorry for the ways in which, regrettably, many Christians supported the colonizing mentality of the powers that oppressed the Indigenous peoples,” Francis said in his native Spanish.

He addressed his comments to several thousand residential school survivors in a grass field encircled by a small grandstand on the first full day of a trip aimed at penitence for one of Canada's greatest tragedies: a school system that forcibly removed Indigenous children from their parents and tried to assimilate them into Euro-Christian society — often brutally. Students were forbidden from speaking their native languages or practicing traditional customs; many were physically or sexually abused.

“It is painful to think of how the firm soil of values, language and culture that made up the authentic identity of your peoples was eroded, and that you have contin-

SEE APOLOGY ON A11

## Myanmar junta executes 4 pro-democracy activists

BY REBECCA TAN AND RACHEL PANNETT

Myanmar's military junta has executed four pro-democracy activists, carrying out its first death sentences in more than three decades and defying international appeals for restraint. The deaths of the activists, including two of the most prominent leaders of the resistance, sent shock waves through the country Monday and were seen as the junta's latest attempt to instill terror since vio-

Country carries out its first death sentences in more than 30 years

lently seizing power last year.

“It's unbelievable,” said Moe Zaw Oo, deputy foreign minister for the National Unity Government (NUG) — a shadow administration that has been operating in exile since the coup. “These were

political prisoners. ... They killed them without any of the right procedures, without any due process.”

Kyaw Min Yu, 51, also known as Ko Jimmy, rose to prominence in student uprisings in 1988 and had spent years in and out of prison for his activism. Phyo Zeya Thaw, 41, was a hip-hop artist turned member of parliament who was widely admired among Myanmar's youths. They were convicted on terrorism charges and sentenced to death in closed-door trials

last fall.

Human rights organizations and several Western countries, including the United States, condemned their death sentences. Last month, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, urged Myanmar's military leader not to enforce the sentences. Nonetheless, the military vowed in June to follow through.

On Friday, prison officials told relatives of the four men that they

SEE MYANMAR ON A12



WLODZIECH GUTZEWSKI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## In Ukraine, mayor of a scattered community

Mykola Khanatov, mayor of the eastern Ukrainian city of Popasna, looks out a window in Dnipro, where he runs his municipal government-in-exile. As Russian forces closed in on Popasna, most of its 20,000 residents fled. Now, Khanatov is trying to aid them, as well as those still in the city. Story, A10

## 'America's rifle' ad stunt sheds light on marketing

Aggressive tactics for AR-15-style gun in firm's Super Bowl plan

BY SHAWN BOBURG AND JON SWAINE

A rapidly growing manufacturer of AR-15-style rifles tried to run an ad during the Super Bowl in 2014, knowing that the NFL typically does not allow gun commercials during its marquee event.

But Daniel Defense — the maker of the semiautomatic rifle used in the school shooting in Uvalde, Tex. — privately had in place a plan to generate publicity whether the ad aired or not, according to previously unreported court documents that shed light on the gunmaker's marketing strategies.

If it aired, Daniel Defense's top marketing executive planned to have people across the country complain about the company's own ad to left-leaning media or-

ganizations, stirring controversy and generating coverage.

If the ad was rejected, records show, the executive had arranged for a prominent National Rifle Association commentator to release a prerecorded online video accusing the National Football League of censorship and hypocrisy.

“I had two plans, you know,” Daniel Defense's former marketing director, Jordan Hunter, a Marine veteran, said during a May 2015 deposition in a trademark infringement case. “That's from the Marine Corps days, two plans. If it goes bad, you have another.”

An examination of Daniel Defense's marketing, based on court filings, interviews, internal documents and other records, shows how the gunmaker over the past decade devised publicity stunts, paid for favorable coverage in newstand magazines and employed other aggressive tactics to entice Americans to buy its AR-15 semiautomatic rifles.

SEE DANIEL ON A7